

City of Future

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Abstract. The city of future represents either a dystopian or a utopic society depending on times or on different points of view of different thinkers. Dystopian literature talks about unknown and bad things, which are regarded with fear meanwhile utopic literature talks about an imaginary future society.

Our article takes us in a historic voyage into the two concepts and reveals the differences between the two.

Keywords: City of future · Smart City · Dystopian society · Utopic society

1 Introduction

Talking about the City of the Future it is talking about a Smart City. Sociologists, engineers, architects, economists, architects etc. approached the construction of the City of the Future lately. The dystopian literature of the last century started to talk about this complex topic. Firstly, as a dystopian argument, the City of the Future was regarded as frightening, as mostly all unknown things, not “a good thing”, also because was thought as an impossible achievement, a utopia.

2 Dystopian Society vs. Utopic Society

Sir Thomas Moore in his 1516, *Utopia*, described a Utopic society with no crime, no violence and without poor people. Other authors like George Orwell in 1984 and Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* talk about a dystopian society. However, some authors also use the term to refer to actually existing societies, many of which are or have been totalitarian states, or societies in an advanced state of collapse and disintegration. Anthony Giddens talks about the modernity as being oriented towards future, as the future wears the conditional models. This means that anticipating the future, on which modernity is based on, means being part of the present. For Giddens this foundation is possible and he calls it utopian realism. This utopian realism, according to Giddens, combines the “windows opening” towards the future with an analysis on the institutional tendencies, making possible that the political scripts of the future to be integrated in present times. As Giddens anticipation concept remains an unresolved problem, for many years anticipating the future from a sociological point of view failed on all levels.

In fact, many sociologists agreed that a serious discipline as sociology must not work with concepts like anticipating the future [1, 2].

What we can say it that this is an open process. The social changes are a result of discoveries, learning, selections, tries and mistakes. Being aware that the research process means to make action possible, as Karl Mannheim says “the only form in which the future is present is in the form of possibility”. But all this is possible only in a constant touch with the past, meaning with knowledge accumulated by “us” and not by “me”. Eugen Ehrlich in his anthropological approach sustains that for the social order are fundamental the groups and the community. Having sane roots it is more important thing for many cultures, even more important than some written norms or rules. Therefore, efficient social norms can determine the future of the society [3]. In his realistic approach, Theodor Geiger, talks about what is fundamental for the social order and that is the effectiveness of the calculus. Therefore, what is important for the future is the present and not the past. Instead, Max Weber, in his relativistic approach, talks about reciprocal acting orientation. According to Weber, discovering the rational criteria guarantees the ability to observe the norms of the future. He also says that there can be used various rational criteria in order to adopt a winning strategy, that being very important for the future [4].

Niklas Luhmann, in his systematic approach, talks about making the results available at a general level as being fundamental for the social order.

The commune functional objective should be the reduction of the social complexity by constructing complex normative structures in order to consolidate the past adequately to the present in order to control the future. He also talks about the reduction of the complexity (past, present and future) for the functional and temporal orientation. Some of the most important dystopian literature works talk about the control of the public space through technology, the urban architecture as tool for social control and behavior alteration, urban fortress as a creation of enclaves for certain social classes, the use of communication and information media as tools of persuading, the sociological term of fear. This makes us understand that the city at its origins represented a shelter for people in a hostile world, meanwhile, today has become a dangerous territory. During history, the city has always been subject of some fears, characteristic for a certain historical period: wars, fires, criminality, overcrowding, epidemiology etc. [5]. According to Ulrich Beck, the city of our days is built accordingly to norms imposed by the general paranoia of security.

Some of the past fears are becoming active in today’s societies and cities but with different outcomes: hostility towards certain social groups, loss of identity, diversity induced insecurity etc. [6–10].

To understand the relation between the city and fear, we must open a comprehensive debate through philosophy, sociology, urban geography, politics and architecture.

According to Mike Davis, the “ecology fear” could be considered the explaining mechanism of the spatial transformations and of social conflicts of cities. On one hand, the generalized fear would determine medium and high classes to leave the cities and move to extra urban locations that are surveyed and homogenous from a social point of view (gated communities) or to regain through processes of gentrification, the historical centers after being sanitized and enabled using urban reform processes. On the other hand,

the traditional city would be accordingly to this security request, by implicating in architecture and urban areas some protection mechanisms, control and survey [11]. It is imperative to study the dystopian literature in order to understand how the image of the city of future evolved in time. Mike Davis said that in order to observe the city of the future you must firstly look at the ruins of its unrealized future [12]. We cannot talk about the City of Future if we don't talk about utopia. One may think that the technological utopia was the result of the cultural context of the industrial revolution, thus his origin being the second half of the 19th century. According to Raymond Trousson, until 1600, utopia has had his roots in religion and its ancestors were Thomas Moore and Tommaso Campanella, a saint and a martyr. New Atlantis of Francis Bacon represents the first utopic work that shows a society based on science and technic and not on religious moral. Bacon uses technological related utopia imagined before the industrial revolution. The 1600 represent a period in witch Europe passed from a agricultural and manufacturing economy to a more commercial one in witch the market became of fundamental importance. In this period some of the biggest companies of the modern times were build: The Company of the Indies, the Company of the Levant, and in 1602 the Stock market of Amsterdam begun its first transactions. As cities, the most important development in the modern era, we can observe England, where being developed the market economy, and applying new technological methods to the agriculture, the result being people fleeing the rural areas for the urban ones [13]. On the other hand, it was in America where the Utopic City was build. It was Robert Owen who suggested a new kind of society based on utopic realities. Material circumstances push all nations in the same direction as America. Living in the contemporary environment, wherever it becomes more and more American, men feel the psychological obligation of becoming americanized: it is a Fate that operates internally and externally to which there is no way to escape. For good and for evil, it seems that the world has to become americanized. America is not unique, it is simply in the lead of the people of every nation and every continent. By studying the positive and negative traits of American life, we study, in a generally more defined and developed form, the good and the bad of the present civilization and that of the whole world. Discussing the future of America, we discuss the future of civilized man [14–16]. The fact that distopic visions dominate the city's representation of the future in the fiction of the last decades testifies how in the contemporary city a reversal of the historical role that it had coated had occurred. The city, which has been particularly disturbed in cinema and literature, is no longer perceived as a place for the protection of its inhabitants, but as a real source of poverty, the incarnation of the evils of Western society. This research sought to show how such overturn occurs from the point of view of time, at a time between the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An age that, from the literary point of view, destroyed large cities or showed their future, inevitable, deceitfulness [17–22]. The control of life, the improvement of race, are among the concerns of utopia since the seventeenth century. The hybridism illustrated by Campanella in *The City of the Sun*, also deals with the inhabitants of the city from a biological point of view. The Solarians follow eugenics, control their births, impose marriages, and regulate the coitus of the inhabitants during the marriage. The ultimate goal is the improvement of the human species. Power, when it directly deals with the life expectancy and reproductive capacity of the population,

becomes biophoton [23–29]. Following this strategy of humanity’s refinement, modernity will see in architecture the disciplinary tool that will enable them to distribute and organize workers in urban space, on the other hand, to increase their productivity to their own ability to maintain society sound, both physically and morally. Le Corbusier, a great admirer of the art of demolition practiced by Haussmann, will speak in his writings of the therapeutic power of good architecture, a vehicle of morality, capable of opening new horizons to childcare and eugenics [30–34].

Architecture offers the administrator of the contemporary city the tools of rationalistic knowledge to combat the sterility of the population, increasing its feasibility and amplifying its productive potential. In this sense, architecture and urbanism are fundamental tools for achieving the utopia of the order of the city-classification machine. The reflection of these goals is materialized by Huxley in the London City of Brave New World [35–38]. What still gives today extraordinary power to the terrible images offered by these novels is their resemblance to the present. Today’s society is already a pioneer, already affected by Huxley’s anesthesia, private life has now been transfixed. There was nothing in the fantasies produced by the dystopian authors. The cities they imagined demonstrate rather the ability of their authors to read and interpret the trends that modern society was already developing. Over the past century, utopia death was often ruled out. It is possible that his failure was due to his authoritarian perversion, his inability to agree to spatial form and social processes (D. Harvey), or to a weakness of our imagination (F. Jameson). Despite the utopian roots chain being enriched by pacifist, environmentalist, and feminist views, the immanent of the 20th century was dominated by the pessimistic and obscure vision of modern dystopia. But dystopia, as he tried to show this thesis, was not just a warning of the deviation of the utopia of social perfection. Dystopia was not only anti-utopia, its function was not only destructive. Dystopia has represented and represents a critical tool for an unbearable state of affairs. In this sense, it is a political instrument and has replaced utopia in the criticism of the preacher. In the contemporary city we recognize the authoritarian tendency, segregation and liberticidal tendency on which classical dystopia had warned us. But dystopia never excludes utopianism, rather inviting the transformation of society in a direction (Berdiaeff parading) non-utopian, less perfect and free [39–41].

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