



## **Introduction**

### **Towards a collaborative notion of Utopia**

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# Introduction

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scopio Architecture, Art and Image publication benefits from a renewed international Editorial Team and Scientific Committee and is now focused on disseminating the themes of Architecture, Art and Image (AAI). The publication is also online in a dynamic OJS platform with the collaboration of the Contrast project. Despite these changes, both the print and the online publications ensure the continuity of scopio's original graphic identity and brand.

This open-access, annual, and research-orientated publication aims to offer critical, explorative and informative text targeting an interdisciplinary audience and providing a new critical space for discussion around the universe of AAI. It seeks, in particular, to debate / (re) think Architecture, Art and Image in our times.

scopio AAI will be organised annually around a central theme and the focus of the first issue is Utopia. We want to challenge the ordinary understanding of this concept by exploring new ways of looking at Utopian thinking within today's complex societies.

scopio AAI explores the notion of Utopia based on the idea that we need to have ambitious visions for the future and propose operational paths, creatively and collaboratively, towards transforming our society. We present works of authors who believe that Utopia can be a source of inspiration and a tool to create a better world. As advocated by Ernst Bloch eight decades ago in *The Principle of Hope*<sup>1</sup>, because utopias offer visions of a better future world, they should be seen as part of our current reality and not be excluded from it. In this sense, utopias are inspiring images that guide us towards real possibilities and help us forge true social transformation<sup>2</sup>.

We were interested in authors capable of highlighting the potential of Image as a medium that crosses borders and dislocates boundaries across different Architectural and Artistic subject areas. We called, in particular, for works by multidisciplinary teams inspired by broad notions of creativity, innovation and cybernetics as drivers of social and institutional co-evolution processes, exploring the potential of the world of Utopia and Image to inventively question and address cross-cutting problems affecting Architecture, Art and Image.

1. Bloch, Ernst, 1885-1977. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.

2. Jovchelovitch, S. & (2018). *Utopias and World-Making: Time, Transformation and the Collective Imagination*. In: C. e. Saint-Laurent, *Imagining collective futures. Perspectives from social, cultural and political psychology*. Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan Editors: C. de Saint-Laurent, S. Obradovic, K. Carriere, pp. 133-5.

We wanted to publish projects that explored the idea of Utopia as a mental tool for architectural design<sup>3</sup>, breaking with the standardised patterns of thinking and creating possibilities for innovative and poetical idealisations of space. We were looking for forward-looking visions in the utopian creation process that materialise the impossible and make us want to improve reality. We were, thus, propounding Utopia as a source of inspiration – never as a dream impossible to achieve nor as an imposed totalitarian ideal.

We were interested in projects from the AAI universe capable of making imaginative questions on space appropriation, cybernetics and digital media, urban perception and socio-cultural diversity, and image thinking. They should address transversal problems within interdisciplinary debates on how Architecture and Public Space define our Cities, how cities define Territories, and how all this can be explored and communicated through images. To be capable of thinking how technology and digital media are actively present in all these processes, and how all this is interconnected and capable of inspiring more Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive built environments and enhancing the participation of all society along the process.

We were also interested in works that critically reflected on the modernist ideals that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century – namely in the sphere of architecture and urban planning – and that inspired utopian visions and proposals, such as the *Ville Radieuse* by Le Corbusier, or the Garden City by Ebenezer Howard<sup>4</sup>, and that are still influential in today's societies. Even if, in many cases, the worlds idealised by modernists did not become realities, or even if they resulted in the construction of slightly dystopian spaces and architectures<sup>5</sup>, they did contribute to many positive achievements. Particularly after the Second World War, the modern movement designed urban planning and architecture that tried and succeeded in solving many problems related to the lack of primary housing conditions and good-quality public spaces in many European and North American cities.

On the other hand, we wanted to amplify and rethink the Utopian thought process within the complex concept of modern democracies. As Daniel Innerarity sustains in *DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE*, we need to invest in Utopian thinking congruous with the complex world we live in; we need democratic institutions to be able to actively influence a change for more sustainable development and a better world, more equitable and just.

3. Many authors have published on the relationship between architecture and Utopia. Nathaniel Coleman, for example, conducted research and has written extensively about these matters. See Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, 1st ed. (Londres: Routledge, 2005), 1.

4. Fishman, R 1996, <Urban Utopias: Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier>, in S Campbell & SFainstein (eds), *Readings in Planning Theory*, Blackwell Press, Cambridge, pp. 19–67.

5. Jacobs, Jane. 1993. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Within this context, we believe that one of the challenges lies in promoting a utopian vision that leans towards a more democratic outcome, as discussed by Crane Brinton in *UTOPIA AND DEMOCRACY*. This idea entails exploring utopian ideals that tend to align more with democratic principles and less with authoritarian or non-democratic methods, such as the dictatorship of the proletariat, discreet or overt technocratic governance, cultural engineering and planning, as exemplified by utopists such as Robert Owen, H.G. Wells or Etienne Cabet.

As Innerarity argues<sup>6</sup>, ours is a time of post-politics; the unbalance between what citizens can prevent and what they can shape has led to a depoliticisation of our public spaces, where populists and technocrats insensitive to democratic reasons ignore what is politically possible. The only way to politicise our democracies is by exploring their limitations and protecting them against themselves. Therefore, we must break away from thinking Utopia as an ideal crystallised into a perfect state and foster a more contemporary notion of Utopia capable of giving us ambitious visions for the future and triggering operational paths to reform society creatively and collaboratively. To make this happen, we need to bridge the gap between the utopian and the reforming paths: We need practical utopias. Moreover, as Fernando Birri said, "We need not to stop walking", i.e., we need to reform constantly<sup>7</sup>.

We have a revitalised Editorial Board coordinating this periodical publication shared between the I&D research centre CEAU/FAUP and other national and international I&D units. This renewed scope publication will integrate universities and departments related to or connected to the worlds of architecture, art, and image at the national and international levels. In doing all this, we are securing interdisciplinarity, enriching the space for the editorial content of the diverse categories and sections of the publication, and giving more freedom and responsibility to their Editors to create increased synergies. Published with a revitalised Scientific Committee, the publication has an Editor-in-Chief and Main Editors responsible for each edition, Guest Editors responsible for organising the different categories and sections, and the Editors around the central theme.

Finally, looking back on the past year, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to this 1st Volume of *scopio Magazine AAI-Utopia* publication. Thank you, editors, authors, reviewers, and readers of *scopio*.

6. Innerarity, Daniel. «Democracy without Politics: Why Democracy Can Seriously Harm Democracy». *Studies in Media and Communication*, vol. 5, n.º2 (2017), p. 76-84. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297227864\\_Democracy\\_without\\_Politics\\_Why\\_Democracy\\_Can\\_Seriously\\_Harm\\_Democracy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297227864_Democracy_without_Politics_Why_Democracy_Can_Seriously_Harm_Democracy)

7. Raffaella Baccolini, «Dystopia Matters: On the Use of Dystopia and Utopia», *Spaces of Utopia: An Electronic Journal*, nr. 3, Autumn/Winter 2006, pp. 1-4 <<http://ler.letras.up.pt> > ISSN 1646-4729. <https://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/3056.pdf>