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Editorial - Let's be utopian!

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Let's be utopian!

**Frédéric Dufaux | Philippe Gervais-Lambony | Claire Hancock |
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Translation: Claire Hancock

Our journal is still standing and operating on its unlikely business model based on good will, a few people's dedication, the help of a few more, striving to keep alive a conception of research as gratuitous exchange, and of knowledge as an imprescriptible right for all, all the more valuable for being handed out freely.

Our journal *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice* is in its own (small) way utopian, it may even be its defining characteristic in the present context in the world as it goes today, the world generally and the academic world in particular. It is utopian in the way it operates, in its attempt to have disciplines meet, as well as in its understanding of the role of research in social science and humanities, and as such, it is fragile. Hence the importance, to us, of the present issue we are glad to be able to put online, after a long period of silence related to technical difficulties, and share with all those who are interested in, and wish to contribute to, the growing body of work on spatial justice.

This issue celebrates nothing short of our re-birth, and to make up for the long wait, it is a double issue edited by Bernard Bret, Sophie Didier and Frédéric Dufaux. The journal itself is more beautiful than ever, with an entirely new design and a more user-friendly site, where papers that had become hard to access are once again available to readers.

Sadly, current events keep reminding us of the topicality of relations between space and justice. What took place in Lampedusa in October 2013, with 350 losing their lives on the boat carrying migrants from Somalia and Erythrea to the Italian island, is not just one of many such events, it is particularly heart-rending to us. The Schengen Area, which makes circulation free within 26 European countries, has caused a reinforcement of the closure of its external borders, obliging migrants to travel ever more dangerous maritime routes, bringing about the loss of 4,000 lives in the Mediterranean since 2009. The injustice of such migration policies is such that it revives the need to dream of a borderless world in which such tragedies would not occur. One of the papers in this issue (written before this most recent event) tackles this concept of the borderless world, and demonstrates the inability of the critics of migration policies, who articulate their injustice very clearly, to formulate simply a positive version of what these policies should become.

However, in the world as it is today, a return to utopian thought, in all its complexity, work on what could be, seems vital. To quote Walter Benjamin, the greater the peril, the timelier are utopias!

After a while out of the spotlight, utopias, the theme of the present issue, are enjoying a form of come-back, and regaining their ability to mobilize and shed light on our world. Positing the future as something not to be passively awaited, but actively intended, utopias both criticize the injustices of the societies in which they are produced, and promote alternative social and spatial organizations, in which aspirations to justice are crucial. As explained by Henri Lefebvre, open-ended utopian experimentation, virtually infinite, of different spatial forms, allows us to explore

emancipatory alternative strategies: the contributions to this issue examine a number of utopian propositions mobilized in current claims for greater justice.

Articles in the Public Space section of this issue also raise questions about utopias, in particular with reference to the Indignés movement. A short themed section which also questions aspects of the future comprises two papers selected among those that were presented at the conference "Toward a Just Metropolis : From Crisis to Possibilities" which took place in Berkeley in 2010, and both examine, in the context of San Francisco, ways in which communities attempt to work towards a more "just metropolis".

Also available in this issue are interviews with three scholars whose work sheds light on issues of injustice and spatial justice in North-American cities: Marc Levine (Professor of History, Economics and Urban Studies at the University of Milwaukee, Wisconsin), William Julius Wilson (Professor of Sociology at Harvard) and Susan Fainstein (Professor of Urbanism, also at Harvard, the author of *The Just City*, 2011).

The issue also includes reviews of recent books which address, more or less directly, the question of spatial justice. Last but not least, let us also mention the two most recent volumes in the "Espace et justice" series of the Presses Universitaires de Paris-Ouest: *Ségrégation et justice spatiale* (S. Fol, S. Lehman-Frisch and M. Morange, eds., 2013) and *Justice spatiale et politiques territoriales* (F. Dufaux and P. Philifert, eds., 2013)¹.

¹ - FOL S., LEHMAN-FRISCH S. and MORANGE M. (ed.), *Ségrégation et justice spatiale*, ouvrage collectif, Collection Espace et Justice, Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, Nanterre, 2013.

- DUFAUX F. and PHILIFERT P. (ed.), *Justice spatiale et politiques territoriales*, Collection Espace et Justice, Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, Nanterre, 2013.