**Title:** Representation and Reification: Architecture in the Politico-Media-Complex

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**Abstract:**

The relationship between politics and advertising is controversial, polemic and seen by many as inherently manipulative. At its most explicit in election campaign imagery, it is now integral to the political process. However, one component of this relationship yet to be investigated is the role of architecture. This project investigates the employment of architecture in political imagery in the US and the UK – in both historic representations of democracy and power – and in contemporary election campaign communication. It will suggest that the nature of architecture’s appearance in ‘representations of political power or authority’ is, almost inevitably, manifest in its constructed form – either explicitly or implicitly.

Its template of analysis employs Antonio Gramsci’s notions of Civic and Political Society, embedded in the concept of hegemony, and Louis Althusser’s distinction between Ideological and Repressive State Apparatus, central to his definition of ideology. Conceptualising architecture in political imagery as a tool in ‘civic’ and ‘ideological’ social constructs, it seeks to trace out the routes through which this imagery feeds into the nature, style and typology of constructed architecture – an architecture that thus becomes readable as the ‘political’ and ‘repressive’ manifestation of the democratic socio-media complex.

Offering a historical overview of the emergence of the contemporary political communication machine, and its continual appropriation of architecture and architectural imagery, this work will focus on recent ‘political architecture’. Using examples from the Tony Blair governments in the UK and the George W. Bush administrations in the US, it will underline how, in the democratic socio-media complex, the importance of constructed architecture becomes inseparable from its appearance in imagery, and how both reflect sub-level ideological constructs.

In short, this work offers a model through which we see the relationship between constructed architecture and political imagery in contemporary democracies as both symbiotic and mutually influencing. It is an interpretation that reframes our understanding of political architecture as both reification and representation in the media saturated environment of contemporary democracies.
This paper represents the second in a series of publications documenting the development of the current Architecture_MPS Host Project Scheme: Representation and Reification: Architecture in the Politico-Media-Complex. It is presented here as an outline of the overall project which will remain in development until December 2014 at which time a full publication is expected. It is presented as part of a pilot initiative intended to operate as the model for an Architecture_MPS Fellowship Scheme to be launched in 2015.

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Introduction

In its examination of the relationship between architecture, politics and advertising in the context of political imagery, this project starts with an historical overview whose first points of reference are the architecture and political imagery of the years following the Revolutionary War in the US, and the architectural-political symbolism of Interregnum in England. It thus commences by traversing three centuries in a synoptic view of the appropriation of architecture in political portraiture and photography that will extend to the mid-20th century and the use of architecture in the early political imagery of the television age.

Against this historical backdrop it will examine in more detail two specific US and UK examples; the architecture and imagery of the New Labour years 1997-2007, and that of the Republican Party administrations between 2000-2008. In doing so, it will propose an as yet un-investigated relationship between the political imagery of the New Labour and the UK’s flagship school building program of the period and, in the US context, a similarly underexplored relationship between political imagery and suburbia on the one hand, and its role in the sub-prime crisis of 2008, on the other.

The work will draw upon both historic and contemporary political theorists including John Locke and Jürgen Habermas, and reference social and political philosophers such as Pierre Bourdieu and Hannah Arendt. However, it is the political writings of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci that offer the principal theoretical framework through which we approach this intertwined reified and representational question of architecture. Consequently, it is through the prism of ideology and hegemony that we frame our argumentation on the need to reconsider the nature of political architecture in contemporary neo-liberal economies and democratic processes.

Premised on the generalised assumption that political architecture is a term whose natural referent is an explicit constructed building, and presumption that the most common milieu in which those explicit forms emerge are state controlled economies or, indeed dictatorships, this work offers a major recalibration of our conceptualisation of the explicitly political in architecture. Firstly, it opens up a new arena of investigation - the election campaign imagery of the contemporary democratic process. This as yet unexplored architectural realm will be presented as not only unchartered territory but, significantly, a purely ‘representational’ terrain in which many of the characteristics of subsequently constructed architecture is initially examined, explored and promoted. Consequently, in employing a template of analysis that places the architectural referent of the political realm in the mediated field of imagery, it proffers an argument that prioritizes ‘image’ over ‘material form’.

By doing this in the context of the US and the UK, it invariably confronts what is perhaps a less widely held assumption – that the politicisation of architecture is a phenomenon less readily associated with neo-liberal economies than it is with state controlled ones. Pinpointing its analysis on the spectacle of the ‘democratic process’ itself, the Presidential and National elections of the US and the UK it will attempt to underline some of the most visible, but little commented and understood, aspects of the architecture of democracy. Whilst it is not necessary to engage in a detailed examination of either of these ‘assumptions’, they represent two conceptualisations against which we will set our own examination, and in counterpoint to which, we aim to reveal new insights into the nature of architecture as a politicised phenomenon today.
PART ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT / IDEAS:

In 2008 Barack Obama is a little known Senator from Illinois. His background is community organising. He suffers from three main problems, all of them ‘image’ based – his lack of experience, the colour of his skin, the ‘Islamic sounding’ name. He is presented by his opponents as lacking experience – of having dubious ‘patriotic credentials’.

In order to counter these charges ‘fears’ ... ‘criticisms’.... ‘doubts’... call then what you will... his campaign team appropriate architecture, or rather, its imagery. Candidate Obama is sent on a European tour. He seeks photo opportunities in front the established icons of political power; 10 Downing Street, the Champs Elysees Palace, the Reichstag. Architecture and, above all, Neoclassical architecture, is appropriated in the construction of ‘political image’.

At home, the biggest television spectacle of the campaign is conceived along the same lines. For the Democratic Party convention in Denver, the design team comes up with a stage set resonant of established democratic politics – a classical colonnade is adorned with 18 American flags. The flags function as symbols of patriotism. According to the mechanics of standard semiotics, their supposed values move in the direction of the ‘product’. Obama takes on the attributes of a true American – he is associated with the flag.

However, this architectural set does not just function in ‘patriotic’ terms. It is a denotative representation of the buildings of American power themselves. It ‘literally’ stands in for Capitol Hill and the Whitehouse. Using standard advertising strategies Obama is, to all intents and purposes, placed in the Oval Office.

Countering the image of inexperience, this architectural representation conjures up references to the architecture of American democracy and through them, references to the political past of the Enlightenment and ancient Greece - to the ideals of democracy, ancient civilized cultures and traditional bases of political power. It cements his image in the appropriate ideological frame of reference.
In both the European tour and the 2008 Democratic Party convention, deliberate and overt attempts were made to appropriate images of architecture and its ideological paraphernalia. Importantly, this was done in ways that follow the standard visual communication techniques perfected by the advertising industry over the past half century. However, the traditions these ‘political images’ drew upon were not contemporary, they were historic and, in the US context, deeply ideological. In this sense they took up their position in a long line of political images that have mined the cultural value of architecture, and in particular Neoclassical architecture, over centuries. The very act of using architecture in political imagery is then, we will suggest in this work, a political tradition in and of itself.

This tradition has roots that go back to the birth of the independent and democratic nations of both the US and the UK. In the US context it can be clearly identified through the conduit of 18th century political portraiture; a genre epitomised by Gilbert Charles Stuart’s images of George Washington and their repeated incorporation of architectural symbolism – images clearly intended to usurp the ideological associations of Neoclassical architecture in exactly the same way as the Obama case in 2008. In the UK, it is arguable that this tradition emanated centuries before but, in the context of the ‘democratic’ period, it was clearly evidenced in the Regicide of 1649; a political act of revolution symbolically carried out against the backdrop of the Neoclassical Banqueting Hall that Inigo Jones designed for the beheaded monarch himself (Brooks, 1999).

The United States:

In the late 18th century United States, the classically trained, and classically influenced, political image makers of the day, John Turnbull, Gilbert Charles Stuart, John Singleton Copley etc., were not simply carrying on the European traditions of portraiture in the new independent arena unwittingly (Doezema and Milroy, 1998). Their use of Neoclassical architectural symbolism reflected the political climate of the times - the Enlightenment climate of post-revolutionary America in which the ideals of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson could all be defined as indissoluble from the ‘ideology’ of the new nation and, in some cases, inseparable from the aesthetic traits of Neoclassicism.
Rousseau’s social contract and its argument for a republic as a prerequisite of liberty and morality; Locke’s arguments for small government, the will of the people and the ‘natural right’ of property; and Adam Smith’s self-interested competition, enlaced by a concern with monopoly, would all feed into the ideology of the new nation (Locke, 1988; Smith, 1994). Rousseau and Locke’s ideas can certainly be traced throughout the writings of Thomas Jefferson who, more than any other thinker, envisioned this new representative-democratic ideology as manifest through architecture.

Jefferson’s idealisation of the ‘honest yeoman’ and his defence of an agrarian future (in contrast to Alexander Hamilton’s industrialised and monetarist paradigm) set up an American idyll that would underlie the psyche of the independent and individualised domestic lifestyle of the new nation (Randolph, 2003; Reynolds, 2009). Implanted alongside his promotion of Neoclassical architecture, as representative of the new enlightened and democratic age, the ideological groundwork for contemporary suburban America was ingrained early in the democratic period. Within this context Monticello and The University of Virginia are identifiable as constructed manifestations of cultural attitudes played out earlier — in the architectural representations found in the works of Gilbert Charles Stuart et al (Meacham, 2012). These images then, become the visual starting point for ideological and aesthetic attributes that underlie over two centuries of developments in US domestic and political architecture — to which both Obama 08 and contemporary suburbia, still attest. They are mediated-architectural manifestations of the ideological substrata of their day.

The United Kingdom:

By way of a historical synopsis of the United Kingdom, a very similar relationship can be discerned between the application of architecture to political imagery, and the style of architecture commissioned by monarchical and parliamentarian patrons between the 17th and 19th centuries — and what we may see as the ideological conceptualisations underlying them. The most obvious and celebrated example of this is evident of course through the monarchic triumvirates of Charles I, Anthony van Dyke and Inigo Jones on the one hand; and Charles II, Dirk Stoop and Sir Christopher Wren on the other — politico-artistic ensembles through which the Stuart Monarchs conspicuousely promoted Neoclassicism and the Baroque in both political portraiture and architecture (Mullins, 1983).

For historians such as Chris Brooks the political machinations of this period were not only played out through the use of Neoclassical symbolism, of which the selection of Jones’ Banqueting Hall for the Regicide of 1649 was a particularly macabre example. On the contrary, it was also played out on the battlefield of the constructed architecture of the period. For Brooks, the ‘modernising’ tradition, inculcated by the Renaissance, manifest itself through Neoclassicism in the UK and was, contradictorily in the late 17th century, ascribed to the monarchy. However, he also suggests that it was in constant ‘political struggle’ with forces of ‘British tradition’, as represented by the Gothic style — a scenario which meant that neither monarchical nor parliamentarian forces felt politically free enough to totally disassociate themselves from it (Brooks, 1999).

As a result, suggests Broooks, both Parliamentarians and Monarchists in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and beyond, all ensured the ‘survival’ of the Gothic as a means to ‘legitimise’ their political positions — each faction citing the medieval past, specifically the Magna Carta, and different interpretations of its political heritage and meaning, to justify their respective political standpoints. The variegated politicisation of UK architecture that manifest itself during
this extended historical period then, becomes definable as the representation of two coexisting political dispositions which would remain in evidence until the 19th century, and the ‘stylistic’ battle over the reconstruction of the Parliament buildings by Augustus Pugin and Charles Barry (Port, 1976).

The mediatisation of the public arena

Beyond simply establishing aesthetic links between political imagery and political architecture however, this introductory historical perspective will draw upon the work of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas. From Arendt, it will borrow arguments on the decline of the public sphere as a ‘space of appearance’ in the 18th century (Arendt, 1998). Although she argues that the rise of the novel (and thus the emergence of the shared ‘individuality’ of the social realm) marks the decline of the public realm and, by extension public arts such as architecture, Habermas gauges it equally as the period in which the ‘public realm’ became a mediated sphere (Habermas, 1989).

For Habermas, the 18th century equates to the apogee of the newspaper or political journal and its establishment as ‘the’ public sphere – albeit in mediated form. Employing this idea, we will conjecture that the political architecture of the period can be described as entering a phase in which it ceased to be a ‘space of appearance’ and morphed into an ‘object of appearance’ – an image that may have had an life independent of its representation, but whose function comports primarily to that of a specific symbol in the mediated public realm of the journal, newspaper, political pamphlet or reproduced political portrait.

A perfect example of this phenomenon from the mid-19th century is AA Lamb’s Emancipation Proclamation, 1863. Lamb’s image is an obvious construction of pictorial political allegory. It is an imaginary celebration of the emancipation proclamation that resorts to the iconographical tradition of art history. It proffers an Abraham Lincoln equestrian figure heading the Union army. To the right is a full bearded, sword wielding General resembling Ulysses S Grant; to the left are bands of liberated slaves. At the head of the composition is the Goddess of Liberty riding a chariot, drawn by two white horses – emblems of the purest values of democracy and freedom. The American Eagle hovers over the entire ensemble whilst, partially concealed in the middle ground, is a statue by Henry K Brown of the untouchable, and unblemished figure, of George Washington. The whole is played out against a backdrop of the symbolically resonant Capital building.
Still unfinished at the time the painting was executed, the Neoclassical Capitol Building takes on its anointed symbolic role here. This was an illustration produced at a specific political moment and intended to support a specific political policy – emancipation and, by extension, the war. As such, the rendition of the Capitol Building, as complete, takes on importance in the real-politick of its day. Its actual physical state of construction was irrelevant – it was envisaged as operative not in a physical space, but as an ‘object of appearance’ on the mediated stage examined by Habermas.

David Brion Davis identifies that this image, and others like it, were typical of the period in this regard (Millon, 1992). In appearing in broadsheets and popular magazines throughout the 1860s images such as this and, by correlation, the architecture they presented, were never intended to have an ‘aura’ in the sense identified by Benjamin – they were, in their very conception, works of communication in an age of mechanical reproduction. Lamb’s image then, formed part of the propaganda battles that accompanied the civil war and, in this context, ‘image’ was as important as reality - and diffusion as important as propinquity. Consequently, architectural representation and reification became two sides of the same political coin and space was reduced to object and, further, to image.

The Emergence of the Politico-Media Complex:

Being the first President to be extensively photographed, Abraham Lincoln becomes the political figure through whom it could be argued political imagery entered the modern age. One of the things many of the early photographic prints by Mathew Brady, of both Lincoln and subsequent Presidents reveal however, is the stylistic conformity applied in the incipient years of the new medium (Trachtenberg, 1989). In the US, this took the form of staple formal traits found in the portraiture of Gilbert Charles Stuart et al, - including omniscient Neoclassical architectural backdrops. Indeed, no significant change to this model occurred until the John F. Kennedy administration when the presentational rigidity of the political figure and the Neoclassical setting was confronted in the age of the personality-politician (Reeves and Sawler, 2010).

Abraham Lincoln. 1863. Mathew B. Brady
The full promotional manipulation of the Kennedy image machine did not emerge spontaneously however. As will be underscored by this work, the Woodrow Wilson administration can be pinpointed as a key juncture in this regard. The specific importance attributed to the Wilson administration in this sense is contingent on its incorporation of three men into the heart of the White House machinery: Edward Bernays, George Creel and Charles Merriam.

George Creel - Head of The Committee on Public Information (CPI) during WWI. He would later go on to have a highly successful career in PR (Creel, 2012).

Edward Bernays - employed by Creel in the CPI. He would go on to author two books of central import to the PR and advertising worlds: Propaganda, 1928, and The Engineering of Consent, 1947.

Charles Merriam - another member of the CPI. He developed the 'behaviouralistic' approach to political science and thus pioneered the use of data and quantitative analysis in 'understanding' voter tendencies and preferences (Karl, 1975).

The consequences of the admittance of marketing and advertising techniques into the nucleus of the democratic process is significant in our appraisal of political architecture, and its use in political representations, for one primary reason. In a position to identify tendencies and preferences, and subsequently to manufacture promotional materials to correlate with them, the modern political communication executive would never again produce an illustration that was not fully thought through in its 'communicative' consequences.

This new understanding of governmental chimera certainly underlay the photographs 'engineered' by Art Rickerby and Cecil Stoughton for the Kennedy administration between 1961-63. In the case of Stoughton, the use of the Neoclassical architecture of the Whitehouse was central to the construction of the domestic idyll of Camelot and the political image of Kennedy himself (Stoughton, 1973). As will be argued later, by way of reference to Bourdieu, it can also be read as playing a role in the emanation, and continued development, of the postmodern movement and the historicist architecture of suburbia respectively (Bourdieu, 1984).

President Kennedy, Caroline and John Jr. in the Oval Office, October 10, 1962
Cecil W Stoughton
PART TWO

POLITICAL COMMUNICATIVE ARCHITECTURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

- Advertising the Special Relationship

Clearly, by the second half of the 20th century the political communication machinery of Western democracies was deeply imbibed with the promotional ethos of the commercial sphere. The epoch of the modern media political campaign, and what may be called ‘the commercialisation of Western politics’, had begun in earnest. This period however, also represented the zenith of the political and cultural influence of the United States and the period of the ‘special relationship’ with the United Kingdom.

The ‘special relationship’ is, of course, well documented. It was patent in the relationship between John F. Kennedy and Harold Macmillan, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, to name just the most obvious examples (Bartlett, 1992). However, this relationship also carried over into political campaigning; US political advisors aided the Tory Party in the UK throughout the 1980s and Labour Party Director of Communications, Philip Gould, worked closely with the Bill Clinton team to prepare Labour’s 1992 UK election campaign – and more. Inevitably then, a close relationship ensued between the campaign techniques and imagery employed in the US and the UK throughout the second half of the 20th century.

One consequence of this transposition of developments in one country to the other was the form of cross commercialisation of election campaign strategies that occurred during this period, as political parties in both countries began employing the communicative strategies of the advertising industry. In 1952 Dwight D. Eisenhower used 40 television advertisements in his presidential bid, while in 1960, the John F. Kennedy team used over 200. By the 1970s, commercial advertising practices had become commonplace in both countries, with the Labour Party enlisting an advertising agency for the first time in 1970 – a trend that later unfolded into the use of advertising agencies and film directors to produce ‘political commercials’, such as Kinnock the Movie, 1987 (Butler and Kavanagh, 1988).

By the 80s, 90s and the first decade of this century then, advertising agencies such as Saatchi and Saatchi had begun promoting political parties and individual politicians as ‘branded products’ (Lees-Masment, 2011). Indeed, parties of all persuasions had begun to transform themselves from what was known as ‘product’ or ideological based parties, into ‘market’ orientated parties – political entities that use market research techniques as a way of actually formulating political positions on individual issues, rather than building policies from a defined and general standpoint (Lilleker and Lees-Masment, 2005). By the time of the 1997 campaign in the UK, the Labour Party had incorporated advertising techniques to such an extent that it actually re-branded itself completely as New Labour. The asymmetry between advertising and political campaign messages had evaporated completely, and the very latest advertising and PR techniques had become fully amalgamated with those of the political communication sphere (Copeland, 1996).

- Architecture in Modern Political Campaigning

In these campaigns, architecture has often been used in complex and contradictory ways. The Kennedy administration invited the press into the White House and presented it as a place of
high office and a family home. In the 80s President Reagan was presented as a frontier pioneer against an outdoors backdrop replete with the symbol of rural living: the Mid-Western ranch. A decade later Bill Clinton was pictured on the modern stage sets of MTV, whilst emotive and symbolic images of George W. Bush against the rubble of the Twin Towers, were used repeatedly in the 2004 US Presidential campaign (Thomas, 2005).

In the UK, the first Post-War Labour government often pictured its politicians in front of slums and new buildings to emphasise the new deal it represented – a penchant replicated by the Wilson governments of the 60s and 70s to promote Labour as the party that ‘re-housed the nation’. More recently, Margaret Thatcher launched her 1979 campaign from a symbolic ‘white elephant of industrial decay’, Battersea Power Station, whilst hours after his 1997 victory, Tony Blair availed himself of a symbol of Old Labour policies, the Aylesbury housing estate, London, as the landmark from which to launch his ‘New Vision of the Future’. Carrying on the tradition, in the last UK general election, David Cameron returned to Battersea Power Station to conjure up memories of Margaret Thatcher and reignite the criticism of Labour as a failed government through the image of decaying industrial architecture (Cowley and Kavanagh, 2010).

In the 2008 US campaign Senator McCain was depicted at the Vietnam Memorial to emphasise his War credentials, while Barak Obama was placed in front of classical architecture, both at home and abroad, to exemplify his ‘readiness’ for high office and general political experience. However, in a prime example of the flexibility of advertising techniques, classical architectural backdrops were also used in the ‘attack ads’ of the Obama campaign to portray, first Hillary Clinton, and later Senator John McCain as parts of the Washington establishment (Dover, 2008).

Beyond being ‘images’ that function as photo opportunities, or appropriate associative backdrops, this engagement of architecture in political campaign imagery often unveils something deeper - a direct correlation with government policy and government supported shifts in design. In the United Kingdom context this has been particularly evident. In the 1945 Labour Party Manifesto, ‘Let us Face the Future’, there was an explicit promise to invest in housing (McCallum and Readman, 2008). As a result, Aneurin Bevan was often pictured in front of slums and new building projects - the Elstree Estate, Hertfordshire, being an example where he
opened the 500th New Home in front of the press cameras in March 1949 (Francis, 1997). By way of contrast, the buildings of Festival of Britain (which Labour MP Herbert Morris suggested was part of the plan to ‘build the Tories out of London’) were used to depict Labour as the ‘modern party’. Launching the careers of modernist architects such as Hugh Casson and Herbert Morris, its buildings were regularly featured in party propaganda.

In what Labour leader Harold Wilson called ‘the white heat of technology’ in 1960s and 70s, both local and national Labour politicians endorsed modernist architects. Examples include Sydney Cook and Neave Brown, whose designs for the Fleet Road and Alexandra Road Estates were seen as ideal ‘architectural types’ for the Party’s modern image (Kynaston, 2013). After Margaret Thatcher’s use of Battersea Power Station in 1979, her government proceeded to advocate for the construction of the ‘mini Manhattan’ that is Canary Wharf. Freeing up the planning system for SOM’s master plan and Cesar Pelli’s Canary Wharf Tower, the Tory party actively promoted and lauded the post-modern corporate architecture of the 1980s which, indirectly, resonated with its campaign imagery, its political messages and its cardinal ideological assumptions (McCleod, 1989). In the monetarist economic climate promoted by Margaret Thatcher’s economic guru, Sir Keith Joseph, architecture was once again a political motif.

**Political Architecture – US**

In the United States, the explicit architectural-political connection was significantly different throughout this period. With federal government playing a significantly less direct role in the promotion and financing of architecture, the sometimes ‘direct and obvious’ examples of politicised architecture evident in 20th century Britain were less common (McCleod, 1989). However, some explicitly Federal government commissions were identifiable and, in most cases, seem to have resulted in ‘a return to convention’. One of the more conspicuous cases in this regard is Allan Greenburg’s Neoclassical renovation of the State Department in Washington, D.C.; a project commissioned by George Schultz in the 1980s and perfectly attuned with the majority of Neoclassical political representations favoured by successive US administrations (Greenberg, 1994). Even Barack Obama, who campaigned on the ‘change agenda’ reverted to type in this regard, with his ‘neo-classical lite’ renovation of the Oval office in 2010 by the Los Angeles based designer, Michael S. Smith.

Whilst these projects echo one aspect of the ‘political image’ of both these administrations, the Post-WWII embassy building program (1945-1970) expressed a very different use of architecture in line with a very different political context – foreign policy. With the US fully engaged in the Cold War and the Soviet Union still associated with a Stalinist version of Neoclassicism, the construction of US embassies across the globe assumed the guise of an opportunity to capture the ‘modernity’ of America’s political image and its political imagery. Financed by the Foreign Building Office’s use of war debts owed to the US, the number of ‘modernist’ US embassies increased two fold (Fraser, 2008). Eero Saarinen’s ‘free expressive experimentation’ was ideal, and was used for the Jefferson memorial, 1948, and the US London embassy in 1960; a project identified by Reyner Banham as a form of ‘US branding’.

In all of these cases it is obvious that architecture does not exist outside the sphere of influence exerted by the political lexicon of its day. It represents, and supports, the political mind-set of the moment, whether that be a post-modern, neo-liberal corporate economy; a fully housed modern socialist utopia; or a home owning American individual and semi-agrarian idyll. It emblems the reformulated manifestations of ideology that undergird the political context of the period in question. Significantly however as the ambience, in which these political visions,
assumptions and ideologies are played out and proffered, has become more mediated, so too has the significance of the architecture associated with them.

Continuing a move away from an understanding of the public sphere as a ‘physical space based on propinquity’, identifiable in the work of Arendt and Habermas, examples such as the ones listed here operate as political iconography in a primarily mediated realm – the newspaper, the magazine, the TV news slot etc. Consequently, its importance as a constructed object has been recalibrated to emphasise its significance as politically loaded facsimile intended to be seen in journals, read about in magazines, and spoken about in subsequent conversations.

However, beyond this, the reoriented focus we outline here of an architectural and political engagement premised on the ‘representational’ is, as indicated by both Arendt and Habermas, deeply ideological in and of itself. Moving our very comprehension of public space and political engagement into the realm of the mediated, always at one remove (or more) from physical presence and actual action, this mediatisation of the public and political platform helps ensure the continued existence of ‘representational’, rather than ‘participative’, democracy. This in turn, as appraised by Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci, helps democracies maintain the political status quo through the indirect means of their ideological and hegemonic apparatuses.
PART THREE

Political Architecture and Image as Ideology.

- Louis Althusser

In his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, 1970, Louis Althusser lays out an understanding of the functioning of contemporary ideological systems in line with the Western Marxist tradition (Resch, 1992). Developing ideas found in his two main treatise, *For Marx*, 1969, and *Reading Capital*, 1968, he underlines his rejection of the ‘subject’ associated with Marx’s early writings, and thus reiterates the case for Structural Marxism. Within this ‘structural’ model, he develops a number of issues that, in one way or another, resurface in our application of his arguments in the context of the use of architecture in political imagery – and its influence on constructed architecture. Amongst these we find:

The *lacunar discourse* – the use of false or untrue assertions that are capable of suggesting a reality that may not exist but which is conceivable (Althusser, 1970). The attempt to associate economic success with home ownership in the 2004 election by George W. Bush could be enumerated amongst typical examples. Numerous other more generalised political narratives of ‘the American Dream’ or David Cameron’s idea of the ‘Big Society’ can also be referenced in this regard.

*Ideology as mirror system* – in referencing Lacan in this sense, Althusser dissects the methods through which social norms and systems engender the frameworks of reference social groups employ in the ‘construction’ of their sense of self. The offer, and our acceptance of, membership of the ‘home owning democracy’ through the purchase of a ‘stylistically typical home’ is a potentially archetypal case of how this plays a role in our engagement with architecture here.

*Interpellation* – building on Lacan’s ideas again, this notion describes the modus operandi through which social practices actually instil the ‘self-awareness’ made possible by the mirror system (Althusser, 1970). The identification of a particular group with a particular architectural typology, style or approach at any given point in history is indicative. The Labour Party’s endeavours to build houses for ‘its voters’ in the post-WWII period, could be cited as an exemplar.

- *Ideology and Ideological state Apparatus*

More fundamental to our work than these specific concepts however, are the two related ideas that bridle them in the Althusserian sense. Firstly, the acceptance that the Base – Superstructure analogy in Marx remains a valid metaphor for explaining and rationalising contemporary social structures and norms - but that the economic determinism of early Marxist thought has to be significantly nuanced (Althusser, 2008).

Building on Lukács, (Lukács, 1923) the nuanced base-superstructure analogy proposed by Althusser stresses an important role for superstructural factors in determining the physical and social make-up of any extant culture and its cultural objects, amongst which we find architecture. Hence, Althusser continues the Western Marxist challenge to economic determinism and suggests that, if we are to comprehend the compliant behaviour, attitudes and tastes of we, the public, and hence the continuance of the socio-political status quo, it is necessary to reframe our focus and bring into sight those forces operating indirectly on the formation of social criterion.
In developing this exposition of the social superstructure Althusser proposes the second main idea of relevance here - a clear discrimination between Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses – which he sees as another two layered set of mutually buttressing systems. The role of the Repressive Apparatuses, roughly equating to the direct and real tools of state control such as the police and the armed forces, are intended to enforce and reinforce the indirect and conceptual norms of social behaviour instigated by Ideological Apparatuses such as the education system and entertainment industries etc. (Althusser, 1970).

Thus, what Althusser manufactures is a model that places emphasis on the indirect branches of the superstructural complex, and which would further suggest a two layered / two part model for how any phenomenon in that complex operates - as something material, real and direct in one sense, and immaterial, conceptual and indirect in another. It is a model that serves as the primary template for analysing constructed architecture and representations of that architecture on the political stage offered here.

- **Althusser and architecture as ideology**

If we consider Althusser’s first major theoretical step within the rubric of architecture more closely, emphasis slips from a purely economic explanation of the promotion and construction of distinct architectural typologies and ‘styles’, to an examination of a more ancillary set of questions such as the ‘construction’ of social attitudes, leanings, aspirations and cultural associations around, and by, architecture. In spotlighting these ‘superstructural’ questions Althusser’s two layered ‘repressive – ideological’ distinction then, suggests that preferences and social expectations around architecture are assembled through the existence of a built infrastructure but also by secondary and immaterial manifestations of that infrastructure, such as symbolically loaded architectural imagery.

At their most obvious then, these ideas operate by way of analogy; built architecture being defined as an example of a real, physical token of ideology – a built ‘reified’ form – and ‘representations’ of architecture being defined as indirect expressions of ideology – images that do not impose any material restrictions on the way people actually behave, but do influence thinking and beliefs. When considered within this context, and bearing in mind the work of Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991), the examples of architectural representations and concomitant constructed architectures described earlier, from the Whitehouse to Canary Wharf, can be seen as the dual architectural manifestations of the ideological forces at play in Althusser’s superstructural definition – both ideological and repressive apparatuses, to use his specific terminology.

However, over and above architecture and representations of architecture setting social attitudes, given that Althusser’s superstructural model remains premised on its ultimate support for the economic base (albeit in a nuanced way), it should be possible to use this analytical template to also identify the superstructural – base relationship through architectural case studies. The promotion of pre-fabricated housing in the architectural journals, lifestyle magazines, art exhibitions and TV programs of the post WWII United States could be cited as emblematic in this regard (Smith, 1989). They become definable as attempts to sustain the economic viability of industrial production in the US at the highly profitable rates attained during the war (Shanken, 2009). In this case, architectural representation prefigures reification in an attempt to sustain the Post-War industrial economic model and its raison d’être of continued profit.
Similar base level economic explanations could be applied to the exposition of Cecil Stoughton’s imagery of the Kennedy Camelot in Time Magazine, lifestyle journals of various sorts, and in TV programmes such as Jacqueline Kennedy’s ‘White House Tour’ aired by CBS in 1962 (Kennedy, 1962). In the context of this economic sub-level framework, all these mediated representations of Neoclassical domesticity become decipherable as ideological forces indirectly promoting domestic consumption in the idealised and stylistically historicist suburban developments of the period. Thus, Althusser’s model gives us both the terminology and the theoretical anatomy through which, firstly, to engage with and analyse how images of architecture coexist with constructed buildings in a given political or ideological milieu - as direct and indirect ideological apparatus operative at the superstructural level, and secondly, how they can, and do, operate at the material economic base.

- Antonio Gramsci

In many ways the work and ideas of Antonio Gramsci form a template of analysis and understanding that overlaps with that of Althusser. Developing the Western tradition of Marxism some three decades prior to Althusser, his work draw out a similar principle dichotomy between the direct and indirect methods for ensuring social conformation at the superstructural level - in Gramsci’s terminology the duality we described in the context of Althusser’s ideas however, takes the form of his Political and Civil Societies (Gramsci, 1995). Placed within his broader framework of analysis, these dual and allied sets of forces compose the two principle axis of his concept of hegemony (Showstack-Sasso, 1982).

In the hegemonic template of social analysis offered by Gramsci, the most important difference to the Althusserian configuration is the even greater emphasis Gramsci places, in the maintenance of a political and social status quo, on the role of indirect persuasive societal organs. Hence, for Gramsci, the superstructure becomes almost disembodied from the base and his indirect forces of Civil Society assume more importance than the direct modalities of Political Society which, he suggests, are only ever used as a means of last resort in ensuring the political status quo (Jones, 2006). For Gramsci then, the indirect carries greater weight than the direct in any dissection and analysis of social and political accords which - if transposed as a template to our examination of the correlations between the ‘direct’ physical manifestation of built architecture and its ‘indirect’ representation - shifts emphasis onto the latter. In our terminology, representation accrues more importance than reification.

- Civil and Political Architecture

If applied to an examination of, for example, the Post-WWI house building programs in Britain, initiated by the Labour Party in 1945, primary political bearing would not be placed on the construction program itself, and the actual housing of families, but rather on the ‘image’ of modernity and industrial productivity it was capable of portraying - an appearance seen as politically expedient and underpinned by a deeper ideological or hegemonic agenda – securing the social acceptance of the new technologically advanced late industrial economic model, as delineated by Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991).

Within this schemata, the ‘images’ of architectural modernity that littered the promotional literature of the Labour Party during this period become seen as more salient to the ‘construction’ of political image, and a new model economy, than the actual buildings were to the construction of modern housing infrastructure. As such, although modernist projects typified by the Fleet Road and Alexandra Road Estates designed by Sydney Cook and Neave Brown respectively, clearly did have a real and material impact - they housed thousands - (Fraser,
2007) their role as ‘images’ in the acceptance of the modern techno-industrial economy being forged in the ‘white heat of technology’, would be defined as more important. This, after all, would have more profound implications at a general social, political and economic level.

In this Gramscian construct, the architecture commissioned by governments and its appearance in official and unofficial political imagery, transmogrifies into two mutually influencing layers of the ideological and hegemonic tapestry operative at the superstructural level. Importantly, in this form, it is the most immaterial of the two architectural manifestations that now becomes paramount. The photo-op in front of a newly constructed house takes on more significance than the fact of its construction – which is seen as a form of act of last resort in the manufacture of a stable and ideologically compliant polity.

Although this prioritising template is what the Gramscian model most clearly advances, as is the case with Althusser, within his work one finds multiple other contentions pertinent to our discourse - each contributing to this reading of political architecture as principally operative in its ancillary manifestation as image. These arguments include:

- **Other hegemonic concepts:**

  **Negotiated hegemony** – the argument that our acquiescence in the assumption of particular social roles and norms is not externally imposed but rather a question of negotiated acceptance (Gramsci, 1995). Again, the social desire for membership of the home owning nation is archetypal here, as are assimilated social preferences for particular ‘styles’ of architecture for the home.

  **Historicism** – the proposition that any assemblage of theoretical ideas, social norms or preferences, has to be understood in its specific historical, economic and cultural context (Jones, 2006). Echoing the social art history tradition that was to emerge some years later, this Gramscian argument helps explains the asymmetries that surface in the precedents cited in this investigation, as it crosses centuries and continents.

  **War of Position** – related to his concepts of negotiated hegemony, this argument suggests that political and social concessions (on the part of all social groups, not just ‘ruling elites’) are intrinsic to the social developments played out at the level of Civil Society (Gramsci, 1995). The Tory policy in the early 1980s of the ‘right to buy’ could be construed in this light – as a policy ‘permitting’ council tenants access to the home owning class and the cultural connotations it carried.

As with the arguments of Althusser, these issues emerge throughout this project as it traces a general development of architecture’s relationship with its own political representation in the first instance and, later, probes its two specific sites of enquiry: the George W. Bush administration years 2000-2008 in the United States, and the Tony Blair New Labour years in the UK, 1997-2007.
PART FOUR

Ideology in Contemporary Architecture and imagery

- New Labour 1997-2007

In scrutinising New Labour and the UK context at the end of the 1990s in detail, it is inevitable that our deliberation is focused on the new generation of Labour politicians that exemplified the period. Coming after 18 years of Tory rule in the UK, the 1997 election campaign by Labour ushered in a new wave of political leaders and a nascent political ideology (Abse, 1996). The triumvirate of Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson and Alexander Campbell spearheaded the conversion of the Labour Party from what Lees-Marshment calls a Product Orientated Party, to a Marketing Orientated Party – a shift premised on a rendering of voters as consumers (Lees-Marshment, 2005). It was a fundamental conceptual displacement that also saw PR, marketing and advertising methodologies control political communication like never before. Resulting in the complete re-branding of the party as ‘New Labour’, this market orientated approach also corralled the Party’s association with architecture (Ramsey, 2002).

The 1979 campaign of the Tory party had successfully affiliate Labour with failed industrial policies - most visibly through their selection of Battersea Power Station to launch their election campaign. It was a strategy backed up by the association of Labour with inner city housing problems - epitomised by modernist housing estates such as Aylesbury in London. Consequently, the new Labour Party image presented in the 1997 campaign conspicuously avoided all references to Labour’s past – including the architecture and urban infrastructure projects it was aligned with. It was not until the morning of the election Victory that this architecture surfaced at all in any Labour imagery (Butler and Kavanagh, 1997). When it did, it did so in the guise of a counterpoint – a typology of what was to be rejected and reversed by the coming government.


Using the Aylesbury housing estate as the site from which to launch his ‘New Vision of the Future’ Tony Blair promised to demolish the estate - and those like it around the country. Proclaiming a ‘regeneration’ of the country – and its cities – the Labour Party explicitly disassociated itself with the architectural modernism it had championed in the past and inaugurated its ‘third way’ – a policy that presupposed a move to the political centre and the espousal of a neo-liberal approach to economic policy.
In architectural terms, the ‘third way’ resulted in the investiture of a number of policies and initiatives, including: the establishment of CABE; the setting-up of the Urban Task Force; the City of Culture scheme; the PFI funding framework and the Building Schools for the Future Program. All the buildings that were to emerge from these initiatives were to be the symbols of the new Labour party and had to conform to its marketing strategy for the British ‘design led’ (as opposed to manufacture led) economy, that was to be nurtured by Labour’s ‘third-way’ model – a change of course summed up by the marketing slogan, ‘Cool Britannia’ (Wring, 2004).

Within this milieu, the ideological underbelly of the ‘New Labour architecture’ of the period is evinced with clarity. Explicitly and implicitly, it was to reinforce the more liberal and ‘modern’ policies of the new party. Clearly foreshadowed in the political imagery of the 1997 campaign, the architectural ‘style’ to be promoted between 1997 and 2007 was intended to be ‘populist’, ‘spectacular’, ‘modern’ and ‘marketable’ – the antithesis of Old Labour and its ‘concrete’ architecture.

In examining the ideological context of this market orientated approach to political science, and the architecture that derived from it, this work will focus by way of precise example on the ‘Building Schools for the Future’ program. It suggests that the commissioning of architects such as Fielden Clegg, Ed Cullinen and Will Alsop within this scheme, can all be decoded in the context of this ideological extolling of a new design led economy; a new mechanism of public-private financing; and a new architectural ‘style’. In particular, attention will be paid to the Michael Faraday School, constructed on the symbolically important Aylesbury housing estate; an example of contemporary constructed architecture operating as emblematic reification – a visual icon of the New Labour ethos.

Michael Faraday School, Aylesbury Estate, London. Will Alsop

In embodying the New Labour ethos in very explicit aesthetic terms, this Will Alsop designed building offered itself as an image the Party was happy to promote in its own literature, as well as the site of photo opportunities for the press upon its opening. Being backgrounded by the semi brutalist concrete housing blocks of the estate itself, it morphed into a sort of architectural re-enactment of Tony Blair’s 1997 election morning image. Being a building based on ‘image’, and constructed on the site of a symbolically important political image in and of itself, it is a politically loaded building-image whose meaning is only fully explicated in the context of previous political imagery. Any differentiation between its importance as reified construct and represented symbol was definitively obscured from the outset.
In both its built form and ‘image’ state, this building exists and operates at what both Althusser and Gramsci define as the superstructural social level. As such, it can, according to their templates of analysis, be seen as a component part of the multiple social forces that maintain a coherent set of assumptions, aspirations and belief systems operative across society. In the specific Labour Party context of the 1997-2007 period, it can be seen as representing the creation of an architectural symbol in line with the neo-liberal recent Tory past the Labour Party now sought to align itself with, whilst distancing itself from the industrial associations of its own heritage. Indeed, even the name of the school celebrates an inventor rather than a producer or manufacturer.

Alternatively, this same template of analysis allows us to see the building as the representation of the Old Labour interest in education reframed in a new, modernised, guise. Furthermore however, it also permits an interpretation operative at a deeper level too. Whilst undoubtedly positive, its very function as an educational establishment would, in an extreme application of Althusser’s arguments, be seen as the modernising of the paramount ideological institution in modern democracies. It would thus become both a real and a conceptual attempt to ensure the ideological machinery of the education system remains relevant - and active - in the changing social environs of a modern neo-liberal economy. Read in these terms, it becomes a complex, layered and contradictory form of democratic political architecture operative as a reified and representational component of specific party political communication and, in addition, a component part of much more expansive ideological and hegemonic forces.

- The Republican Party 2000-2008:

This period of US political history obviously tenders the most explicit form of symbolic political-architectural construction imaginable - the Daniel Libeskind led project for Ground Zero (Sorkin, 2002; Goldberger, 2003. However, what this work centres on during this period, is an architectural phenomenon much more deeply embedded in the American psyche: suburbia. The history of suburbia in the US is of course extensively documented already. It is a story that Noam Chomsky designates as a ‘mass social engineering project’ that was, in essence, government-led (Chomsky, 2012). Inverting the standard view of suburbia, and the US economic system generally as a private business initiative, Chomsky cites the role of central government in the highways construction program of the Eisenhower years and the destruction of the rail system, as just the two most obvious examples of government’s role in this social engineering.

Another issue necessary to keep in relief in this regard, is the establishment of the National Association of House Builders in 1942 – a body that essentially became a lobbying group to add grist to the mill in the suburbanisation of America. Despite high profile attempts, such as the Case Study Program, (Smith, 1997) and the general acceptance of modernism by corporate America however (Martin, 2003), the architectural typology of suburbia fell in accord more closely with the ‘idealised home’ of Levittown than it did with modernism. It is in this respect that the first and most palpable link with the political imagery of the US emerges in the suburban context; the proffering of the East Wing of the Whitehouse as an idyllic domestic typology – most forcefully fostered through the portrayal of ‘Camelot’ in the photography of Cecil Stoughton during the Kennedy administration.

Identifiable in other high profile political-domestic exemplars in the US historical canon, such as Mount Vernon, it is possible to suggest a kinship between Neoclassicism, political architecture and domestic idealisation that runs throughout the history of the United States (Meacham, 2012). In drawing upon this link, it is arguable that the promotion of suburbia, and its stylistically
homogenised architecture, was not only played out in the commercial sector, but was, in line with Chomsky’s perspective, also operative at a political level too, albeit indirectly - as is always the case in a well-functioning ideological or hegemonic system (Althusser, 1970). The repeated association of Neoclassicism with the political architecture of the US, including its domestic manifestations then, can be seen as a vital component in understanding the ideology underlying suburbia.

A political or ideological reading of suburbia is, of course, already established (Kushner, 2009). In its presentation as a response to the ‘Red Threat’ in the 1950s it was explicitly political from the outset - its later association with ‘white flight’ being a social event that simply added more layers to its genetic socio-political tapestry. However, applying this explicitly ideological reading, and threading it through the political history of the United States, by way of Jefferson and Locke, (Jefferson, 2002; Locke, 1988) becomes essential in order to analyse its promotion, and hence appearance in the political imagery of the 2004 election campaign of George W. Bush.

By 2004, home ownership in the US was at an all-time peak: 69%. Coming on the back of 1989 FHA changes allowing increases in the size of mortgages banks were able to offer, and the more recent ‘National Home Ownership Strategy’ initiated by the Clinton administration in 1992, the 2004 election campaign policy of promoting suburban home ownership, was just the latest in a string of recent policies with the same end (Baker, 2009). The principle differentiation between the 1992 and 2004 initiatives however, was that the latter explicitly targeted the Latino community and was paralleled by the further relaxation of banking rules regarding mortgage concessions.

Leading the ‘Home Ownership’ campaign in 2004 was Mel Martinez - the son of Cuban immigrants who George W. Bush explicitly presented to the Latino community as “epitomizing the American dream” (Thomas, 2005.) Typically fronted by idealised images of Neoclassical suburban homes, the campaign rallies to promote this policy conspicuously drew upon the cache of symbolism attached to the economic-political ideas of John Locke, as well as the idealised cultural and architectural ideas ascribed to Thomas Jefferson. Reaching deep into the ideological heart of the United States, the campaign strategy and its appropriation of architectural imagery was fully, and multiply, ideological. Its particular use of architectural imagery and its correlation with the construction and sale of ever more Neoclassically tinged homes for the aspirational poor in the United States had, of course, catastrophic consequences.
In drawing on this historically symbolic treasure trove, the architectural imagery of the 2004 campaign not only referenced the US past, it did so in order to ‘interpellate’ a new generation of prospective house buyers. It set up what Althusser would term a lacunar discourse through which the game of negotiated hegemony was to be played out. Indeed, in Gramscian terms, the economic shift it claimed to personify for the Latino community can easily be labelled a move in a War of Position. In echoes of the ‘right to buy’ policy of the early Margaret Thatcher years in the UK, it conceded the cultural status of ‘property owner’ to a new generation of aspiring denizens.

In this context, the relationship between the everyday political imagery of Neoclassical elite lifestyles and the architectural aesthetic offered to the populace is unequivocal. We also get a clear amalgamation of architectural image and constructed architecture which is premised on the moulding and framing of both aspiration and taste along clear and entwined lines. Furthermore, we are witness to a clear forging of the dual aspects of Althusser’s ideological apparatuses and Gramsci’s civil society forces - and their fundamental connection with the continued propagation of an extant economic base model which, in this case, is one of individualised living and consumption.

In this case, everything about the architecture discussed was clearly predicated on its power as a collateral form of social ‘persuasion’ – as stressed by both Althusser and Gramsci as the bedrock of their ideological and hegemonic concepts. Within this milieu, once again, any anomaly between architecture as a material object and its use in, and its immaterial status as, ‘image’, is aggregated. The use of architecture in the democratic political context of communication conflates reification with representation. In short, we get the double sided coin of architecture’s role in the ideological and hegemonic constructs of a contemporary capitalist democracy.
Conclusions:

In dealing with these two recent exemplars of the reification and representation of architecture in the political and ideological realm, we attempt to conclude a series of arguments that lead us to re-evaluate the nature of political architecture. We intended to interrogate the status of political architecture as primarily a ‘constructed phenomenon’. Through emphasising its contingency on political imagery on the one hand, and the notion of its essence as an ideological and hegemonic configuration of social persuasion on the other, our emphasis shifts from architecture’s materiality, to the assignation of an equally prominent role to the imagery through which it is often filtered.

We suggest that the built projects, political programs, campaign images and the underlying ideological conceptions they represent, give us manifest prototypes for a conflation of built form and political image. In doing this in the sphere of the political imagery of the United States and the United Kingdom, we invariably accent how this occurs through the communicative channels that define contemporary democracies. Hence, we also reconsider the nature of political architecture as a phenomenon more frequently associated with state run economies and, often, dictatorships. Here, we propose that ‘political architecture’ is completely imbricated into contemporary capitalist economies such as those of the US and the UK - and what often seems to be their apolitical infrastructural, construction and architectural projects.

In developing this argument, emphasis is placed on recent examples, but attention is also drawn to the fact that this phenomenon has deep and intertwined historical roots. In beginning with an overview of the use, and combination of architectural and political imagery and buildings, we attempt to establish the credibility, and perhaps universality, of the ideological and hegemonic readings of social and cultural phenomena offered by Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. This historical universality is, indeed, integral to their arguments - Althusser’s suggesting that ‘ideology’ is a concept operative throughout history and Gramsci’s suggesting that ‘historicism’ is key to comprehending the nature of hegemony itself, as it helps explicate apparently disparate historic, geographic, social and political manifestations of underlying ideological and hegemonic base conditions and assumptions.

This final point also goes some way to explaining our US – UK axis and its historical slant - aspects of this study that reveal ideas of ‘universality’ and ‘specific historicism’. In both countries we hope to have convincingly argued that throughout the recent history of their democratic lives, architecture has not only been a direct, but also an indirect manifestation of economic, political, social and cultural forces – and that in its manifestation in two concomitant realms, as building and as imagery, it remains deeply ideological. By underlining the role of imagery, and specifically political imagery, we hope to have affirmed something new about how architecture functions in this capacity - that it is integral to the democratic process, and that reified form is only one way in which it operates. Thus, we hope to have exposed something new about the functionality of architecture as both representation and reification in the politico-media-complex of contemporary democracies.