

Suhail Malik

On the occasion of the Venice Architecture Biennial 2038 press conference at ExRotaPrint, the political econoplexist calls in from 2031.

With the convergence of environmental and financial breakdowns in 2023 we reached the point at which everyone understood that there was nothing left to protect from the previous system.

This historic event has by now come to be commonly known as The Jackpot — a term adopted from William Gibson's novels of the 2010s onwards, in which it designates an undefined calamity in social relations and social condition. Just as long ago Gibson's coining of the term 'cyberspace' was quickly adopted to signify the commonplace of internet immersion, The Jackpot was a handy term to capture the total failure of the previous order eight years ago. We called it that because the breakdown wasn't due to the disappearance of wealth but the hyper-accumulation of most of the planet's capital by a very, very small number of people — the famous "1%" or 0.01%, a micro fraction of the planet's population. They won the lottery again and again, accumulating from even the greatest disasters by betting *for* them: Jackpot. For everyone and everything else — planetary systems, environmental mechanisms, and the rest of it — it was a calamity.

The lesson from '23 was that the basis for this kind of accumulation had to change. That premise was private property as it was enforced through the long history of sovereign authorities of the nation state formations in the North Atlantic, then more recently implemented across the planet by transnational alliances, contracts and agreements across nation states. As you already know in 2020, that system went further and further even after the warning of the 2008 Crash. It was a complete market failure in the sense that the markets totally failed, incapable of allocating resources with any degree of competence. The Jackpot.

So, by now, in 2031, private property is manifestly and commonly understood to no longer be a viable condition to keep things going — both for the human social system and also for the environment. It was already clear even by the first decade of his century that the environmental system was unable to maintain itself because of the consequences of the privatization of wealth and property accumulation.

But one of the political and theoretical struggles we have right now is that we don't know what the basis for social condition instead of liberalism should be. What is the social and political formation that does not have private property as its premise? There are many arguments about what to do based on two negative criteria: first, that private property cannot continue as the basis of a social system and, second, that communism is still untenable. At this point in time we are still trying out many

different systems and there are many different experiments to find out what to do after liberalism and neoliberalism.

There are some theoretical answers, there are some practical answers. Maybe the hardest problem is that the premises for most of these local and situated practices or theories oblige us to establish particular bounded claims and actions — for example, if the acting agency is taken to be an embodied individual, never mind a community, a firm, a specific organization, or a country such formats assume enclosures and separations. And that assumption quickly leads to the requirement of enforceable private spaces which quickly seems to regress back to some variant of liberalism.

We've however come to appreciate that actions and systems need to be instead configured in terms of managed environments. That means both managing the environment but also being managed by the environment. This in turn requires a recursive feedback: that is, a responsive to and from of what has just happened between any system and its environment, between what is internal to a system and what is external to it.

In this specific sense, recursion means that the system's output, which is in the future of the system's operation, will itself shape the future of the system. As a consequence, the concept of a masterplan, or of a final answer or solution, just isn't tenable anymore. Now, it's more about the dynamic organization and processes by which we get to maintain sustainable environments and provide viable conditions into the future.

In architecture, for example, the imperative to build a future now means that architectural forms are no longer about separating our private spaces from other spaces. If the wall, the roof or the floor were once viewed as a kind of separating or striating mechanism, these elements are now understood more as membranes or interfaces between an inside and an outside. Each involves a regulated transmission, leading in turn to an architecture directed by porosity rather than separation.

An architecture that adapts to the consequences of outcomes and their feedback into the construction schemes generates new results that can't be preplanned and are instead unpredictable. So, part of the post-Jackpot paradigm is that architects don't just build in space. They also build in time: stated as an imperative, what needs to be built are various time configurations. In this sense, and exemplarily, architecture now builds time machines.

But, as said, intrinsic to this time construction is also that the unpredictability of the outputs is part of the future configured by the system dynamics. The characteristic uncertainty of the future of the system and the consequences of its output is what feeds back into the system itself. So, recursion is a speculative mechanism for

promoting uncertainty and risk. In fact, we now assume that all systems processing risk are time machines of this kind.

Of course, the processes and systems by which those inputs and outputs are organized also need to be regulated so that the unpredictability does not entail toxic outcomes. The contribution to larger environments, but also how they feed into other systems need to be managed. Again, architecture — or, more precisely, time machine architectonics — has become a promising practice for thinking about such speculative organization.

What then are the viable parameters for such a speculative recursive architecture? What risks does it involve? How are these to be mitigated? After the multiple convergent crises of 2023, we finally understood that there are no more externalities. That there never had been. In a way, planetary integration — which was realized in part by the risk-promoting financial system necessary to The Jackpot, and in part by environmental breakdown — definitively means that there is nowhere else to deposit the exhaust. We've come to appreciate that a system's waste is itself a component of its speculative organization. We have just the planet itself, and the residues of the processes feedback directly into it.

So, one of the most significant shifts post-Jackpot is the increased responsiveness to how disparate systemic operations aggregate into an overall system which shouldn't produce or amplify toxic speculation — toxic with regard to both the distribution of wealth or capital, and also to the environmental consequences. Regulatory mechanisms are really significant to avoid the reflux of a system's exhaust into its speculative organization.

What has obviously been needed — even before '23 — is a framework that protects common interests from both private and state interests. The construction of such framework exceeds nation state authorities but doesn't presume a planetary state, which just upscales the problem. Some model of a distributed, yet common legal framework seems the most promising as we're still trying to construct the new post-Jackpot era. We are now working towards a binding legal framework for everyone and everything that is distributed (so it can be locally organized) while being nested within a larger regulatory framework (because we don't permit ourselves the alibi of cost-free externalities).

The binding legal framework needs to be distributed, multilayered, local, yet combinable within a planetary scheme. We know that it can be anything that we want it to be, but what still needs to be understood is how to fabricate a recursive organization that's protective — and that's another problem for the architecture of speculative organisation.