COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA

DEL ORIGEN DE LA MODERNIDAD A LA ERA DIGITAL

COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA

DEL ORIGEN DE LA MODERNIDAD A LA ERA DIGITAL

TOMO I

eug

COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA

**del origen de la modernidad
a la era digital**

TOMO I

JUAN CALATRAVA
DAVID ARREDONDO GARRIDO
MARTA RODRÍGUEZ ITURRIAGA
(EDS.)

COMUNICAR LA ARQUITECTURA
del origen de la modernidad a la era digital

Granada, 2024

Printed in Spain   *Impreso en España*

IV Congreso Internacional Cultura y Ciudad

Comunicar la arquitectura: del origen de la modernidad a la era digital

Granada 24-26 enero 2024

Comisión Organizadora

David Arredondo Garrido

Juan Manuel Barrios Rozúa

Juan Calatrava Escobar

Ana del Cid Mendoza

Francisco Antonio García Pérez

Agustín Gor Gómez

Bernardino Líndez Vílchez

Juan Carlos Reina Fernández

Marta Rodríguez Iturriaga

Manuel "Saga" Sánchez García

María Zurita Elizalde

Comité Científico

TOMO I

FOTOGRAFÍA, CINE, PUBLICIDAD: LA COMUNICACIÓN VISUAL

CONSERVAR, ORDENAR, DIFUNDIR: ARCHIVOS, MUSEOS Y EXPOSICIONES

TOMO II

REVISTAS, LIBROS, TEXTOS: LA COMUNICACIÓN ESCRITA

LA ARQUITECTURA EN LA ERA DE LA COMUNICACIÓN DIGITAL

Utopia in Architecture and Literature: Writing Ideal Worlds

Utopía en arquitectura y literatura: escribiendo mundos ideales

JANA ČULEK

University of Rijeka, janaculek@studiofabula.eu

Abstract

Proveniente originalmente del campo literario, la utopía como forma creativa también está presente en otros géneros como el arte, la arquitectura y el cine. Sin embargo, las formas en que se imaginan y describen los mundos utópicos a veces difieren según el campo. Este artículo se basa en una investigación más amplia que trabajó con tres pares de utopías arquitectónicas y literarias, a saber, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (Ebenezer Howard), *The Time Machine* (H. G. Wells), *Metropolisarchitecture* (Ludwig Hilberseimer), *We* (Yevgeny Zamyatin), *12 Ideal Cities* (Superstudio) y *The Dispossessed* (Ursula K. Le Guin). Al examinar cómo las obras reflejaban sus contextos históricos, el artículo proporciona información sobre algunos de los métodos comunes utilizados para comunicar sus diversas ideas creativas y revela cómo las seis obras imaginaron y describieron, tanto a través del texto como del dibujo, investigando en consecuencia cómo se desarrollaron los mundos utópicos en contraste crítico con sus propios contextos históricos.

Originally stemming from the literary field, utopia as a creative form is also present in other genres such art, architecture and film. However, the ways in which utopian worlds are imagined and described sometimes differ depending on the field. This paper is based on a more comprehensive research which worked with three pairs of architectural and literary utopias, namely Ebenezer Howard's *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform, H. G. Wells' The Time Machine,* Ludwig Hilberseimer's *Metropolisarchitecture,* Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Superstudio's 12 *Ideal Cities,* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. Examining how the works reflected on their historical contexts, the paper provides insight into some of the common methods used for communicating their various creative ideas and reveals how the six works imagined and described, through both text and drawing, consequently investigating how the utopian worlds developed in critical contrast to their own historical contexts.

Introduction. Utopia as a Multi-Disciplinary Form

By turning a critical mirror onto our own present, utopia provides a glimpse into a possible future. Through modifying existing or constructing new worlds, objects, systems, hierarchies, and other forms within our environment, utopia through its fictional and imaginative nature weaves together different scenarios for the future. Using the events and conditions from our own contexts, utopian scenarios critique the status quo and propose alternatives to it, often without any direct societal and spatial consequences. Utopia can therefore be seen as an important method of creative production in which, through reflection and speculation, it enables us to look at our own past and present in a critical and productive way.

Examining utopias from two of these fields, namely architecture and literature, brings focus to the often different methods through which works are envisioned and the mediums through which they are presented differs. Utopian literature, although sometimes containing a limited number of accompanying illustrations, is created in the format of a fictional text of varying length. The visual representation of the text is mostly limited only to the book's cover art —an interpretation of the text which varies from publisher to publisher—. The narrative is set in an imagined location, or one which closely resembles reality but has been altered in order to accommodate the utopian proposal. To describe the imagined world, the various changes which the utopian work proposes in relation to our "reality" are depicted mostly on the level of social interactions, with the spatial conditions often described as a setting for the plot to unfold. The societal, political, and economic conditions of the utopian world, which differ from the conditions of the work's historical reality are therefore usually better defined than the changes in the spatial conditions. Architecture, on the other hand, proposes its utopian alternative mostly through drawings. In some cases, the set of drawings is accompanied by a text which either describes the author's critical intentions or it is a narrative through which the inner workings of the utopian world are described in more detail. The focus of the architectural utopian project is placed mostly on the changes which occur in the utopian built environment. There are rarely any specific characters inhabiting the architectural utopia. The population is rather described in toto and in relation to their interaction with the built environment. The proposed societal changes are, thus, made visible through the changes which occur due to a modification of the spatial surroundings. The repetitiveness of a specific building type, the lack of external pedestrian connections, or the strict zoning of urban functions, all have a profound effect on the way of life. However, this way of life is rarely made explicit in architectural utopian works but is rather left to the interpretation of the viewer. Unlike the literary utopia which can encompass virtually any scale, architectural utopias are limited mostly to the scale of a city, albeit its potentially endless size. The drawings through which the utopian works are proposed are used to depict both the systems and the specific elements which shape utopian worlds.

Common Narrative Methods

And while the differences between the two genres are perhaps more readily understood, delving deeper into specific examples of architectural and literary utopias, one begins to uncover some of the similarities. Examining six examples of architectural and literary

utopias[1] created in the twentieth century it was possible to begin distilling different methods and tools used by authors to describe their imagined worlds. Each of the three examined pairs addressed some of the most pertinent issues and conditions of the period in which they were produced. The first pair, that of Ebenezer Howard's *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898) and H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) dealt with the transitional period from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Both works, produced in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, reflected on the development of what was to become the modern metropolis, while situating (most of) their inhabitants outside the grey city and in the green countryside. Although it may seem that the works share a nostalgia for simpler, pastoral times, they are in fact inherently modern. Instead of ignoring the developments brought by the Industrial Revolution, they address the topic of class struggles, the development of the capitalist system, and new means of work and production. The second pair, that of Ludwig Hilberseimer's *Metropolisarchitecture / Großstadtarchitektur* (1927) and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We / My* (1924), was created in the modernist period between the two World Wars. The works took mathematical logic, rationalization, and standardization as both their main topics and creative methods. The narratives are situated within the modern metropolis —a new urban locus which emerged as a result of industrialization and the development of capitalist modes of production—. Lastly the third pair consisting of *Superstudio's 12 Ideal Cities / Le Dodici Citta Ideali* (1971) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), portrayed a turbulent and multifaceted period of our recent history, namely the seventies and the advent of postmodernism. Aside from both dealing with and depicting multiple utopian worlds, this pair of works also touches upon the most varied array of topics and is therefore the most complex, both narratively and thematically.

With the changing times and consequently the change in topics which the examined utopian works have addressed, the ways in which they constructed their narratives, how their imagined utopian forms, as well as how they critically positioned themselves in relation to their historical contexts, also changed. Through the analysis of the six works it was possible to identify several predominant techniques which the utopian authors used to deliver their critique. They revolve around specific relationships that utopian works weave with their historical contexts, and the manner in which they deliver their critical response. They are namely: (1) dichotomous relationships —a technique through which either the social and spatial forms of the utopia are imagined as opposite to those of the historical context, or one in which the forms of the utopia itself are imagined as opposing, making certain conditions or relationships more visible through these oppositions—; (2) bridging the small and the large scale —a technique which was identified in several of the works, and revolves around creating a link between the "part" and the "whole" through using small scale forms as building blocks for the large scale—; and lastly (3) contextual verticals —a technique which was at first more dominant in the literary utopias, and which references and ingrains in the

---

[1] Jana Čulek, "Utopia as Critical Method: A Comparative Analysis of Six Architectural and Literary Utopias" (doctoral dissertation, TU Delft, 2023).

utopian narratives specific reality-based social and spatial forms which serve as connection between the utopian narrative and the author's historical context—.

Four Methods in Practice

The Garden City and the Distant Future
The utopian worlds envisioned by Howard and Wells are predominantly based on establishing dichotomies. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in Howard's "Three Magnets" diagram (fig. 1) where he opposes various social and spatial aspects of the town against those of the country, "marrying" them in his proposed "town-country" model –the Garden City. But while "town-country" might seem like a compromise solution, Howard's model is very selective in what it takes from each domain, adding to the description of his "town-country" concepts like "freedom" and "cooperation". The "town-country" thus becomes the alternative to both "town" and "country", a completely new form in its own right, which is to replace both existing ones. Howard proposes a model for the Garden City –emerging either as a new town built on agricultural land, or one which is manifested through the downscaling, greening, and depopulation of larger cities–.

Figure 1. Diagram n.º 1: The Three Magnets. Source: Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898).

He addresses his historical context directly within his narrative, referring to very specific conditions in his own reality, such as the living environments of the working class, various infrastructural problems, or rent prices. He also continuously refers to different texts, beginning each chapter with a quote –sometimes from literary works such as Victor Hugo's *Le Miserables*[2]– works which have inspired him like B. W. Richardson's *Hygeia; or, a City of Health*[3], or with segments of politically geared texts such as Marshall's "The Housing of the London Poor"[4]. He even openly discusses the works which have heavily influenced his proposals[5] and from which he has taken inspiration in structuring his Garden City model. In other words, Howard's historical context is complexly intertwined with his proposal, drawing from it both fact, fiction, critique, and inspiration, but always keeping it visibly separate from his own utopian proposal.

Figure 2. *The Garden and the Underground*, depicting the future world of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. Jana Čulek, 2023.

Wells' *The Time Machine* also is also predominantly developed through establishing dichotomies. But instead of proposing a new model which could replace the existing one and —as Howard's proposal— decrease the social divide, Wells exaggerates the conditions of his historical context to create two separate worlds and species (fig. 2). He plays out the already dichotomous relationship of the working class and the bourgeoisie from his historical context to its radical end where the divide grows so large that it separates the two groups both biologically and spatially.

---

[2] Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform,* (1898), facsimile of original edition with commentary by Peter Hall, Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward reprint (Oxford: Routledge, 2003), 20.

[3] Howard, *To-Morrow...*, 42.

[4] Howard, *To-Morrow...*, 54.

[5] "(1) the proposals for an organized migratory movement of population of Wakefield and of Professor Marshall; (2), the system of land tenure first proposed by Thos. Spence and afterwards (though with an important modification) by Mr. Herbert Spencer; and (3), the model city (of somewhat different design, however) of Jas. S. Buckingham". Howard, *To-Morrow...*, 128.

Given that *The Time Machine* is a work of literature, the form itself doesn't limit Wells to draw only direct correlations to his historical context in the same manner that Howard did, allowing for the historical context to become intertwined in the narrative itself. What Wells also employs is what Suvin refers to as the "frame-within-a-frame"[6] structure, or what Huntington identifies as "the coexistence of opposites"[7]. In Wells' *The Time Machine*, the two frames —or two opposite worlds— are obvious and fully separated through the narrative: the outer frame amounts to the Time Traveller's home, his houseguests, and Wells' historical present, while the inner frame, visited through the "imaginary voyage" via the time machine, depicts the year of 802, 701. Through this temporal "frame-within-a-frame", Wells establishes a critical correlation to his historical context through the process described as "invoking a structure that allows our world and the world of 802,701 to share the same space"[8] —therefore juxtaposed and possible to observe simultaneously—. Wells also deploys this dichotomous coexistence within the "inner frame" of his narrative, in the two worlds and two "species" which inhabit the year 802, 701: the space above ground, inhabited by the Eloi, and the underground which houses the Morlocks, with each part systematically designed to follow both the needs and the characteristics of each of the two "species". Through these two structures, Wells addresses both the relationship of his future world to his own historical context, as well as one of the most pertinent topics of his period —that of the increasing differences between the working class and the bourgeois— which in his narrative have taken on an evolutionary proportion. He addresses this topic again through the use of Huntington's "coexistence of opposites", which in this case play out through the narrative itself. Wells also reflects on his historical context through the three different speculative scenarios which the Time Traveller lays out when contemplating how the future state of the year 802, 701 came to be. In these speculations[9], Wells discusses three separate political and economic systems, and how they could have resulted in the world the Time Traveller encounters. What is curious about Wells' narrative, is that Wells positions himself on the "side" of the bourgeois[10], not that of the suffering working class, which is evident in the

---

[6] Darko Suvin in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979) identifies the "frame-within-a-frame" structure as a method in which the narrative is constructed from two separate worlds and two separate narratives —the outer frame which is more akin to the actual historical context which depicts the transition to the "imaginary voyage" from our world to the utopian, and the inner frame which contains the depiction of the utopia proper—.

[7] John Huntington in *The Logic of Fantasy: H. G. Wells and Science Fiction* (1982) identifies "the coexistence of opposites" as "a fundamental structure in all of Wells' early fiction" (Huntington, 1982, 21) whose aim is "not to describe a change, but to set up a static antithesis and then to fill in the relation between the two elements. [...] in such a structure neither world in itself holds our interest; what is important is the two of them together and the linked opposition they establish". Huntington, *The Logic*..., 22.

[8] Huntington, *The Logic*..., 21.

[9] Wells, H. G., *The Time Machine* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018), 56-59.

[10] As Suvin explains, this favoritism of the Eloi probably "flows from the social consciousness of Wells himself, who came from the lower middle class, which lives on the edge of the 'proletarian abyss' and thus", as he quotes the work of Caudwell, "looks upon the proletariat as being something disgusting and evil and dangerous". *Suvin, Metamorphoses*..., 212.

much more relatable and childlike Eloi, as opposed to the monster Morlocks. A question which occurs is whether Wells was perhaps more afraid of the growing mass of the working class and a possible power they might begin to exert, than he was distressed with their living conditions. Or was his work —similar to that of Superstudio which I will address in the following segments of this paper— a way to pinpoint the issue very clearly by exaggerating it to a point where the two classes become two divergent species.

The Metropolis and the One State

When compared to Howard and Wells, the works of Hilberseimer and Zamyatin already exhibit various changes both in the topics they address as in the critical methods they use to propose their utopian alternatives. However, Hilberseimer's proposal is in some ways relatable to that of Howard. And while he does not begin his chapters with quotes from other authors, he does continuously refer to his own historical context and different social and spatial forms which he deems unfit for the modern metropolis. In the chapters dedicated to discussing the different typologies[11] he also references numerous architectural and urban planning projects. Examples include Le Corbusier's Ville Contemporaine[12] for which he provides rough calculations which call Le Corbusier's proposed functional ratios of built and unbuilt (green) space into question. He also addresses Mies van der Rohe's conceptual skyscraper project[13], as well as Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House in Buffalo[14]. Taking from all of them, as Howard, pieces he deemed functional, and rejecting those he sees unfit, he builds his proposal by including his own design project as segments in some of the chapters. But unlike Howard, Hilberseimer doesn't see his proposed model as one which should completely replace all existing urban forms. He acknowledges the existence of the historical city, and the fact that it will remain as part of the built environment. Instead of replacing it in full, he rather proposes a new, in his view more appropriate model, structured on the principles of industrialised mass production, which can become the locus for the new modern man (fig. 3).

Within this new metropolis, his focus lies predominantly only in the functions of housing and work. Another technique Hilberseimer uses it that of directly linking the forms of the small scale to those of the large, stating that the "central problem" his work addresses is "the relationship between cell and organism, part and whole"[15]. This technique is also visible in Zamyatin's *We*. It is reflected in the fact that the only individual housing unit that is described in the narrative –the single room of the numbers inhabiting the One State. It is identical in each instance, and as such replicated throughout the city-state. Zamyatin also

---

[11] "Residential Buildings", "Commercial Buildings", "High-rises", "Halls and Theaters", "Transportation Buildings", "Industrial Buildings", in Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Metropolisarchitecture" (1927), in *Metropolisarchitecture and Selected Essays,* ed. by Richard Anderson (New York: GSAPP Books, 2012), 84-281.

[12] Hilberseimer, "Metropolisarchitecture", 114.

[13] Hilberseimer, "Metropolisarchitecture", 216.

[14] Hilberseimer, "Metropolisarchitecture", 186.

[15] Hilberseimer, "Metropolisarchitecture", 61.

employs contextual verticals to structure some of the critique towards his historical context, the majority of which is introduced through the form of the Ancient House (fig. 4) which in many ways stands as a stark contrast to the physically and ideologically transparent world of the One State. Positioned at the very edge of the city, right next to the Green Wall, it is a point in space where the forgotten past and the newly constructed future briefly touch. An example of a housing typology of the past, and as a direct contrast to all other elements of the One State, its structure is a metaphor for secretes –which is indeed what it enables in the narrative. Comparing the structure and materiality of the Ancient House[16] Δ-503 compares: "Our present-day glass —beautiful, transparent, eternal— was there only in the form of pitiful, fragile little square windows"[17].
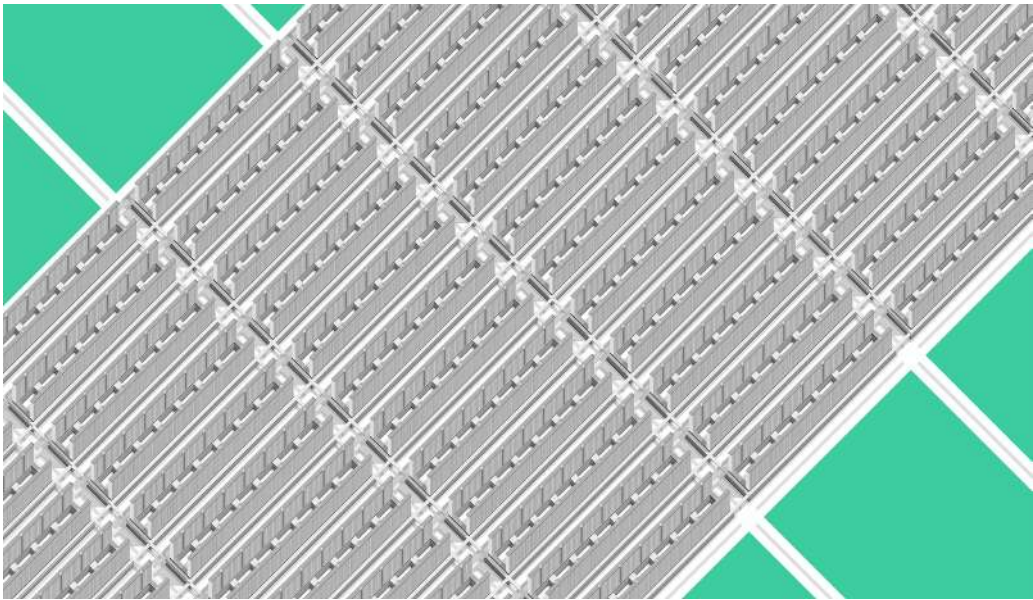
Figure 3. *The Metropolis*, interpretation of Hilberseimer's *Metropolis.*

Written in the form of journal entries, from the point of view of the main protagonist Δ-503, references to the "reader's" historical context are present throughout the narrative as a way of contrasting the seemingly perfect future world to the problematic, unstructured, messy

---

[16] The Ancient House, however, has one more function within the narrative. Firstly, it is a direct connection to the author's historical context, with the descriptions of its interior reminiscent of early twentieth century houses with its "glimmering mirrors, sombre wardrobes, intolerably gaudy sofas, a huge 'fireplace', and a large mahogany bed" (Zamyatin, 2009, 27). Being positioned on the edge of the One State, adjacent to its Green Wall, enclosed itself within a glass shell, it also represents an object out of place —a disruption within the perfect order of the One State–. And lastly, being the location of revolutionary meetings as well as a connection to what lies outside of the Green Wall, the Ancient House also plays the role of a connector between the ordered world of the Numbers, and the seemingly chaotic, wild, and uncivilized world of the Mephi.

[17] Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, trans. Hugh Aplin (Richmond: Alma Books Ltd. 2009), 28.

world of the past. And while, as Wells, Zamyatin also actually proposes two worlds in his narrative —that of the numbers enclosed within the glass walls of the One State, and the Mephi who lead a seemingly wild and uncivilised existence in the jungle and wilderness surrounding the One State, their relationships are structured differently (fig. 5)—.

While Wells' dichotomy is based on class and the social and economic roles which the two disparate classes had in his own time, Zamyatin's dichotomous relationship is visible in between the numbers and the Mephi which are separated by the concepts of freedom and safety. The numbers, fully controlled by the One State —a radicalised version of the Zamyatin's historical Soviet[18] context— live a predictable life of safety and "unfreedom", something which is seemingly cherished by all of them, according to Δ-503. The Mephi, on the other hand, representing perhaps the rest of the non-Soviet world, live a life of freedom but without any visible overarching social or political structure keeping them "safe". The critique which is posed through revolving the narrative around the concept of freedom, which is manifested in Zamyatin's work through both social and spatial forms of the numbers' existence, is perhaps mostly focused on the lack of freedom of one's own ideas and beliefs. Δ-503, continuously opening his mind throughout the narrative, slowly developing his own point of view and thus –his own freedom of thought– is in the end lobotomised by the One State, reverting him to a docile follower of the overarching system.
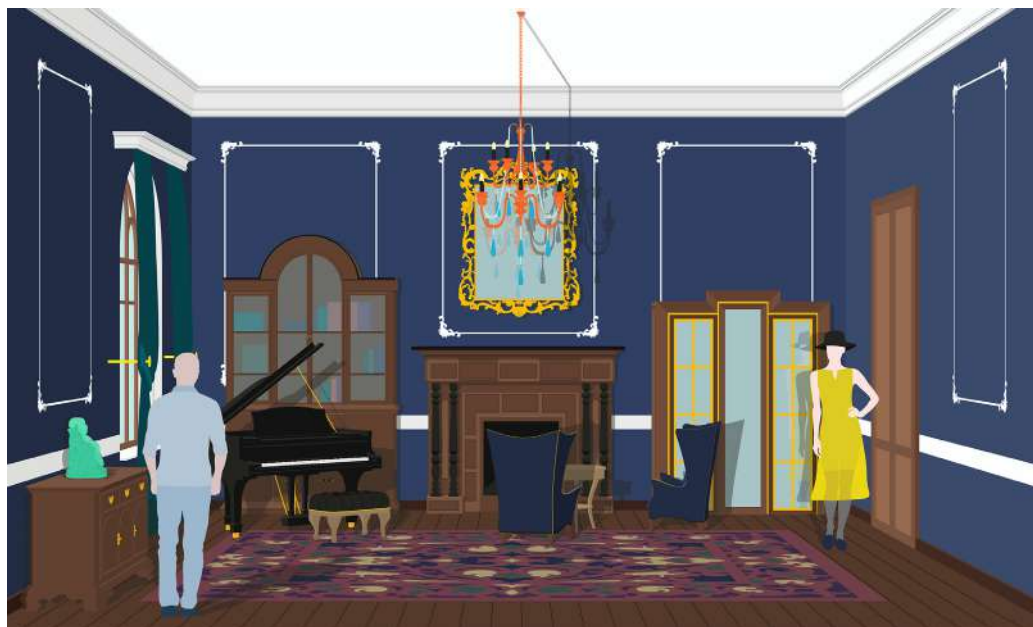
Figure 4. *The Ancient House*, depicting the Ancient House in Zamyatin's *We*. Jana Čulek, 2020.

---

[18] And while Zamyatin never points his critique directly to the Soviet system, nor does he address any type of other political or economic system from his historical context, the fact that his work was not published in Russian until the nineteen fifties and that he was exiled (Ginsburg, 1987, xix, in Zamyatin, 1987), speaks to the direction of his critique.
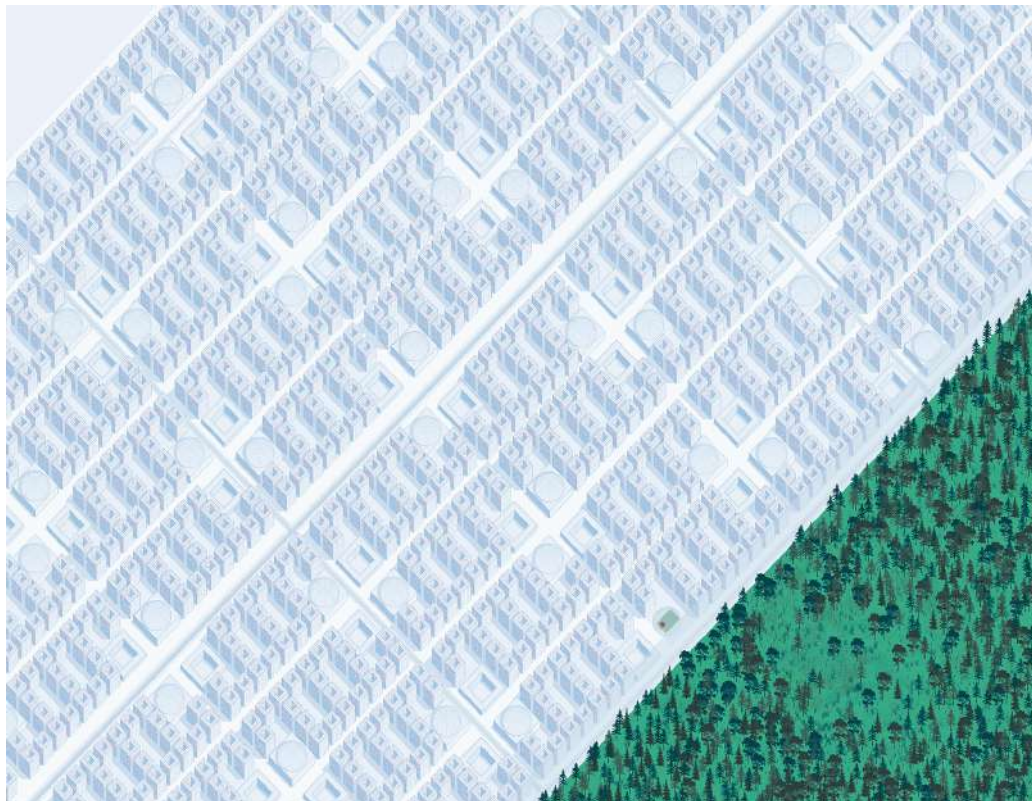
Figure 5. *The One State,* interpretation of Zamyatin's One State. Jana Čulek, 2022.

Twelve Cities and Two Planets

The last examined pair, that of Superstudio's *12 Ideal Cities* and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed,* have a slightly different approach. This is strongly related with the changing times in which grand narratives are no longer produced[19], and are in fact critiqued, and where the simultaneous and equally valuable existence of various groups, communities, interests, and ways of life becomes more and more prominent. Utopia as a form begins to change, both in the architectural and in the literary field[20]. What can be seen from the works of Superstudio[21], is that utopian architectural projects have become more narrative based, weaving their critiques and counter-proposals into imaginative stories which depict the urban environments and the events which take place in them. While some techniques which were evident in Howard's and Hilberseimer's proposals such as the correlation of the small and large scale

---

[19] Cf. Jameson, 1991; Lyotard, 1983.

[20] Cf. Burns, 2010; Schrijver, 2016.

[21] But also in the projects of some of their contemporaries such as Archigram or Archizoom.

are still visible in the *12 Ideal Cities*[22], Superstudio's proposal ceases to draw direct correlations between the issues of their time and their utopian counter proposals in the same manner that Howard and Hilberseimer have done it. Rather, what the group is critiquing becomes in some ways less obvious, while their counter proposal becomes more radical. The narrative, while still supported by visual material like the other architectural examples, begins to be structured and read more like the narrative of a literary utopia. The texts of the *12 Ideal Cities* don't merely describe the spatial layout of the cities and the various other spatial forms found within them, providing only a short description of overarching economic or political systems. Rather, they begin to form cohesive narratives which depict the utopian cities by describing the various events which take place in them. Consequently, unlike the proposals of Howard and Hilberseimer, in which the direction of the critique is clearly stated in the text, in Superstudio's proposal the critique is much more indirect, especially if we consider that the project falls within the anti-utopian subgroup in which the group, similarly to what Wells does in *The Time Machine*, reflects on their context through exaggerating some of the urban planning approaches of the time –to the point of absurdity–. Being more akin to literary utopias, the *12 Ideal Cities* project also employs contextual verticals –references to the group's historical context which are ingrained in the narrative itself and which were previously not found in the examined architectural utopias (fig. 6)–.
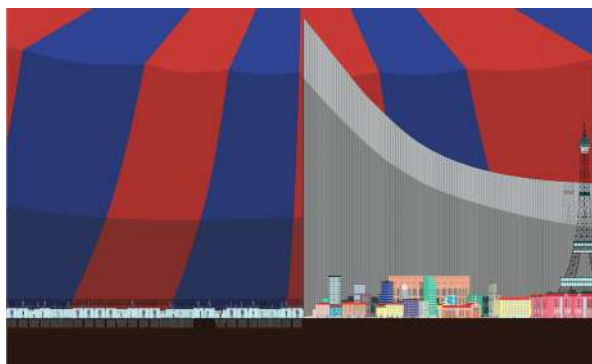
Figure 6. *Barnum Jnr.'s Magnificent and Fabulous City,* depicting a section of Superstudio's Sixth City: Barnum Jnr.'s Magnificent and Fabulous City, *12 Ideal Cities*. Jana Čulek, 2023.

Through situating their cities in real locations such as the Central Park in New York, or referring to celebrities from their historical period, Superstudio grounds their project within their specific context, allowing the reader to grasp their critique more easily.
Lastly, Le Guin's work is perhaps the most complex of all six examined utopias in the ways in which it critically reflects on its historical context. *The Dispossessed* can be seen as a new type of a literary utopia, namely a utopian novel[23], due to the more detailed way in

---

[22] Some of the cities (such as the "First", "Second", "Third", "Fourth", "Fifth" and "Eighth") are based solely on this relationship and are structured literally as accumulations of individual cells.

[23] Tony Burns, *Political Theory, Science Fiction and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and The Dispossessed* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 32-35, 134, 142.

which Le Guin approaches the development of her utopian characters[24]. Le Guin's Shevek is a fully developed individual. While he is an avid Odonian, he does reflect on his beliefs, sometimes even embracing the conditions which he encounters on Urras and which are radically different than those of his homeland Anarres. This change in the approach to the utopian protagonist is relevant in this context because it brings focus to the the fact that the clear-cut division of what is utopia and what is reality, or even what is dystopia is blurred in Le Guin's work. For Wells' Time Traveller this is obvious –there was his present, which was reality, and the future, which was the utopian critique–. With Zamyatin it already becomes more complex given that we have two realities, each of which is described as both a utopia and a dystopia– depending on one's point of view. Something similar occurs in Le Guin as well. Neither Urras nor Anarres are ever identified as "the" utopia. Both worlds have their positive and negative aspects. The use of dichotomies as a utopian method is perhaps most complex and evolved in *The Dispossessed*, given that the dichotomies are continuously subverted through the narrative by a third concept, condition, space, planet. While the main dichotomy is that of the two radically different societies of Anarres and Urras, the former located on the latter's moon (fig. 7), we soon find out that the planet of Urras is home not just to the nation of A-Io —one which is continuously contrasted to that of Anarres both in its spatial and social forms— but also to the nations of Thu and Benbili, each with their own political and spatial conditions.

What is curious about Le Guin's work however, is that unlike the first two pairs, in which the use of dichotomies often clearly delineates the problematic forms of the authors' contexts from the critical utopian responses, the two opposing sides in Le Guin's dichotomous pairs are much more "ambiguous"[25]. Both worlds have their positive and negative aspects. In other words, in Le Guin's narrative, the critique of her context is ingrained everywhere. By never defining "a" utopia in her imagined world, and by leaving it ambiguous, she allows the reader to decide and pick their own utopian alternative. And unlike the worlds in *The Time Machine* and *We*, both worlds are reminiscent of our own, and of Le Guin's historical context. Either could exist. In other words, in Le Guin's narrative, the critique of her context is ingrained everywhere. And while Le Guin, as all the other literary addressed in this paper, does use contextual verticals as a way of connecting the distant planets of Urras and Anarres to Earth itself, all her social and spatial forms are familiar, allowing her to project her critique through all aspects of the narrative. By never defining "a" utopia in her imagined

---

[24] This slow but steady change from the format of "utopian literature" to that of the "utopian novel" (Burns, *Political Theory...,* 121) can be seen in all three examined literary utopias. Wells' protagonist didn't really have any other function in the narrative except for arriving into the future and telling us —the reader— about it. The Time Traveller was a simple character with no depth or much personality to him, who served merely as a tour- guide for the year 802, 701. Zamyatin's Δ-503, while still playing the role of a tour-guide, given that we learn everything we need to know about the One State through his journal entries which form the entirety of the book, begins to develop some depth as a character. Beginning to doubt his indoctrinated beliefs, he manages to show the reader the "other side" of the narrative and Zamyatin's imagined world by venturing outside of the One State and encountering the Mephi.

[25] The original title of Le Guin's work was *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. However, the "ambiguous" appendage was removed in subsequent editions of the book.

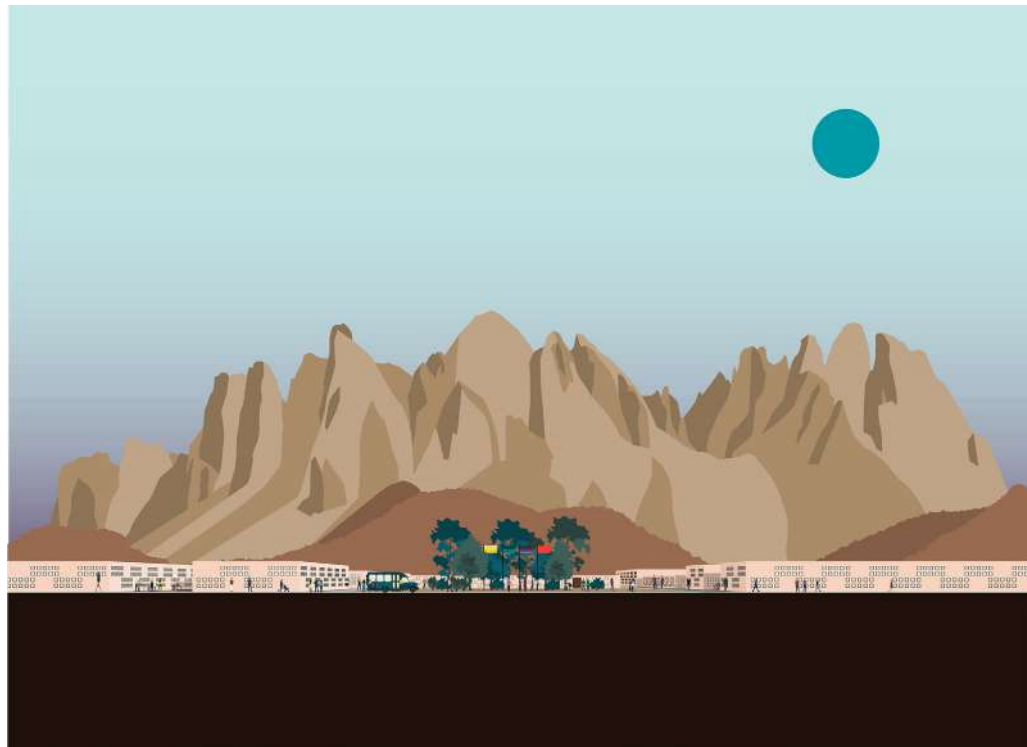world, and by leaving it ambiguous, she allows the reader to decide and pick their own utopian alternative.

Figure 7. *Depot Street*, depicting a section of a street in Abbenay from Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. Jana Čulek, 2023.

Towards New Utopias: A Conclusion

Architectural and literary utopias, while based on the same impetus —one of critically reflecting on their historical contexts through providing alternative social and spatial forms to those found in the authors' reality— achieve this task through numerous different means, approaches, and techniques, which change throughout history together with the genre itself, which shows the breadth and potential of utopia as a critical method. It is precisely through its numerous and changing approaches, the different topics utopian works address, and the various manners in which they address it, that utopia shows its versatility and its potential to adapt to the specific conditions of each historical context on which it reflects. This continuous change which occurs within the genre does not only accommodate new, more complex, and more pluralistic social and spatial forms, but also develops and represent new ways of thinking, understanding, disseminating, and representing utopian narratives. While the structures of traditional literary utopias were perhaps fitting for their historical context, the increasing complexity of the twentieth, and consequently the twenty-first century also required an increased complexity of the utopian literary and architectural form.

In other words, utopia had to grow and change in order to remain relevant. Although some may argue that together with the disappearance of grand narratives following the Second World War, the time of totalizing utopias has also gone, my reading is that utopia has merely changed. And while what some consider architectural utopias which are structured as totalizing narratives are still being created, these projects rarely critically engage with the reality of their historical contexts, but rather either (re)use social and spatial forms of previous utopian works, or use social and spatial forms which strengthen existing and often problematic conditions. This way, instead of serving as a critical method, they rather become a tool of perpetuating and strengthening what is already there. We should therefore rather try to look for utopia in its new forms and ways of working: not anymore in singular narratives, but rather in plural, complex, and multifaceted ones, where each world, city, space, or inhabitant is described through their own set of social and spatial forms, and where each can be perceived either as utopian, dystopian, or even as reality.