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(Re)Defining Utopia

The Changing Concept of an Ideal World

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Publication date

2023

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Critic|all V International Conference on Architectural Design & Criticism

Citation (APA)

Čulek, J. (2023). (Re)Defining Utopia: The Changing Concept of an Ideal World. In S. Colmenares Vilata, E. Martínez-Millan, R. Cavallo, S. Martín Blas, G. M. Domínguez, & N. Mota (Eds.), *Critic|all V International Conference on Architectural Design & Criticism: Conference Proceedings* (pp. 125-133). DPA' Prints, ETSAM, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid.

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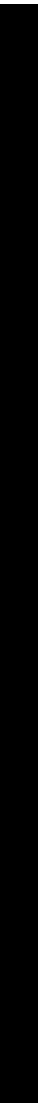
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EDITED by critic|all PRESS + Departamento de
Proyectos Arquitectónicos (ETSAM-UPM)
ISBN: 978-84-09-54795-1
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Brazilian Modern Architecture. The term is still used as the title of the curatorial text by Guilherme Wisnik in the exhibition “Coletivo.”

34. Milheiro, “‘Coletivo’: The invention of the classical,” 239.

35. Salvarori, “Arquitetura No Brasil: Ensino e Profissão,” 57.

36. Bortoluci, “Brutalism and the People,” 316.

37. Not by coincidence, the most emblematic project that names and marks the beginning of this generation is also an Expo pavilion. It repeats the same condition of symbolic exceptionality characteristic of the occasion, but unlike that one, it was never built and is part of the contemporary imagination only as an image and representation of architecture.

38. Martin, *O Fantasma Da Utopia*, 100.

39. Barros, *PT: Uma História*, 127; Costa, “Popular Refractions”; Chauí, *Seminários. O Nacional e o Popular na cultura brasileira*, 84–85.

40. Martin, *O Fantasma Da Utopia*, 83.

41. Arantes, “A Fratura Brasileira Do Mundo.”

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Biography

Frederico V. Costa is an architect and Ph.D. candidate at UNICAMP since 2021. FAPESP PhD scholarship holder. He holds a master's degree from FAU USP and conducts research in the areas of architecture and urbanism theory, history, and criticism. From 2017 to 2022, he taught architecture and urbanism at UNIFEOB in the interior of São Paulo. Additionally, he has held various roles in cultural institutions, including being the Manager of the MCB Design Award at the Museu da Casa Brasileira from 2022 to 2023. He has also worked as a production assistant and architecture curatorial assistant in institutions such as Instituto Tomie Ohtake, Casa do Povo, and the Brazilian Pavilion at the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale. He is a member of the collective Arquitetura Bicha (@arquiteturabicha) since its formation in 2020, and lives in São Paulo.

(Re)Defining Utopia The Changing Concept of an Ideal World

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Abstract

Utopia, seen not only as a creative and imaginative form, but as a critical and speculative method of devising worlds, spaces, and societal structures different than our own has existed long before receiving its name based on Thomas More's 1516 book *Utopia*. Originating in the literary field, utopia has since been used in various creative disciplines, including architecture. Presented as a textual and/or visual narrative, often set in an unspecified future and a remote location, utopias describe worlds in which many or all ails of its author's historical context have been solved through a thorough reconstitution of the built environment and its inhabitants.

And while what constitutes a utopian work has changed over centuries, it has for the better part of history remained a positively charged notion, signaling new hope and new ideas for the future. However, from an architectural perspective, the notion of utopia has taken on more negative and even pejorative connotations, often signifying a project or idea which is so far off from any concept of reality that it can automatically be dismissed as trivial or inconsequential.

Observing utopia from an architecture standpoint, focusing mostly on its development within the last century, this paper will address some of the changes which have occurred in the meaning, understanding, and connotation of utopia within the architectural field. Correlating these changes with the rich and multilayered understanding of utopia as a literary concept, deepened with its numerous sub-forms and genres (i.e. dystopias, anti-utopias, critical utopias, etc.), the paper will argue that utopia as a form, although often viewed as straightforward in its meaning, actually allows for and has demonstrated a capacity for change and variety, adapting itself within numerous historical periods and creative fields in order to critically and speculatively respond to everchanging political, societal, cultural, and economic challenges.

Key words: utopia, ideal city, utopian literature, utopian architecture, critical method.

1. Utopian Terminology

It is impossible to observe utopia as an architectural word or concept and its changing meanings and connotations, without discussing the concept's literary origins, as well as its numerous related terms. But before focusing on the etymology of utopia, it is perhaps curious to note that, although utopia as a genre owes its name to Thomas More's 1516 book *Utopia*¹, More's initial intent was to name the book (and its imaginary island) *Nusquama*, based on the Latin *nusquam* meaning "nowhere", "in no place", "on no occasion"², only to decide against it for the reason of not completely wanting to deny "the possibility of the existence of such [a] place"³. Choosing, in turn, to name his imaginary island as Utopia, stemming from the ancient Greek words *topos*, meaning "place", and *ouk*, meaning "not", he automatically defined it in spatial terms, as "a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial"⁴. While originating as a literary and narrative form, one of utopia's most relevant hallmarks is that it has always been innately spatial. Defining utopia as a discourse rather than a concept, Louis Marin argues that "the 'content' of utopia is the organization of space as text"⁵ and that "each utopia is the 'figurative' product of possible architectural production"⁶. But as Fátima Vieira notes in her text "The Concept of Utopia"⁷, More added another name for his imaginary island located at the end of the book, in a six-verse poem structured into the narrative in which the island is referred to as *Eutopia* – meaning *good place* – creating thus a "perennial duality of meaning of utopia as the place that is simultaneously a non-place (utopia) and a good place (eutopia)"⁸. The dual terminology can also be seen as describing two different aspects of utopia where "utopia in the sense of *eu topos* [good place] refers to an ideal society and its realization", and "utopia in the sense of *ou topos* [no place] emphasizes a mode of narrative rather than a political goal"⁹, relating it directly to its original narrative format which constitutes a "traveler's account of a visit to an imaginary country where the journey is either to a far-of land or to the distant future"¹⁰. In other words, aside from depicting an imagined space which is different from our own, this space is also visualized as better than our own.

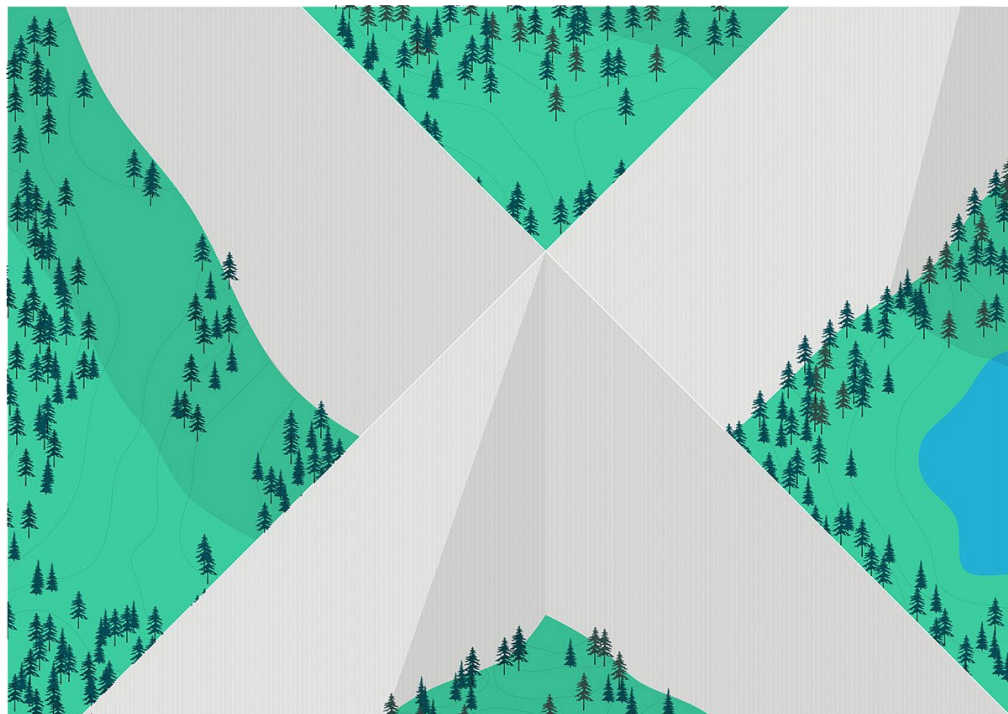


Fig.1

Aside from utopia's original form, several other sub-forms or sub-genres have emerged over the centuries – playing with the *topos* etymology – in which certain aspects, goals, or approaches have been modified. Perhaps the most known term is that of *dystopia* – utopia's counterpart the goal of which is not to create an imaginary place as an expression of human desire, but rather one as a response to fear¹¹. Devised by the British philosopher and political economist John Stuart Mill, the term combines *topos* with the ancient Greek *dus* meaning "bad, abnormal, diseased"¹². Unlike utopia, "dystopia rejects the idea that man can reach perfection"¹³, focusing rather on the goal of convincing their readers and viewers that "social improvement – rather than individual improvement – is the only way to ensure social and political happiness" and that "the depicted future" which dystopias describe are "not a reality but only a possibility that they [readers/viewers] have to learn to avoid"¹⁴. Other utopian sub-forms include *satirical utopias* in which the main drive is "distrust"¹⁵; *anti-utopias* in which the drive is "total disbelief"¹⁶; *critical dystopias* which are described by Vieira as dystopian narratives in which the authors have "tried to make it clear to their readers that there is still a chance

for humanity to escape, normally offering a glimmer of hope at the very end of the narrative"¹⁷; *critical utopias* which depict "a better future, but by no means a perfect future"¹⁸; as well as more contemporary related forms such as *heterotopia* or *hyperutopia*. Heterotopia, a term coined by French theorist Michel Foucault, refers to "unreal spaces" and "sites with no real place" which have a "general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society and 'present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down'"¹⁹. Hyperutopia, on the other hand, is a more recent neologism which "forces the reader to deal with the problems of multilinear reading, of the abolition of the idea of center and margins, as well as of all forms of hierarchies"²⁰.

While most, if not all of the utopian sub-categories originally stem from the literary field, a lot of them can be identified in architectural works as well. Aside from utopia proper, which has historically been the most predominant form within the architectural field, the twentieth century also brings forth the anti-utopia or the critical utopia in which – through more narrative based projects such as those of Superstudio, Ettore Sottsass, or Constant Nieuwenhuys, to name but a few – a critique is posed towards society but without the need of escaping to an idealized utopian narrative in which all issues are solved. Through acknowledging the flaws and shortcomings of the utopian method and exploiting them, anti-utopias have proposed critical reflections on society where the goal was not one of betterment or fear, but rather of re-examination and questioning of the status quo through imaginative means.

2. Defining Utopia in Architecture

While the etymology of utopia already demonstrates the breadth of the term, approaching a further specification of what utopia actually is, with the aim of providing a single and all-encompassing definition is a task of nearly utopian proportions. It is important to establish that the task of defining utopia concept is a much revisited one, and that it is often field-specific, with definitions encompassing only those aspects of utopia which are relevant or graspable from the point of view of the researcher. It could be argued however, that this unreachable universal definition of utopia is also impossible because there is "no universal utopia, not just because needs are differently perceived by different observers but because needs actually do vary between societies"²¹. Acknowledging the impossibility of providing a universal definition of utopia, Vieira instead opts for providing several different approaches which are most commonly defined in regard to:

"(1) The concept of the imagined society [...]; (2) the literary form into which the utopian imagination has been crystalized [...]; (3) the function of utopia [...]; [and] (4) the desire for a better life, caused by a feeling of discontent towards the society one lives in [...]"²²

But, as this paper proposes, utopia can also be defined and explored in regard to a specific creative field or discipline within which it is produced – which is in this case the field of architecture and urban planning. French architectural and urban theorist and historian Françoise Choay in her work *The Rule and the Model: On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism* (1997) examines links between architectural treatise and the literary utopia. In it, Choay introduces the concept of *instauration* texts – an overarching term which brings together architectural treatises, theories of urbanism and utopias. While acknowledging that it is debatable whether utopias as a literary genre should be included, she states that the fictional and imaginary basis of utopia does not "deprive it of any efficacy"²³. She continues to explain that utopias "propose by means of critical reflection on society the imaginary elaboration of a counter-society" and that they are "organically connected with the urban theories [they] preceded, having stamped upon their form its indelible imprint"²⁴. In other words, Choay provides a strong correlation between a specific set of architectural and urban texts with the utopian literary form stating that both types of text have "a critical approach to a present reality" and are busy with "the modelling in space of a future reality"²⁵. She notes, however, that utopia should not be considered "with respect to its content, but rather to its form, shifting our attention from recent history to the *longue durée*"²⁶. Choay defines for the reader both the traits of utopia, extrapolated directly from More's work stating that:

"(1) A utopia is a book signed by its author; (2) a subject expresses himself in the first person singular - the author himself, and/or his spokesman, an eyewitness to the utopia; (3) the text is presented in the form of a narrative which contains a description in the present indicative of a model society; (4) the model society is opposed to a historically real society, and the criticism of the latter is indissociably linked to the description of the former; (5) the model society is supported by a model space which is an integral, necessary part of it; (6) the model society is located outside of our system of spatio-temporal coordinates: it is elsewhere; (7) the model society is not subject to the constraints of time and change."²⁷

And while Choay's definition of utopia is deduced through the literary field, I argue that many of her identified points can also be used in order to define the concept of utopian architecture, albeit with some modifications. Nathaniel Coleman, on the other hand, focusing less on utopian architectural projects and more on a utopian strive found in architectural projects of different scales or functions, relates utopia to the intrinsic drive of architecture rather than to its manifestation. He states that both utopia and architecture are "ever the result of a belief that what could be, or ought to be is superior to what is"²⁸, also noting that "as a literary form, fiction presents plausible unreality" and "architectural designs, like fictions, are the making of an imaginary realm." But, as he explains "architecture is

profoundest when an architect's invention advances a commentary on the social activities it will house, as they are lived and as they might be lived" which positions architecture "between conservation of what is and proposition of improved future conditions"²⁹ – which is very similar to the position of utopia, which as he explains also "envision improved conditions intended to replace existing ones, [with] their concern [being] as much with the past and present as with the future"³⁰. He proposes to view architectural projects not as being utopian per se, but rather as having "utopian potential" or a "utopian dimension"³¹, offering a definition of what a project must in order to be considered utopian. Namely, it should consist of at least some if not all of the following elements:

"...social and political content; a significant level of detail in the description of what is proposed; elaboration of a positive transformation of social and political life as key to what is proposed or constructed; and, not least – ethical and aesthetical – critique of the present informed by a critical historical perspective"³².

2.1. When Architecture is Not Utopia

According to Louis Marin "utopia is space organized as text and discourse constructed as space"³³. This can be understood to mean that utopia is innately architectural. But is the reverse also true? Can we consider all architectural projects, regardless of their scale and social or political engagement as utopian? Architecture as a discipline has a projective nature. Projects are always set in the future and propose an alternative version – a change – to the present. However, even though they share a projective intention, I argue that not all architectural projects can be considered utopian. While the line which delineates non-utopian projects from the utopian ones is in no way fixed, clearly defined, or consistent throughout history, I propose that the two can still be differentiated.

A typical architectural project aims to propose a realizable solution to a defined problem (or a group of problems), while the utopian architectural project goes beyond the brief in order to provide a critical stance as well as a projective proposal. Both utopian and non-utopian architectural projects are created and depicted through the use of both drawings and texts. But while these two mediums vividly and intriguingly describe the imagined cities and societies of architectural utopias, they merely provide instructional or descriptive information in non-utopian architectural projects.

Another difference can also be noted in the location of the proposals. Given the scale and ambition of the utopian architectural project, and the degrees in which they divert from their contextual reality, they are often proposed as completely spatially (or temporally) detached from the built reality in order to accommodate the utopian vision. Unlike non-utopian architectural projects, the utopian ones tend to mostly remain in the form of so called "paper architecture" –which, similar to their utopian literary counterpart, are not intended or possible to be realized. Utopian projects are also often self-initiated, created as a result of the architect(s)'s own interests and research questions, and not as a result of conforming to marked led agendas. A utopian project is not a project of market necessity, and can as such also be seen as a project created from a position of privilege. And while utopian projects are often identified as either singular eccentric buildings whose out-of-the-ordinary form is explained nominally as utopian, or as large-scale spatial proposals, namely "ideal cities", whose designs are often based only on the principles of geometrical symmetry and the ideal distribution of spaces and use, neither of these two categories necessarily defines a utopian architecture.

When observing early utopian works such as that of More, Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1623), or Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), it is important to delineate them from another term which re-appeared³⁴ in the architectural field in roughly the same time period, namely that of the *ideal city*. Best represented in the works of Leon Battista Alberti, Filarete's "Sforzinda" (c.1464), or "The Ideal City" paintings by Fra Carnevale (c.1480), ideal cities are often wrongly understood as architectural and urban manifestations of utopia. Ruth Eaton, in her book *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (2002), while acknowledging a correlation between the two terms, also provides a clear differentiation between the project of an *ideal* city as opposed to a *utopian* one. Eaton notes that proposals for ideal cities, according to their etymology, contain both a perfected physical model of an ideal space [*idea* (ancient Greek) – an intellectual conception or representation] and a corresponding notion that "the physical form of a city [*civitas* (lat.) – a body of citizens who constitute a state] can both reflect and condition the workings of a society and the behavior of citizens"³⁵. But while ideal cities contain both a projective and physical model of an ideal space and a corresponding social and political ordering of its inhabitants, the modes of living they propose are not always critical or innovative in regard to their historical context. Eaton therefore defines two main types of ideal cities: *reactive* – "where the city is 'adjusted' to reflect an established social order"³⁶ and strengthen the political ideals of the system in power; and *proactive* – one which proposes a new type of social order and can therefore be considered utopian.

3. From Utopia to Heterotopia: A Recent History

While this paper will not delve into historical examples of utopian architectural works, it is important to address some of utopia's more recent architectural history, due to the often-observed incongruity in what utopia denotes within the contemporary architectural discourse.

Reflecting on the history of utopian architectural production of the twentieth century, the term most often signifies large-scale (pre)modernist projects such as Le Corbusier's *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City* (1932), Ludwig Hilberseimer's *Metropolisarchitektur* (1920s) or even the earlier model for Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City* (1898). However, with the disillusionment in grand narratives which occurred as a response to the events of the Second World War, the form of utopia itself needed to change in order to remain relevant.

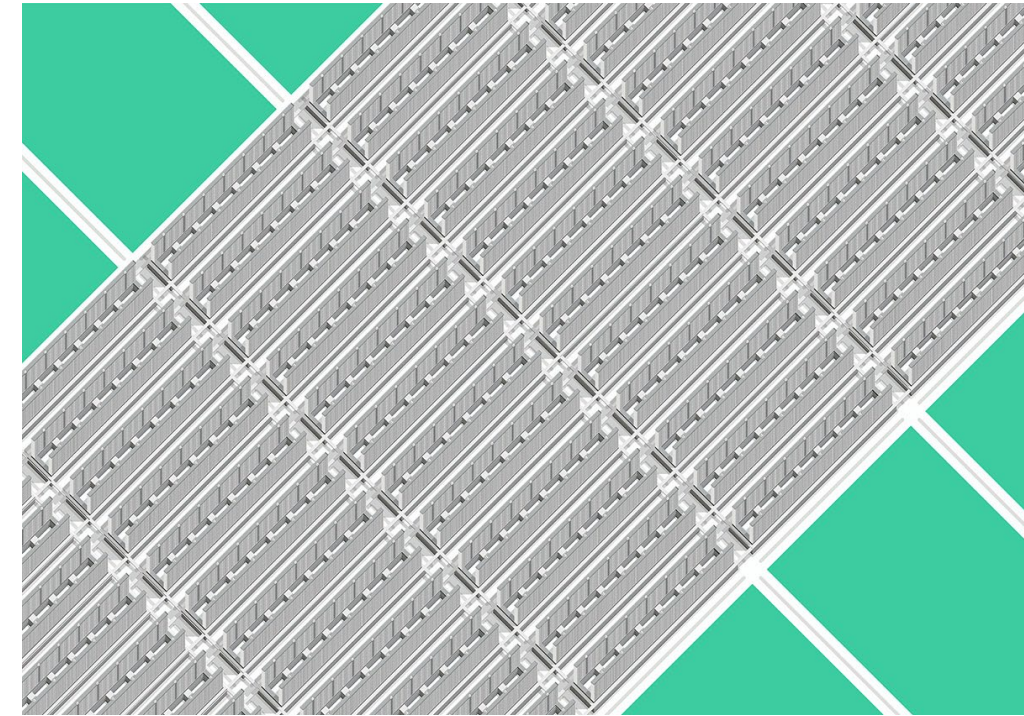


Fig.2

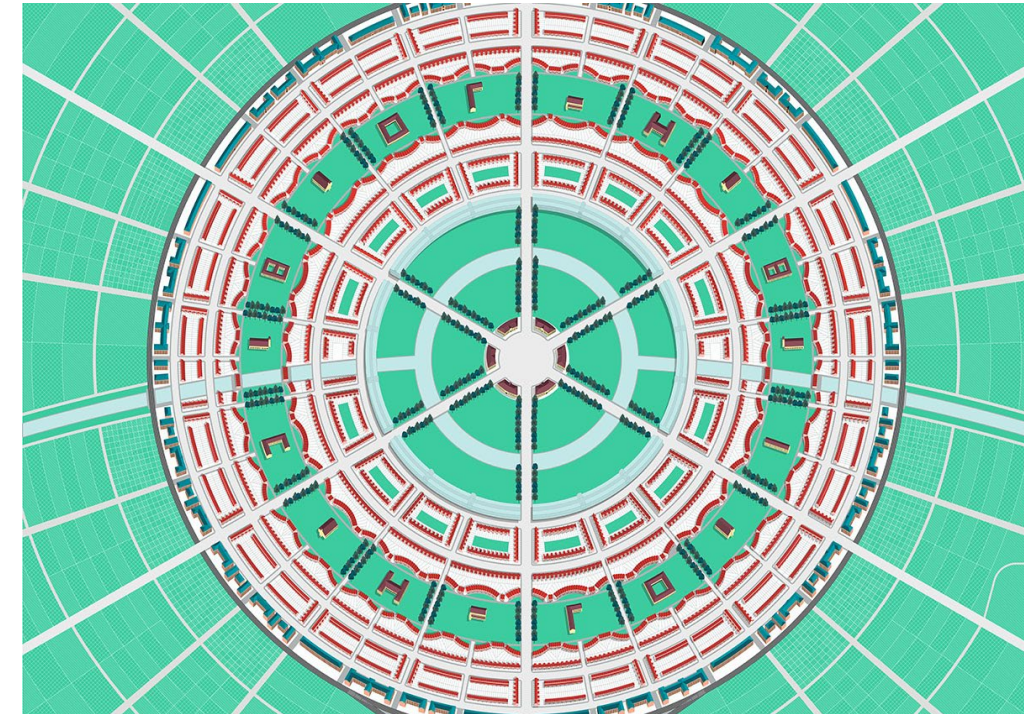


Fig.3

The societal change which began to occur within the second half of the twentieth century, becoming most prominent in the nineteen sixties led to what Foucault describes as the "epoch of simultaneity", and an "epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed"³⁷. He continued to describe that the inhabited space became heterogenous and consisted of a "set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another"³⁸. As the title of his text "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" suggests, he focuses on two specific groups of sites – utopias and heterotopias - which "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set

of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect”³⁹. Foucault defines utopias as “fundamentally unreal spaces”, as “sites with no real place”, ones which have “a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society” and which “present society itself in a perfected form”, or in the case of dystopias, “society turned upside down”⁴⁰. Heterotopias, on the other hand, are defined as “something like counter-sites”, an “effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all other sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted”⁴¹, noting also that they “are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality”⁴².

Although Foucault differentiates utopia and heterotopia, seeing the former as unreal, and the latter as its possible real-life enactment, at that specific point in history, the notion of utopia itself begins to change – transforming itself from a more distant depiction of an ideal space and society, to a more critical yet grounded depiction of a possible alternative. And while by describing six principles of heterotopia, Foucault defines their various types and manifestations, what is more relevant in regard to heterotopia within this chapter, is the notion that all these heterotopias, diverse as they are, can seemingly all simultaneously exist within one larger space – that of the city.

Based on the notion of heterotopia, Charles Jencks identifies another concept parallel to it, namely that of the “heteropolis”⁴³ – a newly emerged form which could, I argue, perhaps be seen as a contemporary version of the *metropolis* – its early twentieth century counterpart, or perhaps its predecessor. He describes contemporary cities such as London and Los Angeles, as having grown from “a collection of villages” into a “multi-centred network”⁴⁴.

And while Jencks locates heterotopia as a formative element of the postmodern city – the heteropolis – which he sees as structured out of numerous social and spatial heterotopian forms, Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) acknowledges its existence in literature as well. Harvey proposes that Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is “a perfectly appropriate image to capture what [postmodernist] fiction is trying to achieve”. He also notes that what Foucault means with the notion of heterotopia is ‘the coexistence in ‘an impossible space’ of a ‘large number of fragmentary possible worlds’, or more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other”⁴⁵. Given that this plural and heterogenous condition is prevalent on both the social and spatial level in this historical period, and that it permeates both architecture and literature, it is only expected that the utopian projects of the time – both architectural and literary – are structured out of numerous, often incongruous worlds, cities, and places. This is evident in projects such as Superstudio’s *12 Ideal Cities* (1972), OMA’s *Exodus: or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* (1972), or Yona Friedman’s *Utopies Réalisables* (1974), to name but a few.

4. Utopia Today and Tomorrow

David Harvey argues that within the context of postmodernism – in which we still locate ourselves today - due to the “schizophrenic circumstances induced by fragmentation and all those instabilities”, it is almost impossible to coherently picture, “let alone devise strategies to produce, some radically different future”⁴⁶. In other words, the complexity and fragmentation of the world which are present on all social and spatial scales make it impossible to construct a utopia, which would act as an ideal alternative to the world we inhabit. And while this might be true in a sense that it is perhaps no longer possible to construct the *same* utopias as we have done in the past – ones which offer grand narratives and singular systems, I argue that the time of producing utopias is all but gone. Like many other methods, genres, and types, utopia of the postmodern also changes. Instead of continuing to produce grand narratives and focusing on the scale of the city, utopia began to propose multiple fragments, present on various scales.

While utopia can still seemingly sporadically be found in the form of all-encompassing grand narratives, these examples often do not offer a critical stance towards their context. Rather, they tend to serve as a method of affirming and strengthening already existing conditions – something more akin to what Ruth Eaton refers to as the “reactive” ideal cities, rather than “proactive” ones⁴⁷. Examples of this are for instance “The Line”, a concept currently developed by the Saudi business group NEOM which, although formally reminiscent of Superstudio’s *Continuous Monument* project, is described as a “civilisational revolution that puts humans first, providing an unprecedented urban living experience while preserving the surrounding nature”⁴⁸. Another example is the “Masterplanet” (2020), a seemingly abandoned research project by the Danish architecture office BIG in which all aspects of life, production, and the built environment are tackled on a planetary scale.

However, an example which is perhaps more in tune with the critical and “reactive”⁴⁹ features of utopia is the multi-format project Planet City (2021) created – or rather curated – by designer and film director Liam Young. The project is described as the only remaining city on Earth which houses the entire human population of ten billion, while the rest of the planet’s surface has become wilderness. The setup is quite reminiscent to that of Zamyatin, proposing a totalising utopian world similar to those created during the modernist period. However, the fact that it is assembled out of works created by multiple authors including, among others, the fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson and sociologist Saksia Sassen, signifies that it is more akin to the examined postmodern examples which deal with

multiple social and spatial conditions, narratives, and points of view, which allows it to critically reflect on the contemporary condition much more successfully.

Aside from sporadically locating productive examples of utopia within traditional architectural practice, I suggest that utopian works can also be found within the wider area of architectural activity. For instance, we can search for utopia in curatorial practices, in which utopian critiques and reflections of multiple individuals or groups are gathered and presented under an overarching topic. A good example of this is the “Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales” exhibition curated by Ethel Baraona Pohl and held at the Matadero in Madrid in the spring of 2019, in which an array of authors from various creative fields were asked “what is an ideal city like?”⁵⁰. As explained by Baraona Pohl, the exhibition aimed to make the assembled artistic and spatial narratives “a useful tool to imagine futures together” in a time “when liberties are repressed, interpersonal and interspecies relationships questioned, and the idea of “surviving” supersedes that of “living””⁵¹.

Another group of similar examples, this time in the form of exhibitions of singular authors and collectives, are those in which the medium of the exhibition is used to bring forward utopian visions as well as activate a discussion. In these cases, the utopias are often structured out of multiple narratives reflecting on various aspects of our societal condition. They include examples such as the Belgian pavilion for the 2016 Venice Biennale authored by the Traumnovelle group which, aside from the conceptual land of “Eurotopie” which is “built upon the ashes of totalitarianism” and “ridicules methodological nationalism and the derelict nation-state”⁵², also provided a physical space for possible utopian discourse through the form of the exhibition pavilion itself. Or perhaps the exhibition *Geostories*, together with its accompanying publication, by the architectural duo Design Earth which through a set of projects “becomes a medium to synthesize different forms and scales of knowledge and technological externalities such as oil extraction, deep-sea mining, ocean acidification, water shortage, air pollution, trash, space debris, and a host of other social-ecological issues” (Design Earth, 2018).

Utopia can also be found within numerous teaching practices where architectural and urban design students work on assignments which allow for innovative and unencumbered ways of thinking about future cities and the world. In such educational settings, a much broader and more critical discussion of the status quo is possible. And while sometimes these practices can be based on re-examining historical utopian works and re-interpreting them from a contemporary perspective, other times the projects use some of the established utopian tools and techniques in order to propose new views, or even completely new approaches. Some of the more creative and inventive teaching practices in the recent years have certainly been the Videogame Urbanism course at the Bartlett, led by Sandra Youkhana and Luke Caspar Pearson (You+Pea) or the Studio Adam Caruso of the ETH Zürich which in 2016 and 2017 held studios and seminars titled “Social Structure” and “Structure and Society” which examined multiple overarching social and spatial forms of our society, as well as numerous utopian precedents.

Lastly, I suggest that utopia can also sometimes be found in architectural ideas competitions where authors, given that there is no intention of realisation, often have more freedom in developing critical and innovative narratives. This category of utopias is perhaps the most ambiguous one because it can either offer a possibility for authors to reflect more freely and critically on a specific topic, or it can be overly influenced and steered by the competition brief itself.

Circling back to the concept of heterotopia, I propose that through the multiplicity of ideas whose coexistence it affords, and the multiple readings and correlations which it engenders, the changed form of utopia appears that can be strongly situated within the postmodern condition – one which was triggered by the disillusionment with overarching myths and narratives of the modern movement. Frederic Jameson notes that the “overarching or structural Utopian vision” has been submerged by “a swarm of individual Utopian details, which correspond to the parcellization and thematization of so many individual Utopian opinions and personal or life-style fantasies”⁵³. Responding to the plurality and fragmentation of our current condition utopia has refracted “into a multitude of little Utopias – many little islands rather than just one big one”⁵⁴, providing multiple possibilities not only for the utopian subjects, but also for providing a critical reflection on our contexts, encompassing their complexity, and addressing numerous topics within the framework of one contextually rooted, fragmented utopian project.

Through this multiplicity of utopian narratives, utopia arrived to the exact position and form from which it can deliver the most relevant critique to the very conditions of our society within our point in time. Not anymore seen as a method of producing totalizing narratives, but rather as a tool for bringing forth voices and conditions which have historically been silenced and overlooked, utopia affords us to delve deeper into the multifaced socio-spatial issues and crises we are faced with today. Utopia gives us a glimpse of a possible future by turning a critical mirror onto our own present, making evident – through speculative narratives – the multifacetedness and complexity of our environment. Bringing focus on the discursive, experimental, and transdisciplinary aspect of the architectural discipline it allows us to engage more productively in conversations regarding our wider spatial, climactic, cultural, political, economic and social milieu.

Notes

- 1 The full title of the work was *Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia* (A little, true book, not less beneficial than enjoyable, about how things should be in a state and about the new island Utopia)
- 2 Vieira, Fátima, "The Concept of Utopia", in The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature, ed. Gregory Claeys, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4
- 3 Vieira (2010), 4
- 4 Vieira (2010), 4
- 5 Marin, Louis, *Utopics: Spatial Play* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), 9
- 6 Marin (1984) 10
- 7 Vieira, Fátima, "The Concept of Utopia", in The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature, ed. Gregory Claeys, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- 8 Vieira (2010), 5
- 9 Knop, Karen. "Utopia Without Apology: Form and Imagination in the work of Ronald St. John Macdonald", *The Canadian Yearbook of International Law* (2002)
- 10 Knop (2002)
- 11 Carey, John, edit. *The Faber Book of Utopias* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1999)
- 12 Vieira (2010), 16
- 13 Vieira (2010), 17
- 14 Vieira (2010), 17
- 15 Vieira (2010), 16
- 16 Vieira (2010), 16
- 17 Vieira (2010), 17
- 18 Vieira (2010), 18
- 19 Foucault, Michel, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October, 1984), trans. Jay Miskowiec from "Des Espace Autres," (March 1967), 3
- 20 Vieira (2010), 19
- 21 Levitas, Ruth, *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1990), 213
- 22 Vieira (2010), 6
- 23 Choay, Françoise, *The Rule and the Model: On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism*, 1980 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 7
- 24 Choay (1997), 7
- 25 Choay (1997), 8
- 26 Choay (1997), 7
- 27 Choay (1997), 34
- 28 Coleman, Nathaniel, *Utopias and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24
- 29 Coleman (2005), 46
- 30 Coleman (2005), 27
- 31 Coleman, Nathaniel, "The Problematic of Architecture and Utopia", in *Utopian Studies*, Vol.25, No.01 (2014), 8
- 32 Coleman (2014), 8
- 33 Marin (1984), 10
- 34 In actuality, both utopia as a concept for an ideal imagined society and space, as well as the ideal city as a perfectly geometrically organized space have appeared as ideas and narrative or spatial approaches much earlier with examples including Plato's Republic (circa 375 BC), and the Roman castrum.
- 35 Eaton, Ruth, *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 11
- 36 Eaton (2002), 11
- 37 Foucault (1984), 1
- 38 Foucault (1984), 3
- 39 Foucault (1984), 3
- 40 Foucault (1984), 3
- 41 Foucault (1984), 3
- 42 Foucault (1984), 4
- 43 Jencks, Charles, *The Story of Post-Modernism: Five Decades of the Ironic, Iconic and Critical in Architecture* (United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2011), 125
- 44 Jencks (2011), 125
- 45 Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity – An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge MA, Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2017), 48
- 46 Harvey (2017), 54
- 47 Eaton (2002), 11
- 48 NEOM, 2022, <https://www.neom.com/en-us/regions/theline>
- 49 Eaton (2002), 11
- 50 Baraona Pohl, Ethel, "Twelve Urban Fables" (2020), 2
- 51 Baraona Pohl (2019), 2
- 52 Traumnovelle, 2016, <https://traumnovelle.eu/Projects-index>
- 53 Jameson, Fredric, *Archaeologies of the Future – The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 218
- 54 Marin (1984), 176

Image Captions

- Fig. 1. Jana Čulek, "The Metropolis", interpretation of Hilberseimer's Metropolis (2022)
- Fig. 2. Jana Čulek, "Garden City Street" (2023), depicting Ebenezer Howard's Garden City
- Fig. 3. Jana Čulek, "The Thin Grid" (2023), depicting Superstudio's "First City: 2000-ton City", 12 *Ideal Cities*

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Biography

Jana Čulek is an architect, urban planner and researcher. After acquiring a Master in Architecture and Urban Planning in at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb (HR), in 2014 she continued her studies at the post-master program of the Berlage Center for Advanced Studies in Archtiecture and Urban Design. From 2014 to 2022 she was based in the Netherlands, first working as part of the Rotterdam based KAAAN Architects, and since 2019 through her own practice Studio Fabula. In June 2023 she gained her doctoral degree at the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment (NL) with the Chair of Methods of Analysis and Imagination. She is currently also part of the teaching staff at the Urban Studies interdisciplinary post-graduate specialist program ran by the Delta Lab – Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Rijeka (HR).