

**BLADE RUNNER: A MIRROR OF SOCIETY'S FUTURE
TODAY?**



Jose Antonio Chinchilla Garcia

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
The Movie: Blade Runner (Summary)	Page 4
First Topic: common dystopia?	Page 5
Second Topic: the scientific empire	Page 9
Third Topic: a society with levels?	Page 11
Fourth Topic: the power of multinational companies	Page 13
Fifth Topic: constant advertising	Page 16
Sixth Topic: the presence of the eastern culture	Page 18
Seventh Topic: the police state	Page 19
Eight Topic: the nature of humanity	Page 21
Conclusions	Page 23
References	Page 24

Introduction

The movie *Blade Runner* was released on 1982, making the film a 38 years old movie. It is a sci-fi tale that happens during the future (by the time of the movie's creation), specifically in 2019, and focuses on presenting a dystopic, futuristic society in Los Angeles.

Given that we are in 2020, we could treat the movie as a reference of what we thought humans could evolve to, at least approximately. As we are not yet in a technological world where we can create robots that mimic humans, obviously the movie isn't 100% accurate, but this does not mean that the society the movie presents doesn't have any similarities with the one we have now. In fact, if we search between the two, we can find various common elements in which it would seem the movie was going in the right direction.

These elements are the objective of this essay: determine in which aspects today's society can be seen or paired with the one shown in the movie, and why is it comparable or incompatible with today's society. To do this, first of all the movie will be more explained, giving a brief summary of the plot and the ambient in which is narrated. After that, a total of eight general topics will be commented and explained to give insight as to why they can be linked with today. The result could be that they are similar or identical, or that they don't have anything to do, of course

In the end, my main purpose is to answer this simple question: "Is Blade Runner reflecting today's society?"

The Movie: Blade Runner (Summary)

Blade Runner takes place in Los Angeles, in the year 2019 and the month of November. The first element we hear about this new society are the Replicants, artificial humans created by genetic engineers thanks to the advance on the fields of biogenetics. Physically, they are identical to normal humans, but their physical abilities are superior, coupled with high intelligence. Their purpose was to help maintain space colonies, but because of a violent rebellion they were banned on Earth. This is where the Blade Runners enter, a special force dedicated to solve matters with Replicants.

Because a blade runner was killed during a test to detect possible Replicants an ex-agent, Deckard, is called by his old boss to help neutralize the problematic batch of Replicants, the Nexus-6, where he also learns of the limited life-span of the Nexus.6 of 4 years to control the emotional instability. To do this, Deckard visits Tyrell Corporation (where the artificial humans are created) and speaks both with Doctor Tyrell, the boss, and his secretary Rachel to prove that the tests used to identify Replicants work on Nexus-6. During this, Deckard learns that Rachel is an experimental Replicant, with implanted memories of a human to provide emotional background.

After confirming to Rachel that she is a Replicant, Deckard registers the hotel room of the Replicant that murdered the agent, while said Replicant and their boss, Roy, try to find a way to reach Tyrell, ending up with the name Sebastian. As time passes, Deckard manages to pinpoint a Replicant in a night club, Zhora, who tries to escape after attacking him but ends up getting shot by Deckard. Moments after, Joel (the first Replicant) ambushes him and almost kills him, but Rachel appears and ends up shooting him before he can do anything.

Meanwhile, Pris, the final Replicant, and Sebastian meet with Roy, and Sebastian helps Roy get in contact with Tyrell. After declining the possibility of modifying his dying body, Roy ends up murdering Tyrell and Sebastian.

After going to Sebastian's apartment and confronting Pris, Deckard fights Roy, who keeps cornering him and makes him climb up to the roof. While trying to flee, Deckard is left hanging and almost falls, but Roy ends up saving him. After a brief talk in which Roy expresses his regrets of the experiences he's lived and will be forgotten, dies and leaves Deckard in silence. The ending scene shows Deckard going to his apartment, where Rachel is waiting for him and both leave to an uncertain destiny.

The first Topic: common dystopia?

The Earth *Blade Runner* shows us is a dystopic world. It isn't specified why or mentioned, but the population is leaving the planet, despite the technological advances we can see in the city. Since the Replicants were created to work precisely in space operations, it is safe to assume humanity has established colonies in outer space and is locating there.

In fact, it is mentioned that those wishing to go to space must pass some sort of health test. Sebastian mentions this when he takes Pris to his apartment, when she questions why he remains on Earth. This denotes a selection process where the chosen to go to a safe environment are the healthiest ones, and those who have some kind of problem are left on Earth.

This is a procedure to ensure the species future. Leaving those "crippled" in favor of healthy specimens to preserve the human race in a safer location than the current one. It is clear then the dystopic ambient of the city and the planet, even if we don't know the exact reason of the establishment of the space colonies (most likely the overuse of resources, more explained later). However, what is our current situation in that department?

Given that we haven't started to segregate people based on the amount of diseases, we are not yet at the same level. But the key word here is "yet". There are a number of issues currently that, while not qualifying as apocalyptic, can be the cause of a serious threat to the planet's sustainability, issues that globalization hasn't managed to subdue and has even worsened in some cases. The most important ones in sense of urgency could be two: climate change and economic activities

Climate change

Precisely in 2019, it was celebrated in Madrid a summit about climate change, the 25th, in which more than 25.000 participants attended. The conference was held during 11 days, and while the intentions were there, it was impossible to reach an agreement that really mattered and contributed to a sustainable environment.

This inability for the countries to comply and work together to solve this issue will have negative repercussions: the effects of climate change are showing already, despite what some may believe, and they are not to be taken lightly: the melting of the glaciers and subsequent increase of the sea level, abnormal heat waves, the change in the pattern in the range of both animals and plants and the trees flowering before their time are the principal occurrences we can see in the present time.

However, these are not all the causes we will have. According to scientists, in the future we will continue to have an increase in temperature, more extreme droughts and heat waves, a longer growing season for agriculture, changing precipitation patterns and stronger hurricanes are only some of the possible effects.

All the previous changes have one point in common: they would disrupt greatly the sustainability in the world, leading to a point where it could be impossible to maintain the quality of life in the planet and to start searching in other places, like space. The main problem here is the absence of technology for establishing space colonies, hence why the problem is really worrying and one that, for the moment, does not have an optimal solution.

In the movie we cannot observe direct comments about the sustainability or the environment in general. But, there is an interesting fact that can relate to it: all the animals that are shown are artificial, meaning that either very few are still natural or either that all the species have become extinct, a very good possibility given the fact that there is people dedicated to elaborate this animals, mimicking perfectly their physiology. This could indicate a similar problem to the one mentioned, in which all animals have become extinct showing an unsustainable Earth ravaged by the advanced technologies.

So, could we say this extinction of nature is comparable with today's society? The answer is complex: we cannot say it will be 100% this result, since theoretically we can still change this outcome, even if we have a low margin, but it's not possible to entirely negate it either because of the same reason, the possibility of it being a mirror of the future. Besides, considering the phenomenon of globalization, this last option is very plausible, because it is very connected with climate change through the next issue: the human activities, or more specifically, the economic activities.

Economic activities

It's no secret that economy has been a crucial element in humanity's growth since old times. It has allowed an organization of the limited resources we have had at our disposal in order to satisfy our needs and guarantee a stable environment of wealth. This system has grown dramatically over the last years due to the phenomenon of globalization, but is this growth good for the economy and sustainability?

Due to the globalization phenomenon, the trade exports and imports have exponentially grown, reaching new heights and transforming the global economy completely since this wave started, around the end of WWII. This must mean good news, since a bigger economy will always be better, right? Well, not quite, and here is a reason why.

Since globalization promotes international trade and mass production, it will also increase the amount of processes required to make this happen i.e. transportation, industry and so on. Overlooking the employment factor, this has an impact related to the previous point, the climate change, which is the emission of Greenhouse Gasses (GHG), which are very prejudicial regarding climate change, since they are the main cause of the Greenhouse Effect, and thus the increase in temperature. This is why an increase in the Gross Domestic Product of a country in the sectors of industry, manufacturing or even agriculture can be related to more of these gasses being emitted. Seeing this, can we really say that globalization has allowed for a more sustainable economy?

The famous economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1906-1994) was a firm believer of the principle that pure economic growth, while attractive, does not allow for a sustainable economy to develop in the long run. Not only that, but it was the principal cause of the environmental problem, attributing this to a seemingly infinite growth linked to limited resources, a non-sustainable model. Because of this, he declared that a decrease in the level of population was necessary, to the point where we could sustain ourselves with ecological agriculture, all while managing accordingly the available resources. While this approach may seem contrary to technology, it isn't, it just defends the necessity of having another perspective of it before consuming all that is on Earth.

What can we see about the economy in the movie? We are not informed of exact activities and data, but we do see the pattern previously mentioned of being technology-focused. The hovering cars, futuristic buildings and complete urbanization are indicators that this society has been advancing completely investing in technology, disregarding sustainability as shown by the fact of not being able to see a single plant in the entire city.

This could be seen as a confirmation of this trend, and the possible outcome it could have: the necessity of leaving the Earth and start looking elsewhere to leave due to the used up resources.

So, can we consider this technology-based economy a mirror to the one of today? I'd say they share quite a few similarities, taking into account the difference in technology of course. We could even consider the state of the planet in the movie as a future reflection of what could happen if we keep the current attitude.

Final answer: is the dystopia common in both societies?

The short answer is no. But this is also an incomplete answer. Both the highly advanced technology and the absence of nature in the movie shows that this economic growth has been cemented on unsustainable processes, leading to the search of other living places.

While this extreme is not seen today, the actual trend is going that way: climate change is slowly but surely messing up the sustainability we are used to have, and the current economic growth does nothing to prevent this, even worsening it. What is even worse, the globalization, a current that could help in this regard unifying the countries to look for solutions together, is doing nothing to prevent this because of the impact it has on today's economy, reinforcing these resource-consuming activities.

So, it is true we can't say this dystopia is the same situation we have now, but it can effectively be seen as a future prediction of what could happen if things stay the same way. Yes, we could have a future with flying cars and artificial humans, robots and so, but is it worth doing that at the cost of our own planet? Everyone is free to have a different answer to that question, but I don't think so.

With this general view of the dystopic nature explained, I'd like to introduce another element related to this one: the dominance of technology in the society of Blade Runner.

Second Topic: the scientific empire

Blade Runner shows us a dystopic world, yes, but also one where technology and science has taken a core place in the society. The high and future-like buildings coupled with the size of the city are proof of this, but more important is the role science plays here. And even though some of the elements of technology of our society are not present, like the Internet and the use of newspapers, we are presented with more technological innovations.

The spinner, a vehicle model in Blade Runner



Without a doubt, the most interesting feature about this society are the Replicants. These artificial humans represent literally the ability to be a god, to create life that replicates that of a human being. Such advancement in genetics and engineering are inconceivable for us right now, but what about in the near future?

Recent advancements in genetics such as the research in stem cells and DNA manipulation lead to believe that, while it's not possible to create life at that stage in the near future, the possibility is centrally there. And the robotic field is most certainly going at the same pace: robots to do hard jobs for workers, drones able to execute a great number of jobs and nanotechnology and Artificial Intelligence are more advanced each year. This leads to think that a future with the movie's elements, such as artificial humans, robots and increased automatizing is not so far-fetched.

This goes paired with another concept: ethics, or said in another way, where do we put the limit. Obviously, the movie doesn't exhibit a strict ethical code regarding the artificial humans: besides the new safeguard (the 4 years' time limit), there is little about Replicants that isn't included in humans, even surpassing the vast majority of them in intelligence.

In our society, the closest thing we can find to that is the ethics of genome editing, where the consensus is that until total safety is ensured during the different processes, this activity is only allowed in research purposes. However, what the new code of ethic will be when that discipline is more advanced remains a mystery: will we not allow similar intelligence to ours to be created in labs, or will we try to limit it by other means like in Blade Runner?

And of course, the element of space is worth mentioning also: in the movie, we hear about space colonies (even if we cannot see any) and we are led to think as them as a better place to live than Earth. This shows that society achieved the ability to not only travel to space, but to live there during an unspoken amount of time. In fact, it is possible that this development was reached because of the damaged state of the ecosystem to reach a safer and sustainable home.

In terms of space department, we are not that advanced, but it is true that the progress is still there: trips to space are very much close for those wealthy enough to afford it as a touristic experience, and the construction of an orbital station for astronauts to live in outer space is also a reality. So it is a similar scenario to the genetic field, we are not at that level but with enough time we could be.

Is science the primary focus of our world and society, then?

Well, not in the slightest. While it is true technology and science is gaining terrain in that department, we are still mostly an industrial society at base, where globalization has allowed this model to grow with the connection between the exporting countries and the importing. There is a huge problem here besides that, and that is the equality and allocation of the resources and wealth, a problem that globalization seems to be clearly not improving (details in the next question) and generates questions about whether or not this inequality should be solved before allowing the current economic model to expand and grow like it has.

Precisely, science could help in this issue by investigating possible sustainable uses of the available resources more efficiently and with more dedication, but the current economic model prefers to invest into new mobile phones, leisure devices and other production-related inventions. As long as this keeps up, if we do end up becoming scientific-based (which seems to be the case) we could find ourselves in the same situation as in the movie: having to leave the planet.

To mention the past problem, the inequality, I'd like to introduce the third topic, which is precisely the apparent levels society has in Blade Runner, and their differences.

Third Topic: a society with levels?

Before going into detail about this question, I want to show something: here is a photo of the highest buildings we see in Los Angeles of Blade Runner:



And here, there is the same city but at lower levels of height:



It seems unbelievable, but both of the pictures are of the same city indeed. The only change is the height the picture reflects, having the most luxurious and advanced buildings at the top while leaving those poorly developed at the bottom.

This seems to be in contrast with the previous point of high technology, after all if society is more advanced the wellbeing in general should advance as well, isn't that right? But then, why do we only see the results of this advancements in the high buildings, while the bottom levels are in very clear contrast reflecting a poor community? Because there is a very clear inequality in the way this society works.

The rich people, those with money or with prestigious careers have apartments in the buildings with good accommodations, such as Deckard and even Tyrell, who has a very

luxurious home. But when we see the streets and the lower levels, the idea that everyone is wealthy quickly disappears: bonfires made in the middle of the street for the poorest people to warm up, piles of rubbish in every corner and bad living conditions reflect the state in which the people there live.

Not to mention, the businesses run there are not as prestigious as a high technology society may be imagined: food stalls crowded and poorly covered, laboratories in bad conditions and nocturnal bars are some of the examples. Except some cases, the common trend is also that the employees with “mediocre” jobs are the ones residing there, but some exceptions are the eye genetic engineer and Sebastian, who lives in an abandoned apartment building despite being a genetic designer

Now, let’s compare this level of wealth and standing to today’s society. There have always been countries and world zones in which the quality of life (education, healthcare, resources and wellbeing) was very different from the others prior the WWII. When the second wave of globalization started, it was natural for some to think that this differences would be solved by connecting all the world. But the truth is very different.

Globalization has done nothing to greatly palliate the differences between the First World and the Third World (or developing countries). In fact, very few countries of that kind could be considered to be “stable” in that regard since the war. Chile, for example, could be considered one of the most (if not the most) developed country in South America, and its GDP per capita isn’t that great compared to countries like Italy and Germany.

And this is without mentioning the African continent, where in most of its countries the standards of living aren’t even met: low level of basic school education for children due to not being a possibility for most of them, more than 60% of the people living there don’t have access to medicines and health services, and due to being highly dependent of occidental countries they can’t have their own growth.

But the problem is also shown in big cities, with the people who doesn’t have an employment for any reason struggles with meeting the standards of living, and those that can’t even have a roof and are forced to sleep in the streets.

Does our society have levels, then?

At the very least, it has economic levels that are associated with the amount of income people has, and with the country of living. It is actually very accurate with the movie, albeit there the segregation is more based on the profession and the association and availability of high technology.

Obviously, it is difficult to find today a city like Los Angeles covered in rubbish and damages while the buildings are perfectly fine, but still there is a common level differentiation in both worlds that separates those with possibilities from the ones with less luck, creating a barrier that holds two groups of people.

The next topic will change the approach, since it will be about the role multinationals have.

Fourth topic: the power of multinational companies

The movie has a multinational company that plays a very important role: Tyrell Corporation. This company, founded by Tyrell, is the one that designed and created the Replicants, and we could argue that, with what we see in the movie, is the most important one in the world.

Their building is the biggest one in Los Angeles, further indicating their power, and the pyramid-like structure of the building could be seen as an allusion to Egypt's pyramids, where the pharaohs (the most important persons in their society) and the royal family was buried. Another interesting fact is that the sun is only seen there in the entire movie, exactly when Deckard interrogated Rachel, asking for less light. This could represent the company as the core of the city, where the light shines in an otherwise dark metropolis.



The pyramid design is indeed very present

And the final aspect to consider is the absence of a government. We can't see a ministry, a city hall or even a mayor out there. In fact, the two most authoritative figures we see in the movie are Deckard's ex-boss and Tyrell himself. A definitive answer to the question of who holds the power in the city: the authority and those with the most resources, more specifically, Tyrell Corporation.

Having seen this, what is the current role of multinationals in our society? Are they more powerful than the government? That is indeed an interesting question: multinationals are companies that have presence in different countries across the world, investing and working in various territories to extend their activities. Currently, they can't elaborate laws, decide matters of global importance or work with legal fields, but the truth is they have a powerful weapon at their disposal: money.

This table below shows the revenues in 2016 obtained by both companies and countries, to illustrate this:

	Country/Corporation	Revenue (US\$ bn)		Country/Corporation	Revenue (US\$ bn)
1	United States	3363	51	General Electric (US)	140
2	China	2465	52	CSCEC (CN)	139
3	Japan	1696	53	AmerisourceBergen (US)	136
4	Germany	1507	54	Agricultural Bank of China (CN)	133
5	France	1288	55	Verizon (US)	132
6	United Kingdom	996	56	Chevron (US)	131
7	Italy	843	57	E.ON (DE)	130
8	Brazil	632	58	AXA (FR)	129
9	Canada	595	59	Indonesia	129
10	Walmart (US)	482	60	Finland	128
11	Spain	461	61	Allianz (DE)	123
12	Australia	421	62	Bank of China (CN)	122
13	State Grid (CN)	330	63	Honda Motor (JP)	121
14	Netherlands	323	64	Cargill (US)	120
15	South Korea	304	65	Japan Post Holdings (JP)	119
16	China Nat. Petroleum (CN)	299	66	Costco (US)	116
17	Sinopec Group (CN)	294	67	Argentina	116
18	Royal Dutch Shell (NL/GB)	272	68	BNP Paribas (FR)	112
19	Sweden	248	69	Fannie Mae (US)	111
20	Exxon Mobil (US)	246	70	Ping An Insurance (CN)	110
21	Volkswagen (DE)	237	71	Kroger (US)	109
22	Toyota Motor (JP)	237	72	Société Générale (FR)	108
23	Apple (US)	234	73	Amazon.com (US)	107
24	Belgium	232	74	China Mobile Comm. (CN)	106
25	BP (GB)	226	75	SAIC Motor (CN)	105
26	Mexico	224	76	Walgreens Boots Alliance (US)	104
27	Switzerland	216	77	HP (US)	103
28	Berkshire Hathaway (US)	211	78	Assicurazioni Generali (IT)	103
29	India	200	79	Cardinal Health (US)	103
30	Norway	200	80	BMW (DE)	102
31	McKesson (US)	192	81	Express Scripts Holding (US)	102
32	Russia	187	82	Nissan Motor (JP)	102
33	Austria	187	83	China Life Insurance (CN)	101
34	Turkey	184	84	J.P. Morgan Chase (US)	101
35	Samsung Electronics (KR)	177	85	Koch Industries (US)	100
36	Glencore (CH/JE)	170	86	Gazprom (RU)	99
37	ICBC (CN)	167	87	China Railway Eng. (CN)	99
38	Daimler (DE)	166	88	Petrobras (BR)	97
39	UnitedHealth Group (US)	157	89	Schwarz Group (DE)	97
40	Denmark	157	90	Trafigura Group (NL/SG)	97
41	EXOR Group (IT/NL)	154	91	Nippon Telegraph and Tel. (JP)	96
42	CVS Health (US)	153	92	Boeing (US)	96
43	General Motors (US)	152	93	Venezuela	96
44	Vitol (NL/CH)	152	94	China Railway Constr. (CN)	95
45	Ford Motor (US)	151	95	Microsoft (US)	94
46	China Constr. Bank (CN)	150	96	Bank of America Corp. (US)	93
47	Saudi Arabia	150	97	ENI (IT)	93
48	AT&T (US)	147	98	Greece	93
49	Total (FR)	143	99	Nestlé (CH)	92
50	Hon Hai Precision Ind. (TW)	141	100	Wells Fargo (US)	90

Source: *TheConversation.com*

Besides the top positions of US and China, one interesting fact is that Walmart, for example, had more revenues than Spain, meaning that a company gained more money than a country. How can this be, some may ask? Well, the answer to that is globalization, and more concretely the facility it has brought for trading and exporting. In fact, it could be said that the global structure it has created is one where the power of the states is not the only governing force anymore. Brands like Apple and Starbucks control and oversee high supply-chains, even to the point where they can try to mold the international policies up to some degree to their favor all while trying to avoid the tax payments using said policies.

States can't put out of the picture the big corporations: they even have to consider how their decision will affect them before acting. Globalization has changed the balance of power, transforming the all-powerful state power into a balance of state and corporations, where power is shared and sometimes taken from one agent to another.

So, do multinationals hold the power now?

They hold a great amount of power indeed, but not all of it yet. However, this current trend of "bickering" between states and multinationals could really impact the order. If governments try to gain more profit from the multinationals, the latter may try to avoid having to pay this by exploiting other international policies, and that could lead to a very bad situation of "economic civil war" that could end up having one of them coming on top.

So yes, the multinationals hold power like in the movie, although not to the same extent and with the government still present. Given the actual model of tension between these two parties, however, the possibility of one of them openly opposing the other is not so implausible.

And speaking of multinationals, the next topic has to do with companies and brand, which is the constant advertising.

Fifth topic: constant advertising

During the movie we can see in multiple scenes a big screen in buildings where a Japanese woman is speaking and addressing the citizens. When this happens, the image of the woman captures great part of the screen, making her face the only thing we can focus on during that scene (as shown in the image below):



Note how the scene focuses entirely on the woman

This constant purpose of trying to gain our attention symbolizes the influence advertising exercises in the society, and how it's presence has become so engrained in the natural flow of the city that the citizens aren't even fazed when they hear the speech, a note of the power of the companies, previously mentioned.

In our society, and precisely paired with the growing power of companies and brands, advertising is something we've grown accustomed to: it has been so introduced in different ways that it is difficult to see any kind of media or network where there isn't some kind of advertisement of a brand: the radio, television, newspapers, Internet and even social networks have this.

The causes of this are three in general terms: one of them is the already mentioned growing power of the companies, since this growth allows them the capability of affording these advertisements in different media.

The other one is, precisely, the amount of different channels in which advertisements can be “placed”: there isn’t only the typical advertisement in a newspaper anymore, or the typical television announcement, the new technologies have contributed to introduce new ways of advertising such as pop-ups in websites, e-mails and even interactions in social networks.

And finally, the advancement of marketing, the discipline focused on detecting or creating needs in possible customers and exploiting them for a defined purpose. From using catchy slogans to even having a specific smell associated to a product, these new approaches to the consumer’s mind have a powerful impact in advertisements, making them even use all our senses.

This, coupled with the huge influx of advertisements we see every day, has the effect of them being a core part of our daily lives.

Do they have the same importance as in the movie, in that case?

A bit of a redundant question given the previous statements, but yes they do. Even if we don’t have giant screens of woman speaking (not of that size anyways), it is unquestionable that advertising as a common element in our lives is ingrained in this society.

Not only that, but it is a concept that will possibly evolve with the new technologies and advancements. The floating screens are just an example, maybe we will have a future where robots in the street give demonstrations of the effects of a product, or even where we will be able to taste food virtually with sensorial stimulation.

Of course, this presence in society has been criticized by many, arguing that companies shouldn’t extort that kind of influence in human minds. It is debatable indeed, but it would take too long for it to be adequately expressed, and as such I won’t delve into that.

As for the next topic, I spoke about a Japanese woman before, and it will be related to that: it is the influence of eastern culture into society.

Sixth question: the presence of the eastern culture

This is an interesting topic, if we consider the movie takes place in Los Angeles. If we take a closer look at the different people the movie shows, most of them are of eastern origins: the workers in the street food stalls, the numerous people we see at the lower streets and even the genetic specialized in eyes is from that origin.

Also, like mentioned before, the advertising of a Japanese woman is shown in multiple scenes, leading to think that this culture holds power also in the companies and business world. And another interesting point is the “street tongue” spoken in those levels, called Cityspeak, composed of different languages mixed such as Spanish, German or Korean.

In today’s society, this is not as ingrained as in the movie. While the interaction between the eastern countries and the world grows each year, with more tourists visit the western and European zones and more people of the east chooses to live in these zones, there isn’t a presence with that level of population or influence in the cities that makes us think of the eastern culture as a vital part of our lives.

In fact, we can still differentiate two big cultures in this ambit: the western and the eastern culture. Each one has its own values and preferences: western culture prefers individualism while the eastern is collectivist, eastern cultures view family as a responsibility, equality is the main focus in eastern cultures versus the talent and eastern cultures prefer to establish work relationships while westerns prefer efficiency.

Is the eastern culture as present as in the movie?

The answer is no. We can establish big differences between eastern and western cultures, enough to separate them clearly and see that in western countries the western culture is the main one, and the same for eastern zones. Despite this, the influence of eastern cultures is growing through interactions, and maybe a future where eastern and western cultures could result in a mixed culture with similar traits could happen. Until now, globalization has not achieved this, and given its economic mindset it’s doubtful it will, even if it promotes trade interactions.

For the next topic comes a point related to a previous one, the power of multinationals, which is the power police has in the movie, in what will be called a police state.

Seventh question: the police state

In the movie, the police are seen in various scenes: when they come for Deckard, his boss is shown as a harsh and vain man, who makes clear to Deckard that he doesn't have a choice in helping him and wants to end the threat of the Replicants as soon as possible.

In later scenes, we see more of this cold demeanor when they are disposing of the corpse of Zhora, the Replicant Deckard chased and killed. Multiple agents come quickly and make sure not only that the process is done immediately, but they also question Deckard regarding him with suspicion until he shows his credentials. On another similar scenario, when Deckard goes to Sebastian's apartment to investigate his death, a flying police car points him with a light demanding for him to leave, and it isn't until Deckard shows again who he is that they let him be.

This is a way of showing the audience the power police hold in the city. It could be called, in fact, a police state: the officers exercise a big pressure to the citizens to get the situations under control, to the point where they could be viewed as cruel and ruthless, such as Deckard's boss.

Does this happen today? Depends on the country we are referring to. Obviously, we should focus on big cities for that aspect, because of the greater amount of police forces there. Let's compare the UK and the US: in the UK, in the last 3 years only 2 people were fatally wounded by shots by the British police, while in the US an average of 2.6 people is shot mortally every day. This police brutality is incredibly different in comparison with the two countries, and is precisely what a police state refers to: the use of excessive force to control the situations.

A similar situation happens in China. Due to their particular situation, the laws are very strict in some places, like Kashgar, where growing a beard is enough to get reported to police. This instigates fear and bad connotations for the police, since this system promotes the punishment of many for the actions of a few. To achieve this, the police have at its disposal surveillance technology that can have a really big radius of action, further increasing tensions between the citizens and promoting the more radical people to finally snap.

Is the police state present in our society, after all?

Like it has been said at the start, it depends on where we look. The United Kingdom is an example where police only use brutal force when its necessary, but we've also seen the US and their policy of "treating fire with fire", and China and its hard regulations and laws, creating tensions in the citizens.

Even in Catalonia, where there weren't big records of police violence, there have been questionable actions from the force due to the political matters involving the region. This is proof that, given some circumstances, police could resort to power and violence to solve the problems, further reminding the situation as a police state.



Police state makes policeman appear as "monsters with human faces"

The final say would be that, while not every police unit in the world is ruling under a police state, it is true that we can't refuse the prospect of this happening if some circumstances and events happen.

And the final topic we will introduce in this essay is also the most ambiguous one: the human nature.

Eight question: the nature of humanity

The most notorious aspect of the movie could possibly be the way in which it treats human condition. During the entire movie we find situations involving both humans and Replicants in which their emotions and conflicts are explored to make us think about what it means to be human.

One of these situations is the Voight-Kampff test. It is the main tool Blade Runner has to identify the Replicants, and it consists of questions asked to the subject in order to force an emotional answer or reaction. The amount of necessary questions isn't exactly specified: Deckard says to Tyrell that an average of 20-30 questions is enough in most cases, whereas with Rachel Deckard asked more than 100 questions. Despite this, what is interesting about the test is the fact that the ones showing emotional responses are associated with Replicants, leaving then the normal humans as the emotionless ones.

Precisely, the motto of Tyrell Corporation is "more human than humans", an allegation to this apparent inability of normal people to feel anything whereas the Replicant, due to being unstable, feel at an emotional level. But if we take the example of Rachel, a Replicant with no limit of time and with an emotional background to provide stability, could we differentiate her from a normal human?

Deckard is also a source of questions for the audience: during the movie, we see him in continuous conflict with himself, asking if what he is doing is the right thing, if he is able to deliver a death sentence to a being that seems as human as he (or even more). Because that's also another aspect: the movie makes us question things to the point where we think if Deckard himself is a Replicant, seeing his convulsing attitude with conflicting emotions in all the movie and his sometimes rudeness with Rachel.

But probably the most iconic and complex character in the movie is Roy, the Replicant's "boss". For the majority of the movie we can't really picture him as truly evil, since it isn't until he murders Tyrell and Sebastian that he commits a truly evil act, but we see him as an unstable and rushed character, desperate to live when his limit is approaching. In his confrontation with Deckard, although initially he antagonized him, Roy ends up saving his life and lamenting that all he has lived and experienced will be lost, like tears in the rain, revealing who he really was: a tormented soul that carried that limit as a penance and only wanted answers and carried a desire to live.

Considering this, what is that makes us human in today's society? Biologists may answer to this that the hairless skin, our voices or the bipedalism, priests may answer that religion is what differentiates humans from the other species and others may say that our brain is what makes us different.

All this could be right from an objective perspective, however, what has been the current trend to associate with humanity is our capacity of feeling empathic, in other words, of being able to see and understand the other's perspective when making decisions and develop a social conscience. This is the main promotor for those solidary moves of NGO, social workers and ordinary people with genuine desire of helping those in need. Will this continue, however?

What will happen then in the future?

It is very difficult to answer this, because we have to consider the possibility of society not even being the same as now. With the advancements of new technologies, a tendency of "avoiding" close relationships, such as going out for a walk or a drink, is being more generated, instead offering the possibility to chat through Skype in home. This is a trend that could lead to a similar scenario to that of the movie, actually, where humans can't express emotions due to the lowering human contact.

Or maybe we will end up like the Replicants, incapable of controlling our emotions because of the lack of an appropriate method of expressing them and ending up as instable, making Roy our future image: a lone person searching for answers and with convulsing tendencies.

Regardless of the future, in our actual society what is widely known to make us human is precisely the opposite of what happens in the movie: the emotions are what differentiate us, while in the movie is this incapability to feel what makes humans differ from Replicants, ironically making them appear as the real humans to our eyes.

Conclusions

Blade Runner is a classic movie, but it has stopped being a sci-fi to become a thriller. The society it reflects is a dystopic setting where power and authority are the law, and the Earth has been ecologically destroyed and disregarded in favor of human colonies.

As it has been shown, there are a number of aspects in that society that we can link with our current one: the power multinationals hold, the indicating advance of new technologies until they are the main motor of the world and the advertising presences are some of them. But one of the most worrying is the dystopic future.

Even though, like it has been explained, we haven't reached a level of total destruction, all the signs are there in the form of climate change getting worse and the economy sustaining itself in a way that consumes our resources at an alarming rate. And globalization, the main motor that gave a push to the economy at the end of WWII is one of the main reasons this is happening, further increasing the amount of problems.

We can take this as a warning sign, however, and start looking into possible ways of dealing with this now that we are in time. Since we can't live in space yet, it is imperative that measures to avoid the worst of Blade Runner's setting are established, but to do that we would most likely have to reimagine the economy as it is now, something easier said than done considering its total participants.

So, to finally answer the question of "Is Blade Runner reflecting today's society?", it doesn't offer a carbon copy of it, but a mirror of one of the possible outcomes it could change into if things are going the same way.

References

Wikipedia. Blade Runne General View: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blade_Runner

Wikipedia. Sustainable Economy: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Georgescu-Roegen

ThoughtCo. What Makes Us Human: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-makes-us-human-4150529>

LearningMind. Western and Eastern Cultures: <https://www.learning-mind.com/cultural-differences-east-west/>

BuzzFeedNews. Police State: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/the-police-state-of-the-future-is-already-here>

CriminalJustice. Police State: <https://www.criminaljusticedegreehub.com/police-state/>

BBC. Blade Runner Today: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20191111-are-we-living-in-a-blade-runner-world>

Equatex. States vs Corporations: <https://www.equatex.com/en/article/who-runs-the-world/>

TheConversation. States vs Corporations: <https://theconversation.com/who-is-more-powerful-states-or-corporations-99616>

AyudaenAccion. Third World Problems:
<https://ayudaenaccion.org/ong/blog/infancia/africa-para-ninos/>

WarmHeart. Climate Change:
https://warmheartworldwide.org/climatechange/?gclid=CjwKCAiAjrXxBRAPEiwAiM3DQpDPmiP7vC5VEz7HifzBYAcnoel57k7gpDAgy7v7ROS_H6L-3UzLuRoCDQ8QAvD_BwE

Ourworldindata. Trade and Globalization: <https://ourworldindata.org/trade-and-globalization>