



EPIPHYLOGENESIS



ADVENTURES AWAIT

Epiphylogenesis in the journey of
exploring your city

page 02

VISIT INVISIBLE CITY

unknown city by Italo Calvino

TOURIST GUIDE

FIND YOUR OWN CITY

Join world well-known explorer
Marco Polo on the journey of **55**
cities

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Introduction

EPIPHYLOGENESIS AND INVISIBLE CITY BY ITALO CALVINO

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‘**Epiphylogenesis**’, introduced by French philosopher **Bernard Stiegler** in his first trilogy: *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*¹ in 1994. Stiegler described epiphylogenesis as the exteriorization of human evolution in which he believed human and technology existed and developed at the same time. **Inspired by Martin Heidegger, Leroi-Gourhan, Jacques Derrida and Gilbert Simondon, Stiegler figured the epiphylogenesis as the ‘the evolution of prosthesis’².**

According to Stiegler, ‘Epiphylogenesis’ provokes the reflection between technics and human which potentially would lead to an ‘epochal historical rupture’³. City, as a civilised object through human evolution, has a similar concept from the co-determination of ‘Epiphylogenesis’. In **Italo Calvino**’s book ***Invisible City***⁴, the fifty-five cities described by Marco Polo, are the allegory of human experience in the city as a habitation. **The city could be a physical container of memory, while it could also be regarded as a mental prosthesis.** The city itself has life with the contribution from all the people who live there, whereas people were also influenced by the city to live.

The purpose of this essay is to explain Stiegler’s concept of epiphylogenesis and how this idea could reflect in the *Invisible City* by Italo Calvino with further relating to the visible city around us. This essay will be divided into three parts. The first part is about Stiegler’s study on Epiphylogenesis. And the second part is a journey by Marco Polo who would lead us to explore the invisible city with three subthemes: City and Memory, Cities and Signs and Continuous Cities. During this journey, we could evidence how the cities and human developed together relating to Stiegler’s idea. **This would lead to the third part on how Epiphylogenesis and Invisible city provokes us to think about the visible city in our real life.**

Get to know Epiphylogenesis

THE EXTERIORIZATION OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

Bernard Stiegler was a French philosopher, who robbed a bank to pay off his overdraft in 1976. His most influential work, the three-volume *Technics and Time*⁵, challenged philosophy's categorical opposition between *epistēmē* and *téchne*, arguing that humanity and technology, subject and object, are mutually imbricated.

The word “**Epiphylogenesis**”:

This compound word **Pylogenese** is a Greek word combined by *phulon* (tribe) + *genese* (origin), which means the **biological process** by which a taxon (of any rank) appears. The *epi* means “after” or “upon” in Greek, which indicated the concept of Epiphylogenesis is a reciprocal development of phylogenese.⁶

As Martin Heidegger described “*the main challenge for humanity was mastering those ‘means’*”⁷, the technology beyond instrumental was discussed further in Stiegler's theory. While **Leroi-Gourhan** believed the tool freed human and **Gilbert Simondon** discussed the ambiguity between interiority and exteriority⁸, Stiegler proposed the human evolution exteriorization is similar to biological evolution. At the same time, inspired by **Jacques Derrida** ‘originary supplementarity’⁹, Stiegler also defined how human became human: All these ‘supplementarity could reinforce the biological character, which is also called “**the evolution of prosthesis**”¹⁰.



Figure 1 “Epiphylogenesis” to other related philosophers, how Stiegler draw upon those ideas. Sketch by author, 2021.



TOOL LANGUAGE WRITING

Stiegler introduced three types of memory: ‘*genetic memory; epigenetic memory; and techno-logical memory.*’¹¹ The third memory is called epiphylogenesis which amalgamated languages and technics during the exteriorization. The human could use languages, writing, objects, and so on to document their memories. In this case, we could see a ‘history of the technics-which is the invention of the human.’¹²

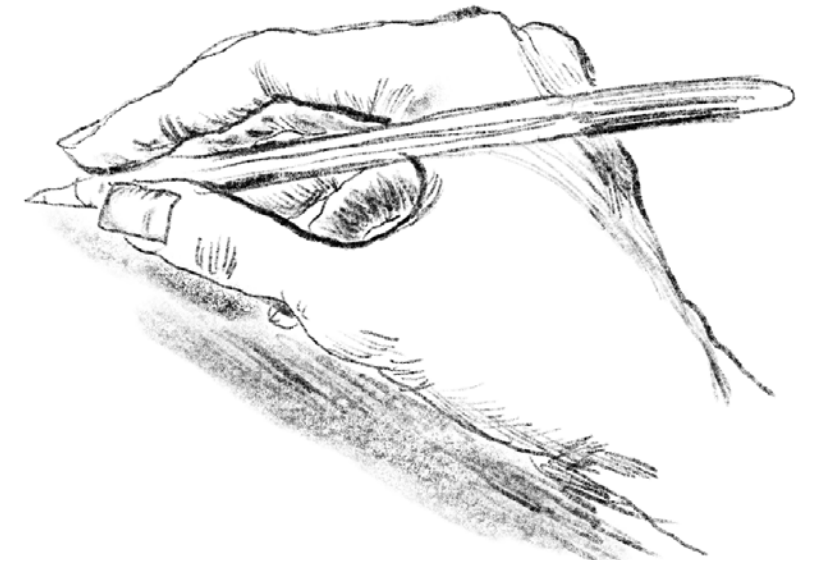


Figure 2 “Tool, Language, and writing”. Sketch by author, 2021.



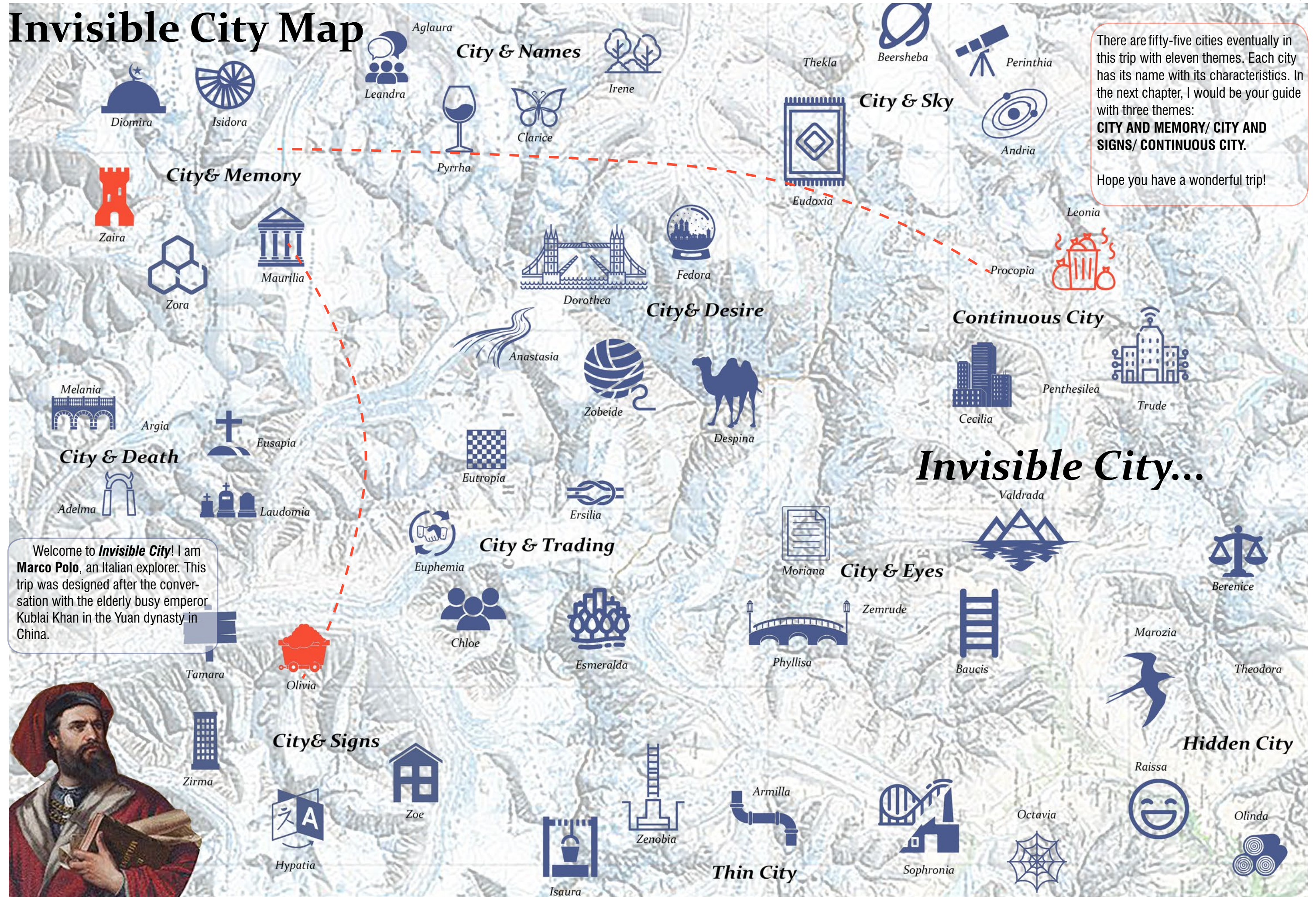
PROSTHESIS OF HUMAN



Figure 3 *Modern Times*, directed by Charlie Chaplin (1936; United States:United Artists, 2010), DVD.

Beginning with tools and language, and especially writing, Stiegler thought any extension of the biological individual into the wider world has a technical dimension. In *Modern Time*¹³, the eating machine could be regarded as an enhancement of biological capacities which Stiegler figured technics as the manifestations as an exteriorization. The technics (eating machine) seems to rescue people from moving while it re-binds us eventually.

Invisible City Map



There are fifty-five cities eventually in this trip with eleven themes. Each city has its name with its characteristics. In the next chapter, I would be your guide with three themes:

**CITY AND MEMORY/ CITY AND
SIGNS/ CONTINUOUS CITY.**

Hope you have a wonderful trip!

Welcome to ***Invisible City!*** I am **Marco Polo**, an Italian explorer. This trip was designed after the conversation with the elderly busy emperor Kublai Khan in the Yuan dynasty in China.

Invisible City...

CITY AND MEMORY

The city is a memory container of people who live here.



ZAIRA



Zaira is a magic city that remains the same streets, the houses, the doors and the windows happened in our daily life. Even though we might see similar objects in another city, but they are never the same as what happened in Zaira. The city could be called a 'social organism' outside ourselves passing the liberation of memory.

"The distance from the ground of a hanged usurper's swaying feet, the ribbon of queen's wedding, the whisper happening in the square..."¹⁴ Surprisingly, we would realize not only all the memory is folded into Zaira, but the city also continuously produced new memory for the new passengers. Zaira is similar to a sponge that soaked all our memory and expanded when we saw it.

The memory outside of the human body which Stiegler has suggested becomes the DNA of this city. It perhaps always remained the same, but the city indeed spoke post-speech and slide with individual subjectivities. To some extent, the city itself was not a machine forcing us to remember the past story, but the 'epiphylogenesis' memory remaining in the paper we used, the window we stood by, etc. which provoke us to think vaguely.

the festoons that decorate queen's nuptial procession

the firing range of a gunboat which has suddenly appeared beyond the cape

Figure 5 ZAIRA. Collage by author, 2021.

CITY AND SIGNS

Duality of the city



OLIVIA

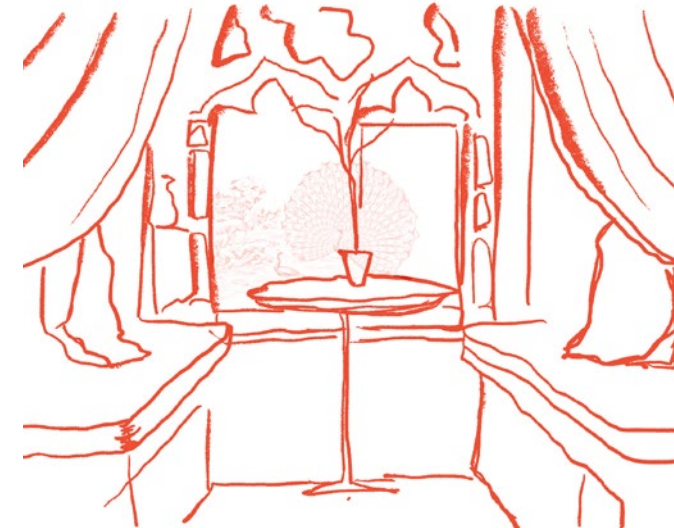


Figure 6 Cushion and windows in Olivia. Sketch collage by author, 2021.

The city **Olivia** was a city with contradiction. The language itself was a metamorphosis of the individual idea and hope. Unfortunately, there is always something language can never achieve. When we described it as a prosperous city with shiny palaces and furniture, it was also a city with dirty houses. "**Falsehood is never in words; it is in things**"¹⁵ The word has a lot of potential in expressing ideas. At the same time, when different people interpret it, the meaning is variable. Similar to the people who live in the city. The real experience could never be described with words.

The interpretation always takes away some feeling and produce new experience from it. The process of missing and creating is like the story of *Epimetheus and Prometheus*. It was happening in both the city and people at the same time. We might find thousands of way to describe Olivia, but the true Olivia has already become **a mental prosthesis** for everyone who lives there.



Figure 7 OLIVIA. Collage by author, 2021.

CONTINUOUS CITY

What behind the glamorous modern people?



LEONIA



Figure 8 MODERN LIFE. Collage by author, 2021.

Everyone in **Leonia** is the freshest person in the world. However, the rubbish from Leonia has not only invade other cities but also the higher and higher rubbish has threatened the safety of Leonia. This is precocious thinking about technology and human. The technology in the Leonia might develop a huge convenience to the people in the city. However, the disappearance of nature leads to a rupture of the Leonia.

To some extent, the rubbish in the city becomes redundant to human bodies.¹⁶ They are indeed the manifestations of an exteriorization of human's ugliness of greed. The more rubbish is the more greedy human beings.

As Stiegler described an apocalyptic situation, all this dirty and chaotic rubbish has already become a prosthesis of the human body. When people invented more technic, they were eroded by the subsequent influence.¹⁷ Technics and human are never separated, rather co-determination.



Figure 9 LEONIA. Collage by author, 2021.

PLANNING YOUR EPIPHYLOGENESIS TRIP

It is not 55 cities, it is the city we live in every day.



HONGKONG



Figure 10 Hong Kong Travel Guide, *Tram in Hongkong*, China Highlight, accessed May 17, 2021. <https://www.chinahighlights.com/hong-kong/>

Zaira, Olivia, and Leonia are all about one city. As Polo said, *"Every time I describe a city, I am saying something about Venice."*¹⁸

It could be Venice, whereas it could be any city you live in. If we regard them as Hongkong. Even though the colonial era has passed, the memory contained in the tram, the language and the architecture. City, as a mental prosthesis of the human body, was not created by the human. However, it exists when the human keep their ideas outside of their body. The city has an active life containing all the memory and continuously connect and influence the people who live there.

In some way, epiphylogenesis grows in the development of the city, which is a coexistence of the technology and human body. The memory of human remains in the city, the words related to the city and the form of continuity in the city all reflect on how the city (technology) and citizens (human) influence each other. As demonstrated through the essay, these seem to lead to an 'epochal historical rupture'¹⁹ from Stiegler's framework. However, as Marc Polo said at the end of the conversation:

"The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space."

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*²⁰

PLANNING YOUR EPIPHYLOGENESIS TRIP

It is not 55 cities, it is the city we live in every day.



HONGKONG

Nature seems away from our life. We have to admit that most city around the world like Hongkong has suffered a process of 'becoming more technological' trying to create more convenient for people. The squeeze space and tight city planning seem to bring tension into the city.

However, there is always someplace contains a large amount of memory, a series of stories, a sense of warmth in the hidden area of the city. (Figure 11) The light, the conversation, the food immediately bring back the closer relationship between people.

A city always has strong ambiguity similar to the life of every people. The high skyscrapers and the flat fruit shops are all Hongkong. The city developed in the gap between multiple perspectives. It exists as a physical apparatus for the human to inhabit. What is more important, it is a mental prosthesis for the human body to link their ideas and thoughts.

Epiphylogenesis inspired us to think about technics and human. Same as the relationship between the city and us, we are never opposed to each other rather co-evolute. If we want to prevent the rupture, we need to continuously 'seek and learn to recognize'²¹ in the world.



Figure 11 *Fruit shop in Hongkong.* The area around Graham St has been earmarked for a HK\$3.8 billion redevelopment © OliOpi / Shutterstock

Endnotes

1 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,1998). Translation of *Le Technique et le temps, 1: La faute d'Épiméthée* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins.

2 Chris Abel, “Technics and the Human”, in *The Extended Self: Architecture, Memes and Minds* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2016), 61-72.

3 Ibid, 65.

4 Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities*. [1st ed.]. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

5 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,1998). Translation of *Le Technique et le temps, 1: La faute d'Épiméthée* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins.

6 Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1*,

7 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, ed. Paperback (New York:Harper & Row, 1977).

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9 Chris L. Smith, “Speaking”, in *Bare Architecture: A Schizoanalysis*. 1st ed.(London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017),135-154.

10 Chris Abel, “Technics and the Human”, in *The Extended Self: Architecture, Memes and Minds* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2016), 61-72.

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12 Chris Abel, “Technics and the Human”, in *The Extended Self: Architecture, Memes and Minds* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2016), 61-72.

13 *Modern Times*, directed by Charlie Chaplin (1936; United States:United Artists, 2010), DVD.

14 Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities*. [1st ed.]. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974),10-11.

15 Ibid,62.

16 Ibid,114.-116.

17 Andrés Vaccari and Belinda Barnet, “Prolegomena to a Future Robot History: Stiegler, Epiphylogenesis and Technical Evolution,”*TRANSFORMATIONS Journal of Media & Culture, no. 17 (2009): Bernard Stiegler and the Question of Technics*: 10-12 http://www.transformationsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Vaccari-Barnet_Trans17.pdf

18 Ibid, 86.

19 Chris Abel, “Technics and the Human”, in *The Extended Self: Architecture, Memes and Minds* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2016), 61-72.

20 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 165.

21 Ibid,165.

Images

Cover: Caitlin Russell, *Invisible cities*, Graphite and digital Colour. accessed May 10, 202. <http://www.caitrussell.com/cities.html>

Figure 1 “Epiphylogenesis” to other related philosophers,how Stiegler draw upon those ideas. Sketch by author, 2021.

Figure 2 ‘ Tool, Language, and writing’. Sketch by author, 2021.

Figure 3 *Modern Times*, directed by Charlie Chaplin (1936; United States:United Artists, 2010), DVD.

Figure 4 *Map of Marco Polo’s journey*

Figure 5 *ZAIRA* Collage by author, 2021

Figure 6 Cushion and windows in Olivia. Sketch and collage by author, 2021.

Figure 7 *OLIVIA* Collage by author, 2021

Figure 8 Modern life. Sketch by author, 2021.

Figure 9 *LEONIA* Collage by author, 2021

Figure 10 *Hong Kong Travel Guide, Tram in Hongkong. China Highlight*, accessed May 17, 2021.<https://www.chinahighlights.com/hong-kong/>

Figure 11 *Fruit shop in Hongkong*. The area around Graham St has been earmarked for a HK\$3.8 billion redevelopment © OliOpi / Shutterstock

BACK COVER: Leemage/UIG, *Marco Polo*. Biography Images accessed May 17, 2021. <https://www.biography.com/explorer/marco-polo>

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invisible city

Thanks for choosing the trip ***Epiphylogenesis and Invisible City!*** Hope you find your visible city around you!



ZAIRA



CITY AND MEMORY

CITY AND SIGNS

OLIVIA



CONTINUOUS CITY



LEONIA

Planning your Epiphylogenesis trip



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