UTOPIAN PROJECTS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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A b s t r a c t
This paper is dedicated to utopia in terms of theoretical and historical view of their spatial aspects. The paper presents current classifications and definitions of the phenomenon of utopia (theoretical approach), and the evolution of spatial utopias (historical approach).

S t r e s z c z e n i e
Niniejszy artykuł jest poświęcony utopiom w ujęciu teoretycznym i historycznym z uwzględnieniem ich aspektów przestrzennych. W artykule przedstawiono dotychczasowe klasyfikacje i definicje zjawiska utopii (ujęcie teoretyczne), oraz ewolucję utopii przestrzennych (ujęcie historyczne).

K e y w o r d s : Utopia; Utopia development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Utopias of each epoch, even if they anticipate the future or on the contrary search for an ideal in the distant past, bear the mark of the time and place in which they were conceived. [13]

Utopia is a neologism of a Greek origin coined as a result of joining two words *eu* – good, *ou* – no, *topos* – place. Nowadays, it is most often used in the context of describing an *unreal, unfeasible idea*. The original use of the word "utopia" by its author Thomas Morus indicated its positive character. By means of this term he defined eutopos – a wonderful place and *outopos* – a place which does not exist.

This paper provides a summary of initial research on the significance of spatial aspects in the development of contemporary utopias. It contains fundamental information concerning the phenomenon of utopia and provides an introduction to further, more detailed investigations. The examinations of literature constituted the basic research method. The research aimed at the creation of a definition of a contemporary architectural utopia as well as indication of characteristic features of contemporary architectural utopias. The scientific purpose of further research encompasses the identification and prediction of the influence of contemporary architectural utopias on the development of the 21st century architecture.

This article consists of three parts preceded with an introduction and closed with conclusions. The first part aims at an unambiguous definition of the phenomenon of utopia on the basis of the existing definitions and classifications. The second part provides a chronological and synthetic review of utopias and their architectural aspects. This part is closed with conclusions defining common features typical of most utopias despite their development through the centuries. The third part is a review of modern utopias being reflection of the present reality. It distinguishes their scope and forms of conveying the message.

2. THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF UTOPIAS

The notion of utopia usually encompasses: 1. all visions of an ideal society in principle different from a critically assessed status quo; 2. plans for rebuilding the society without taking into account the realities or without specifying the means of their realisation; 3. all overall

pictures of the desired state of the things; 4. a genre of didactic literature including works (mainly novels) presenting the life of an ideal society, for instance in the yet undiscovered lands (typical of the utopias of the past) or in some distant future (in more recent forms, beginning from the half of the 18th century). [16]

Among various ways of perceiving the utopia one may distinguish utopias understood as a pipe-dream, ideal, experiment or alternative [13] [6]. The pipe-dream is perceived as an unrealistic idea, extremely impractical, cut off from reality. This term is of a subjective and judgemental character. Utopia understood as an ideal presents views expressing opposition to reality. Utopia in this sense is a goal which should be pursued by the mankind. Utopia perceived as an experiment aims at the theoretical examination of a certain hypothesis. It constitutes a kind of a mental process (thought process), an exercise in which it is possible to verify everything which cannot be proven in reality yet. Utopia as an alternative is a result of an explicit disagreement with the existing world and a conviction that the alteration of reality should happen in an instant manner and not in an evolutionary way.

During the past years, parallel to the appearance and development of subsequent utopias, one developed the directions of research on this phenomenon creating new definitions and classifications of researchers (including: Ernst Bloch [2], Françoise Choay, Georg Kateb [7], Lewis Mumford [9], Georg Picht [12], Jerzy Szacki [13], Aleksander Świętochowski [15]). No new definition, even the most accurate one, did not supplant the so-far definitions permanently embedded in culture. However, due to the multitude of and discrepancy in the available definitions of utopia, it has become necessary to distinguish, analyse and formulate one definition that would serve as a further research tool. While analysing the definitions of utopia one should also pay attention to the criticism of utopia and the impact individual definitions had on the common understanding of this phenomenon. From the scientific point of view, it seems reasonable to exclude definitions of a subjective character providing the criticism of this phenomenon and not its objective characteristics.

As a result of the analysis of numerous research approaches (including: Ernst Bloch [2], Françoise Choay, Georg Kateb [7], Lewis Mumford [9], Georg Picht [12], Jerzy Szacki [13], Aleksander Świętochowski [15]), the phenomenon of utopia was defined as a vision of an ideal society in the form of an entire system devised with respect to the future. The utopia in this sense constitutes both an ideal attained by way of an experiment and an alternative understood as a commentary on its contemporary reality.

Divisions and classifications

Aleksander Świętochowski (utopias of individual epochs), Lewis Mumford (utopias of escape, utopias of reconstruction), Françoise Choay (progressive and traditionalistic utopias), Georg Picht (imaginary, critical and enlightened utopias), H. V. Rhodes (upward, outward, inward), Frank E. Manuel (utopias of peaceful bliss and happiness, dynamic utopias of better future, eupsychie), Joanna Kamińska (conservative and critical utopias) [6]

The so-far divisions and classifications of utopia reveal the degree of complexity of this phenomenon and resulting difficulty in unambiguous ordering and organisation. Extensive characteristics, which seem the most useful at the further stage of research, are provided by means of the division into escapist utopias and heroic utopias [13].

Escapist utopias make it possible to escape from reality by creating space detached from the contemporary world, the space which remains only a dream and fantasy about a better world. They take a form of utopias of place, time and eternal order. The utopias of place present previously unknown places where happy people live – a happy somewhere. The utopias of time depict *a happy some time*, set in some unknown epoch, in the future or past. The utopias of eternal order place an ideal beyond the human worldly existence, beyond the time and space. Heroic utopias are connected with a clear programme and imperative of action. They take a form of the utopia of an order or the political utopia. The utopias of orders convey their message to a narrow circle of followers, believing that staying in a closed circle will protect their essential values. The political utopias assume the change of the entire society from scratch in compliance with the author's utopian conception.

Aspects of utopia development

A multifaceted character of this issue is revealed in the areas in which the utopias became an alternative, incl.: economic, religious, spatial or sociological aspects.

The spatial aspect is the most visible aspect of utopia. Being the field of research it becomes the reflection of other aspects. Depending on the degree of crystallization of individual utopias, it has both an architec-

tural and urban planning scope. The spatial aspect was defined in accordance with the changing forms; it subsequently adopted the form of descriptions, engravings, entire projects and nowadays also the forms of advanced visualisation and animation.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF UTOPIAN IDEA AND ITS REFERENCE TO THE SPACE

First utopias

State (427-341 BC, Plato), Utopia (1516, Thomas Morus), The City of the Sun (1602, Tommaso Campanella), Christianopolis (1619, Johannes Valentinus Andreae), Chaux (1780, Claude Nicolas Leoux) [11] [6]

Plato's The Republic is considered to be the first work of an utopian character. It presents considerations concerning the value of good, beauty and truth constituting an ideal model system. The good of an individual was perceived as social good connected with limited private property and the possibility of interference and control of the citizens' private lives by the state.

The notion of utopia was created, however, as late as the 16th century in order to present conceptions of an ideal city and lucky society. It showed an alternative to the-then reality. In the 17th century utopias took a form of the descriptions of lands distant from the real world in topographic as well as social and cultural respects. They constituted separate societies of a communal character, whose living conditions were the same for all dwellers. The world of such utopias was static and perfect at its stability and independence. This picture functioned as a happy *somewhere*. In spite of the fact that subsequent projects of ideal cities took a fuller form of the utopia of a spatial character, they remained still in the sphere of theoretical considerations. At the end of the 18th century along with an emerging idea of progress, utopias were set in time and their perfection was to be achieved as a result of the course of time, a happy *some time*. Utopias became visions of a progressive and evolutionary character. The perfection was understood as a synonym of the future progress. Utopia began to provide solutions which were possible to apply in reality in the future.

Utopias in the 19th century

New Lanark (1784, Robert Owen), Icaria (1840, Etienne Cabet), Victoria (1849, James Silk Buckingham), Happy Colony (1854, Robert Pemberton), Falanster (Charles Fourier), Familister (1859, Jean Baptiste, Andre Godin), Hygeia (1875, Benjamin Ward Richardson) [11] [6]

The 19th century was the epoch of experiments, implementing utopias and ideas of restructuring the society; development of communes in the form of real islands or settlements which were supposed to grow in the future and take over all the continents. Utopias adopted the form of specific descriptive or graphic projects providing guidelines for the citizens' daily lives, beginning from the dwelling space through a diet and dressing code to daily detailed routines. The basic aim of creating those new utopias was to rid the mankind of social inequality and forced labour. The utopias took the form of a plan and a set of orders or imperatives. Abiding by them was supposed to ensure the dwellers happiness. It was then that North America became a specific place of realisation and development of utopias. The majority of attempts to implement specific utopias ended, however, in fiasco or had to revise original assumptions. The 19th century was the time when the faith in the development of technology and the possibility to use it for the good of mankind began to chart a new direction for utopias. It was not, however, a dominant direction.

Utopias in the early 20th century

Garden City (1898, Ebenezer Howard), Industrial City (1904, Tony Garnier), Contemporary City (1922, Le Corbusier), Radiant City (1924, Le Corbusier) [11] [6]

After the 1st World War utopias aimed at developing an ideal spatial model of dwelling, work and leisure. New urban planning concepts constituted subsequent utopias of a system character. In the 20th century the attempts to implement utopias in reality were continued, however, their character was completely different from the 19th century attempts. Utopia as a vision of an ideal society became a tool used by totalitarian systems. Sham willingness to make living conditions equal for the whole society led to its complete objectification. As a result, such actions contributed to the way utopia is perceived, i.e. as a clearly negative phenomenon. The 20th century has been nicknamed by the researchers: "the age of the end of utopias".

Characteristics

Subsequent utopias, changing over the centuries, reflected conceptions of an ideal society. Their par-

tial implementations in reality became an inherent part of the real space. It seems, however, that it is not the attempts but their original message that constitutes the value of the utopia. It is their primal intellectual essence which is a desire to create a new better order and at the same time to provide a critical commentary on the reality in which the utopias are born.

On the basis of the analysis of historical examples of utopia presented in an abridged form in this paper, one may define a set of common features characteristic for most of utopias as well as changeable, distinguishing and evolving features of particular examples.

Permanent features. Utopia, understood as a vision of perfect society, in a form of a comprehensive system, designed with a future in mind, represents a coherent vision of happy society, equal and fair, in which the needs of the residents are fulfilled in all the areas of life [6].

Variable features (Fig. 1). In some particular utopias, within social aspects, a perception of a source of happiness and ideal is variable. Within the spatial aspects - structures, forms of communication and locations of individual utopias are also variable. The importance of individualism and communalism, and also the relationship between utopia and reality can be clearly read, within these aspects.

Contemporary utopias

Utopian character of a set of views is determined not by their content but by the way they are preached and advocated as a proposal of a radical and final solution to all problems which are perceived as alarming and significant by the society. [13]

Utopias in the late 20th century

La Ville Spatiale (1960, Yona Friedman) [10], Walking City (1964, Archigram) [10], Instant City (1969, Archigram) [1], Model for Total Urbanization (1969, Superstudio) [10], The Strip (1972, Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis) [1]

Utopias of the second half of the 20th century came into existence as a reaction to real contemporary civilisation risks. They were at the same time the manifestation of the fascination of technology development. The projects were characterised by futuristic visions of spatial character being simultaneously a kind of framework for social issues, whose priority was mobility, flexibility and activity [11].

The activity of designing groups like Archigram, ArchiZoom, ArchiteXt and Superstudio introduced for good the dimension of meaning into their designs. Originality of those utopias was determined apart from the values of a spatial character by the language and method of conveying the message which had not been used in architecture before. The projects were devised in the form of cartoons supplemented with texts and manifestos popularising the new concepts. As a result, in the field of architecture the press became the means of conveying the message and not the architectural structures themselves.

In spite of an ironical character and a light form of conveying the message, the utopias in the late 20th century delivered important content. Yona Friedman's designs showed the desire to create framework for a new kind of lifestyle, flexible and mobile one. The designs by Archigram and Superstudio groups were of a cautionary character. They warned of possible future risks – the mobile city was designed as a project of housing structures in the world destroyed by a nuclear bomb explosion. The designs by Superstudio group warned of the consequences of the total urbanisation.

Such utopias forecast an unquestionable influence of the technology development on the change of a lifestyle. They also took advantage of the-then cutting edge technology as an essential element of progress, the element which directly affects the spatial change. Utopias became the area where the so-far limitations both technical and mental were challenged.

Utopias in the early 21st century

Pig City (2001, MVRDV) [20], Lilypad (2008, Vincent Callebaut) [23], Cloud City (2009, Studio Lindfors) [21], Eco-Pod Gen1 (2009, Howeler Yoon Architecture), A-way (2010, Jurgen Mayer Architects), Acoustic Batony (2010, Benque David), Migration Floating Gardens (2010, Rael San Fratello), Hydrogenase Alge Farm (2010, Vincent Callebaut) [23], Freeland (2012, MVRDV, The why factory)

Sociological research concerning contemporary times defined as postmodernity distinguishes the individualism and development of technology as crucial features contributing to the social development [6], [16]. These features are undoubtedly characteristic of modern utopias and are reflected in their spatial aspects.

The authors of historical utopias believed that happiness of the whole of society was possible to achieve by means of devising a perfect society. That was their

goal. Nowadays, the vision of happiness has been shifted from the perfect society to the happiness of an individual [16].

Today, utopia understood as a tool of achieving progress is an attempt to *build bridges between two worlds, a subjective and artistic world and a clearly objective approach to innovation in science* [17]. It is there, in the clash of these two trends that contemporary utopias are born. They perceive the development of technology as a trigger of the lifestyle changes, on the one hand. On the other hand, they treat such development as a method of attaining important changes. Contemporary utopias do not, however, have an explicit common direction of development. They come into being as individual mental experiments defining ethical stance.

Due to the problems undertaken, three characteristic groups of modern utopias can be distinguished.

The first group consists of projects, which respond to alarming changes of the environment components, such as natural resources and a natural landscape. Spatial solutions are based on a development of areas of the artificial intelligence, also a development of biotechnology and nanotechnology. New sources of energy are the basis for the projects of self-sufficient residential structures. Water and air structures are permanent elements of the new natural landscape.

The second group contains some projects, which define the evolution of the sensory and information space as a creative impulse.

The third group of projects bring up some major social issues, in which individualism and happiness of an individual is reflected in a vision of ideal places. The projects involving a stimulation of individual initiatives rather than the top-down planning, define the development of a city as a result of individual events and subsequent decisions taken by the residents.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary utopias take the open form of an unrestricted formally spatial application structures. The utopias are embedded in very specific locations and they are no longer happy somewhere. The vision of happy society comes from the happiness of the individual residents. Creators of contemporary utopias no longer assume idealism of human nature, just the opposite – they try to minimize effects of imperfections of society with spatial solutions. In terms of form, utopia projects take the shape of both: graphical abstraction supplemented with manifestos as well as complete projects provided with descriptions.

The important feature of the modern utopias against their historical background and also the completely new one is reflected in the creators' attitude towards the development of technology. This relation strongly affects the spatial solutions. Technology development is a creative impulse to beget visions of a future. It becomes a tool for solving real problems and when involved in social nature projects it becomes one of the elements, which are necessary to meet the residents' individual needs.
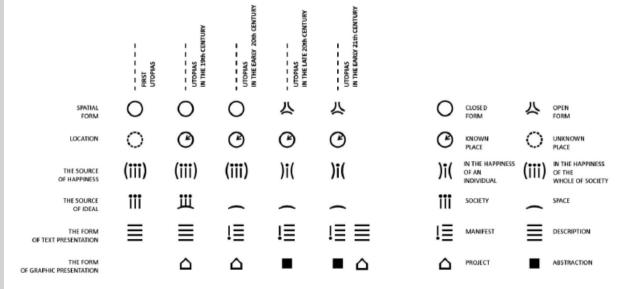

Figure 1.
Summary of the characteristics of utopia in a historical context

The historical analysis of utopia makes it possible to explicitly define this phenomenon and determine its constant and variable features. The characteristic features of new contemporary utopias juxtaposed with historical examples confirm this thesis. Moreover, despite adopting the futuristic form or being the futuristic vision, the contemporary utopias provide an essential "commentary" on and diagnosis of the present reality.

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