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# **Blade Runner - Which aspects became Reality?**

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## **1. Summary: Blade Runner (1982)**

The movie *Blade Runner* takes place in Los Angeles in the year 2019. It conveys a dystopian world where the sun has lost its power so it is nearly dark outside and it rains a lot. Moreover, peoples' lives mainly happen in the center of cities where there are no parks or plants in general. On top, real animals are almost extinct. In contrast to the environmental situation, the technology is extremely advanced – cars can fly and devices such as a television can be controlled by voice. The greatest technological innovation is the creation of artificial humans – the replicants. Responsible therefore is the Tyrell Corporation which gives the impression to be a supranational organization. Optically one cannot distinguish between real humans and the replicants but the physical and psychological abilities of the replicants outperform those of real people. Some of the replicants even manage to develop their own emotions after a few years. Therefore, the service life of all models was then limited to four years because of security concerns.

After a rebellion of the replicants, they were banished from the earth and the humans created a special unit – the blade runners – to detect and eliminate all of the illegally remained replicants. This task is not as easy because of the indistinguishability of humans and replicants. The only way to detect a replicant is the Voight-Kampff test which can expose artificial emotions. Rick Deckard who is a former blade runner is the main character and gets called out of retirement because four replicants illegally trespassed on the earth. Those replicants of the newest Nexus-6 series came to earth because their service life is almost expired and they want the Tyrell Corporation to extend it.

Coming to the plot of the movie, Deckard goes to the headquarter of the Tyrell Corporation where he tests Rachael who was introduced to him as a human being. With the help of the Voight-Kampff analyzer he finds out that she is a replicant which she did not know before. After finding this out, Racheal flees from the company boss Dr. Eldon Tyrell who kept her at home for his personal experiments. During the movie, Deckard and Racheal fall in love with each other what makes Deckard question his job.

In the meanwhile, the rebellious replicants find J.F. Sebastian who is a genetic designer for the Tyrell Corporation and who lives completely alone in an old hotel. The replicants, especially Roy Batty who is the leader of them, want Sebastian to provide them access to the private home

of Tyrell and they force him to do so. Being there they want Tyrell to extend the lifetime of Batty but he can or does not want to do it. In the end of the scene Batty kills Tyrell.

Deckard kills a replicant during this time. She works in a night club and owns a snake which is, of course, an artificial animal because she cannot afford a real one. While Deckard gets into a fight with another member of their group, Racheal shoots the replicant and saves Deckard's life. The next time Deckard kills someone is in the flat of Sebastian, he namely fights with Pris, the mistress of Batty. Batty finds the dead body of Pris which leads to the final battle between him and Deckard. Even though Deckard is physically inferior to Batty, he wins the fight because the lifespan of Batty runs out in the last moment.

In the last scene of the movie, Deckard and Rachael leave the city so that Rachael does not have to die.

## **2. Analysis**

We think there are some aspects from the lesson of January 16<sup>th</sup> that can be found in Blade Runner. For example, we talked about a universal language. In class we said, that it could happen, that one day there will be one, but we do not expect other languages to die out. Similar to our thoughts in class, the people in Blade Runner speak a new language that is a mixture of different languages. However, Rick Deckard for example still talks German (in the OV probably English) to his supervisor, the replicants or the boss of the Tyrell Corporation. So there is a new language but according to the movie the original, non-merged languages will still have their *raison d'être*.

What else is very interesting when watching Blade Runner, is the Asiatic impact on the Western World. At first, we thought that we got this impression only due to the fact that the scenery is in Chinatown. However, when continuing with the movie it becomes obvious that no matter where Rick Deckard goes, the number of Asiatic looking people predominates. In class we took a look at a picture of the average earth inhabitant and we could observe that this person looked Asiatic. So we think in 1982, the prediction of this merging races for 2019 is a bit ahead of time but as we could see from class, there is some truth behind it but probably only in the longer run.

Another important aspect is the elite in Blade Runner – that is represented by the Tyrell Corporation. The Tyrell Corporation is responsible for the innovation of the replicants. When

watching the video, we got the impression that this corporation is like a supranational organization. Despite some policemen or blade runner, we cannot identify people from politics. In this case, the business seems to have the highest power which is why they can have the largest influence. That the organization is very influential becomes also obvious when taking a look at the skyline. The Tyrell Corporation is the only building that looks like a pyramid. This pyramid exceeds the other buildings so the sun seems to shine only for them, if at all. In the city, the fog and the clouds do not let the sunlight pass. Furthermore, the created replicants now live on other planets. Therefore, a huge investment was probably necessary which again shows the financial opportunities that the Tyrell Corporation has. Regarding today's reality, people are not able to live on another planet (or at least the government does not tell us). However, there is a trend developing to bring ordinary people into the space, for example Elon Musk's SpaceX. But like in the movie, this is up to now only reserved for the elites - the people with money.

Regarding the Tyrell Corporation, we think that the metaphor of the car from our class also fits for this organization. The reason is that they probably gained their power through their innovative work. This could be seen as the self-appointed driver. Furthermore, by developing and improving their robots the Tyrell Corporation was able to create the Nexus-6 series which is superior to humans. At least they were able to implement a lifespan of 4 years into this series, but you can definitely see that the technology is no longer under control. The newest replicants can even develop own emotions and take own decisions. In class we talked about possible motives that determine our actions – reasons, interests and emotions. Regarding the replicants, we believe that if there are only reason and interest that determines their actions, it would be relatively easy to predict the actions of them. However, since the newest technology provides them with the ability to acquire own emotions, it makes them much more unpredictable, which again shows, that the Tyrell Corporation already lost and otherwise would lose the control over them. As we could see from the movie, the will of the replicants to live longer than 4 years caused a lot of problems. Imagine what could have happened if the number of rebellious replicants would have been higher. Independent of this scenario, we can see that always improving the technology without being prepared for it and their consequences can have a huge negative impact on our world.

As already stated, Blade Runner takes place in Los Angeles - a city with only 23 rainy days per year. It might be a coincidence, but in the movie it was mostly raining outside and the sun was only once visible from inside the Tyrell Corporation building. This shows that people in 1982 predicted the weather to become rainier and extremely cloudy. It was not only the fact that the

sun was not visible, it was always nearly dark outside. The reason therefore can be either clouds or air pollution which would explain the foggy appearance of the air above the city. Nowadays the situation regarding air pollution is not as extreme as predicted, but there are areas in the world that suffer from smog. Namely Gurugram which is a city in India was the most air polluted city in the world in 2018. Next to India, other countries such as Pakistan and China also suffer from the man-produced mixture of smoke and fog.

The absence of the sun that comes along with this can possibly be the reason for the extinction of many animal species. Compared to today, it is still affordable for most people to have a pet or to go to the zoo. On the first sight, especially from a European point of view, it seems that there are still many animals in the world. But the truth is that the extinction of animals is happening, it mainly happens to animals that are “exotic” to us. The top 10 of endangered animal species include the javan rhinoceros, the cheetah, the tiger and the red tuna. The “ordinary consumer” from Europe would not even notice in his or her daily live that these species do not exist anymore – except from the red tuna, because many like to have this saltwater fish on their plates. The only two animals one can see in the movie are a snake and an owl – both are artificial and not real. Zhora once said that real animals are too expensive to afford. However, it is noticeable that there are neither real animals in Blade Runner, nor any plants. The reason for the latter could also be the absence of the sunlight.

Another topic that is addressed in the movie, is the increased urbanization. The city center is crowded, there are people and buildings everywhere, so there is no space for any parks or plants. In general, the movie conveys the message as if there were no fields for agriculture or even villages. From the scene where J.F. Sebastian invites Pris into his home it is interesting to see that a lot of flats are empty. We do not really get to know the reasons therefore, but one interpretation could be that the prices for the flats are too high and the gap between the poor and the rich too big. This would also explain the high rate for criminality that is drawn in this movie (like the scene where people of short stature damage Deckard’s car).

The next interesting aspect to mention is the technology. As already explained, the technology in Blade Runner is far advanced, since people are able to build flying cars and artificial human beings. But when taking a look at the televisions one can see in the movie, it is noticeable that, even though video calls are possible, the used device is still a traditional CRT television. This shows that the movie makers mainly concentrated on inventing radical innovations. Their power of imagination was so distracted that they did not think about or could not imagine to optically improve the televisions. Another point regarding technology are the advertising

boards that one can see hanging on the outside of skyscrapers. Nowadays those advertising boards are very common in large cities. The difference that we observed is, that in reality those boards show so many different advertisements which often leads to information overload. In contrast, the two of the few advertising companies one can see are “Coca Cola” and “Budweiser”. So maybe the movie makers thought that the biggest or strongest brands will assert themselves and smaller brands will get left behind.

## **Sources**

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