7 ‘Scripts’ in Urban Development

Procedural Knowledge, Self-Description and Persuasive Blueprint for the Future

Barbara Buchenau, Jens Martin Gurr

Cities have been matched with minds, manners and traditions since the heydays of the Chicago School of urban sociology a century ago. Urban infrastructure, then, came alive as a cultural organism developing creative and destructive energies that cannot be contained by its material constraints. Within the past three decades, this turn to culture in the age of American urbanisation transformed into a turn to stories and narrative in the age of global urbanisation.¹ Stories, urban researchers and developers suggest alike, can raise urban structures, with professional and professionalised narrative place-making attracting the majority of the global population to cities and urban agglomerations in the global South and North.² With this turn to stories came the rise of urban storytellers – itself a story of professionalisation driven by the ‘story turn in planning’.³ Thus, in 2017, plagued by long-term decline and consistently negative media coverage as a city in ruins, the city of Detroit hired “America’s first official ‘chief storyteller’” (Helmore n.p.), Aaron Foley. Foley’s task was to counter the overwhelmingly discouraging reporting with more positive stories about the city. Other US cities – primarily Denver and Atlanta – have followed suit (cf. Williams). In Sweden, too, a network of cities intent on sustainable and climate-sensitive development, the Viable Cities Network, hired a professional “Chief Storyteller” (Grankvist n.p.). And in Helsinki, a novel was commissioned to promote the development of the city’s former port district (cf. Chapter 6; as well as Ameel 2016, 2021).

While city administrations have become increasingly savvy in harnessing the power of stories for urban development, the turn to stories as tools of change has a sharp political edge as well. During the 2016 US elections, in Donald Trump’s Inaugural Address, throughout his presidency and again very prominently in response to the 2020 protests against racist violence, storytelling was brought in as an incremental political practice.⁴ Donald Trump’s heroic and anti-heroic stories integrate punching depictions of urban decline; they reiteratively evoke ‘inner cities’, thus calling up the long-standing distrust of the city in US culture, while swiftly authenticating and authorising racist and white supremacist rationales.⁵ His campaigning until today leverages narratives, medial representations and figural language to endorse, change and exploit anti-urban imaginaries. “Trump thinks-by-narrative”, according to Hart, leaving “no gap at all” between “personal experience and public policy”

(101). His happenstance storytelling addresses the convictions and the fears of people who crave to find “narratives designed to heal [their] wounds – both imagined and real” (Hart 98). If “urban structures are built and sustained by layered, conflicting stories and the bodies that live them” (Rhinehart n.p.),⁶ then the case of Trump’s divisive stories of racially divided inner cities requires us to think twice about “storytelling” as an easy and uncomplicated “model *of* and *for* urban planning” (van Hulst).

This chapter accordingly discusses the ability of fictional accounts, poetic language and audio-visual storytelling to serve as powerful models *of* and *for* urban developments, exploring especially the energetic and potentially disintegrative dynamics unfolding at the intersections of descriptive, re-scriptive and prescriptive uses of texts. We will first discuss the conjunction of textual strategies and spatial processes in urban planning to then introduce the notion of ‘scripts’ as a new conceptual framework for the study of the art of persuasion in urban development. Scripts are artful combinations of narrative, medial as well as figural acts of framing, inscription, description and prescription.⁷ In their combination of stories, tropes and media, scripts serve three contending functions simultaneously: they activate procedural knowledge, they serve as self-description, and they provide blueprints for the future. Thus, scripts establish contingent connective tissues between the past, the present and the future.

We begin our critical inquiry into scripts by asking: Is it possible to relate fundamental strategies of textual representation to key processes of urban development? The turn to stories in the field of urban planning (cf. Sandercock 2003, 2010; Throgmorton 1996, 2003; and others) suggests that this is an easy and effective conjunction. But literary strategies and urban planning do not coincide without conflicts and contradictions. Blends of poetic techniques, social practice and urban form generate imaginative overflows that are potentially productive as well as destructive.⁸ Observing the close ties between media, narratives and (urban) spaces, we argue that texts can function as indicative as well as indexical models *for* the city. The conjunction of textual strategies, urban form and urban development opens up multiple spaces of imagination, generating new options for agency as well as narrative control. These dynamics must be acknowledged and thoroughly studied, if the conflictive powers of storytelling in urban development are to be properly understood.

In a previous joint essay (Buchenau/Gurr 2016), we have conceptualised ‘condensation’, ‘inversion’ and ‘assemblage’ as three procedures that conjoin texts, cultures and cities. Condensation, inversion and assemblage are central patterns of urban change. At the same time, they are key strategies of representation in urban cultural production that activate the imaginative drive of literary art. This imaginative drive is built on what Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously called the “willing suspension of disbelief” in 1817 (cf. Coleridge ch. XIV). And it offers catharsis precisely because of its fictional, non-representational stance, as Aristotle understood it.

Cities are sites of 'condensation' – people, infrastructures, medial forms, semiosis and semanticisation meet here; they intersect, clash and collide, multiply and overlap. Needs, desires, hopes and fears are condensed in cities as well. Literary and media strategies of 'condensation' replicate *and* prefigure these urban condensations: figural and "narrative arc[s] through time" fuse past, present and future, establishing "typological bridges between distinct moments in time and space" (Buchenau 2012, 179). Layering, adaptation, plurimedial experiments, multiple references, and textual strategies of convergence and assimilation compress meaning and integrate contradictory affects and arguments. These core techniques of the art of persuasion constrain and thereby focus the imagination of their readers, thus ostensibly strengthening their sense of unity of purpose, place and time. But the reductions and adaptations of 'condensation' also lead to the multiplication of potential applications as well as meanings (cf. Buchenau 2012).

Cities are sites of 'inversion' as well – for instance in de- and reurbanisation and the drastically shifting fate of the inner city, but also in the industrialisation and deindustrialisation of urban fringes. Literary techniques of 'inversion', for instance by irony, metaphor, remediation or by a conjunction of generic conventions as in tragicomedy, conjoin opposites. These inversions allow for contrapuntal games as well as alternate histories, and they celebrate (or lament) the change of fate. But literary and media inversions also draw attention to narrative paths (cf. Rabinowitz 182–185) and path dependencies as well as to contingencies that limit human ambitions of intervention and control (for narrative path dependencies, cf. also Chapter 6).

Finally, cities are sites of combination, juxtaposition, recomposition – and thus of the 'assemblage' of different elements, forms, materialities and functionalities. Textual strategies of 'assemblage' (in the sense of a montage of distinct, seemingly irreconcilable media, genres, conventions, styles or techniques) heighten complexity. They confound *and* liberate readers at the same time, thus enticing readerly engagements and downright reader activism.⁹ Literary and media 'assemblage' serves as a signpost for changing uses as well as revolutions of tastes, ideologies and habits.

The textual strategies and techniques of 'condensation', 'inversion' and 'assemblage' have been central to attempts at *rendering* 'cityness'. As literary innovations, they have frequently evolved in response to the challenge of representing urbanity (cf. Chapter 2). More importantly, however, they have been central strategies in *initiating*, blueprinting and thus 'scripting' urban developments. In contemporary urban planning, cities are quite literally 'scripted': the narrative voices of testimonials as well as marketing anecdotes connect seamlessly, but not without friction, with exclusive and occasionally inclusive medial frames and dramatic remediations. As the following example of Essen's campaign for the title of European Green Capital will show, poetic language and literary figuration are rarely missing in strategic urban documents, thus enhancing the degree to which urban planning and development makes

deliberate (but not always well-informed) use of the literary and medial arts of persuasion.

Defining ‘Scripts’

In 2017, the city of Essen, metonymically standing in for the entire Ruhr region, became the European Green Capital. The first paragraph of the application for the title submitted to the European Commission in 2014 stated:

The successful 150-year transformation story, from a city of coal and steel to the greenest city in North Rhine-Westphalia, is a role model of structural change for many cities in Europe [...] Green infrastructure is the motor for our sustainable urban development [...] The people’s “ability to change” is the key to the success of this process of transformation.

(Essen 2014, 1)

This paragraph provides, among other things, the diagnosis of an “intrinsic logic [‘Eigenlogik’]” of a city, as Berking and Löw outline it: Essen is depicted as a city in structural transformation, which today has become remarkably ‘green’. But beyond referencing this “intrinsic logic”, the introductory sentences of the application text perform a three-step-move of yoking together past, present and future: What is emplotted here is the seamless conjunction of *procedural knowledge* gathered in the history of (post-)industrial transformation; *self-description* capturing the present-day regional and international role of the city; and a *blueprint* for the future envisioning the fully sustainable city. The Green Capital campaign at large underscores this tripartite move through time, using the figure of thought “from green to grey to green” (Essen 2017, 8; our translation) as its motto, an alliterative condensation of a 150-year transformation from pre-industrial via industrial to post-industrial city. The opening sentences first provide the procedural knowledge of the “150-year transformation story” (Essen 2014, 1) recalling the hardships and challenges of more than a century of structural change. Second, the self-description as presently the “greenest city in North Rhine-Westphalia” (Essen 2014, 1) enables a plausible story of an apparently straightforward development from the past of industrial labour into the present of greening, deindustrialising infrastructure. Third, the persuasive blueprint of “the motor for our sustainable urban development” (Essen 2014, 1) elegantly suggests a path into the future of green urbanity.

But this strong and indeed ‘transformative’ reading of a greening city of coal and steel also singles out from other cities this specific transformation achievement: To be ‘green’ in locationally privileged cities like Stockholm or Hamburg (the first two European Green Capitals in 2010 and 2011) is easy – for a post-industrial legacy city like Essen to have reached the current state, the passage implies, is the far more impressive achievement.¹⁰ This combination of narrative sense-making, temporal condensation and the suggestive charting of a future-oriented development, enhanced, as we will indicate in what follows, by

Figure 7.1 The kernel script “from green to grey to green” with suggestive illustration in the 2017 European Green Capital image brochure of the City of Essen, Germany (UNESCO World Heritage Site Zollverein, view of the pithead frame of shaft 3/7/10 towards Gelsenkirchen-Rotthausen).

Source: City of Essen, European Green Capital Image Brochure (Essen 2017, 8); photograph by Frank Vinken. Reprinted with permission of the Green Capital Agency, City of Essen.

savvy medial framing and a figurative rendering of structural transformation – the alliteration “green to grey to green” (Essen 2017, 8; our translation) – is an epitome of what we call a ‘script’. This particular ‘script’ also entails the collective personification of a population with a specific “ability to change” (Essen 2014, 1), plotted to appear as a single communal life of 150 years of transformation. This is a ‘script’ *of* and *for* human and urban change delivered in the combination of just one alliterative headline (the figure), a short paragraph (the narrative) and a photograph (the media; cf. Figure 7.1).

In the text of the 2017 image brochure, the pre-industrial deep past as well as the industrial near past become striking contrasts to today’s surprisingly green city:

The transformation of the city of Essen from a pre-industrial diocese with abbess gardens and imperial parks via a coal-mining and steel metropolis to a green city is impressive. Around 1900, the cityscape of Essen was largely characterized by the Krupp cast steel factory, by tight quarters near the old town, and large Krupp colonies [...] by the chimneys of the coking plants and the framework of blast furnaces, by conveyor towers and slagheaps.¹¹

(Essen 2017, 8; translation Phillip Grider)

Epitomised in the figural kernel script “from green to grey to green” (Essen 2017, 8; our translation) of deep past, near past and present, the text is here accompanied by a highly suggestive image of a pithead in the midst of urban greenery (cf. Figure 7.1). The haze looks distinctly ‘idyllic’, dreamily unreal, *and* it recalls the days of industrial fumes and air pollution – thus again visually, medially yoking together past, present and future.

Scripts such as the one produced by the Green Capital of Europe 2017 combine descriptive, re-scriptive as well as prescriptive elements. They mostly conjoin two to three temporal dimensions and they nearly always communicate figurally, as well as narratively *and* medially. Scripts thus are not stories, they are also not limited to stories. But scripts do incorporate persuasive storytelling into a matter-of-fact world of make-believe. They are assemblages of figural expression (poetic language, tropes, but also numericals and charts), of narrative exposition (story, voice, focalisation, character constellation, emplotment) and of media presentation (frames, schemes, tracks and shots established by images and sound tracks, analogue and digital maps, audio-visual material, diverse forms of writing and printed matter).

‘Scripts’ across the Disciplines

Of course, the notion of the ‘script’ is widely used in a range of fields and disciplines outside of the realm of literary studies, such as biblical hermeneutics, critical race theory or artificial intelligence, to name just three fields. The most basic definition of a script is the idea of a “typescript of a cinema or television film; the text of a broadcast announcement, talk, play, or other material” (*OED*, s.v. script), material, that is, that urban developers and planners today continually produce and consume. This standard definition already contains the more descriptive sense of a ‘transcript’, but also the prescriptive sense of an instruction to be carried out, of a predefined sequence of actions and dialogues to be appropriated and enacted in a specific setting. One particularly intricate application of typescripting in urban development is the case of the Ruhr region’s title of the European Capital of Culture in 2010. As Hanna Rodewald explores in her investigation of the RUHR.2010 artistic output and its slogan “Change through Culture – Culture through Change” (our translation), this standard implementation of scripting in urban development transfers and translates to German post-industrial cultural landscapes famous American tropes and plot lines such as the frontier (cf. Rodewald).

The scriptural dedication to norms, rules and laws can be traced back to the context of the systematic interpretation of the Bible, where the notion of ‘scripture’ applies to all texts that are taken to be “as surely true as Holy Scripture” (*OED*, s.v. scripture 1c). The normative implications of ‘Scripture’ in the sacred sense – writing that spells out norms and practices of faith in ways that are understood to be sanctified, authoritative, beyond critique – lost its tight grip on the world in the Early Modern period, but lived on in the multiple permutations of, especially, US American civil religion. A much embattled instantiation of a proto-religious scripture of the American Dream is the Statue of Liberty. Its dramatising sculptural commemoration of the abolition of slavery belies the violence and murder of the Jim Crow laws, and the Emma Lazarus sonnet added in 1903 sanctifies immigration and its control. The statue spoke to and impacted the massive growth of metropolitan regions, scripting American standards of social and racial mobility in the urban realm. Chicago’s White City, Detroit’s Ford River Rouge Complex accompanied

by Diego Rivera's artwork or the Zeche Zollverein in the Ruhr region have scripted urban aspirations and dreams in similarly complex ways. They are today iconic and potentially authoritative projects of greening and ostensibly desegregating urban environments, as Juliane Borosch argues in her doctoral project.¹² As examples such as these suggest, writings claiming authority or anything that was perceived as being authoritative served as a kind of 'scripture' broadly conceived. These texts (indeed these are more often text/image/media assemblages) can be understood to control and regulate people's actions and mental spaces (cf. Assmann/Assmann 8).

Before the invention of copy machines, 'scripts' also denoted the originals of a legal document. In this context, the normative implication of the 'true' or 'authoritative' version differentiated it from a merely derivative rescript – an important distinction in all settings in which titles and true scripts were and continue to be needed to claim urban lands, assume ownership or safeguard autonomy and freedom. Think, for instance, of the 'Bracero Program', a post-war initiative attracting four million workers from Mexico under contract in the guest worker programme (cf. Molina ch. 5, "Deportations in the Urban Landscape", 112–138). These workers on contracts were matched by *sin papeles*, workers who lacked the original documents granting them the right to work in agriculture and a wide range of other industries. In common parlance, these undocumented labourers were soon called 'wetbacks' – a term which then became a shorthand or kernel script, "used [...] interchangeably with *Mexican immigrants* in stories on crime, communicable disease, and deporting children" (cf. Molina 114). The non-script of an insufficient legal title here becomes the script of the racialised outsider who can be subjected to deportation. Questions of authority, authorisation and regulation have quite obviously affected uses of the script for the design of urban futures until today. Quite programmatic, if apparently non-political, engineering examples can be found in the difficult international translation of sustainability and green building standards and their explanatory text/charts/media compounds that Katharina Wood investigates in her dissertation.¹³

Another understanding of 'scripts' that is crucial for a better understanding of how stories, figures and media collaboratively shape urban development and especially urban planning comes from the field of social psychology, where 'scripts' are understood as "generic schemata of social events" (Whitney 13522). As schemata, they connect "symbolic and nonverbal elements in an organized and time-bound sequence of conduct through which persons both envision future behaviour and check on the quality of ongoing conduct" (Gagnon 61). Here, the descriptive sense of 'script' as procedural knowledge is inextricably combined with the prescriptive sense of appropriateness and social control. Scripts are so pervasive (and naturally persuasive), because they are immensely adaptable, as Gagnon notes: "their capacity to be assembled or disassembled in creative or adaptive responses to new circumstances is a critical element in our capacity to manage a changing internal and external environment" (62). Literary theorist Paula Moya has brought the notion of the schema that is at

the core of this definition of the script to bear on literature proper, noting that schemas are

structures that have been built up through a person's past behaviour and experiences in specific domains [...] Schemas thus have a temporal dimension characterized by evolution across time – they are anticipatory as well as retrospective, even as they orient a person's behaviour in the present.¹⁴
(15)

Prominent examples beyond the signposts of segregation would be encounters with *stop and frisk* policing. These “symbolic and nonverbal elements” (Gagnon 61) in retrospect and in anticipation manage the expectations and the behaviour of people of colour and of white people. While some are subjected to unwarranted searches when moving in public urban space, the others experience and learn to expect the exposure to a sense of privilege and entitlement in the same spaces.

But scripts are also unconscious life plans developed in response to education and early experiences. They are plans that can be made conscious and can to some extent be re-scripted or at least modified, according to Berne's “transactional analysis” (1958, 1961). Transferred to cities, this suggests that path dependencies can be said to play a significant role, though re-scripting is understood to be possible within reasonable boundaries (cf. Chapter 6). In the Ruhr region, the University of Duisburg-Essen's affirmative action programme for first-generation students *Chance hoch 2* is one example of a structured attempt at reprogramming unconscious life plans; RuhrFutur's educational initiatives and their ambition to craft social change is another, as Chris Katzenberg argues in his doctoral project.¹⁵

Artificial intelligence (AI) researchers Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson further define a ‘script’ as “a standard event sequence” (38), as in their well-known example of the “restaurant script” and the internalised familiarity with the sequence of actions from being seated to leaving that a restaurant visit involves. Based on this notion, ‘script’ here came to be used to refer to cultural models as powerful unconscious or semi-conscious guides of individual and collective human behaviour (for such cultural models, cf. Quinn/Holland as well as Stigler/Hiebert; on frames, cf. Goffman; for a compelling case study on how cultural scripts and models support or impede action, cf. Ungar). Their argument clarifies that scripts are a form of procedural knowledge that effortlessly and without further notice guide people through standard urban situations such as the meal at a restaurant, the use of public transportation or the visit to a tourist attraction, framing and thus guiding people's understanding of the social world. One particularly transformative “standard event sequence” (Schank/Abelson 38) appears to be urban gardening with its twofold promise of recreation and sustenance. Forms of transatlantic ‘diversity gardening’, under investigation in the dissertation project of Elisabeth Haefs, indicate that the effortless guidance through urban garden patches

builds temporary communities dedicated to sustainability, but not necessarily social inclusiveness.¹⁶

This effortless guidance by scripts is neither harmless nor without discrimination. As Natalia Molina argues, "racial scripts" connect "the lives of racialized groups [...] across time and space [...] thereby affect[ing] one another, even when they do not directly cross paths" (6). These "racial scripts" determine social as well as institutional interactions, they affect everybody individually and all kinds of social and cultural group identification specifically, though they have decisively and dominantly negative effects on racialised groups only. In response to 'racial scripting', "counterscripts" come into action, which "offer alternatives or directly challenge dominant racial scripts" (Molina 7). One particularly powerful example of 'counterscripting' in action is the work of the *Quilomboarte* art collective and the *Tía Chucha's Centro Cultural*, supported and studied by Florian Deckers in his dissertation project on "raising ethnic voices" in New York and Los Angeles.¹⁷ As the scrutiny of street art suggests, the inversion of 'racial scripts' might be possible, but the tipping points that would reverse dynamics of racialised oppression are hard to reach and they are extremely sensitive to reversals and backlashes.

Finally, from the field of architecture and the design of a user's experience of that architecture, Norman M. Klein's notion of "scripted spaces" draws attention to the

walk-through or click-through environment (a mall, a church, a casino, a theme park, a computer game) [...] designed to *emphasize* the viewer's journey [...] The audience walks *into* the story. What's more, this walk should respond to each viewer's whims, even though each step along the way is prescribed (or should I say preordained?). It is gentle repression posing as free will.

(11 *et passim*; italics original)

Understood in a way that combines all these different definitions and uses, scripts are models *of* and *for* urban development, oscillating between and suggestively – if sometimes problematically – blurring descriptive, re-scriptive and prescriptive components. In the field of urban planning, Christopher Alexander's notion of "patterns" can be seen as a closely related concept: Here, a "pattern" is a modular solution, blueprint or 'recipe' for a specific design challenge, a solution that can be replicated or adapted in comparable contexts to address comparable problems (cf. Alexander/Ishikawa/Silverstein).¹⁸ This notion of a hierarchically ordered system of patterns as a 'language' – with a specific 'vocabulary', 'grammar' and 'syntax' and a formulaic way of outlining them, their contexts and applications – has been widely adopted as a 'travelling concept' (*sensu* Bal) in other disciplines, most prominently in software engineering (cf. for instance Gabriel). Johannes Maria Krickl's doctoral research on waterfront reconquistas in the deindustrialising urban environments of the United States and Germany indicates that the planning, the operation and the re-use of inner harbour spaces is indeed a strong case of a 'pattern language'

brought into action, of prescribing and preordaining future developments by forceful imagination.¹⁹

Flipping Scripts, Exploring the Dynamics Unfolding

Scripts can of course be modified. When Jamie Peck critiqued the “creativity script” popularised by Richard Florida and his many disciples on both sides of the Atlantic, he did not argue for an inversion, or a turn away from a fascination with the so-called ‘creative class’ of artists, academics and cultural workers (cf. Peck 2005, 2007; for an Emersonian reading of Florida and his functionalist understanding of creativity and the ‘creative class’, cf. Grünzweig). Instead, he sought to loosen and lessen the tight, normative bonds between the arts, the sciences and capital, wresting academia and the arts, as well as the city, from a notion of creativity that made literature, the arts, scholarship and especially the sciences appear religiously scriptural and therefore unchallenged in their status as canonical authorities who bind together and lead communities of believers (thus replicating the generalised as well as figurative definition of religion, cf. *OED*, s.v. religion, 3a, 4a/b, 5a, 7). Planning scholars such as Courtney Elizabeth Knapp move forward from this critique of the industrial reproduction of creativity, investigating how, when and to what extent divisive and oppressive scripts can be flipped to make sure that the production of knowledge and culture can contribute to transformative social change rather than the normalisation of the status quo. Studying how planners and city officials have sought to change the script behind their cities’ development, Knapp points out that since the late 1980s and early 1990s, a generation of urban planners at work in Chattanooga, Tennessee, rewrote the post-industrial script of manufacturing decline by “inspiring a Back to the City movement, and expanding its arts-history-and-culture-based tourist economy” (14). This turn to and celebration of obliterated histories and stories of the city facilitated a “renaissance” of the “Dynamo of Dixie” (Knapp 14), which has brought authoritative exclusions and textually regulated forms of gentrification. A turn to storytelling for the oppressed hence does not guarantee narrative control or even the affordances and allowances of authorship. In response to this intricately de-authorising change, new social movements are currently “working to [again] flip the mainstream script of urban revitalization” (Knapp 16).

One of the rather unproductive generic implications of scripts is that the possible outcomes of a plot are not numberless. If you know the script, you know its narrative trajectory and you might want to try to change it, by flipping genre, voice, imagery or media. But the life of stories, figures and media is never that easy (for narrative path dependencies, cf. also Chapter 6; and Ameel 2016, 2021). An exception to the basic rule of the path dependencies of each individual script is said to be computational script, since it is often understood to promise the invention of real alternatives. At the “Mediated City” Conference in Los Angeles in 2014, for instance, in a presentation entitled “Do We Have to Stick to the Script? Cities, Surveys and Descripting”, architect

Eric Haas discussed the “projective” as well as the “prescriptive enterprise” entailed in computational language that turns “land descriptions” into “alternative mediations of the city” (4): “we can import recorded data sets, unleash the potential of computation to produce alternative results, and physicalize the consequences to produce new ‘real’ cities that participate in a cycle of recreation” (Haas 4f.). In these new mediated and computationally enhanced urban spaces, practices of prioritisation and leisurely trivialisation unfold, which Maria Sulimma explores in her postdoctoral research on “trivial pursuits”.²⁰

In urban contexts, then, the idea of the ‘script’ is used to think of regulations that are communally binding and restricting, and that serve to build a consensus – or relay and enhance dissent – on possible styles of interpretation. To speak of scripting is to suggest and even promise a high degree of predictive reliability, even a strong sense of determinism, while at the same time defusing potential reactions by proposing that a script can be adapted or modified. Studying the detailed narrative, figurative and medial processes at the core of each script is a necessary exercise to understand how scribal agency and modes of scripting and deciphering empower legal codes which regulate the underlying obligations and rights of the producers and the users of texts and images: Who is allowed to write/read; who speaks; who is being heard and who is being hurt, to adopt an incisive set of distinctions implemented by a group of scholars gathered by Mahmoud Arghavan, Nicole Hirschfelder, Luvena Kopp and Katharina Motyl;²¹ which kind of authority is obtained by the act of writing/reading; who gets to keep the document; which rights are given to the holder of the document; etc. The notion of ‘scripts’ permits close and detailed observations of the contradictory outcomes of planning practices that operate within the storytelling paradigm, using stories to be persuasive in processes of urban development. Scripts function as powerful cultural tools, suggesting, accompanying, framing or plausibilising specific paths towards the future of cities. In many cases, practitioners are aware of the importance of such scripts – with their specific narratives, media and figures – to their practice, without being experts in *how* they function and *why* they may foster mixed results. This is precisely the key contribution literary and cultural studies can and must make. Despite the strongly normative implications, the power of scripts lies precisely in their threefold nature of being (1) merely a form of happenstance and often unreliable procedural knowledge about the past, (2) a practice of wilful self-description informing the present (and rewriting the past), (3) *and* an ambitiously authoritative, binding and thus strongly prescriptive attempt at blueprinting the future.

As literary and cultural scholars with interests in narratology, media change and fiction, our understanding of how scripts affect urban imaginaries, economies and infrastructures combines three interrelated insights to describe the conflictive condensation at the core of urban scripting processes: (1) the awareness, repeatedly discussed throughout this book, that planning is quintessentially a narrative process, including the ensuing complications arising from the fourfold public use of narrative as an affective access to knowledge, shock, enchantment and awe, to paraphrase Rita Felski (cf. 2008); (2) the debate about the future-oriented,

anticipatory, premeditated and performative function of both, the media (cf. Grusin) and of narrative patterns (cf. Koschorke 245); and (3) developments in cognitive science and their repercussions in literary and cultural studies, which indicate how figurative thought and cognitive modelling guide thoughts and behaviour, a procedure only complicated by the ability of figures of speech and thought rather seamlessly to yoke together times present, past and future as well as distinctive places and spaces (cf. Chapter 6; Gurr; Buchenau 2011).

A contentious hermeneutics is at work, then, whenever successful urban transformation seeks to draw on storytelling to bring about the future. The ultimately idle hope of urban developers, municipalities and, for instance, the creative and sustainable industries, is that a script can serve as a neutral tool to tailor urban change. But as Dzudzek and Lindner have noted in their study of the creative economy, a script for the future “is actually the result of an ongoing collective (re)writing and performing endeavour, to which not only ‘partners in mind’ contribute but also sometimes fierce opponents” (392f.).²² These scripts are inherently performative: If persuasive enough, they bring about what they often purport merely to describe. This is particularly evident in the case of the ‘creative city script’ as outlined and promoted by Richard Florida: While in parts allegedly *describing* a pattern of urban development – the accumulation of the ‘creative class’ in particularly attractive locations offering the ‘three T’s’ of “Talent”, “Technology” and “Tolerance” (cf. Florida 2002, 2005) – the ensuing “creativity fix” (Peck 2007; cf. also Dzudzek/Lindner) proposed itself as a blueprint and ‘recipe’ for cities. The ‘creative script’ was rolled out in numerous consulting projects by Florida himself and by global consulting firms in his wake. The characteristic oscillation between re-scripting, description and prescription inherent to scripts here led to a self-reinforcing global hype of urban development strategies geared towards the attraction of the desirable ‘creative class’ segment.

In conceptualising the way in which urban agents in their engagement with models combine tradition, everyday practice and innovation, Armin Paul Frank’s understanding of “writing strategies” in colonial and new national contexts provides a number of helpful clues (2015, 235; cf. also Frank 2004, 838): “when writers feel moved to assert a new identity in literary terms” (2015, 235), Frank argues, they can – heuristically and with variations and combinations – make use of basic strategies “that fit in with the morphology of the German verb for writing, *schreiben*: *nachschreiben*, *weilerschreiben*, *umschreiben*, *gegenschreiben*, and *vorbeischreiben*” (2015, 235f.). Thus, original models, in the process of adapting them, can be largely copied (“*nachschreiben*”), continued (“*weilerschreiben*”), changed and adapted (“*umschreiben*”), countered and opposed (“*gegenschreiben*”) or circumvented (“*vorbeischreiben*”). Re-scripting (both in the sense of ‘scripting again’ and of ‘changing the script’), scripting further, counter-scripting or circumscripting, it needs to be noted, are not only common writing strategies in literary history (especially in the continuities and discontinuities of (post-)colonial writing), but also common forms of engaging with established self-descriptions, procedural knowledge, as well as blueprints and ‘recipes’ for urban development.

The detailed analysis of scripts and their use in processes of urban development delineated here requires structured conversations between disciplinary schools: Analyses of the narrative, medial and figural layers of scripts strengthen and occasionally qualify insights from literary studies, since an understanding of the uses, functions and effects of scripts fosters new interdisciplinary perspectives informed by the heated debates with urban planners, urban geographers, urban sociologists, economists and others about the incremental status of narrative, figuration, media and the arts in consequential and often violent as well as destructive urban scenario building.

Applications: Scripting Post-Industrial Urban Futures and the Ubiquity of 'Creative', 'Sustainable' and 'Inclusive' Urban Visions

Good stories, strong images and connective media: these are the ingredients increasingly used by municipalities, urban developers, creative industries as well as NGOs in the fields of culture, society and the environment to embellish – or even develop in the first place – their plans and schemes for urban life after deindustrialisation. Our Graduate Research Group, “Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions” (cf. *City Scripts*), engages in a focused transatlantic comparative analysis that maps and evaluates the range of scripts used to invent a better future for cities in the American Rust Belt and the German Ruhr region. At their best, narratives, figures and media help to imagine viable paths into a better future. At their worst, they unleash anxieties and build scenarios that propel further segregation, conflict and economic disintegration. In an era in which shrinking cities trouble the former Western centres of industrial production, bringing fear especially to the homelands of car and steel manufacturing,²³ the faith in the imaginative forms of procedural knowledge, self-description and blueprint for the future we refer to as ‘scripts’ is not only unfaltering, but even strengthened. The belief is that scripts with their suggestive combination and deployment of stories, figures and media can bring about urban revitalisation for so-called “legacy cities – older industrial cities that have experienced sustained job and population loss over the past few decades” (Mallach/Brachman, backcover; cf. also Berking/Löw; Florida 2011; Peck 2005, 2007). These scripts for post-industrial urban futures energise real and complicated power dynamics. They work to contribute to a paradigmatic shift that urban planner and geographer Michael Batty has described as “the transition from a world based on energy to one based on information: from an industrial to a postindustrial world” (191).

When scripts give new storylines to cities that lost, or continue to lose, their lifeline industries, they additionally seep into the self-definition of cities that lack an industrial heritage. Cities that are *not* legacy cities in the strict sense of the term use multifaceted imaginative tools – photos, cartoons, drawings, short narratives, film clips – to dress up as post-industrial ‘working cities’: a consortium of 91 Arizona cities and towns gathering at AZ Cities @ Work. This interactive gateway celebrates old, quaint forms of industrial labour: the ‘o’ in ‘Work’ is a stylised cog wheel; simple drawings and illustrations in the

style of cartoons and children's literature portray stereotypical working-class scenes and locations; photography and short film clips bring an imagined past into the realm of the present. In contrast to the idealisation of manual and industrial work through this employment of iconic art, the biographical narratives of "the men and women that make AZ cities work" (AZ Cities @ Work) redefine the older idea of work that is connected to big industries and manual labour. This old idea is now refitted so as to suit the young and promising service industry (cf. AZ Cities @ Work). The offspring of this union of old and new labour is the production of a sustainable lifeline for a new type of 'working cities' in this sparsely populated section of the American Sun Belt. Here, municipalities comparatively unaffected by the dissipation of industrial production and the concomitant job losses endorse the concept of hard, often physical work. Yet, the slippage in the meaning of 'work' is deployed to insinuate that cities rather than people must work, i.e. function like a cog wheel at the heart of a productive engine, a rhetorical move placing the advertised location and its communities safely outside the realm of the crisis of deindustrialisation.

What is striking in examples such as this is the persistent use of a fairly limited number of basic scripts used in the projection and prescription of urban futures: Cities in urban development, marketing or urban planning documents are almost invariably imagined as 'creative', 'sustainable' and 'socially inclusive', with two or all three of them frequently conjoined under the heading of the 'smart city' in its various definitions (cf. also Chapter 8). As a globally current example, one might take waterfront redevelopments of former port locations. Waterfront projects in their theming and imagineering activities frequently make use of all three current guiding principles of post-industrial urban development, despite latent or obvious contradictions between them: They are almost invariably marketed as ideal locations for the creative economy and – increasingly important for the frequently up-market clientele – as sites of sustainable living, e.g. by virtue of advanced building technologies used in renovation. Conversely, in order to counter the public image as gentrified elite spaces, they frequently project the image of being family-friendly and socially inclusive, not least by romanticising their harbour past as sites of physical labour, even in places where the harbour as a means for providing jobs and income has ceased to play an important role.

The promotion of one of the most visible of such waterfront development projects and arguably the largest such project in Europe, HafenCity Hamburg, is a picture-book example of the pervasiveness of scripting. Between 2001 and the early 2030s, this project is turning an area of 2.2 square kilometres of former port area just south of the inner city of Hamburg into a mixed-use residential and commercial area, with the Elbphilharmonie as its celebrated icon, a futuristic concert-hall-*cum*-hotel and luxury apartments as well as a publicly accessible plaza with views of the city and the port placed on top of an enormous 1960s red-brick warehouse.²⁴ Almost any issue of the project's quarterly newsletter, the *HafenCity News*, yields references to all three major scripts. In issue 47, published in July 2017, for instance, a few pages suffice to discuss the

Figure 7.2 Text and visualisation of 'creative', 'sustainable' and 'inclusive' urban development scripts in HafenCity Hamburg.

Source: HafenCity News 47 (7/2017), 4, 9, 10. www.hafencity.com.

building of “Creative Blocks” that will include a residential project “specifically geared towards the needs of [...] the creative economy, architecture, living and media” (9; our translation), while another article entitled “Sustainable and Regional” (4; our translation) references the ‘sustainability script’. This article announces the opening of a wholefoods supermarket and a farmer’s market offering only organically grown (and largely regional) produce. Finally, under the heading “Apple Juice, Honey and Community Spirit” (10; our translation), this issue promotes local community gardening initiatives including photographs of families happily gardening and a beekeeper on top of a stationary shipping container (cf. Figure 7.2). To be fair, the issue begins with a three-page report on the opening of a memorial to victims of the holocaust deported from a site in what is now the HafenCity, including interviews with historians.

The ease with which these frequently standardising recurrent scripts of the ‘creative’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘inclusive city’ allegedly collaborate rather than collide can also be seen in a text announcing the selection of four Chinese cities as UNESCO Creative Cities in November 2017:

The United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) has picked four Chinese cities to join its Creative Cities Network (UCCN), the organization said on Tuesday [...] The four Chinese cities, Changsha (media arts), Macao Special Administrative Region

(gastronomy), Qingdao (Film) and Wuhan (design) are among 64 cities from 44 countries and regions which join the network. The UNESCO said on Tuesday that the four Chinese cities were picked for their efforts to “develop and exchange innovative best practices to promote *creative industries*, strengthen *participation in cultural life* and integrate culture into *sustainable urban development policies*”.

(Xinhua; our italics)

Here, too, it seems that notions of the ‘creative’, the ‘sustainable’ and the ‘inclusive’ or ‘participatory city’ again seamlessly go together. Moreover, the citation of a UNESCO pronouncement on a news portal closely affiliated with the Chinese government appears to document that these scripts are globally circulating and pervasive models for urban development.

The scripts *of* and *for* sustainable, inclusive and/or creative urban development are simple, but not simplistic endeavours to re-scribe the past, describe the present and prescribe the future of cities facing complex problems. These scripts provide a fixed set of generic responses to recurring global challenges of urban environments, of collective action and individual ingenuity. Whether they can be adapted to local conditions and embodied by believers in these scripts, who bring about social changes they deem to be improvements to a given situation, depends on factors such as (a) the credibility and the consistency of concrete forms of storytelling, (b) the effectiveness and understandability of specific figural expressions, and (c) the affiliations enabled by pivotal (re-) mediations among the audiences that translate reduced and condensed arches through time and space, thus developing real-world applications of the stories heard, the visions seen and the mediations decrypted. While this deep and intricate coding of urban development necessarily can profit from literary, cultural and medial analysis, the scripting of urban change also helps the field of literary studies to get a better grip on the contentious battles between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a willingness to be “hooked”, as Rita Felski describes it: being caught off-guard, to be dragged out of a readerly habit of distancing oneself from the text and its major leaps of faith. In *Hooked: Art and Attachment*, Felski moves away from an engagement with storytelling that suspects the narrator as much as the characters encountered in literary texts. Her appreciation of the verbal and visual inventions that can take their audiences captive reminds us that it is not an easy game played by city agents who turn to scripts as viable pathways to exit current conflicts. When urban practices and urban narratives collide and coincide, negative energies strengthen their readers’ distrust in the future vision portrayed. At the same time, the readers’ will to believe and their readiness to suspend disbelief allows for temporary, if shaky, attachments that provide a home for readers in simultaneous pursuit of several conflicting scripts of urban change.

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Notes

- 1 For the cultural turn, cf. Jameson; for its methodological innovations, cf. Bachmann-Medick. For the narrative turn, cf. Part III, IV and Epilogue in Phelan/Rabinowitz.
- 2 For the big migration to urban settings, cf. WBGU; for the story turn, cf. Buchenau/Gurr 2016; for the cultural and narrative turn to cities, cf. Buchenau/Gurr 2018.
- 3 For a discussion of the 'story turn in planning', cf. the Introduction to this book; as well as Sandercock 2003 and 2010; van Hulst. For an account of the societal functions of narrative, cf. Koschorke; for the implications of global urban competition for the self-representation of cities, cf. Reckwitz 382–393; for a critical discussion of the fuzziness brought on by the stellar career of the term 'narrative' in the field of economic and social practice, cf. Griem.
- 4 As Roderick P. Hart argues with regard to the 2016 US election, "storytelling was one of Trump's go-to weapons. His stories were not Reaganesque, filled with warmth and filigree. They were harsh, soulful, a punch in the face, not a gentle hand on the nation's shoulder. Trump was the protagonist in his stories, almost always their hero [...] Trump is a disciplined storyteller [...] [H]e continually reinforces the same stories" (99).
- 5 For anti-urban traditions, cf. Conn; White/White. For Trump's attraction to and for small towns and the main street, cf. Eckardt. For samples of Trump's use of the 'inner city trope', cf. Ye Hee Lee.

- 6 More fully, the passage reads: “[U]rban structures are built and sustained by layered, conflicting stories and the bodies that live them, eternally (re)shaping cities and histories. This ‘narrative urbanism’ is a patient, organic process revealing every construction site and street corner as a haunted site with stories past and passing by” (Rhinehart n.p.). This nicely illustrates some of our key concerns and might have served as an epigraph.
- 7 For a detailed discussion of the transhistorical as well as transregional cultural work of ‘scripts’ and ‘scribal agency’ in colonial North America, cf. Buchenau 2011.
- 8 For the Nietzschean double bind between the “destructively creative” as well as “creatively destructive” conjunction of literary strategies of representation, practices of the everyday and urban structures, cf. Bradbury/McFarlane 446.
- 9 For a popular culture example of literary and medial assemblages that helped to define North American and European immigrant societies, cf. Buchenau 2013.
- 10 For exemplary investigations of interactions between readers and texts, which highlight how readers establish new contexts for a text and how they defamiliarise established understandings and interpretations, cf. da Costa Fialho; Djikic *et al.* From a philological vantage point, writer response criticism addresses the literary texts produced by transformative readings, cf. Buchenau 2002, 36–51.
- 11 The German original reads: “Die Wandlung der Stadt Essen von einem vorindustriellen Stift mit Äbtissinengärten und Kaiserparks über eine Kohle- und Stahlmetropole zu einer grünen Stadt ist beeindruckend. Um 1900 war Essens Stadtbild geprägt durch die Kruppsche Gussstahlfabrik, durch enge Quartiere nahe der Altstadt und große Krupp-Kolonien [...] durch Schlote der Kokereien und Gestelle der Hochöfen, durch Fördertürme und Halden” (Essen 2017, 8).
- 12 For Juliane Borosch’s doctoral research on new norms and forms of “jazzing up [...] climate-friendly rehabilitation in Detroit and the Ruhr”, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_jazzing_up_the_climate_friendly_city.
- 13 For Katharina Wood’s exploration of the “ecological standardization and optimization” seeking to produce “green metropolises” and the intricate and occasionally self-defeating effects on conservation regulations, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_green_metropolises.
- 14 Moya is building on Markus/Kitayama.
- 15 For *Chance By 2* (our translation) and its goal of educational justice, cf. Chance hoch 2; for Chris Katzenberg’s project on “collective impact” scripts for educational and social reform in post-industrial cities, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_social_change_for_engaging_cities.
- 16 For Elisabeth Haefs’s work on “diversity gardening” in Essen and Portland, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_diversity_gardening.
- 17 For Florian Deckers’s investigations of ethnic urban counterscriptings, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_raising_ethnic_voices.
- 18 In this vein, the chapter on the ‘garden city’ idea and its global spread in the early twentieth century in Peter Hall’s magnificent *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design since 1880* is entitled “The City in the Garden: The Garden-City Solution; London, Paris, Berlin, New York, 1900–1940” (90–148; our emphasis). For a reading of the ‘garden city’ concept as a script, cf. Chapter 8 below.
- 19 For Johannes Maria Krickl’s work on “conflicting scripts for waterfront and port developments”, cf. www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_waterfront_reconquista.
- 20 www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/projects_trivial_pursuits. For an exemplary insight into Maria Sulimma’s research on serialised practices of prioritisation and of storytelling, cf. Sulimma, forthcoming.

- 21 These questions demarcate an almost epic battle about diversity, access, participation and epistemology in the urban as well as the academic realm, a battle wisely condensed into the formula "Liberal Appropriation vs. Critical Intervention" (17) in the ground-breaking volume of essays edited by Mahmoud Arghavan *et al.*
- 22 It is frequently the competition and interaction between different forms of writing and distinctive styles of mediation that substantially affects urban spaces (cf. Binder; Lindner; Schwanhäuser 2010a, 2010b).
- 23 For narratives of decline in the infamous American urban crisis of the 1970s and 1980s cf., for instance, Teaford's chapter on "the metropolitan malaise" and the resulting fragmentation of the city (151–156; here 152); Jonnes. On 6 November 1993, *The Economist* 329:7836 followed suit with the caption "Hell is an American City" on its front cover (cf. Punch 13).
- 24 A similarly iconic office building, the Elbtower, designed by David Chipperfield Architects Berlin, at a projected 233m to be by far the city's tallest conventional building, is to be completed in 2025 as a counterpoint to the Elbphilharmonie.

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