

READING ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIA(NISM)S: A PROPOSAL (1)

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1. This paper is based on the author's PhD dissertation entitled "A New Conceptual Framework for Architectural Utopia(nism)s" completed under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Suha Ozkan in the Department of Architecture at Middle East Technical University in 2014, funded by TUBITAK.

2. David Harvey, Nathaniel Coleman, Reinhold Martin, Marius de Geus, Michael Sorkin, and Marcel Wissenburg, being a few yet significant ones of the many urban/social theorists, have reflected on utopia's potential for holistic thinking and envisioning the whole through numerous texts.

PROLOGUE

Utopia's relationship with the production of space, implicit or explicit, has always been enduring and has generated channels of experiment. As utopia carved its path to the surface through these channels and gained materialized bodies, disappointments, and thus, criticisms were aroused. One immediate and strict response to such disappointments was to "reject the utopian altogether" and to seek ways to strip real-world practices of any remaining "utopian garb" (Cunningham, 2011, 178). On the other hand, many critics, today, believe that this is a null attempt, if not at all impossible (2). Theorists agreeing on this line find leaving such broad agendas aside as an easy escape from the responsibilities of arresting and correcting problems within urban settings. They rather call to put broader agendas back on the table, yet with a revision on what to be critical of. At this point, Reinhold Martin (2010b) proposes to turn to utopia as a revived version of criticality.

Martin (2010b)'s approach succinctly reveals the emergent perspective from which the utopian tradition is approached. Rather than trying to find faults with utopias, urban critics/theorists/practitioners are now looking for useful elements in the utopian genre. They seek the relevance of utopia today, with an awareness of the dangers and risks of their direct translation into real-life practices. The aim in this is to examine the utopian tradition to drag out "useful ideas, enlightening images, challenging visions, and perspectives" and therefore use it as a "navigational compass" to respond to the wide-ranging issues of contemporary urban settings (Geus, 1999).

This, however, primarily necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the existent varieties of relationships between utopia(nism)s and actual space. Assuredly, the journey of utopian imaginary parallel to real context is not a smooth one. However, when read chronologically, only a generic undulation between utopia and space through time may be revealed. This prevents any close readings, and thus a holistic grasp as such. In order to

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comprehensively trace the varieties of relationships between imaginary and real architectural spheres, a framework, which renders different modes and patterns of relationships, needs to be developed.

Most of the existing frameworks which dwell on varieties of utopia(nism)s depart mostly from, in Levitas (2013)'s terms, formal, functional or contextual categories such as the social-physical utopia(nism)s of Martin Meyerson (1961), or as "utopias nowhere and utopias now/here" of Lewis Mumford (1922).

Approaches as such, despite their invaluable contributions to identifying different forms, reasons and periods of constructing desirable states of affairs, are rather simplistic as they only depart from formal, functional and/or contextual aspects of utopia(nism)s. Basing understandings of utopia(nism)s on such subjective aspects yields exclusive understandings and places limits on a full conceptualization of utopian imagination's relationship with reality. This way, certain varieties of architectural utopia(nism)s are either neglected or else suppressed under time-based generalizations.

Situating itself at this fissure, this text proposes a novel conceptual framework through which architectural utopianisms can be discussed unbound by any specific utopian moment or definition of the concept of utopia.

As a means to an integrative framework as such, which does not seek a conceptual divergence, but rather one which allows further conceptual, comparative and critical readings, and that is built upon recognizing different modes/patterns of relationship between utopian imaginary, and space and time, the text pursues two lines of exploration into architectural utopia(nism)s. The first line involves a comparative and critical survey of the relevant literature and representational works of architectural utopia(nism)s via logical argumentation which integrates and re-frames explanatory theories to define the breadth of the varieties of relationships between architectural utopia(nism)s and actual space. The second line introduces and promotes binary oppositions– the outcomes of a parallel thematic analysis of the relevant literary and analogous material – as dualities that utopia(nism)s can be built upon, or nurture, and as a reader's mind filter that facilitates an in depth scrutiny into these relationships. They are proposed as complementary arteries of discussion regarding architectural utopianisms.

The text surveys two major intertwined sets of literature in constructing the above mentioned lines. Within the first, significant figures who exercised different definitions and understandings of utopia – not centered around yet touching upon its architectural aspects to certain extents – are referenced in order to expound a novel approach to reading utopia(nism)s (i.e. Mumford, Levitas, Harvey). Within the second, figures who explicitly elaborated on the architectural vocation of utopia – unavoidably approaching conventionally aesthetic and formalist stylistic critiques of certain architectural periods from time to time – are dwelled upon discussing the varieties and similarities of the ways the relationship between architecture and utopia have been conceptualized in order to manifest an alternative approach which aims to structure all (i.e. Tafuri, Colin Rowe, Philip Johnson).

DEFINING THE EXTENT OF ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIA(NISM)S: ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIA AS MODEL / ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIA AS PROJECT

All types of utopianisms, regardless of how they are categorized or collated, share a common denominator. They are all alternative constructs challenging established settings and situations perceived either as problematic or insufficient and must be considered further. All are triggered by such reflective queries.

The tone and explicitness of these critical queries, however, as well as the intensity of the desire to implement a new alternative, vary. This tone and stance affect the way in which critical thinking is transformed into a comprehensive construct of the mind – how thoughts are transformed into will.

The raw materials for all types and forms of utopianisms – this rethinking – are the same: hopes, wishes and intuition. These are aggregated to form a vision that is a function of one's analysis and understanding of the existing reality. This construct – the vision of an alternative – may or may not be connected to the present with explicit strings. Irrespective of this matter of explicitness, the constructed model acts as an independent standard for making evaluative judgments about both the present and the past, as well as developing designs that function best for that model. The desired reforms may either follow it or not. This depends on the characteristics of the model developed. These characteristics are derivatives of the methods through which complexities, possibilities and evaluations of reality are undertaken.

When the model developed involves components, which are unthinkable for and not implementable within the here-and-now, it functions more as a tool of critique, or a distant reference, rather than an applicable plan. It thus indirectly becomes engaged with the existing complexities and possibilities of reality and informs present actions through referential means.

These types of utopian models are, rather, concerned with a remote time and place – also very frequently with a timeless and placeless construct – which is better-functioning than the existing one. The main aim, primarily, is to convert a world of random happenings into a more highly integrated situation of dignified and serious deportment. Utopianisms – parts – that depart from such utopian programs – wholes – yield impulses, which seek alternatives for the here-and-now in reference to the remote model. These types of utopianisms are discussed here as utopianisms, which take utopia as a model.

Prevailing in these is the emphasis on values and norms rather than instruments. They may best be associated with what Mumford (1922) defines as utopias of reconstruction. According to Critchley (2004), Mumford's utopias of reconstruction "offer a set of references, which enable society to critically evaluate its values, institutions and technology". Thus, such utopia(nism)s involve not only corporeal improvements, but also, and more predominantly, an instauration of relationships, breeding, habits and values. Leading outwards into the world, these become deeply involved with the structures of and within reality rather than any specific material or social component of it. They reconstitute systems in their essence through purposive construction without a precondition of any extensive destruction.

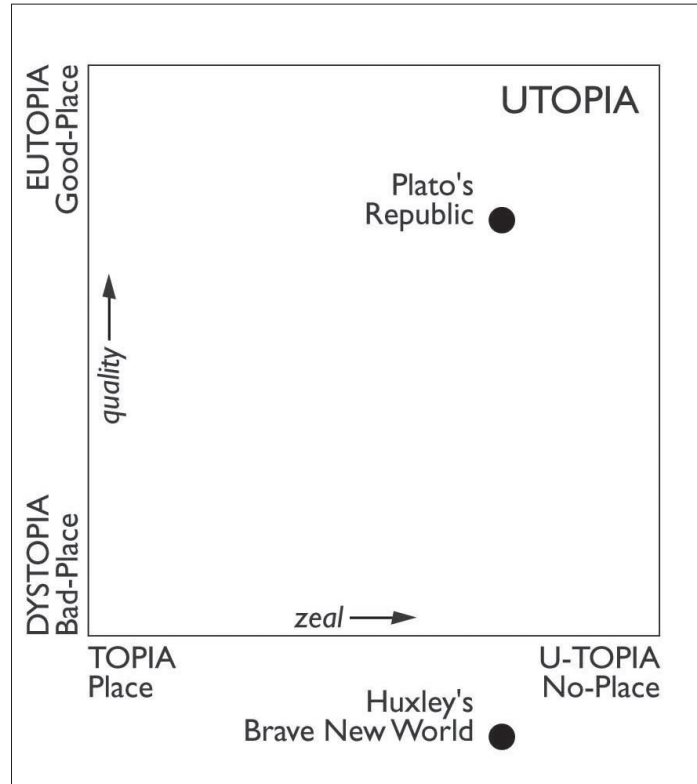


Figure 1. Doxiadis' graph of utopia illustrating utopias of escape (retrieved from [<http://www.architecture.ca/planningarchitecture/document/document3.html#practicalutopia>])

What varies in different forms of these utopianisms is the means of this reconstitution either being definitive, as in Alberti (1485)'s disciplinary prescriptions in his *De Re*, or normative as in Aldo Van Eyck (1962)'s configurative discipline (3). This variety yields multiple different forms of utopian impulses, which are materialized in a variety of ways.

What Doxiadis (1966) defines as utopias of reconstruction, on the other hand, approaches what is discussed here as utopia(nism)s which take utopia as project – those that sit considerably close to reality on the line that alienates utopia(nism)s from reality, at whose other extreme sit utopia(nism)s which take utopia as a model. (4) Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis (1966) associates utopia(nism)s of reconstruction with immediacy. According to him, utopias of reconstruction seek “immediate release from the difficulties or frustration of our lot” (Doxiadis, 1966). He, therefore, associates utopias of reconstruction with topias – place – in contrast to utopias of escape such as Plato's eutopian *Republic* and Huxley (1932)'s overly dystopian *Brave New World* (Figure 1).

Most elaborations on such will-full and comparably concrete architectural utopia(nism)s – utopia(nism)s which act as/become projects – are made in reference to modern architecture, and are better defined as a critique of its failure. Colin Rowe, Philip Johnson and Manfredo Tafuri are three of the most prominent figures on the theme, all of whom believed in forms without utopia.

According to Rowe and Koetter (1979), talking about cities, there are two types of utopias: the classical, as an un-explosive object of contemplation and the activist, as the nutrient of the appetite, triggered by the classical utopias, for the ideal. Rowe (1979) associates activist utopias with the post-

3. See Trachtenberg's (2010) text for further elaborations.

4. Those types of utopias what Rowe and Koetter (1979) came to define as the classical utopia or what Mumford (1922) calls the “utopia of escape” and what Bloch (1995) and Lefebvre (1969) call the “abstract utopia” are deliberately left out of the scope of this work as they do not entail any spatial counterparts.

5. These should not be associated with utopianisms which take utopia as a model. The classical utopias, in Rowe (1979)'s definition, are escapist, whereas utopianisms which take utopia as a model are, rather, reconstructivist.

Enlightenment (5). According to him, they are based on the stimulus of the Newtonian rationalism that prevailed the time.

“... if the properties and behavior of the material world had at last become explicable without resort to dubious speculation, if they were now provable by observation and experiment, then as the measurable could increasingly be equated with the real, so it became possible to conceive the ideal city of the mind as presently to be cleansed of all metaphysical and superstitious cloudiness. ... Then and soon it would no longer be necessary for the ideal city to be simply a city of the mind” (Rowe and Koetter, 1979, 15).

Rowe (1979)'s temporal association is not unjustifiable; however, it should also be emphasized here that in his elaboration on activist utopias, he is specifically concerned with the city as a single entity. He is concerned with the content and fate of the totalitarian approaches as such rather than their varieties. For this reason, he disregards the very possible existence of activist architectural utopianisms until that time.

Philip Johnson (2002)'s approach is also on a parallel line. According to Nathaniel Coleman (2005, 70), “if Rowe attacked the utopian content of historical modern architecture”, Johnson went after what he saw as “the unrealistic social content common to the work of a group of architects” that he called functionalist. Johnson (2002, 11), well-known for his multiple turns in architectural styles, believed that “movements can be neither transformative nor developmental.” This basically meant that what Rowe (1975) called the activist utopias of the post-Enlightenment were mere products of a style phase and thus futile. This actually meant that utopia itself, to its very core, was futile.

Tafuri (1976)'s perspective is rather different. According to him, architecture and urban design are “built-form expressions of ideology” (cited in Cunningham, 2010, 270). According to him:

“Being directly related to the reality of production architecture was not only the first to accept, with complete lucidity, the consequences of its own commercialization, but was even able to put this acceptance into effect before the mechanisms and theories of political economy had furnished the instruments for such a task. Starting from its own specific problems, modern architecture as a whole had the means to create an ideological situation ready to fully integrate design, at all levels, with the reorganization of production, distribution, and consumption in the new capitalist city” (Tafuri, 1976, 48).

This is an extension of his Marxist critique of capitalism and is discordant with both Rowe's and Johnson's naïve conviction in an architecture free of social content.

Tafuri (1976) further opens his point, referring to the *raison d'être* of CIAM. According to him, it was CIAM, which institutionalized, at the political level, “the search for an authority capable of mediating the planning of building production and urbanism with programs of civil reorganization” (Tafuri, 1976, 125-6). This brought about a search for totally articulated new forms as means of attracting the consumers of the architectural product.

Most criticisms of modern architectural utopias base their critiques on the insufficiencies of these articulated forms which basically make them projects. In other words, the failures of built formal experiments are blamed on the concept of utopia, and as a pioneer who “formulated the most theoretical hypothesis of modern urbanism” (Tafuri, 1976, 127), Le Corbusier very frequently becomes the target board.

However, this text asserts that utopianisms such as his, which take utopia as a project, do not actually fail due to the inconsistencies and ill definitions in their structures and contents. They, rather, mainly seem to collapse due to the mis- or direct interpretations of their concrete formal languages, and it is again the case of Le Corbusier which best exemplifies this statement.

Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture* (1931) is certainly one of the most significant manifestos of modern architecture which still have an enduring impact. In this work, Corbusier prescribed architecture to house the new mode of living in accordance with the new emergent spirit of the industrial age. He was, different from his European contemporaries Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, also "anxious to develop the urban connotation" (Frampton, 2007, 155) of this architecture. For this reason, he developed *Ville Contemporaine* in 1922, *Ville Radieuse* in 1924 (**Figure 2(a)**), *Plan Voisin* in 1925, his proposals for Algiers between 1931 and 1940, his proposals for Nemours – eighteen *Unité* apartment blocks – in 1933, and the Radiant City in 1935. All had differences and were residues of his evolving theory of modern architecture, and yet they all became immense formal manifestations of his ideal modern city and ideal architecture for that city (Fishman, 1982).

Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, built between 1945 and 1952, was a very powerful embodiment of the ideas he developed for *Ville Radieuse* in Nemours and Algiers (**Figure 2(b)**). In the following years, his scheme for the *Unité* became a new typology for architectural projects – especially for mass-housing. "One of the most optimistic designs for mass housing of poor people after the Second World War was (Minoru) Yamasaki's Pruitt-Igoe plan in St. Louis" (Johnson, 2007, 33) (**Figure 3(a)**). This has also become one of the most striking examples of the "failure of Utopian planning in architecture" (Johnson, 2007, 34), even though it was given an award by the American Institute of Architects right after its completion in 1956. Only a few years after that, there was serious evidence of decline due to disrepair, vandalism, crime and poverty. In as short as sixteen years' time, "it became a symbol of separation of plan and Utopia in architecture" (Johnson, 2007, 33), and was totally demolished in 1976.

Most have blamed this on the sterile and totalitarian schemes of Le Corbusier – the content of his utopianism. Not devoid of reason, these criticisms, however, very often – if not always – totally neglected the fact that, if anything was problematic, it was not only the program or the scheme of Le Corbusier. If it were so, "the Lakeshore Drive modernism of Mies van der Rohe in Chicago, which used the best of everything, including

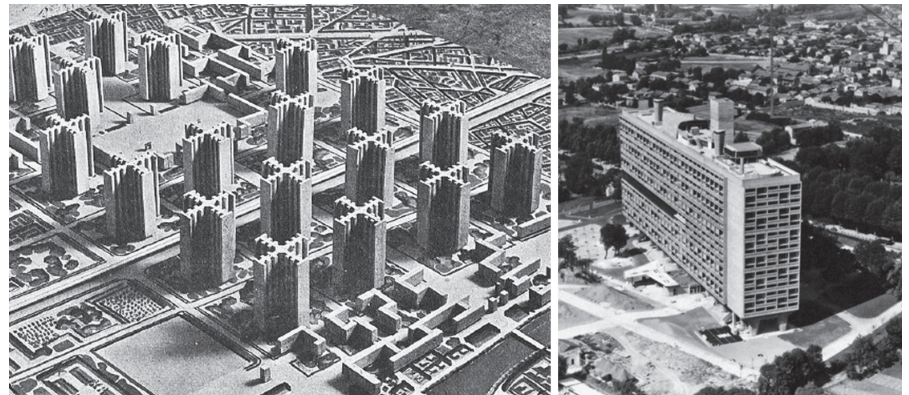


Figure 2. (a) The Radiant City, 1935 (retrieved from [<http://envisionbaltimore.blogspot.com.tr/2013/07/dissolving-border-vacuums-part-7.html>]) (b) Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, 1945 -1952 (Retrieved from [<http://www.brutalismus.com/e/?/concept/>])

real estate and views” (Johnson, 2015) would have also faced a similar fate (**Figure 3(b)**). Instead, this became a prototype for steel and glass skyscrapers all around the world, and in 1996 received Chicago Landmark Status.

Undoubtedly, the precise socio-historical contexts of the two schemes are fairly different, and yet, it is greatly important to recognize how the materialization of a single scheme –tower block housing – yielded almost opposite consequences in the two.

According to Johnson (2002), Corbusier’s modernism actually meant bourgeois modernism, and it was implicitly incoherent with the low-cost, low-service plan of the Pruitt-Igoe. For such positions, Coleman (2011) critically questioned and explained:

“Can a single building be the embodiment of Utopia? Maybe, but only if it is also the physical manifestation of, and frame for, a community of agreement. So for example, whereas, an operational Fourier *Phalanstère* would be a building-based utopia, the vast majority of public housing projects, wherever they might be found, would not be. The key difference between usual public housing schemes and a *Phalanstère* has more to do with the social organization of the communal living it houses than with the specific architectural form it takes; although whatever its form, it must be shaped around the social forms it is meant to house. Thus, a conventional public housing scheme might take a form similar to a *Phalanstère*, but that alone would not make it utopian” (Coleman, 2011, 187).

This meant that (utopian) schemes that do not find actual bodies in accordance with the author architect’s fancy fail to become operational. For this reason, even though the scheme pictured by the architect may be utopian, the resultant built form may never become an operational utopia.

Utopian schemes within which utopia acts as a project – schemes which are formally absolute and concretely illustrated – very often yield architectures as such, and it is argued here that this is a residue of their language – the way they transmit their message. In these instances, the architectural language is extremely straightforward and very often obviates the conceptual depth of the original construct. Accordingly, each and every detailed and concretely illustrated component of the whole



Figure 3. (a) Minoru Yamasaki’s Pruitt-Igoe plan in St. Louis, 1956 (Retrieved from [<http://www.historiasztuki.com.pl/kodowane/003-02-02-ARCHWSP-POSTMODERNIZM-eng.php>]) (b) Mies van der Rohe’s Lakeshore Drive in Chicago, 1951 (Retrieved from [<https://www.archdaily.com/54260/mies-van-der-rohe-lake-shore-drive-restoration-kruek>])



Figure 4. (a) Exterior of Alan I W Frank House by Gropius and Breuer (b) Interior of Alan I W Frank House (Both retrieved from [<http://thefrankhouse.org/gallery>])

becomes readily available for architectural form-hunters. Components as such are extracted out of their conceptual and theoretical context within that construct and are used anywhere, and even for any purpose, as mere figures.

On the contrary, in the case utopia(nism)s which take utopia as a model, the utopian program constitutes a whole new system departing from the existent facts of the real context without any concrete material illustrations. It is doubtless that these, together with the utopian program, foster the utopian impulse. However, the impulse does not trigger, all at once, a radical alteration of the physical and mental context. Architecturally speaking, the remotest utopianisms from physical definitions, and ergo actual place, are utopianisms within which utopia acts as a model. Within these, rather than spatial expressions, general norms and definitions regarding the discipline of architecture are put forth. They wish to (re) structure the way spaces are produced.

Since these utopianisms are not directly engaged with physical attributes of ideal spaces, their implementations through utopian impulses yield different architectures in different scales and forms, which share a common wish – satisfying ideal norms that will guide the discipline. In other words, these utopianisms, within which utopia acts as a model, construct frameworks for architectural thinking and imagining, but not ideal spaces. Therefore, their realization is only possible through internalization of the definitions and norms regarding architecture in its



Figure 5. Louis Kahn's Salk Institute (Retrieved from [<http://www.archdaily.com/61288/ad-classics-salk-institute-louis-kahn/>])

broadest sense and by all. Therefore, they cannot be associated with immediacy.

In many occasions it is not easy or even possible to read this type of utopianism through the built works of architecture. This is because they are utopianisms which may well be associated with what Levitas (1990) reads from Harvey's text as utopia(nism)s as process.

To clarify, if Filarete's Sforzinda is an escapist utopia that has primarily acted as a tool of critique but not an informative model of architecture for the time, his conception of how architecture should be structured in producing spaces stands for utopianism as process, which acted as a model for, at least, his own actual practice (6). Or, if Patrick Geddes's sectional illustrations are utopian imaginings which may be regarded as constructs that act as references for constituting viable urban spaces for his time, his model of urban architectural scrutiny, which is based on survey and diagnosis, yields a utopianism within which what is idealized acts as an informing model (7).

It is possible to multiply these examples with utopianisms that can be read from Walter Gropius's distinctly modern approach to the concept of "Gesamtkunstwerk" in architecture (8) (Figure 4), or Kahn's anthropological conception of the practice, exemplified in the Salk Institute (9) (Figure 5).

THE BINARY OPPOSITIONS AS MEANS OF PROFOUND READINGS

Even a generic account as the one suggested above that aims to identify – but not necessarily stringently define – the extents of the varieties of relationships between architectural utopia(nism)s and actual space might in many occasions be strictly reductionist as approaches sitting at almost two opposite sides of the fetch between utopianisms which take utopia as model and those which take utopia as a project might have numerous common features, whereas those which sail considerably close to each other might have very distinct qualities. As a means to facilitate further readings, which will allow to propound these dimensions, binary oppositions which are derived from a thematic analysis built upon cyclical readings of relevant research material are put forth here.

These oppositions discussed here are not defined as exclusive opposites. There are certain interfaces between the couples as well as among the concepts that form the couples. Therefore, they shall not be directly read as discrete evaluative categories or compositions of two opposing sides of a single phenomenon. They shall rather be understood as complimentary concepts, which balance one another between ideality and practicality.

Autonomous – Agentic

The thickness of the utopian artery, which feeds the architectural imagination, depends on the architects' – preferred or compulsory – positioning among other urban arbiters. The definition of the boundaries of the field of operation either confines or triggers architects' involvement in utopia(nism)s. This is not to say that utopian thought is either internalized or externalized from architectural thinking and design (10). Rather, the scope of utopian imagination is either widened or narrowed through different modes of criticality, but never caused to vanish.

Major questions regarding the agency – autonomy of architecture – boundaries of the discipline – emerged mainly with the twentieth century.

6. Antonio di Pietro Averlino Filarete, a sculptor, architect and theorist of architecture, is best known for his design of the ideal city Sforzinda (c. 1400 – 1469), one of the earliest complete ideal city designs of the Renaissance. The city, which was never built, was constituted by Filarete as a direct response to the congested Medieval towns. Filarete puts forward in his Treatise on Architecture that ideal or original designs are modified during the process of construction. For him, these amendments do not blemish the initial construct but push it towards perfection. In his ideal conception of architecture, the design and construction processes are inseparable. Thus, he postulates that the designer should guide all processes of architectural production from the very early stages to the end.

7. Patrick Geddes is a pioneering town planner well known for his inspirational thinking in urban planning and sociology based on primary human needs. He was after the scientific method regarding urban production and thus encouraged close observation to discover relationships among places.

8. Walter Gropius, one of the pioneers of modern architecture, is the founder of the Bauhaus school. In the modern approach to the concept of Gesamtkunstwerk Gropius contended that architects should be equipped with craftsmanship to be able to work with different materials and in different artistic mediums.

9. Louis Khan, a well-known American architect, according to Nathaniel Coleman (2005), was one of the very few American architects who envisioned an emotionally expanded modern project through a search for themes of cultural continuity.

10. Within this text, utopia(nism) is not undertaken as a concept which either appears in or retreats from the arena of architecture. Owing to Reinhold Martin (2010b)'s theory fully developed in his book *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again*, shifts in the position – but not retreat – of utopia(nism) in architectural thinking and design is stressed.

This was parallel to the changes in the everyday life and in the modes of thought – influenced by the rapid development of technology.

According to Manfredo Tafuri (1976), this was also because of the failure of the discipline of architecture in taming the new emergent forces and wills operating on cities. According to him, architects' insistence on approaching cities as their autonomous fields of intervention and aims to solve all existing and emergent ills of urban environments through formal means triggered crisis both in the city and in the disciplinary field. However, despite his criticisms on architects' reductive approaches towards cities, he is also against approaches that bind the fate of architecture directly to the fate of the city (Tafuri, 1976, 42). By this, he refers to the American city:

“In the American city, absolute liberty is granted to the single architectural fragment, but this fragment is situated in a context that it does not condition formally: the secondary elements of the city are given maximum articulation, while the laws governing the whole are rigidly maintained” (Tafuri, 1976, 43).

If the ideologically charged modern of Le Corbusier stands for what Tafuri (1976) criticizes with the former paragraph, the “content-free” (Coleman, 2005, 71) American Modern of Philip Johnson – that, which has been reduced to a style phase – exemplifies the latter.

Tafuri (1976)'s ascertainments and criticisms in his text, based on his critical rereading of the history of modern architecture, are invaluable within the scope of this text, due to one main reason: Tafuri illustrates the extent to which the domain of the field of architecture may expand or shrink. These mentioned above – the city as a work of architecture, and architecture as a residue of the city – reveal the two sides of the pendulum of architectural domain. Both refer to conditions where architecture and city planning meld together. However, in the first, architecture is widely autonomous in giving shape to the urban, whereas in the second, it is reduced to an agency governed by greater wills and forces.

According to Reinhold Martin (2010b, xiv), “the active ‘unthinking’ of Utopia” is a function of the swing of this pendulum from the side of autonomy towards the side of agency. In other words, as far as architecture withdraws from the urban arena, its utopian contents also withdraw to individual spheres. As one's level of involvement with the structures and networks of the existing context decreases, utopian imagination parallels.

This has two major denotations. One is regarding the detachment of self from grand utopian programs and the other is the involvement of the very self with even greater utopian programs through this withdrawal. Martin clearly illustrates this with his example: “... imagine an atomic physicist withdrawing daily into the laboratory to do science and only science, only to wake up one late-summer morning to discover that she had been working on the Manhattan Project” (Martin, 2010b, xiv).

This illustrates that autonomy and agency are not two extremities of a single rod. They operate in a cyclical manner. As the scope of autonomy is constricted in search of well-defined domains of architectural operation, the field surrenders to the agency of grandly autonomous outside wills and forces. As the opposite happens, control over the detail is forfeited.

In substance, a discussion of this binary couple in relevance to architectural utopia(nism)s is crucial due to two main reasons. The first one is regarding the relationship between disciplinary boundaries and the confines of

utopian imagination in architecture. The second one, on the other hand, is regarding the various ways a work of architecture may involve or be involved in utopian agendas.

Unthinkable – Thinkable

What is thinkable and what is not is a function of possibilities and impossibilities of the existing context, and estimations for the future. Therefore, this concept couple may best be read through an association with the practice of imagining.

There are two main branches of imagination. One is regarding the imagination of a possible construct, and the other is regarding the opposite, imagining the impossible. A utopian ideal may well depart from any of the two.

What is thinkable and what is not is mainly framed by the structures of reality and chiefly by the zeitgeist: To what extent is there room for imagination? Architecturally speaking this is closely associated with the issues regarding disciplinary boundaries. Reinhold Martin (2010b), while dwelling on postmodernism, subtly reflects on an instantiation of this duality between the thinkable and the unthinkable.

“With postmodernism, what was in fact thinkable was subject to new epistemic limitations on which architecture provides a unique perspective. In particular, architectural discourse reproduces the resulting boundary problem, in which what is thinkable is derived from what is not. This is especially true for architectural discourse on the city. I therefore begin with the term territory, instead of the more resonant and more modern space, to mark an oscillation between the territoriality of thought—its epistemic delimitations—and thought concerned with the city and its territories, especially as translated into architecture. More specifically, in postmodernism Utopia is not only a special kind of territory; it is also another name of the unthinkable” (Martin, 2010b, 1).

According to Martin, with postmodernism, utopia’s denotation as a limitless frontier was replaced by an approach, which kept utopia both in and out at the same time. In other words, secession of architectural practice from grand utopian programs ended up in an unavoidable involvement of the practice in even greater utopian programs through this withdrawal. This means that what utopia comes to mean in reference to what is thinkable or unthinkable within the domain of architecture also determines its position and force within the discipline.

In architectural utopianism discussions, it is important to recognize both. The architectural utopian ideals, which may directly be or have already been transferred to materialized bodies, or ways of practices, and those which are continuously haunted by the ghost of impossibility, both, deserve remark. However, on many occasions, architectural utopian discourse is reduced solely to close readings of built forms which are concretized products of utopian moments, or else, utopian proposals conveyed through plans and perspectives.

With an approach as such practices of imagining whole new systems about how we build are underestimated if not at all disregarded. In order to be able to expand on, for instance, the utopian tones of Alberti’s a-historical and a-stylistic proposal on the temporal dimensions of architectural production he elaborates in his *De Re Aedificatoria* which isolates the design process defining it as a prerequisite for construction – a very radical notion given the insufficiencies of construction technology of the time – a more

11. See TRACHTENBERG, M. (2010) *Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion*, Yale University Press, New Haven. for further elaborations.

holistic and comprehensive understanding which integrates both forms of utopian practices is obligatory (11).

Comprehensive – Specific

In the field of architecture, it is the complexity of context and the forces and the wills operating thereon, which directly influence the range of utopian inquiries. Whether a utopian scrutiny dives into the depths of a specific issue – whether it departs from a specific theme within the whole – or it aims to cover the breadth of architectural domain – as a holistic, comprehensive model for architectural production – is bound to this very complexity of its setting.

According to Levitas (1993), utopian speculation evolves continuously. There have been quite important changes in the space that utopian vision holds in contemporary culture, yet this is not due to a failure of the utopian imagination. What changed the position of utopian vision is more concrete. It is the difficulty of identifying spots of intervention in the increasingly complex social and economic structure of the contemporary cities, and of identifying the agents and bearers of social transformation within those structures.

Cities, more than the buildings they contain, are containers for politics, economics and debates, which constitute webs of these structures. They are produced, on the one hand, in a context of social relations that stretch beyond their physical boundaries and, on the other, by the intersection of social relations within those.

Realistically, for the architect, there is no choice other than working with these competing forces operating on the cities. The matter is whether the architect sets to tame all these competing components, or withdraws, as discussed earlier, into his sphere to dwell on specifically formal, technical or thematic issues. If the earlier example of Alberti applies for the former here, Peter Cook's utopian practice may well exemplify the latter.

Cook (1990), steering clear of a critique of the status-quo, but not from an effort to improve already existing or emerging conducts, piles up a thematic development in his thinking, something that he inherited from the Archigram tradition. Cook's propositions do not evolve chronologically from the Plug-in City to the Kunsthaus Graz. In many instances, he claims to find thematic advancement more interesting, since what interests him intellectually is "the recurrence of certain themes" (ArchitectureAU, 2011). In many occasions, he stated that the effect of Archigram on his thematic advancement was quite drastic. His continuing interest in the transient and the impermanent, which yielded an attack on architectural typologies, is rooted in that effect (ArchitectureAU, 2011). Certain ongoing themes departing from there gained a multitude of different forms in Cook's works – even in the early years of his career – as contrasting as the formal languages of the Plug-in city and the Monte Carlo Competition entry (Figure 6).

Cook's stance is cogent as within the complex nature of reality it is, certainly, arduous to refer to any universal consensus, universal model, or even – on many occasions – very generic universal norms. This is a derivative of the diversity of the humanware both formative and part of various social, political, economic and physical networks. It is through the change in the scale of social consciousness regarding this diversity, and

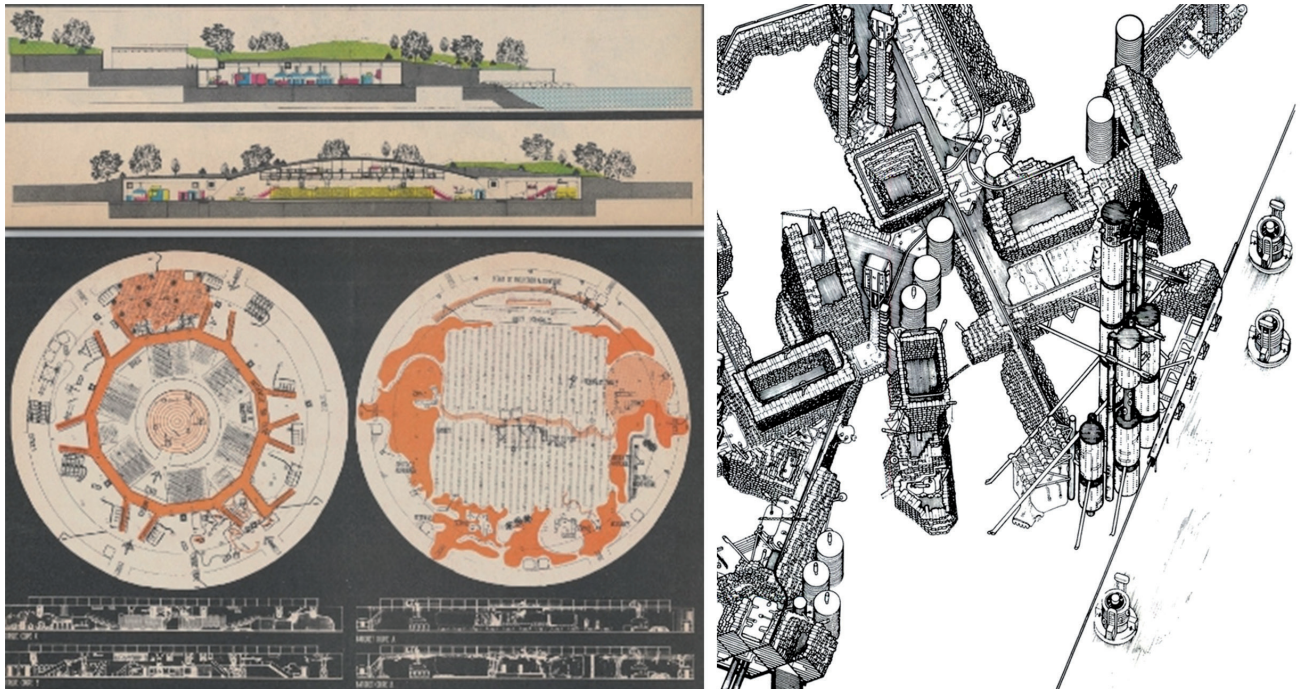


Figure 6. (a) Monte Carlo Entertainment Center by Archigram, 1970 (b) Plug-in City by Peter Cook, 1964 (Both retrieved from COOK, P., ed. (1999) *Archigram*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York).

thus regarding the impossibility of achieving an ideal for all, that utopian imagination is mainly affected by this fact.

Destructive – Constructive

Architecture, as a configurative discipline, becomes involved in the generation processes of both many desirable and as many undesirable components through the production of settings. This involvement transpires at two levels. The first one is through the production of interdependent parts of the city – with buildings and urban designs. The second one is through the constitution, provision and, in certain occasions, construction of wholes out of these parts.

Architectural utopia(nism)s rely on the fusion of these two dimensions. In this way, the idea of the whole either guides the creation of parts, or, in more aggressive cases, is materialized in totality through complete master plans. This level of aggressiveness of a utopian ideal determines whether an idea of literally destroying the existing make-up to replace it with the new and alternative, or one playing within the existing realities to transform them from within predominates the utopian imaginary (12).

In order to erase the extant undesirable elements, both approaches are existent among architectural utopia(nism)s. This is what differentiates Corbusier’s utopianism from Oswald Mathias Ungers’ or Bruno Taut’s.

Taut (1919), for instance, in his *Alpine Architektur* – a treatise on utopian architecture –, elaborates on the construction of an ambitious urban fabric in the Alps using the potentialities the new material glass offers. Through the text he builds up his imaginary via notes and illustrations (Figure 7). These illustrations elaborate abstractly on a gigantic task of construction as an antithesis of war destruction. However, unlike Le Corbusier’s, his illustrations give very little information about the formal qualities of the setting, and his thinking here is revealed through very abstract means. In that sense, the attitude of Taut is not a formally solid and dominantly will-

12. There are, certainly, approaches which set themselves apart from the existing realities. These rather compensatory approaches may best be exemplified by Paolo Soleri’s Arcosnati. Soleri, in his design, radically isolates the setting through the Arizona Desert.



Figure 7. Alpine architecture by Taut, c. 1917-1919 (Retrieved from [http://etsavega.net/dibex/Taut_Alpine-e.htm])

full construct. It is rather an in-depth scrutiny into a specific domain of architecture as a means of facilitating still broad objectives. Therefore, both its intentions and its influence are less aggressive, less destructive and less formal but more thematic, constructive and conceptual (13).

Architecture, by its very nature, is directly related to the reality of production mainly through the act of construction (Tafuri, 1976, 48). This very act of construction has many points of tangency with destruction. The decision an individual architect makes either to change himself/herself or to change the environment determines whether destruction is seen as mandatory or not. This is to say that, if an architect is insistent on the fact that only a new setting can bring about sound futures, destruction – of the existing – is posited to be inevitable. On the other hand, if he/she believes that the existing setting provides potentialities that shall be exploited, destruction is needless.

Thus, what is emphasized here with this concept couple is the dissociation between architectural utopia(nism)s which identify spots of intervention within the existing reality, and those which consider destruction of the existing as a prerequisite for all other architectural production actions.

This, certainly, relates to the level of applicability of the utopian ideals by the existing means of the present. What is doable and what is not – the possibilities of the reality – determine the course of any intervention – either as partial construction, or else as destruction for construction. The complexities of reality also play their parts in sculpting architectural utopia(nism)'s aggression regarding construction and destruction. The mode of behavior for any architectural action departs from the constraints of the existing context. The attempt is either to play with the rules of the game or to undertake an alteration of the rules from the very roots.

It is, as this reveals, crucial to discuss the binary couple of destructiveness – constructiveness in order to unpack what any form of architectural utopianism primarily attempts – either consciously or subconsciously.

Creative – Technical

Creativity, by definition, is a concept firmly bound to the individual and his/her abilities. However, the individual, giving shape to any imaginary, drives his/her references from the existing context and filters them through a mode of thought, which is again a function of the processes of and processes within that context. Therefore, his/her themes, if not capacity, are

13. Here it is important to distinguish between the influence of Taut's architectural works and the influence of his utopian thinking. Since Taut's utopianism is quite abstract in his comprehensive thinking and only its parts are concretely elaborated upon and realized through his work. Here, the influences of his holistic perspective are referred, rather than the influence of his works.

affected by that reality – in all dimensions: historical, social and spatial. In Coleman (2010, xxi)’s terms, creativity is “an interweaving of identity as both empirical and structural”.

Beyond doubt, creativity is an inseparable component of utopia(nism), as is technicality. A structured imaginary model – the utopia – necessitates laboring on both dimensions. Thus, what is implied here with the concept couple technicality – creativity is not a cross tabulation of the concepts as one versus the other. It is rather a question of dominance among both sides. In other words, it implies a scrutiny that aims to uncover the reasons beyond the undulation of emphasis among the concepts.

Whether a utopian ideal is predominantly technical or creative is bound to the way the initial question, which triggers the imaginary, is defined. In architecture, many questions have multiple answers. The way the question is framed defines the method through which the answer or solution will be formulated, and thus, molds the response among these many. Certainly, how questions are formulated within a discipline is affected by the preponderant mode of thought within that discipline.

Depending on whether the question is, predominantly, one of a “what?” or one of a “how?”, the utopian imaginary is either directed towards heavily creative, less dominantly technical corollaries or vice versa.

Architecturally speaking, the relevance of the discussion of this concept couple may best be illustrated by Reinhold Martin (2010b)’s example. In his book *Utopia’s Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again*, published in 2010, Martin differentiates the utopianism of Le Corbusier from the utopianism of Buckminster Fuller. As he identifies, in the Spaceship Earth of Buckminster Fuller, the utopian future is preprogrammed (14). Therefore, it is representable, as well as optimizable. The utopianism of Le Corbusier, on the other hand, is based on images. His designs are “represented in panoramic aerial views and integrated master plans”, whereas Fuller’s “were represented discursively and probabilistically, in charts, graphs, and statistics describing world-historical ‘trending’ (his term)” (Martin, 2010b, 35).

From another perspective, however, it may be claimed that Fuller is a significant and rare figure whose work attains both dimensions: when a discussion of Fuller’s architecturally utopian thinking is reduced to the specific formalism of his inventive Geodesic Dome or else to the Dymaxion House, the essence of his utopia(nism) gets lost in the midst. It is in such a perspective that he may not be counted as being at all utopian. However, when discussed in relevance to the concept of lightness, his utopianism is exposed. In that sense, Fuller is one of the most prominent figures contributing to the imagining of “the most abstract, least material and most conventionally ‘elegant’ of all megastructuralist designs” (Modena, 2011, 133) with his structural and speculative inventiveness. At both a formal and a representative level, besides all those charts and graphs, he maintained the abstractness, and/or relative impossibility in most occasions, of the whole he imagined while still concretely experimenting with the part. In other words, he remained vaporous – in a good sense-, dominantly creative and thus speculative in his comprehensive thinking; whereas he also technically challenged the formal at the micro-scale, dwelling on the specific.

14. In his book *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, initially published in 1969, Fuller (2008) traces the evolution of the mindset of man, and evaluates his capacity to survive on the Spaceship Earth. The Earth is defined as a spaceship since, similarly, the earth has finite resources that cannot be resupplied.

Beyond doubt, from whichever stance one takes, both Le Corbusier and Fuller are invaluable epitomes of architectural utopia(nism)s. However,

their imaginary procedures are somewhat different. How these procedures affect the product – the utopia – deserves further elaboration.

Critical – Projective

The way architecture is defined by the architects themselves, and by the discipline's auxiliary, the institutional context of architectural education, orients extensively how existing settings are approached and shaped. The primary emphasis within both affects the architect's conception regarding himself/herself. At one extreme, the architect sees himself/herself as an artist preoccupied with the beauty of his products, and at the other as a mere specialist or technician who satisfies the wills of his/her client in best technical way possible. On the other hand, an architect may also see himself/herself as responsible for designing settings that are welcoming to people, influenced by and influential on social life. This reflects the distinction between a predominantly vocational approach and a humanistic one.

The major distinction between a vocational approach and a humanistic approach to architecture is regarding the internalization of the existing dominant systems within reality. Once, these systems – together with the ideologies – are internalized, they are no longer questioned by the architect. Thereon, only artistic and technical issues are left to utopian speculation and imagination. The existing setting is accepted as it is and these imaginaries are rather built on possible futures, which are primarily projections of the here-and-now. On the other hand, within a more humanistic approach, social conditions are questioned for the better. Reality is criticized. A utopian imaginary, within this approach, is mostly based on this criticism rather than acquiescing in the existing.

In order to be able to discuss the different forms of Utopia's vocation in these approaches, the binary couple critical – projective will be utilized. The adjective projective will be used to refer to the post-critical – if not uncritical – perspectives within the praxis which aim to address urgent existent problems. Criticality, conversely, refers to approaches which depart from resistant and novel engagements with the here-and-now. As Levitas (1990, 15) states, "although the future is open, in that there is a range of real possibilities, it is not unconstrained". This is, thus, to make a distinction between approaches which challenge these possibilities and approaches which challenge the constraints.

This, however, deserves expansion, and it shall be possible in light of the question posed by Reinhold Martin (2010a): "Critical of What?" As Krista Sykes (2010) briefly summarizes in the introductory chapter of the book she edited *Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993-2009* "critical theory" appears as "an overarching and ideologically grounded practice that strives to interrogate, elucidate, and thus enhance the world in which we live". This postulates that criticality is a counterpart of architectural discussions. (15) However, it is rather in crisis due to lack of any overarching concept within these architectural discussions. Reinhold Martin (2010a) in his text *Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism*, by posing the question mentioned earlier "Critical of What?" makes an important critique of this criticality.

According to Martin (2010a), there are two major strains of criticality in architecture. The first one is political critique developed by theorists such as Manfredo Tafuri. The second one is aesthetic critique, which he associates with architects like Peter Eisenman. His ascertainment here is

15. Critical theory is redefined by Sykes (2010) in relevance to contemporary discussions, by weaving the coupling discussion of Hays and Nesbitt in *Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993-2009*.

that there is currently a line of architecture, which is neither politically nor aesthetically critical but rather post-critical. This means that there are architectural practices which do not challenge any socially accepted norms, yet still radically experiment with the possibilities of the here-and-now. Zaha Hadid and Patrick Schumacher's pioneering inquiry into digital design media as a means to explore new concepts of space may well exemplify approaches as such.

This reveals that there are different approaches to criticality within architecture that deserve elaboration. It is important to refer to these different perspectives as they yield different forms of architectural practices which have different forms of relationships with utopianism.

EPILOGUE

New resilient perspectives favor open understandings of utopia which cannot be fully manifested through mere categorical frameworks, or normative readings of utopia(nism)s alone. Built upon such enquiries the proposed integrative approach propagated a means that prioritizes revealing "the utopian aspects of forms of cultural expression rather than creating a binary separation between utopia/non-utopia" (Levitas, 2013, 4).

At an immediate level, it operates as a novel modus of analysis for the anatomy of the relationship between architecture and utopia. There, different from earlier approaches to architectural discussions of utopia, this stance deliberately sidesteps questions regarding what utopia is. Rather, it aims to act as a framework to question the utopian aspects of phenomena. This has strong references to what Levitas (2013) calls "utopia as method".

"Utopia as method ... has three interlinked aspects: the archeological, which reveals the model of the good society in a political program, text, artwork or indeed piece of urban design; the architectural, which proposes an alternative set of social institutions based on a set of premises, such as the need for sustainable production; and the ontological, which addresses the nature of the subjects or agents interpellated in the society in question." (Coleman, 2011, 305)

When utopia is taken as a method as such, its multiple meanings, forms, functions and contents are subsumed. This shifts the understanding of utopia from a didactic blueprint for a new world towards a concept with multiple reflections, both on imaginary and real contexts that allows for numerous readings.

At this juncture, what is read as an architectural utopia breaks off from what utopianisms may be read from architecture. What the term architectural utopianism refers to, here in this approach, is based on this distinction. Through this, it is aimed to allow for multifarious ways of reading utopian dimensions of architectural constructs.

The analysis proposed by this framework indulges a deliberation and exploration of the hiatus between utopia(nism)s which take utopia as a model and those which take utopia as a project and the proposed binary oppositions above are to shed light on such inquiries. The assumption is that it is through such an exploration that one can detect and elaborate on more resilient and prolific forms of utopia(nism)s where utopia becomes a reference unbound any direct spatial accounts and yet innumerable spatial and vocational interpretations, either a speculative reference, for exempli gratia, as that of Buckminster Fuller which challenges technology as a means to achieve a sort of lightness and less-ness in architecture, or a

16. Cook (1999) frequently expressed his displeasure about the prevailing conducts of architecture. As a response to this perpetual dissatisfaction, Cook (1999) piles up a thematic development in his thinking in return coupled by a utopian dialectical language transmitted through his sequential illustrations which deliberately refrain from the tectonics of architecture.

critical reference as that of Peter Cook which resides on a critical dialogue in search of ambiguous and unexpected possibilities for the environment (16).

It is, however, my contention that none of the discussions regarding the place and act of utopia in the sphere of architecture as such can be made unbound by discussions that are internal to the discipline of architecture. This is because the tidal movements of architectural utopia(nism)s are not discrete from those within the discipline regarding its domain, boundaries and language which collectively and substantially – yet not solely – define the position and attitude of the architect toward the making of architecture. This has implications on both how utopianisms of different periods are read as suggested above and, more substantially, on how the here and now is evaluated and assented to operate from within.

The contemporary scene is dominated by issues of immediateness, presentness and literalness. Concordantly, the contemporary architect is in the position to continuously seek ways to gain control, if not a word, over complex and constantly changing processes of the urban milieu. To this end, multifarious perspectives, models, and techniques are being extensively adopted from disciplines external to architecture. This not only induces an extensive repertoire of novel communicative means, an amply new vocabulary, but also totally refreshing constructs and understandings of both existing and emergent phenomena. Architectural production as well as representation is not didactic anymore (GSD Talks, 2017). With advances in augmented reality per se, even what is/might be the architectural real diverges from what it used to be. This marks a momentous phase where issues of representation as well as issues of reality – what the architectural real is – might be (re)elevated so as to question and draw the integral position of utopia(nism) for the current practice, adding a new discussion ground for architectural discourse regarding the relation and prolific gap between the imagined and the (new) real. The conceit, here, is that this vast repertoire, widely freed from a tectonic nature, is exigently in need of a critical discussion base that challenges its occasional embodiment solely as a pool of forms and collocations which race to emulate the other for the most transcendent, the most unusual and the most provocative as gimmicks devoid of excogitated content.

At an imminent level, thereof, the proposed critical apparatus is propounded as a timely modus of synthesis that intends to inform a potentially resilient paradigm of architecture which builds upon the above mentioned experiments of architectural vocabulary and critically engages with their content becoming a filter of self-probe for the architect to construct and calibrate a critical distance between the imagined – the utopian at best – and the new/assumed real. In other words, it purports to become a critical means to integrate the experiments of architectural vocabulary and the imaginary sphere of architectural thinking into a whole. It aims to galvanize an analytical reading of architectural utopia(nism)s and a synthetic instance of constructively thinking about the language of architecture within which referential utopianisms as mentioned above may flourish.

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Ütopya; ütopyacılık; mimari ütopyacılık; mekan üretimi; parça – bütün ilişkisi

MİMARİ ÜTOPYALARI OKUMAK: BİR ÖNERİ

Karşı-mekânı karşı-toplumun temeli olarak öneren ütopyalari ele alan kent kuramcılarının yazınları, tarihte, oldukça erken dönemlere dayanmaktadır. Buna karşılık, bu türlü kuramsal kurguların gerçek mekana mimari ürünler biçimindeki etkileri üzerinde duran çalışmalar görece yenidir. Ütopya ve mimarlık ilişkisi üzerine yapılan ilk kuramsal çalışmanın üzerinden bir asır ancak geçmiştir. Bu geçen sürede, ilgili kuram hızla gelişmiş ve yaygınlaşmıştır. Buna mukabil, bu alandaki kuram, çeşitli kıyaslamalara

temel olacak bir altyapıdan yoksun olduğundan tutarlı bir yapısal gelişme gösterememiştir. Bunun sonucu olarak, bütünsellik içinde algılanması mümkün olmayan bir bilgi birikimi oluşmuştur.

Bu metnin amacı mimari ütopya kuramını ve bu kuramın mekânsal karşılıklarını entegre etmeyi hedefleyen bir yöntem ortaya koymaktır. Bu maksatla, mimari ütopyaların belirli bir dönem veya belirli bir ütopya anlayışından bağımsız tartışılmasına olanak verecek bir kavramsal çerçeve önerilmektedir. Bu önerinin temelinde ütopyaçı programlar ve mimari üretim biçimindeki ütopyaçı hareketler arasında çoğu göz ardı edilmiş farklı gelgit örüntüleri olduğu görüşü yatmaktadır. Burada önerilen eleştirel çerçeve ile günümüz mimari düşün ve pratiklerini besleyecek esnek yaklaşımların ortaya konmasını \ çıkarılmasını sağlayacak bir temel oluşturulması hedeflenmektedir.

READING ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIA(NISM): A PROPOSAL

The writings of urban theorists who have studied utopias that propose a counter-space as the basis for a counter-society go back to very early periods in history. However, works dwelling on the influence of such theoretical constructs on actual space, in forms of architectural outputs per se, are comparably new. Since the revival of the very first theoretical work on the relationship between utopia and architecture, barely a century has passed. During this period, such theory has developed and expanded rapidly. However, due to the lack of any structure to provide a comparable base, the theory has not indicated a consistently constructed developmental growth, yielding a great accumulation of unintegrated knowledge, impossible to be comprehended in totality.

The aim of this text is to provide a method intending to facilitate the integration of architectural utopian discourse and its physical counterparts into a whole. To this end, a conceptual framework through which architectural utopianisms can be discussed unbound by any specific utopian moment or any specific definition of the concept of utopia is proposed. This departs from the fact that there are different patterns of tidal relationship between utopian programs and utopian impulses in forms of architectural production, some of which are almost totally disregarded. By providing this critical apparatus to explore the varieties of such patterns, it is intended to develop a basis to uncover certain resilient approaches which may potentially feed into the current architectural thinking and practice.

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