### 1AC (Non)Hope

#### The destructive force of capitalism creates voids of (non)existence a place that can be thought of as a place of death, a place of destruction, a place in which nothing escapes the grasps of the machine of capitalism – where the Real cannot be imbricated from the images produced, which is to that the map is the void that precedes the territory – for some this is the utopia that we have always been searching for a world produced by technological innovation of perfect markets, but like the Manta-Manaus corridor these utopias are coopted in the name of profitability where things like oil capital shape capitalism into its violent creation of colonization, extraction and genocide

#### This project is not centralized by urban greening projects but created by 21st century NewSpace companies and their aiding in conflict, accelerationist tendences to move into other industries is proof that NewSpace companies are a bottomless pit – a pit of consumption as it takes in more and more all in the name of sustaining unsustainable capitalism – a product that is created and maintained through both private and state capital – satellites to provide internet but in turn result in surveillance capitalism that biopolitically manages the global south into ultimate poverty – asteroid mining to keep the resources in the global north while the rest of the world suffers from byproducts of climate change, hunger, and neoliberal fascism all created by the global north

#### These processes are nothing new but are further proof that NewSpace companies act as a black hole taking and destroying everything in its path – energy cannot be destroyed, it can only be transformed. Therefore, the energy the black hole strips away from the matter it consumes is released back into space, structuring reality around itself, the same way that the matter capital consumes is broken down, transformed and released as value. the impact is eternal exploitation – value subsumes labor to capital, justifying utter exploitation of the working masses in the name of accumulation for accumulation’s sake, and then it shapes labor to the needs of capital creating a vicious cycle. this same abstract form of domination applies to the space which capital exploits, subsuming it and transforming it to its’ needs ultimately absorbing everything toward annihilation.

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Black holes are the eternal endgame of huge exhausted stars, whose explosive powers have lost the battle against their own gravitational forces. Smaller stars become red giants before shrinking into white dwarfs or neutron stars, in which the last structures of matter are able to retain their integrity. But the enormous mass of black holes causes them to enter a state of infinite collapse. According to Einstein’s theory of relativity, gravity is generated by the distortion of space-time caused by the mass of the objects within it. The space-time around a black hole becomes so contorted that light cannot escape, and black holes are therefore invisible. The point at which this occurs is called the event horizon, because from the point of view of a distant observer the extreme velocity with which objects approach it would make time appear to stop. Inside the event horizon, however, unobservable processes continue to unfold. The gravitational power of the black hole draws in vast amounts of matter from the galaxies that surround it. Having crossed the event horizon, this matter continues to collapse towards the singularity, an impossible point of infinite density buried deep within the void of the black hole. Yet as matter approaches this point of no return, it sheds vast quantities of energy that pour back into space. Through this combination of gravity and energy, black holes structure the entire universe, and at the heart of almost every galaxy is a supermassive black hole (Bartusiak 2015; Scharf 2012). Black holes are therefore ‘real holes in space-time’ (Bartusiak 2015, 15), which are unobservable and unrepresentable, and whose existence is only betrayed by their effects on the galaxies that surround them (Scharf 2012, 95– 121). As such, they are the cosmological equivalent of the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis. According to Lacan, our sense of reality is structured by a combination of symbolic and imaginary elements that defend us against a traumatic and unsymbolized Real. Just as black holes are invisible voids that structure the material universe, so the Real is ‘a hole, a gap, an opening in the middle of the symbolic order—it is the lack around which the symbolic order is structured’ (Zˇ izˇek 1989, 170). Like black holes, the Real is unobservable and its existence ‘can be constructed only backwards, from its structural effects. All its effectivity lies in the distortion it produces in the symbolic universe of the subject’ (Zˇ izˇek 1989, 169). The Real is therefore variously defined by Zˇ izˇek as ‘the central “black hole” around which the signifying network is interlaced’ (Zˇ izˇek 1992, 40); the ‘destructive vortex ... which we cannot approach too closely’ (Zˇ izˇek 2008, civ); and ‘the unfathomable X which ... curves and distorts any space of symbolic representation and condemns it to ultimate failure’ (Zˇ izˇek 1997, 124). This understanding of the Real also resonates with Marx’s theory of value. According to Marx (1976), the value of a commodity is entirely abstracted from its material use value, existing as a pure measure of the socially necessary labour time expended in its production, which is determined by innumerable acts of exchange conducted by private producers throughout the world market. Just as gravity structures the material coordinates of the universe, despite having no concrete materiality of its own, so the law of value determines the space-time of global capitalism, despite the fact that value is a social relation and not a quality inherent in discrete material ‘things’. As Marx himself once argued, value, like gravity, is therefore ‘immaterial but objective’ (Marx, quoted in Harvey 2013, 70). Building on this understanding of value, Chris Arthur (2002) has argued that ‘capitalism is marked by the subjection of the material process of production and circulation to the ghostly objectivity of value’ (154). Like the Lacanian Real, value is therefore an unobservable presence –absence that structures our entire social universe—‘a void at the heart of capitalism’ (154). This description again recalls the image of the black hole, which has been defined as ‘mass without matter ... the mass disappears from our view; only its gravitational attraction remains behind to affect us’ (John Wheeler, quoted in Bartusak 2015, 107). Furthermore, like the black hole, value not only structures the universe of global capitalism, but also drags an ever-increasing mass of use values into its sphere of expanded reproduction, as ‘a shape opposed to all materiality, a form without content, which yet takes possession of the world the only way it can, through draining it of reality’ (Arthur 2002, 167). This understanding of value resonates with Moishe Postone’s (1993) theorization of capital as ‘an abstract form of domination’, which is created and progressively reinforced by our own alienated productive activity. Postone follows Marx in arguing that capitalist production is undertaken for the sole purpose of extracting surplus value through the exploitation of living labour. Competition compels all capitalists to obey an increasingly monolithic logic of ‘accumulation for accumulation’s sake’, and capital emerges as an abstract form of domination, which is ‘blind, processual and quasiorganic ... an alienated, abstract self-moving Other, characterized by a constant directional movement with no external goal’ (Postone 1993, 270, 278). This process begins with what Marx conceptualized as the formal subsumption of labour to capital: the subordination of pre-existing forms of production under the reign of wage labour. Formal subsumption, however, is limited to the production of absolute surplus value. This can only be increased through the expansion of the labour force and the extension of the working day, and as such has concrete limits. In its blind desire for endless selfvalorization, capital therefore drives the transition from the formal to the real subsumption of labour, through which the labour process itself is transformed in accordance with the requirements of capital. Real subsumption enables the production of relative surplus value, through the deployment of technologies that increase the productivity of labour and the rate of surplus value extraction, thus further empowering capital as an abstract form of domination (Marx 1976, 1019 –1038; Postone 1993, 283– 284). This entails a corresponding transition from the formal to the real subsumption of space. If capital initially occupies and exploits the space that it encounters, the shift to real subsumption implies the concrete transformation of this space into an apparatus for the production and realization of relative surplus value (Harvey 1982, 186). Planetary urbanization can be understood as the realization of this ‘tendency towards real spatial integration’ (Smith 1984, 186), through the interconnection of global megalopolises, the construction of transnational transportation systems and the opening of vast terrains of resource extraction at the boundaries of planetary space.3 Planetary urbanization thus transforms the planet into ‘an infernal machine’ for the endless valorization of value (Jameson 2011, 146), through which capital ‘realizes its own agenda of “accumulation for accumulation’s sake, production for production’s sake”’ (Harvey 2014, 58). Like a black hole, this machine ‘must continue to absorb everything in its path, to interiorize everything that was hitherto external to it’ (Jameson 2011, 146). This process of implosion is dialectically related to an explosion of infrastructure networks and transportation systems dedicated to ‘the annihilation of space by time’ (Marx, quoted in Harvey 2001, 244), which further contributes to the process described by David Harvey (2001, 123) as ‘time-space compression’—an expression that recalls the extreme distortion of space-time produced by a black hole. This dialectic of implosion –explosion mirrors the dynamics described by the astrophysicist Caleb Scharf (2012): ‘The more matter is fed into its core, the more food there is for the black hole, and the more the black hole will pump out disruptive energy’ (165). The contradictory forces of planetary urbanization likewise unleash a wave of creative destruction that takes the form of a ‘kaleidoscopic churning of socio-spatial arrangements’ (Brenner 2014b, 17) reminiscent of ‘the enormous whirlpools of turbulence’ that surround ‘the thrashing forces of a supermassive black hole’ (Scharf 2012, 180, 166).4

#### The abstraction of space concludes with universalized alienation – capitalists seize all land and resources, divide them into parcels to be bought and sold, and homogenize everything into exchange-values, rendering all space and life as controllable and dominated.

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Consistent with Lefebvre’s understanding of abstraction as a process in which materiality and representations are dialectically intertwined, the emergence of abstract space involves both the concretization of abstract social relations in material reality and the growing social power of an abstract rationality. Through the concrete process of primitive accumulation—the separation of peasants from the land and the creation of markets in land and labor—space ceases to be “sacred and inalienable as a patrimonial and collective good and becomes a commodity just as any other” (Lefebvre, 1980/2009, pp. 214). As a commodity to be bought and sold in lots, space acquires the properties of homogeneity, divisibility, and interchangeability characteristic of exchange value (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, pp. 75, 337). This process, through which space becomes an abstraction in social practice (Harvey, 1989, p. 177) is accompanied by the rise to conceptual prominence of the abstract Cartesian representation of space as homogenous, continuous, and emptied of all natural and social content (Casey, 1997, pp. 273-274; Sohn-Rethel, 1978, pp. 48-49). For Lefebvre, this representation is no mere fetishized appearance of capitalist social relations (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 307) but functions as a technology of “abstraction wielding awesome reductive power vis-à-vis ‘lived’ experience” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 52). As Elden (2004, pp. 183) points out, “Lefebvre and Heidegger both realize the Cartesian understanding of space as calculable and controllable allows social and technological domination.” Used by the state as a technocratic device, Cartesian representations of space become instrumental in the planned production of abstract space. The representation of space as a homogenous plane serves in the concrete production of a homogenous national territory, (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, pp. 287, 355), while the representation of space as a void facilitates the manipulation of social space as an exploitable resource, “a neutral medium into which disjointed things, people, and habitats might be introduced” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 308).6 The outcome is the reduction of natural and social reality to a “naked, empty social space stripped bare of symbols” (Lefebvre, 1961/2002, p. 305). Absolute space and historical space are “liquidated” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 122), and “representational space disappears into the representation of space” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 398). However, despite its tendency toward homogenization, abstract space is riven with contradictions, arising from the residues of the social spaces that preceded it, and from its simultaneous tendency toward fragmentation. In defining abstract space as both homogenous and fragmented, Lefebvre is referring on one hand to its existence as a commodified space—in which all elements are rendered equivalent as exchange values, but which is necessarily fragmented into individual lots and parcels (Lefebvre, 1977/2003, pp. 87-88), and on the other hand to its status as a political space—in which the state aims both to create a homogenous society and to exploit and control existing differences (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 282).7 For Lefebvre, abstract space both contains and obstructs the possibility of a differential space, which would draw on the remnants of absolute and historical spaces, and on the contradictions that abstract space itself produces, accentuating differences in contrast to the homogeneity of abstraction, while simultaneously overcoming alienation by “restoring unity to what abstract space breaks up,” and by emphasizing appropriation and use “against exchange and domination” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, pp. 52, 368).

#### Thus, we affirm the appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust from a view of the event horizon – the event horizon is a destructive yet hopeless creativity that forces Real utopias into existence – the event horizon asks us to lose all hope in the current world order out of the pure urge of survival that allows the creativity to invent a new space – the construction of Real utopias does not necessitate a faith in the ‘not yet’, it only demands the urgency of oblivion.

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These are the chaotic material dynamics of black hole capitalism, driven by the Real void of value at its heart. Just as Georges Bataille’s scandalous image of a ‘solar anus’ sought to parody and undermine Cartesian and Romantic venerations of a universal harmony (Bataille 1931; Boldt-Irons 2001), so the metaphor of black hole capitalism aims to shatter any illusions of planetary urbanization as a rational or controllable process. This brings us to the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, we can only retain our sense of ‘reality’ by deploying fantasies that obscure or explain away the gaps and holes of the Real, in order to conceal the fact that ‘the symbolic order is structured around some traumatic impossibility, around something which cannot be symbolized’ (Zˇ izˇek 1989, 123). Fantasies are therefore not dreams by which we escape reality, but are fundamental to the structure of ‘reality’ itself, allowing us to come to terms with the ‘traumatic kernel’ at ‘the very heart’ of our symbolic universe (Zˇ izˇek 1989, 133). In the case of planetary urbanization, these fantasies must paper over the traumatic Real of black hole capitalism, by concealing the power of capital as an abstract form of domination. Such fantasies take countless forms. Here we focus specifically on those that frame the implacable dynamics of implosion –explosion as objects of social need and human desire. Black holes generate ‘jets of matter ... that can accelerate particles to huge velocities that are significant fractions of the speed of light’ (Scharf 2012, 158). At the level of our social reality, capital is also an infernal engine of acceleration that relentlessly compels the production of territorial infrastructures that drive towards the annihilation of space by time. In his study of the historic emergence of planetary urbanization, In the World Interior of Capital, Peter Sloterdijk (2013) has noted the profound existential consequences of this endless obliteration of spatial distance and stability, embodied in an unconscious knowledge that we ‘can no longer rely on anything except the indifference of homogenous infinite space’ (23). Our subjugation to this liquid and volatile space-time is framed by a variety of utopian fantasies, chief among which is ‘the neoliberal ... zero gravity utopia, where flows push towards light speeds’ (Featherstone 2010, 128). The etymology of utopia is ‘no place’ (Pinder 2002, 237), and the fantasy space of neo-liberal capitalism takes this literally, ‘despatializing the real globe, replacing the curved earth with an almost extensionless point’ and revelling in ‘the cult of explosion’ (Sloterdijk 2013, 13). This futuristic capitalist utopianism also possesses its radical counterpart, embodied in the heroic modernism of the socialist development projects explored in All That Is Solid Melts into Air, in which Marshall Berman (1982) celebrates the Faustian pact made with capital’s own dynamics, in accordance with which ‘the most valuable commodity, from Mephisto’s perspective, is speed’ (49). The latest incarnation of this tradition is the currently influential Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics, which embraces the ferocious dynamics of global capitalism, insisting on a revolutionary politics ‘at ease with a modernity of abstraction, complexity, globality and technology’, while emphasizing that these gains are ‘not to be reversed, but accelerated beyond the constraints of the capitalist value form’ (Srnicek and Williams 2013). The vast streams of energy exploding from black holes are dialectically related to the tendency for matter ‘to fall into, to pour into, the deep wells and bowl-like distortions in spacetime caused by mass’ (Scharf 2012, 125). In black hole capitalism, the explosive rage of planetary urbanization is likewise profoundly entangled with an equally powerful drive towards implosion, both in the massification of existing agglomerations and in the rapid concentration of capital in previously peripheral hinterlands (Brenner and Schmid 2015). This chaotic process of implosion is both expressed and concealed by the fetish object of ‘the city’, which David Wachsmuth (2014, 356) has claimed ‘is an ideological representation of urbanization processes rather than a moment in them’. But ideologies themselves can be productive of the realities that they misrepresent. As Zˇ izˇek (1997, 6) has noted, ‘the relationship between fantasy and the horror of the Real it conceals is much more ambiguous than it may seem: fantasy conceals this horror, yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal’. The history of capitalism is replete with utopian fantasies of perfectly ordered cities that do not merely remain ‘on paper’, but that are endowed with the social power to transform reality in their image. As Ross Adams (2010) has noted, these utopian schemes are typically underpinned by a ‘collective fear of some palpable sort, whether it be fear of revolution (Le Corbusier in the 1920s) ... or our new fear: ecological collapse (“green architecture”)’ (2). In the latter case, Adams argues, the ideological function of the contemporary ‘eco-city’ is transparently evident: ‘it is merely a phantasmatic screen, prohibiting us from confronting the true terrors of ecological catastrophe, while at once imploring us to silently identify this terror with the collapse of liberal capitalism itself’ (7). As in the case of explosion, these implosive bourgeois utopias are paralleled by a radical tradition of ‘utopias of spatial form’ (Harvey 2000, 104– 113), embodied in a long history of communes and autonomous zones. It is precisely this ‘folk political’ tradition, however, that the accelerationists oppose, mocking the idea that ‘the abstract violence of globalised capital’ can be successfully countered by ‘the flimsy and ephemeral “authenticity” of communal immediacy’ (Srnicek and Williams 2013). Merrifield (2013b, 28) agrees, insisting that ‘The supersession of capitalism ... comes about ... by running through its corridor of flames’, and asserting the impossibility of a reversion ‘to quaint, archaic times, when cities were villagey and less intimidating, both conceptually and existentially’. This tension between utopian fantasies of implosion and explosion is underpinned by a shared humanist affirmation of hope, which has traditionally animated the pursuit of utopia. According to Ana Dinerstein (2014, 23), hope is ‘the strongest of all human emotions that, when educated, allows us to properly engage with a hidden dimension of reality that inhabits the present one: the not yet’. This faith in hope is not only shared by Ernst Bloch, Lefebvre and other utopian thinkers, but is also evident in those anti-utopian strains of Marxism that insist that the ‘hidden dimension’ of the ‘not yet’ is to be found in the internal contradictions of capital, rather than in folk political struggles to immediately realize the future worlds that allegedly dwell within the capitalist present. These opposed positions structure revolutionary thought. But from a Lacanian perspective, their shared faith in the ‘not yet’ is precisely the obstacle that blocks the possibility of a Real utopia, functioning as what Zˇ izˇek (1997) calls a ‘sublime object ... the spectral object which has no positive ontological consistence, but merely fills in the gap of a certain constitutive impossibility’ (97). The very structure of this ‘symbolic field’ is therefore ideological, to the extent that it contains the ‘not yet’ as ‘the place of some structural impossibility, while simultaneously disavowing this impossibility’ (98). The construction of Real utopias can only begin by traversing this fantasy and confronting the constitutive impossibility that it conceals: the absence of any inherently utopian dimension either within or beyond the Real of Capital. As we will see in the following sections, the politics of planetary urbanization is infused with utopian fantasies of implosion and explosion that contribute to the long tradition of ‘obscure utopias’ referred to by Jameson (2005), including ‘liberal reforms and commercial pipedreams, the deceptive yet tempting swindles of the here and now, where Utopia serves as the mere lure and bait for ideology’ (3). But black hole capitalism is also a space of Real utopias, which traverse these fantasies through the urgent construction of possible worlds at the impossible frontier of the event horizon. As the border of oblivion, the event horizon would appear to be the point at which all hope is lost. But Zˇ izˇek (2011) argues that it is precisely this loss of hope that opens the possibility of a Real utopia: ‘The true Utopia is when the situation is so without issue, without a way to resolve it within the coordinates of the possible, that out of the pure urge of survival you have to invent a new space. Utopia is not a kind of free imagination. Utopia is a matter of the utmost urgency.’ To the extent that utopian fantasies are structured to avoid a direct confrontation with the Real, and as such function to reproduce the established coordinates of reality, so a Real utopia can only be constructed in the context of the disintegration of all such fantasies, in which the political subject ‘undergoes a “loss of reality” and starts to perceive reality as an “unreal” nightmarish universe with no firm ontological foundation; this nightmarish universe is ... that which remains of reality after reality is deprived of its support in fantasy’ (Zˇ izˇek 1999, 57). In the context of the present discussion, we could reformulate this argument as follows: black hole capitalism is the ‘nightmarish universe’ that remains after planetary urbanization has been deprived of its support in utopian fantasies, and ‘the traumatic passage [through] this “night of the world”’ (Zˇ izˇek 1999, 38) is a necessary moment in the creation of a Real utopia. Indeed, black hole imagery is frequently encountered in psychoanalytic sessions, in which it is sometimes interpreted not as a sign of psychotic breakdown, but rather ‘as pointing towards possibilities of becoming that are not yet represented. ... The “black hole” or “void”, the no-thing, can open the space for the emergence of new elements. This experience may precipitate trauma and disruption, but also a “rearrangement” or “transformation” of subjectivity as well as cultural creation.’ (Hinton 2007, 433, 444) From this perspective, the event horizon is not only a space of destruction but also a place of potential creative power, in which utopian fantasies are traversed and Real utopias are forced into existence. The latest astrophysical theory resonates with this possibility, pointing towards ‘opportunities for stars to be born within the great gathering disk of material accreting into a black hole’, and suggesting that ‘disturbances in the circulating matter could allow for its localized agglomeration into new objects. Instead of just destroying the arrangement of matter, the black hole environment could conceivably encourage a new start’ (Scharf 2012, 212).

#### Debate is imbricated in the violence that is racial capitalism information schemas and codes reify these politics that make the violence of the status quo inevitable – Ryan Berrmesiter a debater for Northwestern now the head and prime defender of Palentier – the company that makes technology to sell to ICE – Neil Kyteal a debater who defended child slavery in the Supreme Court – these examples highlight the true insidious nature that debate creates – a black hole that sucks people in to spit out those ripe to defend the products of racial capitalism

#### These processes and configuration of the black hole is not just a product of the world put rather a symbolic order that is represented and manifested through information – when the NC gets up and says cap good and T for 7 minutes remember that their performative investments in those arguments come to the justification of planetary urban expansionism that in the colonization of native land and the extraction of their resources

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In Representing Capital, Fredric Jameson (2011) notes the impossibility of directly representing the unimaginable totality of global capitalism, ‘in which the informing power is everywhere and nowhere all at once, and at the same time in relentless expansion, by way of appropriation and subsumption alike’ (7). Jameson insists, however, that the representation of capital must be attempted, drawing our attention to Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams, which ‘presupposes that any full or satisfactory representation of the drive is impossible’, while nonetheless asserting ‘the possibility in the drive of some minimal expression’ (Jameson 2011, 7). Slavoj Zizek (1999) makes a similar argument, suggesting that the unrepresentability of capital embodies ‘the Lacanian difference between reality and the Real: “reality” is the social reality of the actual people involved in the production process, while the Real is the inexorable “abstract” spectral logic of Capital which determines what goes on in social reality’. (331) Although capital is Real, and as such is located outside the symbolic order, we can deploy the power of metaphor to grasp something of its intangible existence. As Zˇ izˇek (1992) explains, in such circumstances it is ‘precisely by “looking awry” [that we can see] the thing in its clear and distinct form, in opposition to the “straightforward” view that sees only an indistinct confusion’ (11). This paper aims to contribute to the impossible representation of capital by looking awry at the phenomenon of planetary urbanization, which we metaphorically reimagine as black hole capitalism. In recent years, an emergent literature has begun to theorize the latest wave of capitalist development in terms of planetary urbanization (see, e.g. Arboleda 2015; Brenner 2014a; Brenner and Schmid 2014, 2015; Kanai 2014; Merrifield 2013a, 2013b).1 Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, this literature understands planetary urbanization as a process of creative destruction that is collapsing the traditional morphological divisions between urban/rural and city/countryside into a churning morass of ‘implosion –explosion’, through which capital agglomerates into ever greater concentrations while simultaneously extending the urban fabric into the furthest reaches of planetary space. As such, the concept of planetary urbanization resonates with the cutting edge of cosmological theory, according to which black holes are not purely destructive forces, but also emit vast quantities of energy that structure the galaxies that surround them (Bartusiak 2015; Scharf 2012). The black hole metaphor, however, extends beyond these parallel processes of implosion –explosion to grasp material and ideational dimensions of planetary urbanization that the current literature does not adequately address. This literature follows Lefebvre in focusing its analysis of planetary urbanization on the state, which for Lefebvre is the key agent in the production of abstract space (see, e.g. Brenner 2014b, 20; Lefebvre 1991, 51), and in reproducing Lefebvre’s dialectic of ideological representations and material reality (see, e.g. Lefebvre 1991, 33; Wachsmuth 2014). In this paper, we begin instead from a synthesis of historical geographical materialism—which prioritizes value over the state in its understanding of capitalist development (Harvey 1982; Smith 1984), and the psychoanalytic critique of ideology—which locates the key ontological rupture of the social world, not in the relation between representation and reality, but in the gap between a symbolically constituted ‘reality’ infused with fantasmatic representations, and a traumatic and unrepresentable Real (Zˇ izˇek 1989, 1997). As an invisible point of infinite density only identifiable by its spatiotemporal effects, the black hole resembles both the Lacanian Real (as a hole in ‘reality’ around which the symbolic universe is structured) and the Marxian theory of value (as a void at the heart of capitalist society). The metaphor of the black hole thus allows us to ‘look awry’ at planetary urbanization, bringing into view certain intangible dimensions of the phenomenon that are missed by much of the literature on the topic, which could be accused of attempting an overly ‘direct representation’ of global capitalist dynamics (Wilson and Bayo´ n 2015a). In particular, the metaphor invites us to explore the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization, which have been given scant attention by the dominant strands of the literature. This is somewhat surprising, given the avowedly Lefebvrean foundations of planetary urbanization theory, and Lefebvre’s own commitment to the concept of utopia (Pinder 2013). It is, however, an absence that the literature on planetary urbanization shares with the majority of contemporary critical urban research (Baeten 2002), as a symptom of the broader crisis of radical thought (Buck-Morss 2002). This absence is not total. Andy Merrifield (2013b) has identified the planetary with an immanent space of non-work, and Marcelo Lopes de Souza (2015) has called for the right to the city to be replaced by a ‘right to the planet’. But the more hegemonic contributions to this literature have tended to represent planetary urbanization in terms of the rational implementation of technocratic strategies and the implacable grinding out of economic mechanisms, in which there would appear to be little space for utopian possibilities. In the conclusion to their programmatic statement on planetary urbanization, for example, Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid’s (2015) utopian vision is limited to the suggestion that ‘urban society is ... never an achieved condition, but offers an open horizon in relation to which concrete struggles over the urban are waged’ (178). The metaphor of the black hole would seem to be of little help in this regard, given the distinctly dystopian connotations of its cosmological point of comparison. Yet the chaotic violence implicit in this metaphor is intended to contribute to the generation of a certain apocalyptic utopianism, functioning as what Cunningham and Warwick (2013, 434) have called ‘a scenario for which it is not the future but our own present re-imagined as apocalypse that operates as a para-science fiction political strategy—one which seeks to make the reader or viewer perceive that catastrophe is not to come, but is already here’. It is only on the basis of such a realization, as Zˇ izˇek (2011) has suggested, that a Real utopia becomes possible, in contrast to the utopian fantasies through which the catastrophe of global capitalism is displaced and concealed. Recent astrophysics has rendered the black hole metaphor consistent with this apocalyptic utopian possibility, through the discovery of the black hole environment as a space of wild creative energies as well as a vortex of destruction (Scharf 2012). Here the traditional division between utopia and dystopia breaks down, as it is precisely the traumatic confrontation with dystopia that generates the circumstances in which a Real utopia can and must emerge. We therefore draw on the black hole metaphor in exploring the utopian dimensions of planetary urbanization, replacing the utopia/dystopia dichotomy with a dialectic of utopian fantasies that function to conceal the apocalyptic dynamics of the Real of Capital, and Real utopias constructed out of urgent necessity at the event horizon of black hole capitalism. These ideas are illustrated through the case of the Manta – Manaus multimodal transport corridor, and its implementation in Ecuador. Launched in 2007, the corridor runs from Manta, on the Pacific coast of Ecuador, to Belen on the Atlantic coast of Brazil, via the booming industrial city of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon. It is part of the Initiative for the Regional Integration of South American Infrastructure (IIRSA), a US$158 billion infrastructure project that aims to transform the entire continent in the image of transnational capital. The IIRSA has been identified by Neil Brenner (2014c, 184) as a paradigmatic example of planetary urbanization in practice, and would appear to be a purely technocratic project devoid of utopian elements. Indeed, an animated graphic produced by Brenner’s Urban Theory Lab at Harvard shows a web of economic infrastructure including the Manta –Manaus corridor spreading silently and inexorably across South America, and generating the impression of ‘large-scale territorial planning strategies’ (Brenner 2014b, 20) being automatically realized on the ground.2 Yet our field research on Manta –Manaus has shown it to be infused with a multitude of utopian dreams and desires. Through an exploration of these dimensions of the Manta –Manaus corridor, we demonstrate black hole capitalism to be a far more hope-filled place than it may at first appear, while arguing that a Real utopia can only arise at the point at which all such hopes have been annihilated. We begin by looking awry at planetary urbanization through the metaphor of black hole capitalism, and setting out its relationship to utopian fantasies and Real utopias. We then illustrate this relationship by appeal to the twin utopian fantasies that frame the dialectic of implosion –explosion in the case of Manta –Manaus. On the one hand, fantasies of postmodern hyperspace and geographical freedom have romanticized the explosion of the Manta –Manaus highway. On the other, fantasies of ecological capitalism and perfect spatial order have domesticated the implosion of capital in Providencia—an intermodal port city in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where Manta –Manaus shifts from road to river. These twin fantasies have been shattered by the Real dynamics that they conceal, as a rapid agglomeration of oil capital has appropriated the infrastructure of Manta –Manaus and destroyed the planners’ dream of a green and pleasant ecocity. At the event horizon of this maelstrom, a marginalized indigenous community has urgently constructed a Real utopia in the form of an autonomous urban project created to prevent its dispossession. The paper concludes with some further reflections on the utopian dimensions of black hole capitalism.