NARRATIVE TACTICS
for making
OTHER WORLDS
POSSIBLE

By Zachary Angles
B.S. Architecture
Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan, 2014

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
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NARRATIVE TACTICS
for making
OTHER WORLDS
POSSIBLE;

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN
between
STORYTELLING,
WORLD-BUILDING,
& SCENARIO PLANNING.

By Zachary Angles

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Narrative Tactics for Making Other Worlds Possible

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 18, 2018 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Be they childhood games of make-believe, sophisticated literary projects, or political inventions (a “Great America”) authors have taken advantage of a world-building imagination creating their own worlds, and theorizing what they were doing. From the 1960s onwards, fictional worlds were studied from a philosophical point of view, using “possible worlds” theory and modal logic, which consider the ontological status of fictional worlds, the nature of their functioning, and their relationship with the actual world. These ideas have been combined with literary theory, setting the foundation for the study of imaginary worlds. Architects and Urbanists have used facets of world-building arguably for as long as the disciplines have existed. Though modernity launched a highly conscious tradition of imagining worlds in literature and creative culture, it also stained imagination and dreaming with a connotation of frivolity and a wastefulness that was antithetical to modern projects of utility and rationality. In the later half of the twentieth century there was an increase in number of architects exploring the irrational and imaginative in defiance of the reign of rationalism. A chasm tore through the discipline: grounded and rational practitioners on one side and imaginative inventors of form, indulgently entrapped in their fantasies, on the other. World-builders have developed robust methods for producing visions for futures, pasts, and other worlds. A study of world-building and narrative methods and their possible application to architectural and urban design has remained largely unaddressed. This thesis proposes methods for design and tests these methods through a case study. The case study is the city of Boston in the year 2100 being changed by many factors not least of which are the effects of sea level rise. A story has been authored, the world surrounding that story has been structured, and designs within that world have been represented.

This thesis seeks to combine methods from storytelling, world-building, and scenario planning in order to allow imaginative explorations of, and design for speculative environments, in response to, and preparation for, challenging situations. And, in the end it seeks to provide tools to tell better stories and see better worlds.
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INTRODUCTION
OR AUTHORS NOTE

Storytelling requires a specific type of imagination. World-building a specific type of hubris. And, scenario planning requires a specific type of neurotic attention. This thesis attempts to introduce how storytelling, world-building, and scenario planning can be applied to architectural and urban design.

The specific product of this investigation is a discussion of the various theories underpinning the project, a description of methods and tactics proposed a process of design, and finally a case study which demonstrates the process and is used to develop the method.

This investigation began long before the bounds of the M.Arch thesis trial. Coursework at the University of Michigan encouraged examination of fictional world as valid architectural investigations. Video-games, films, fantasy novels, science-fiction speculations were treated as sources of insight and innovation within architectural discourse. Literary space was examined as providing excellent representations and insight into architecture. These early formative experiences set a path that I’ve been excited to follow. Along the way, I was able to edit the peer edited journal thresholds under the thematic of MYTH. This provided an opportunity to curate a conversation across a broad spectrum of scholars and creatives.

At some point, with a amazing group of doctoral and graduate students at MIT & PUC, I founded the Storytelling Space Group which has afforded me the opportunity to teach workshops on storytelling, world-building, and design around the world.

In many ways this thesis attempts to be both demonstration of the method developed through teaching workshops and my own design work at the same time that it advances that same method. I don’t know if it treads this line in the most graceful of manners but I’m excited by its demonstration of the method and the ways the method has evolved along the way.
Calls for the creation of other worlds seem to echo all around us from the forty-fifth president of the United States’ call to return to a self-mythologized Great America to Bruno Latour or Andy Merrifield’s calls to narrate tell stories in order to construct futures not yet considered. Stories are often discussed for their reflective capacity, as Ursula Le Guin has eloquently stated, to provide new perspectives and windows into our society and culture. However, storytelling has a lesser studied capacity for projection; storytelling provides a tool for accessing perhaps the most powerful tool of the human species: world-building imagination. Stories offer the opportunity to develop, glimpse, and test the operation of novel worlds. These imaginary worlds contain all the social, political, and ecological life that are made possible in the constructed domain of the story. Worlds are built up around the stories constituting all the material just out of frame or just off the page. From fanciful daydreams to the intricately developed and represented visions of fantasy authors and futurists, world-building is one of the most innate habits of humanity. Conversations about world-building have been ongoing from the 1960’s to present in disparate disciplines such as psychology and creativity theory, narratology, geography, queer studies, artificial intelligence, and philosophy. Despite this ongoing extra-architectural theorization, architecture and urbanism have not engaged world-building as a creative driver in a considered fashion beyond scenario planning and speculation.
THE PARACOSM & IMAGINATION

“A society that wishes to value and promote creative culture needs answers to the role of make-believe—and imaginary world invention—in play and at work.”

Children play make-believe and sometimes go so far as to develop elaborate worlds to situate themselves and their objects of play. This special type of imaginary play is often discouraged as an innate part of childhood but unsuitable for adulthood. In 1988 psychological researcher Robert Silvey first published the results of a over ten year study into this common yet curious phenomena. One of the participants of this study was a self professed paracosmist, a neologism that Silvey would adapt into the generic term for this form of imagination: the paracosm. The result of this study absolved suspicion that there was a connection between this type of childhood imagination and an adults grasp of reality or propensity of schizoid or dissociative disorders. The study also found that the primary reason for the imagination’s cessation is environmental deterrence; or, people teaching the participants that this behavior is undesirable. The imaginary worlds that are produced in childhood are fantastic, a term used here literally, exercises in creativity are key indicators of future success in tackling complex problems which demand innovation or atypical thinking. Research by Michele and Robert Root-Bernstein showed that MacArthur Fellows demonstrated twice the rate of paracosms when compared to a controlled group of undergraduate students at Michigan State University (Fellow rate of occurrence ranged 5%-26% while the general student body was observed to have a 3%-12% rate of occurrence). Root-Bernstein turn to Tolkien, artist and biologist Desmond Morris, and artist and psychologist Todd Siler to show the synergies between worldplay and polymathy. From childhood to adult behavior, when paracosms are paired with diverse and deeply specialized knowledge it increases the chance of, “truly chimeric combinations[s] and novel contribution[s].”
Developmental psychology demonstrates how paracosms are naturally occurring throughout childhood and are able, or encouraged, to persist into adulthood in creative and innovative individuals. However, to examine the processes which constitute this creative phenomenon one must look elsewhere. Specifically, the conversation of world-building and the examinations of the creative works themselves by literary, videogame, film, and art theorists. In Star (Ψ Cassiopeia), French author and physician C I Defontenay highlights readers search for familiarity within a strange built world:

Avidly, I searched some passages of the books for anything I could relate to my everyday life; always interpreting, always translating, I found no mention of mankind or anything from this world. There was no evocation of sciences, customs and details of our world. What I was unravelling, through my studies, was the history and knowledge of a world to which ours appeared unknown.10

Perhaps the first and most fundamental question a world-builder must answer is what the principle features of the built world are that differentiate it from the authors world. It is rather inconsequential, from the perspective of the underlying mechanics, if such differentiation is subtle or dramatic.

The paracosm presents an excellent starting point to an investigation into the storytelling imaginations applications for design. The practice demonstrates how innate this form of thinking and imagination is. Secondly and perhaps most importantly, as a starting point it illustrates how such an investigation requires a wide extra-disciplinary lens. Finally, the paracosm should remind us that projects of world-building and storytelling may be, and perhaps should be, playful and fun.

NOTES
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Root-Bernstein.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid. 410-411 Depressingly, when professional field was accounted for, Fellows in “Public Issues” only had an assessed rate of 6% compared to 33% and 31% in “Humanities” and “Social Sciences” respectively.
9 Ibid. 152.
Three calls to storytelling have come from three voices in the worlds of political, economic, and ecological theory. These three champions of storytelling are in no way the only voices calling for the creation of imaginary worlds, but they are useful for us as they outline the various ways a storytelling imagination can open up the agency of architectural and urban design. Each approaches storytelling and world-building from their own non-narrative discipline and have each arrived at an appreciation for storytelling’s world-building capacities. For Marxist urban theorist Andy Merrifield, fantasy and magical realism have the promise of a state where, “…power isn’t so much taken as neutralized, in which society isn’t so much overthrown as reinvented.”

J. K. Gibson-Graham with the “diverse economies” research agenda have been investigating diversity as a modus operandi. Bruno Latour’s called for mythologizing and narration in 2013 during his Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion with his insistence in returning to narratives such as Gaia to shift from natural to ecological thinking.

In his book Magical Marxism, Andrew Merrifield spells out his proposition that political speculation or political activism needs to shift from reaction and classical Marxism to magical realism or fantasy. Important, the form of political world-building Merrifield outlines proposes is not, “a science of exposing real truth hiding behind false appearance; it’s rather about inventing other truths, about expanding the horizons of possibility, about showing how people can turn a project of life into a life-project that blooms.” Heavily using Columbian Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude as metaphor, and literal example, for living in a fantastic, perhaps anti-rational, mindset such as to find and substantiate alternative worlds. For Merrifield, the production of alternatives, or permutations with substantive difference, to political or economic systems requires nothing short of “magic” and relatedly: magical thinking. “The Catalan
bookseller near the end of One-Hundred Years of Solitude is instructive,” to a mode of magical thinking conducive to a world-building perspective; in particular, the bookseller is remarkable because, “he was sustained by ‘his marvelous sense of unreality’.” His unreality could be thought to be derived from a conscious or unconscious refusal to accept the terms of the world around him but the result of his alternative perspective is that he is able to persist despite the challenges and hardships all around him. For, “Once this wise old man started to get too serious, too analytical, and nostalgic for a paradise lost, his marvelous state began to crumble, began to turn cynical and bitter, becoming contaminated by these twin sources of anti-magic.” For Merrifield, it is not simply, or certainly not exclusively, a fantastic mindset which is necessary to propel one into the state of magical world-building but rather it requires an optimistic and foolish belief in magic; with this he highlights an important aspect of world-building, theoretically but also as a practice, that the author must become magicians who can convince themselves of the worlds they’re building. With persistent optimism, like Merrifield’s magic, one can use a world-building imagination to propose, and occupy, novel political systems impossible by attempting to react or progress directly from existing systems.

Merrifield’s political imagination driven by incisive magical dreaming is complemented by the work of the “diverse economies” research agenda. Perhaps foremost in the contributions one could credit the “diverse economies” research project with is an interdisciplinary discussion of alternative economic realities along with the central presupposition that there are, or certainly should be, many economies (as apposed to discussions of The Economy). As the economically focused research process evolved it gained external researchers who contributed to an archive of case studies which focus on examples of alternative economic models and their ecumenes. Gibson-Graham remind us that, “for many activists and thinkers outside the academy, economic diversity [is] nothing new.” By focusing outside of traditional academic conversations about economic and geographic theories and possibility and looking to altermondalistes, collectives, and rural enclaves the researchers have established a robust archive of examples of diverse economic realities. Similar to Merrifield’s optimistic speculation, Gibson-Graham’s diverse economies are underpinned by the belief alternative worlds are possible. In A Postcapitalist Politics, Gibson-Graham outline fundamental principles for discussions of diverse economies. Three of the six tenants outline the diverse economies use to our conversation:

- Economic sectors, enterprises, and subjects occupy multiple sites in the diverse economy.
- Each site has the potential to offer one or more economic identities or subject positions.
- Each economic relation offers different realms of economic freedom as well as opportunities for exploitation and
oppression depending on circumstances.\footnote{21}

Thus the diverse economies conversation outlines for us economic principles which can be applied to many other aspects considering world-building. These three principles stress the diversity, fluidity, and how these varied positions engender equally varied worlds. Another commonality between Merrifield’s magic and the diverse economies project is that these alternative worlds are constituted by performance. Individuals and communities can manifest alternative worlds through the simple, and challenging, performance of such alternatives. Like Merrifield’s use of Marquez’s stories as example of governing mythology which underlies an alternative world, the diverse economies case studies each are underpinned by their own governing myths and narratives. In highlighting the fluidity of economic systems and the serious resistance to the performance of alternatives, the diverse economies research has also highlighted the importance of addressing of the underlying narrative when seeking to pursue economic or social alternatives.

Bruno Latour has introduced narrative as a critical tactic in his examination and critical conceptualization of the earth, ecological futures, and political challenges.\footnote{22} In his third and fourth Gifford Lectures, Latour proposes the application of chemist James Lovelock’s Gaia theory as a tool to conceptualize and address the Anthropocene.\footnote{23} Beyond simply recovering Lovelock’s conception of the earth as a fundamentally intradependent system, he collides Lovelock’s Gaia with the eponymous mythology.\footnote{24} This combination draws us to his conception of the Geostory; those non-human narratives which order events and provide meaning to natural occurrences. Geostories might be used, “to capture what ‘geostorians’ such as Lovelock are talking about, that is, a form of narration inside which all the former props and passive agents have become active without, for that, being part of a giant plot written by some overseeing entity.”\footnote{25}

Latour has himself explored the use of narrative in some of his own work, namely his radio-play “Cosmocoloss” and the play “Gaia Global Circus.” These plays play with narrative’s capacity to communicate concepts democratically to a wide audience without much of the barrier of access that much of discourse presents. These plays, and geostories generally, shift from conversations on climate change and ecology’s bias towards scholarly texts towards humanities innate storytelling nature.\footnote{26} This shift allows new audiences to participate in conversations they might be uninterested in or ideologically opposed to. With geostories, new stories become possible as suddenly they are co-authored by earth itself. This expansion of possibility also, like Merrifield or Gibson-Graham’s stories, opens up new possible worlds.

These three scholars with primary backgrounds in geography, sociology, urban theory, and economics all found their way to stories and have foregrounded in the importance for storytelling to
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The uncanny

Fantasy

The marvelous

Present

Past
facilitate the type of political, economic, and ecological worlds they foreground. They provide us with rules, or general principals that tie world-building to the tangible implications of their deployment; Merrifield provides magical optimism, Gibson-Graham highlights worlds’ performative fluidity, and Latour proposes the democratizing co-authorship of stories with the earth. Their stories and the worlds they glimpse presently are aspirational and radical departures in their own ways from contemporary realities.

On November 17th 2016 Bruno Latour, writing in the Los Angeles Review of Books, reminds us how world-building in no way is an exclusively aspirational or speculative project but rather one actively occurring all around us and called for urgently: “The question is whether the tragedy of November 8, following that of Brexit, can help us to avoid what comes next. In other words, can we get away from both utopias, that of the Globe as well as that of the Nation?”

Past the calls of theorists and thinkers of all stripes, Storytelling is a tremendously powerful human tool for understanding, communicating, and inventing. Literary theorist Brian Boyd has even compelling argued that if nothing else, it is storytelling that makes us human and structures how we understand and navigate the worlds around us. Beyond the innate drive to tell stories and construct knowledge into ordered systems for digestion, storytelling provides this thesis with a series of tactics. Three of which are: Heteroglossia, Dialogism, and the Chronotope.

The following descriptions are brief and interested readers should delve deeper.

Heteroglossia is the presence of two or more voices or expressed viewpoints in a text or other artistic work. Storytelling allows me as the author to embody varied perspectives, from varied populations, and often conflicting values. Schizophrenically throwing myself into the cast of characters that I’ve developed allows me to see the world through different eyes and simulate a diverse audience incorporating characters including but beyond the economically stable, cis-white male. Author Henry David Thoreau explains how storytelling builds empathy with the following quote: “Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?”

Dialogism refers to the continual dialog with other works and other authors. Stories and a storytelling imagination are influenced by myriad factors on the author, arguably all her experiences; and she responds, reflects, and reuses these factors in an active dialog. This centralizes the notion of influence that scholar Ana Miljački explored in the conference ‘Under the Influence.’

Further than centralizing influence, storytelling’s dialogism expands notions of dialog within design by expanding the input criteria of design to the breadth of factors which play into a story.

Chronotope; the representation of time and space in language and discourse.
space as plots jump across gaps in time or quickly abbreviate journeys. Contrary to other design exercises which seek to strictly toy with the perception of time or sequence; the tactic I take from this is that the design intensity can dilated or condensed across the wide field of the story-world.

Russian Literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov theorized the concept of the fantastic within literature highlighting how it drifts between the slopes of the marvelous and the uncanny. As long as it avoids the off-putting explanations of the uncanny and the dismissal as impossible that the marvelous creates the fantastic pulls the reader forward. The fantastic invites further speculation and investigation by the reader extending the speculative impact of the author.34

Storytelling provides a series of tools for design and literature as a discipline has devoted considerable energy to an understanding of the methods and tactics used by authors to construct their creative product. A level of research that architecture may do well to aspire to. This project dances amongst storytellers and sits at the feet of literary theorists. Seeking, all the while, to digest their lessons so I can bring them home to architectural and urban design.
NOTES

14 Merrifield.
15 ibid. 18
16 Ibid. 46
17 Ibid. 46
18 Ibid.
19 The “diverse economies” research agenda began with the work of J. K. Gibson-Graham. Gibson-Graham being the pen name used for Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham’s co-authored works primarily on feminist political economics and economic geography.
24 Latour. Lecture 3
25 Ibid.
30 Henry David Thoreau, Walden, page 134.
WORLD-BUILDING

In the broadest sense, world-building, as it may be understood today, is a product of the twentieth century. Before moving to a preliminary look at practical applications of a world-building imagination to theorists and shapers of the built-world, it would be useful to construct a sketch history for an interdisciplinary conversation on world-building. Establishing a specific history for the creative project of world-building is an admittedly challenging exercise with many possible origins and historical threads which feed anchor each event into complicated histories of their own. Here I will explore a rough chronology which cuts through the twentieth century and the key concepts of subcreation, possible worlds, world-making, and finally world-building.

In 1947, after finishing his first exploration of Middle-Earth with The Hobbit, English author and professor J. R. R. Tolkien introduced the concept of subcreation as a form of myth-making in his essay “On Fairy-stories.” Together with the Inklings, a literary discussion group at the University of Oxford, Tolkien had begun to critically attack his own fiction writing. His theory of subcreation emerged to describe two phenomena he had discovered through his studies and writings:

- That felt that he was recording rather than inventing; and,
- The invention of rules and structures are fundamental and stories emerge to explore those rather than the reverse.

He introduces both rules in letters written between himself and C.S. Lewis and were never put into a series of rules or principles per se but these two tenants echo forward throughout a history of world-building. For Tolkien, subcreation is the act of making a world or reality within the primary reality. Being deeply religious, Tolkien’s use of subcreation is colored heavily by a Christian world-view where the creative act must be subservient to the primary, God-created, world. Tolkien predicts Merrifield’s reflection on living in fantasies with his first tenant: “I had
the sense of recording what was already ‘there’ somewhere: not of ‘inventing’. Tolkien being a linguaphile, the construction of the imagined languages of Middle Earth may well have been the initial structure produced to order Middle Earth and from the imagining of the cultures and people surrounding the language secondary: “The ‘stories’ were made rather to provide a world for the language than the reverse.” The various narratives of the Lord of the Rings trilogy and the related texts and notes of The Silmarillion are critical tools then for Tolkien to explore the world he was creating not the creation itself in this regard. The construction of this world and the definition of its various facets and histories is the primary project.

The construction or consideration of a possible world entered philosophic conversation in the form of modal logics with Saul Kripke’s “Semantical Consideration on Modal Logic.” Possible worlds provided a philosophic device to resolve truth statements in counterfactual statements and allow for the consideration of alternative scenarios, pasts, or futures. These possible worlds allow for the consideration of particular problems in constructed absentia. In 1978, Nelson Goodman theorized possible worlds and world-making in his seminal Ways of Worldmaking. He applied his interest in formal logic and linguistic structures to the construction of worlds. As a mode of discussing or distinguishing worlds from each other, Goodman stresses the importance that worlds rely on composition and decomposition or the figuring of objects and the nuancing of objects. This simple principle is foundational for a model of world-making that allows for different worlds to recast, or reorient, existing objects. These objects which have been composed are then subject to necessary weighting as to establish their relative prominence or peripheral nature. An ordering logic cuts in to relate the objects in a manner beyond their mere syntax imposing time and space onto the object’s arrangement.

These ordering structures provide the basis for Mark J.P. Wolf’s text, Building Imaginary Worlds; the theory and history of subcreation. Wolf focuses on contemporary transmedial francizes such as StarTrek and the emergence of interactive worlds with video games to continue to identify “World structures and systems of relationships.” Building Imaginary Worlds proposes the two key aspects which differentiate world-building from literature: imaginary worlds are often transmedial as they do not have an allegiance to any singular medium nor could a singular medium serve as an adequate window into the imagination of a world. Secondly, the construction of imaginary worlds is an inherently interdisciplinary affair requiring the exploration of almost all aspects of human knowledge and study. For example, how would one describe the flora and fauna of an imagined world without an elementary understanding biology and botony; to say nothing of the description of imagined cultures or technologies. Wolf proposes that world-building is perhaps at its core an accumulative process relying on
possibility space #2

sub-created worlds

possibility space #1

the "real" world
prolonged, perhaps plural, development by the author. The development would evolve from narrative threads and streams through worlds glimpsing what is possible from such a line of investigation. It should be stressed that narrative is being used to refer to the entirety of possible media not merely the writing or other common literary medium. In fact Wolf stresses the importance of various organizational systems used by authors to describe, and resolve, seemingly manner of fact information such as, “Maps, timelines, genealogies, languages, and infrastructures.” As the narrative threads, or passes, begin to consider multiple occupations, the experience of differing populations or contingencies or significantly differentiated histories, the threads build up into narrative braids. These braids provide significantly depth to the worlds developed through the multiplication of windows into such a world and such braids build up into the narrative fabric. Wolf, through his focus on contemporary transmedial projects and video-game theory highlights how the potential to develop worlds has perhaps accelerated or become more accessible with cultural and technological advances.

These three different cases establish a series of principles which can be attributed to a world-building imagination. Tolkien, Kripke and Goodman, and Wolf propose:

- **World-building imagination demands occupation rather than invention**
- **The infrastructures of a world including its geography, language, and history are the primary project of a world-building imagination rather than narratives per se.**
- **Stories provide essential tools to explore imagined worlds and provide critical windows into them.**
- **The imagining of worlds opens up new possible worlds and novel possibility spaces.**
- **World-building is transmedial**
- **World-building is an interdisciplinary project.**

Building Imaginary Worlds, also introduces an explanation for why the process of creative world-building has not yet been taken up as a popular research topic within academia. Wolf acknowledges that there have been authors, …creating their own worlds, and theorizing what they were doing… From the 1960s onwards, fictional worlds were studied from a philosophical point of view, using “possible worlds” theory and modal logic, which consider the ontological status of fictional worlds, the nature of their functioning, and their relationship with the actual world. These ideas have been combined with literary theory, setting the foundation for the study of imaginary worlds. Philosophical writings on fictional worlds consider mainly questions of language, with most of their examples taken from literature, thereby neglecting imaginary worlds that are audiovisual in nature. Wolf moves to propose that after all of the siloed research that has been done, moving to an interdisciplinary focus such as Media Studies would allow
“Worlds are too big to build, or to know, or even, almost, to live in. A world is going to be compelling at least as much by what it doesn’t say as what it does. Nothing is more drably undermining of the awe at hugeness that living in a world should provoke than the dutiful ticking off of features on a map.

‘World-Building’, at its worst and most compulsive inexorably means the banalising of an imaginary totality. How fucking depressing is that?

Surely we want culture shock, which is about not understanding, rather than understanding. And we can get culture shock at home, too.

Hence the greatest moment in world-creation ever, that opens M John Harrison’s The Pastel City. “Some seventeen notable empires rose in the Middle Period of Earth. These were the Afternoon Cultures. All but one are unimportant to this narrative, and there is little need to speak of them”.

That refusal to speak of them is one of the most awesome and confident moments of scare-quotes world-building scare-quotes ever.”

- China Mieville\textsuperscript{48}
for a more varied approach. Media Studies advantages for examination of world-building is in its synthesis of interdisciplinary knowledge and research scope which is broad enough to address a wide swath of the world-building project. Architectural and urban design present the opportunity to insert a new perspective and body of knowledge into the world-building project. Particularly when one makes the radical transition to preformed, or materialized, world-building as Merrifield, Gifford-Graham, and Latour discuss.

It's useful here then to remember author China Meville's quip on the subject, "World-building, at its worst and most compulsive, inexorably means the banalising of an imaginary totality. How fucking depressing is that." Heeding his advice, world-building is a powerful tool to expand and materially understand the implications of your story and push back against your narratives. In this way it allows the architect/storyteller to operate in a world of brick & mortar, glass & steel, and populated by flesh and blood constituencies with varied life experiences and histories.

A few of the principles of world-building incorporated into the method presented by and in this thesis. Cohesion amongst Complexity or the concept that worlds are held together despite incredible breadth by elements which oblige a series of principles and see a limited set of elements reappearing if at different scales and differently purposed.

The idea of minimum departure or that the audience will complete voids in the described world with a self-generated combination of extending the described world with remaining gaps completed by the audience member's own expectation for what the world is. For example, an author does not need to describe that the sky is blue. The audience will complete that image from their expectations. In this way, speculated worlds function as a collage of novel elements in a web of the conventional and known.

The principle of Accommodation or that the author will also very facilily accept presented rules or structures of a world and respond according to these new truth statements. Meaning that the author does not need to describe all aspects of a world but concern herself with novel elements and structures. The infinite resolution of details between those provided by the author are volunteered by the reader. This makes the final product a co-authored collage of novel elements within a field of the known.

Metalepsis provides perhaps the most powerful principle: when an object is repositioned within an imagined-world. The audience perspective of that object is changed when they approach it again even outside the context of the story-world. This allows the author, or authors, of a world to not only imagine novelty or to provide a commentary on the world but to actually change how peoples see and understand the world around them.
Zachary Angles
World building opens up new possibility spaces providing new domains for design untethered by the domains of realities. World-building is a powerful tool that has nearly infinite layers. From the consideration of internal psychology of characters in the world to the form, structure, and behavior of the universe. World-building presents the radical proposition that considering a brick structure equally weighs the brick, the mason, the mason’s husband, the stories the mason’s husband tells his children, and the stars that soar above them inspiring and anchoring those stories.

The daunting breadth and depth of world-building can be seen of limited use to the circumspect responsibilities of architecture. This is undoubtedly true. Like many of the liberal borrowing this project undertakes to stitch together a cohesive design method, the use of world-building should keep in mind the initial focus of the author’s project.
NOTES

World-building Imagination is a term used throughout this project to refer to the specific imagination or creative space which emerges from the unique conditions of world-building.

"On Fairy-Stories" can be found in: C.S. Lewis. Essays Presented to Charles Williams, 1947. 38-89.


Ibid. 145.

Ibid. 219.


Further conversation on re-orientation is taken on by Sara Ahmed in recent years and focuses in on how the re-orientation, or the re-composition, of objects opens the possibility for queer worlds which through simple acts deviate dramatically from the norms previously established in ways far outstretching the object itself. Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology. London: Duke University Press, 2006.


Ibid. viii.

Ibid. 153-197

Ibid. 7.


Ibid.


SCENARIO PLANNING

A sister creative practice to world-building and storytelling is scenario planning and its related practice of strategy planning.

Both practices rose to a degree of popularity in the mid-twentieth century and both sought to couple speculations about futures with a dearth of data to produce actionable plans towards established goals; primarily used by large institutions, corporations, and nation-states.

Practical and pragmatically minded, strategic planners and scenario planners ground their speculations in forecasts and opaque analysis which seeks to provide quantitative results and options. Despite this, recent surveys of strategic planning have stated, “Strategies cannot be analytically planned but rather emerge in a process that involves creativity, intuition, and learning.”

With scenario planning one is able to narrow the focus of world-building so as to define various initial factors, target conditions or challenges to address, and incorporate wide swatch of data to enrich the speculation grounding the imagination in meaningful ground realities and tangible challenges.

Hazards planning and its related fields of inquiry seem to be quivering between a speculative world-building project, if a decidedly anti-fantastic one, and the production of analytics and forecasts necessary for world-builders interested in anchoring their projects against near future realities for use to inform immediate designs and plans.

This projects of storytelling does not require sustained research. That is, their is no requirement for the storyteller to conduct active research during their authoring of their story. The world-builder does not have a requirement to conduct research. Or the wild, reaching, research of the world-builder is not structured by any traditional conventions of research as it is purely fact finding and not interested in a horizontal understanding of perspectives.
and facts. Scenario planning internalizes literature reviews and deep dives into the exercise of gathering, organizing, and digesting a deluge of data, analysis, and forecasts for the particular scenarios being investigated. This appears in stages two and three of a prototypical scenario planning process at left.

First, the planner must establish expectations and perceptions. While this likely will focus on interviews and social research into the clients specific needs and demands, there is also a cursory literary survey within the defined scope of the scenarios. This survey should provide a penciled in understanding of the field before you, the client, and the scenarios. There will inevitably be great challenges that have been established and seen on the horizon, voids in the map where exploration may be fruitful but risky, and areas that are smoother to traverse. By understanding, loosely, the existing research and direction of broad themes relevant within the scenario’s scope the author is able to better position herself and chart an initial trajectory into the speculation.

Many, if not most, of the major issues the designer-planning-worldbuilding-storyteller will be addressing have been researched extensively. For many of these issues forecasts have produced by multiple state, non-profit, and corporate sources. Understanding these forecasts provides a critical piece which anchors speculation not within free-floating science-fiction, nor a flawed and potentially biased sampling of data. Having a fuller understanding of contemporary understandings of the situation in question allows the author/designer to respond to ground realities.

Scenario planning is the facet of this foundation that is the most underutilized and under-understood. A hopefully productive byproduct of having a less detailed understanding of the field as an outsider, is that I lump multiple related disciplines and broad investigations together. So within camp scenario planning I find a war-gaming tent, a hazards planning tent, a disaster resilient design tent, a scenarios tent, and a strategy consulting cabin (Of course the consultants get a cabin. Have you seen their billable rate?). So this camp is a bit of a rag-tag group brought together by an interest in seeing the future, applying quantitative data to those understandings of the future, and using that understanding to achieve some form of victory condition.
Scenario Planning Procedure:

1. Define of Scope
2. Establish Expectations & Perceptions
3. Ascertain Trends & Uncertainties
4. Author Speculations
5. Define Actionable Strategies & Tactics
...successful strategies rather emerge in a messy process. He therefore postulated to emphasize strategic thinking instead of strategic planning.

Strategic thinking is directed at synthesis instead of analysis and it involves intuition, creativity and learning.

Thus, it allows successful strategies to ‘appear at any time and at any place in the organization, typically through messy processes of informal learning that must necessarily be carried out by people at various levels who are deeply involved with the specific issues at hand.’

-Torsten Wulf, Philip Meißner, Stephan Stubner
NOTES


Before diving into a description of the principles and details of the tacts developed in this project lets focus for a moment on a definition of world:

1. Connected set of objects and individuals.
2. Habitable environment.
3. Reasonably intelligible totality for external observers.
4. Field of activity for its members.

In addition to being an interesting definition of a world, I appreciate this definition because of how it can serve as a definition of architecture. This overlap highlights how world-building can be considered as analogous to architectural and urban design.

The method developed by this project adapts processes and tactics from literature, world-building, and scenario-planning for a process for architectural and urban design. The method has been developed through my own creative projects and designs. I’ve also had the opportunity to teach workshops on the topic of world-building and design. The sustained development of the method and the explication required for the workshops have assisted me in moving towards three goals. The method should be replicable, teachable, and easily adaptable.

Stories, and world-building, open up fundamentally new possibility spaces for design. Telling new stories opens up new worlds, new tactics, fundamentally new modes of operating. In short, rigorously adapting stories and world-building into a design process allows for the opening up of new design spaces. Not simply as ways of communicating a design, nor as a manner of legitimating idiosyncratic designs but as a way of utilizing storytelling intrinsically so as to build worlds markedly different that todays.

The method begins with a story. As an initial story is developed, it begins to explore the world. Through this process, the story encounters characters, objects, and locations to explore that likely
dive from an initial narrative thread. Pursuing these alternative narrative threads down back alleys, into the odd bookstore, or tracking a stranger on the street as she goes to work; these narrative threads build up past singular stories into a narrative braid and given enough development into narrative fabric where a world is constituted through the histories, stories, and fantasies of innumerable differing constituencies (see illustration on page 49).

These story-lines sometimes continue no further developing on and refining but never being expanded into descriptions of broader worlds. But some narrative threads branch and grow into broader descriptions of worlds. This may be guided by the authors imagination or whim or be dictated by the demands of a speculation. These descriptions of world, like the story-threads before, tangle themselves as they overlap and intertwine. Some of these descriptions, these collections of histories, maps, and other expansive representation are refined into objective description of objects within the world. Buildings, city fabric, or everyday objects can all be refined from this process allowing the front end development (making a story and developing a description of a world) into a fertile process with a high potential for growth and design yield. This also means that later in the design process the author can easily adjust scale or other parameters and transition the design to best suit a changing understanding of the situation.

As an author develops a story it cuts through a story-world. Through the text an initial mapping emerges. There are numerous graphic methods to translate and continue this development in graphic form. As mapping is developed other forms of structuring stories emerge as possible or demanded. Time-lines, cosmigraphs, and genealogies present possible opportunities to develop and represent worlds beyond the limits of stories.

As the plots and structures of the story trace themselves through the story-world, a series of scenes or perspectives open up at key moments. Represented in text or in other graphic conventions. These representations begin to resolve a series of details again past the explicit bounds of a story. These objects detailed slowly begin to build up to constitute the world. Each of these objects from an alley glimpsed to a brick detailed presents an opportunity to trace this new object and further the development and resolution of the world. Ultimately in the same way that defining the full scope and depth of a world is an impossible objective, fully describing the contours of the story-world is a futile mission (see illustration on page 33).
As the author begins she must first establish even in a cursory fashion, the initial direction of her story. What does it concern itself with; what is it about? Almost without exception, this story will splinter into abandoned tangents and lost ideas at the same time that it develops its own narrative braids. This method importantly sees these fragments of narrative, perhaps under-developed, potentially contradictory, or seemingly irrelevant as fertile material for the design process. Rather that seeing storytelling as an iterative process in pursuit of increasing rarefaction. I purpose that, treated as a cumulative process, storytelling provides a rich bed of imagination, information, and innovation upon which to develop design. Amongst the spiraling tendrils of the story, one encounters unknowns: those things that either research or the established storytelling imagination provide no explanation for. This provides the opportunity and challenge to research and imagine.
Narrative Tactics for Making Other Worlds Possible

Diagram with labeled parts a through h.
The design of the world is informed by all my experiences as author, and heavily influenced by a series of influential professors and creatives who have taught and inspired me. These inputs all critically inform the fantasy; and from the fantasy, designs are derived. In dialog with the fantasy/world is the story which navigates the world.

The inputs of this process are myriad: collective considerations such as sociality, sexuality, and politics; the personal factors such as imagery from ones memory, poetry from ones experience, or narrative from ones exposure to stories of all stripes; and those factors which we train in, tectonics, disciplinary histories, and the various forms of expertise we develop throughout education and experience. Each of these domains informs the development of a storytelling imagination and should be drawn on fluidly and freely. The fantasy produced by the storytelling imagination is bigger than objective designs. Fantasies and designs are communicated through stories which in turn inform the development of the fantasies.

And along the way, designs are distilled from the ongoing process.
Narrative Tactics for Making Other Worlds Possible

- artifacts
- poetry
- narrativity
- imagery
- story
- project
- sexuality
- politics
- expertise
- project
- fantasy
- textura
- disciplinary bias

Artifacts

Story

Project
BOSTON 2100+

As a case study for the method and theory being developed, this project explores a speculation for the American city of Boston in the year 2100.
Narrative Tactics for Making Other Worlds Possible
PARAMETERS, DATA, & FORECASTS

Boston in the year 2100 will be wildly different place than it is today. Many of the infrastructural, social, and commercial networks upon which we rely are forecasted to become ever more distributed and ephemeral. The population of the city can be reasonably expected to dramatically balloon driven by urban migration and displaced people across the greater Boston Census Survey Area. Perhaps most impactful is the possible, if not likely, impact of Sea Level Rise on the urban topology.

These are the three considerations which initial structure the scope of the investigation. Boston approaching the year 2100 with concern to sea level rise, population growth, and changing energy demands.

Sea level rise is perhaps the most obvious impact as it will have a substantive effect on the topology of the city. Large sections of the city will be impacted dramatically. Many neighborhoods will be effected to a point of questionable viability as occupiable territory. The entire city will feel the impact of climate change through increased dramatic storms, dramatic increases in summer heat and winter cold.

Following current population trends, the cities population and demography will change significantly. Population growth can be anticipated by typical urban growth which will continue to stress the city. Secondly, urban migration can be anticipated to accelerate as a result of displaced people across the Boston census area. People displaced by the changing climate and work demands can be expected to move into the city. Following current trends and accounting for the demographics of displaced people, the city will become increasingly impoverished and marginalized.

Changing energy demographics both in supply and demand will alter the topology of the cities energy grid. This affords higher flexibility in settlement form.
NOTES

Geographically notable results:


Webler, Thomas Nathan, Seth Tuler, and Elizabeth C. Oriel. 2013. Results from participatory hazard mitigation and climate change adaptation planning workshops in Boston, Massachusetts. Cambridge, Mass: Sea Grant College Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.


Sea Level Rise (SLR):


Weber, Thomas Nathan, Seth Tuler, and Elizabeth C. Oriel. 2013. Results from participatory hazard mitigation and climate change adaptation planning workshops in Boston, Massachusetts. Cambridge, Mass: Sea Grant College Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.


United States. 2012. Sea level rise: hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, second session, to receive


**Forecasts for the next century:**


Fuhrer, Jürg, and P. J. Gregory. 2014. Climate change impact and adaptation in agricultural systems.


**Changes in Energy Profile:**


Population Trends:


Adaptive Technologies:


Hinders, Kevin. 1995. After the flood: crises, concepts, conclusions. Champaign, Ill: School of Architecture/Building Research Council University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Reichel, Claudette Hanks, Pat Skinner, and David Bankston. 1999. Wet floodproofing: re-
ducing damage from floods. [Baton Rouge, La.]: Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.


Informed Policies:


Relevant Precedents:


A series of stories was developed traversing the time between 2020 and 2110. These stories encountered a series of characters, a series of places, and a series of objects.

The characters in the stories allowed each story to be seen from a different set of eyes and allowed me to explore a series of diverse perspectives. These characters constitute a small social network glimpsing a small fraction of the speculated world. This small glimpse hopes to provide an amount of diversity and to witness a somewhat representative population across the speculation.

The story traverses a series of sites. The design and imagination of these sites began as a discrete and fragmented. Throughout the process motifs and objects are repeated, refined, and rarefied until they settle into fixed places within the world.

The textural story is readily translated into a series of storyboards or illustrations of various fragments of the story. As the narrative becomes illustrated it allows an opportunity for a story to communicated in the limited requirements of an architectural review. For the story to be more easily absorbed and communicated. This communication is a powerful facet of storytelling though not the facet the project explicitly concerns itself with. These illustrations, often hazy, often disjointed, provide an opportunity to develop objects. Test them in varied contexts and develop an aestheticized understanding of the world being developed.
To be is to be perceived. And so, to know thyself is only possible through the eyes of another. This is something we care too little about. Our lives are not our own. From womb to tomb we’re bound to others. Past. And Present. And by each crime and every kindness... we rebirth our future.
We worked so hard to keep the city safe. We were not always successful yet always tried. Those who rebelled never really sought to serve the city. They sought only to save themselves!
I loved him.
I loved my city. I think my greatest struggle was knowing that enduring to keep both was likely impossible.
Everything needed repair.
Everyone was fretting all the time. Just always losing themselves. But, I tried my best just to help everyone remember that we were living. We persisted. I persisted. And, does anything else matter?
Sometimes I wondered if I made the right choices. The city was gone. Resilience was a joke. I guess I could have done something else but...what would that resembled? Nothing Resembled Anything Anymore!! Frustratingly, everything remained yet so fantastic.
The Market will always go on they said. The demand would always match supply they said. They said nothing of a collapsing supply. They said nothing of ‘localism’ or ‘natural markets.’ Yet we still must buy our things and I do love my baccarat.
I honestly think that it was all bull. Just absolute nonsense. I’d seen the structure’s life. Our so called ‘World.’ But it was nothing compared to the world Harvard ago.

I just want to make Boston Great Again.
Everyday was the same ridiculous shit. Blat! It was absurd! They wanted this; they marketed that. They wanted my left tit. Well fine. I’ll mark it up and give them Elizabeth’s. They’ll never know the difference.
The city was going to shit. The government was fucked. We escaped and managed to make something else. We fought for something else. I hope we were successful.
We ran about endlessly through the city. All we cared for was the discovery of a new corner or new vista. The city provided nothing if not many opportunity for exploration. And, did we not oblige its request.
I wanted nothing more than to be working on a new future. Something genuinely novel and exciting. Nothing like the tired lost world of my parents. We have to build a new World.
Sometimes I get angry.
Though I'd never show it.
I keep a stiff upper lip regardless of situation.
Because that's what we had always been expected to do. Those of our opportunity had a responsibility to maintain a sense of decorum.
I can faintly hear Valentina and a customer discussing a painting on the wall.

I never understood people's fascinating with that one. A solitary man standing in the water staring at the viewer...it was sad if anything.
The sun splashed through the screen of my little cubby and I turned the final page of Candid following the journey of the intrepid optimist.
Emerging from the hidey-hole I spent so much time, I hurried across the room realizing that I was late. The customer had taken the painting and I felt a pang of loss. For as much as I hated that she’d painted it, I liked the constant reminder of the encroaching deluge.
I was running late and tore through the house...
...through the conservatory’s humid air...
...(past our algal reactor)...

...to arrive at the stairs up to the skyway.
Slightly out of breath from all the stairs, I slowed my pace.
"The air flickered.
Animated by the dancing glow of the lamps.
Ubiquitous reminder of a gas lit past"
The skyway cut through the city recovering the street systems raised into the air.

Developed in phases, it linked areas the city saw as critical and kept the city running as the tunnels built in the twentieth century were inundated by flood waters.
Alex leaned perched on the edge of the walkway and smiled side-wise as I approached.

“What a day,” he sighed after a long pause. I asked what was on his mind, gazing back with a faint smile that he always teased me about. A smile that Telegraphed my interior transparently.

“Well first, I was out of the house at seven to get to the Fourth Passage Project. There was a meeting with hydrologists and engineers discussing how much longer we can keep the tunnels dry. The pumps already consume so much energy. As the city shrinks and trade slows it becomes increasingly untenable.” Alex sulked from the weight of these debates. Little was very easy these days. “I thought I was going to be late but I’m happy to be here now.” He sighed.
Our conversation meandered through everything and nothing as conversations have a habit of doing. I remember the sun warm on my face. Alex ran his fingers through my hair and I eagerly suggested that we return to his apartment.

We made our way along the skyway through the crowds of business people, tourists, and meandering children.
Alex lived in a Shard. Not being from a family which had already controlled property in the city. But as he was valuable to the city and it’s attempts to buttress itself he was afforded nice accommodations.
A series of apartments surrounding an open atrium. We rushed eagerly up the stairs and spun around the narrow turnabouts as we ascended the tower. The path danced through the air like trapeze artists.
We were practically running at this point and I fell through the front door as it pressed open.
Rushing, we made our way into the room...
...and as the door clicked shut behind us,
Alex lifted my shirt off my head.
I disappeared into him and for an eternity we were like the water.

Floating.
Wrapped in a sheet, Alex stared at the city. Cranes flinging themselves off buildings where they lifted streets into the sky.
Passing him a coffee, his crinkled brow signaled that our brief escape was over. "Everything will be alright?" he asked sitting down at the table, barely looking away from the city. "Right?"

I didn’t know if it was my family’s security, blind foolishness, or simply a reiteration of the lie we all tell ourselves, but before I knew what I was saying the words had escaped me:

"Everything will be okay, because that is how is will be."
A sharp rapping at the door snapped us back to reality.

“We know you’re in there, Mr. Frobisher. Please open the door, this is not why we provided you an apartment.”

The controller of the spire had probably heard that Alex had left work earlier in the company of another man.
With haste we through on our clothes and slipped out the window and dropped onto the ramp which spiraled down to the skyway below.
Passing through a developing crowd hurrying home or running errands, we enjoyed our rediscovered anonymity.
Stomachs growling, we grabbed some dinner and slipped into an alley to eat on the steps leading down to our meeting.
We rounded the corner and stepped from the main pathway on its stilts to a series of boards which had been placed haphazardly atop buckets, stacks of bricks, and general rubbish.
The door swung open and with a quick turn we were halfway down the steep stairs when the door clicked shut behind us.
The large platform and table dominated the flooded chamber.
“Sorry Dauphine, we got caught up.” I said and felt that sideways smile sneak across my face before I repressed it; I took my seat near the middle of the table and Alex pulled out a roll of drawings and spread them out before Dauphine at the end.

We discussed the a series of plans that Alex had brought with us and were excited that our group would begin construction on the community residences and hopefully the market soon. We’d hoped to finish by the end of the year.
“À ta santé,” Dauphine said, lifting a slender glass glinting in the evening light, “to being so close to commencing the project.”
We found ourselves in a discotheque inside an abandoned South End brownstone.
And later we made our way through the city in the dim light beneath the skyway back towards our home.
Years later the structure had been completed and various communities have sprung up amongst the new ground of the city.
I straightening up in the room and wondered where Alice had gone off to.
I expected that she was playing somewhere in around the complex or in the market.
Getting dressed and preparing the shopping list, I went to look for her and as soon as I left the apartment she ran into me.
I explained that we needed to run some errands but than were going to go to Lynda’s house for a late lunch where she could play with Mireille.
The market wasn’t so crowded for a Saturday and we were able to get what we needed rather quickly.
Chuck packaged the fish for dinner and we made our way up the passage towards the edge of the complex.
Turning down a side street, the pathway rattling slightly with our steps, the checkpoint at the exit clicked open for us. The guard wished us a good afternoon and made some passing comment about the weather being nice.
The path slipped down towards the water and we turned past two strangely dressed men before I opened the door to Lynda’s house.
A comfortable apartment, we made our way inside and Alice raced off to play by the window and I heard Lynda call that she’d started cooking and I should pour myself a glass of wine.

We caught up and the hours melted away, we sat down for lunch as the window transformed to a dull grey than black.
The evening growing late, I explained that Alice had to be getting to bed. A statement she certainly wasn’t excited to hear. Nevertheless, we left and made our way back up the walkway towards the checkpoint.
There was a small queue as people returned from their weekend adventures and but pretty soon we found ourselves back in the apartment.
I found Amir at the table.

He was concerned that the taxes were rising, that the complex was rapidly approaching its power generation limit and the group would have to build more to host the influx of people requesting housing. We had a meeting in the morning to discuss such things and I assured him that everything was going to be okay. Things had worked for decades as the complex grew. The community had already begun construction on the aeroponics farm...things were looking as far as I saw it.
There was a sharp crash and we both were startled and saw a rock thrown the window, shattering glass across the room and letting the sounds of a crowd to flood in.
I rushed to the window and couldn’t believe what I saw.
A patrol was making its way down the market and a crowd of people were fleeing back beneath stalls and up into their homes.
We rushed down to the market hoping to address why they’d invaded the market in this bizarre raid. The community had done nothing illegal and there was certainly no need to be harassing us like this.
Turning the corner onto the platform, the patrol as startled and there was a series of cracks.

I felt myself grow light and fall back.
The cool water rose over my face and in the dappled water stained rose, I could swear I saw Alice’s face as I closed my eyes.
A few years later.

I was shaking from the cool air.
I tried to see through the light and make out the contours of the person sitting there.

“This is not an interrogation or a trial.” He began and my heart dropped. It wasn’t a dream and I had been taken.
“Alice, You’ve been found guilty and now we are interested in knowing your perspective on the activity of the group known as “the community,” it’s anti-governmental activity, and what life was like in your “commune.”
My mouth fell open and I noticed that there was another person standing at the door... Hope that this was an elaborate joke evaporated.
“Please start at the city riots from ten years ago.”

The riots? You shot my mom?!? Protests and riots erupted around the city as the various community centers were invaded by you! What happened next was chaos and I don’t think we had anything to do with it!
While parts of the city were erupting in violence most of the city remained unfazed and life continued insulated from the struggle of people beneath the skyway.
What happened was terrible. Just awful. So many people going about their business. So many innocent people. I paused... still not sure how to make sense of what happened.
The explosions tore through the city.
The city burned. Again I paused, voice quivering.
But I’m sure that this was not us!
I exclaimed eyes full of tears. There’d always been rumors and blame thrown from all sides. But it remained a tragic mystery.
Agreements were made to separate the city and establish a placid armistice between us and the government. The communities would continue to reside in the western areas of the island and its marshes while the government would remain in control of the harbor, the eastern areas, and the former seaport neighborhood.
Interrupting, “What happened after that, what was life like as you grew up?” He asked.

I paused…

I don’t know it was good. I grew up in the main tower attached to the complex after Alex and his partner adopted me. But surely you already know this? I asked incredulously.

“We just want to hear your story” he stated calmly.

Fine.

Sure.
The building was covered in shutters which could be closed for storms and kept the heat out in the hot summers. I’d often work at the main table on my coursework while Alex met with people and discussed plans for development and maintenance. The community grew and we became increasingly self sustaining.
My dad’s would work on plans for new towers and new communities around the city as the project of serving the health, safety, and welfare of the city continued.
Towers were planned that stood atop the skyway, filled with apartments and surrounded by commercial spaces waiting to be filled.
The form of life remained largely the same as what I’ve heard life was like a century ago.
I worked at the farm on the 8th floor where I’d tend to the plants with the rest of the team. We grew enough to eat modestly and bought the rest from the traveling merchants or out of city farms.
The structure was under constant construction being expanded as new families moved in and renovated their spaces with what they could find.
There was always work to be done and plans for expansions and improvements.
I remember hearing that you guys weren’t happy about these plans…the towers were not yours and yet you didn’t like the idea of us growing.

Well one night it all fell apart.
I don’t remember much. The door flew open.
There was a struggle and so much crying.
I was taken.
And now I’m here...what more could you possibly care to know?
There was a pregnant pause.
The flat affect of a stoic he stated simply
"Thank you very much for sharing your experiences. We'll return if we need to know more."
Of course this is not the end.

After Alex and his partner were taken and Alice went missing the team rushed to help and found only the plans for development. Plans to continue building.
The team found plans for a series of projects.
Projects for amphibious neighborhoods that address the dilapidating triple-decker structures beneath the skyway far from the centralized towers.
As the sun rose cranes littered the city again. Constructing a new series of structures extending from the skyway and the towers.
Composite bubbles skinned of ancient animals float, adhered, to the flooding streets of south and eastern Boston.

Creating a new density of foams slipping past each other amongst the aquatic turbulence beneath the skyway and the elevated city.
PROPOSITIONS

In addition to the three towers and various other structures and urbanism, the speculation yields some more generalized approaches to the future.

The designs both within their organization and also in their interrelation will be aggregate composed of numerous diverse aspects brought together. This manifests itself formally as things become diversified collections but also in community organizations. Varied constituencies and their architectures slip past, against, and atop each other. We quickly begin to see that the future city may be more diverse than the city of 2018. Diverse worlds will slither past each other. Ooze into crevices and contaminate each other. Like foams, worlds will expand and contract themselves in amorphous masses. This may be merely a statement on looking into the future and a partial truism about worlds (that they continue to break down and deteriorate).
Narrative Tactics for Making Other Worlds Possible

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The cities infrastructure and utilities should be raised to construct a new ground. Infrastructures like the “Big Dig” tunnels of the twentieth century must be reversed. These alterations will have a profound effect on the city. This will allow the opportunity for new structures of occupation to develop across the city and for new modes of occupation within the structures built upon terra firma.
As the endless ground of the American condition is eroded by the earth's violent response to our occupation, changes are inevitable. The endless ground and all the freedoms and ideologies which have been informed by and anchored to this geography will need to be rethought. Occupation will inevitably become of verticality and overlap.
This document should be considered as evidence of an ongoing project. A project years underway and with a lifetime of potential investigation before it. The rigorous integration of storytelling and world-building for architectural and urban design is a significant endeavour. An endeavour this document could not have ever hope to adequately complete. My hope is that this document demonstrates an earnest and serious effort to undertake the endeavour however Sisyphean an endeavour it may be. I sincerely hope that the resources collected here and the theoretical propositions and methods inspire future investigation by readers as they find use for it.

World-building presents a radical proposition for architects to expand past the bounds of a licensed practice and to soar beyond the tethers of concerns dealing explicitly with the manipulation of materials in space. It presents the propositions to be much more. I hope that the discipline may grow towards this end.

These thoughts are likely naive but I hope that naivety provides a precocious disregard to those things that weigh us down.
AND IN THE END
WE SHOULD ALL WANT
TO HEAR
BETTER STORIES
AND SEE
BETTER WORLDS