

Izvorni znanstveni članak /  
Original scientific article  
Primljen/Received: 15. 10. 2025.  
Prihvaćen/Accepted: 9. 12. 2025.

UDK/UDC: 316.334.56  
DOI: 10.46352/18403867.2025.85

## Separatist Narratives of Utopia: The Role of Boundary Phenomena in Defining Idealized Space(s)<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

One of the most potent and genre-wide literary phenomena is the concept of utopia, an *atemporal non-place* where the perfect society lives. History of utopian thinking and writing showed that the notion of perfection is relative and grounded in real-life socio-spatial and temporal context. Utopias are manifold, yet, they are often very similar, even across different historical, geographical and cultural contexts. They can be deemed as radical critiques, yet they rarely renounce or reconsider archetypal narratives that in everyday life actually led to the crisis that was the impetus for their creation. Moreover, they are often rooted in exclusionary visions and practices, and nurture separatist narratives. This paper examines the manifestations of the mentioned separatist narratives through insight into features of various utopian city concepts in literary and architecture, in the realm of their interconnected toposphere, sociosphere and ethosphere.

**Keywords:** utopia, boundary, toposphere, sociosphere, ethosphere

### Separatistički narativi utopije: uloga fenomena granice u definiranju idealiziranih prostora

Jedan od najmoćnijih i žanrovski rasprostranjenih književnih fenomena je koncept utopije — atemporalno *nemjesto* u kojem obitava savršeno društvo. Povijest utopijskog promišljanja i pisanja pokazala je da je ideja savršenstva relativna i

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this paper are contained within author's PhD dissertation: "INHERENTNOST FENOMENA GRANICE U PROCESU ODREĐIVANJA URBANITETA. Poseban osvrt na transformacije u relaciji: grad-društvo-granica" (2025) / "INHERENCE OF THE BOUNDARY PHENOMENON IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING URBANITY. Special overview of transformations in the relationship: city-society-boundary" (2025).

ukorijenjena u stvarnim socio-prostornim i vremenskim kontekstima. Utopije su mnogostruke, no često vrlo slične, čak i u različitim povijesnim, geografskim i kulturnim kontekstima. Mogu se smatrati radikalnim kritikama, no rijetko odbacuju ili preispituju arhetipske narative, koji su u svakodnevnom životu zapravo doveli do krize koja je potaknula njihovo stvaranje. Štaviše, često su ukorijenjene u isključivim vizijama i praksama, njegujući separatističke narative. Ovaj rad proučava manifestacije navedenih separatističkih narativa uvidom u obilježja različitih koncepata utopijskog grada u književnosti i arhitekturi, a u okviru njihovih međusobno povezanih toposfera, sociosfera i etosfera.

**Ključne riječi:** utopija, granica, toposfera, sociosfera, etosfera

## 1.0 Introduction

One of the most potent and genre-wide literary phenomena is the concept of utopia, an *atemporal non-place* where the perfect society lives. History of utopian thinking and writing showed that the notion of perfection is relative and grounded in real-life socio-spatial and temporal context. Utopia is an abstract (urban) scheme produced as a reaction to anomies, post-disaster and/or post-war transitions – an escapist answer to societal failures. Utopistic answer to a crisis reconstructs how people *live* space, by splitting reality into the external world and the internal one – *idolum* (Mumford, 2008, p. 12), the world of ideas, shared beliefs and meanings that shape the human perception of world, technology, environment and society itself<sup>2</sup>.

Utopias are manifold, yet, they are often very similar, even across different historical, geographical and cultural contexts. They can be deemed as radical critiques, yet they rarely renounce or reconsider archetypal narratives that in everyday life actually led to the crisis that was the impetus for their creation. Moreover, they are often rooted in exclusionary visions and practices, and nurture separatist narratives. One could argue that this is the reason why the boundary between utopia and dystopia is blurred and easily crossed. In essence, utopia as a way of thinking is ubiquitous in architectural thought and urban visions.

This paper aims to examine the manifestation of the mentioned separatist narratives through insight into features of various utopian city concepts in literary and architecture, within the interconnected realms of the toposphere, sociosphere, and ethosphere.

To explore these intertwined spheres, it is essential to analyze how the separatist narratives are spatially and symbolically encoded. Literature,

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Mumford (1965) made a distinction between utopias of escape, which retreat from the real world's problems, and utopias of reconstruction, which aim to reshape the world and socio-spatial environment to better the human potential. That implies not only a different society, fostering new system of values, beliefs and relationships, but also a more or less defined space where new customs are played out.

in particular, provides a rich ground for such analysis, as utopian texts frequently construct idealized urban environments that function as both critique and alternative to prevailing sociopolitical conditions. These imagined cities serve not only as spatial metaphors but also as socio-ethical blueprints, making them pivotal in articulating the underlying impulses of separatist thought.

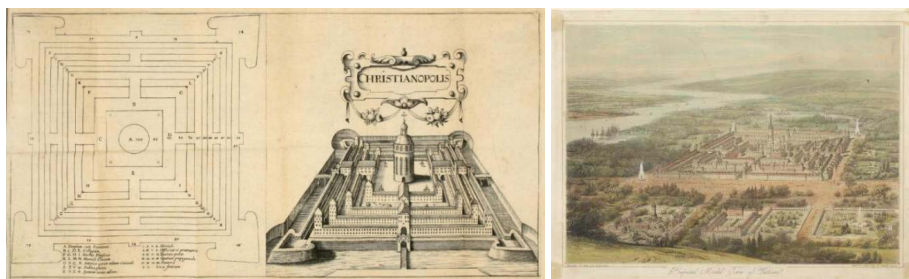
## 2.0 Utopian Toposphere – Spatial Organization of Utopian Cities

Utopian concepts in literature follow the thematic thread of the city, which hosts the new social order. These cities are conceived as a more or less defined space through various natural and man-made physical and social constraints that guide the social activity and create the stage where the old social order is criticized and the new one played out. The space is used as a setting for “symbolic expression of the perfection of the new society” (Lynch, 1981, p. 58). That perfection is established in the sterile image of an isolated society, undisturbed by external, even internal attacks or influences. Plato justifies this as the establishment and critical examination of the conditions necessary to sustain the cohesion of the community, in the absence of any overt external force, such as war (Mumford, 2008, p. 38). Geographical setting of utopian cities mirrors this notion by setting them on an island (Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Plato’s *Atlantis*, Sir Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, or Aldous Huxley’s *Island*), surrounded by mountains and hills (James Hilton’s *Shangri-La*), or built on isolated mountains (Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun*). The topographical setting and the physical delineation of city limits further underscore the isolationist character of the utopian community, which is often depicted as retreating behind concentric walls in certain utopian models (Figures 1, 2, 3).



**Figure 1.** *Campanella's City of the Sun*<sup>3</sup>—It is surrounded by seven circles of walls, relying on the narrative of defense – “It is so built that if the first circle were stormed, it would of necessity entail a double amount of energy to storm the second; still more to storm the third; and in each succeeding case the strength and energy would have to be doubled; so that he who wishes to capture that city must, as it were, storm it seven times. For my own part, however, I think that not even the first wall could be occupied, so thick are the earthworks and so well fortified is it with breastworks, towers, guns, and ditches.” (Campanella, 1929, p. 8).

<sup>3</sup> Author: Sébastien Lorenzini, 2018/2019, available at: [https://www.epfl.ch/labs/lapis/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LAPIS\\_VETU19\\_CIVITAS-SOLIS\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.epfl.ch/labs/lapis/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LAPIS_VETU19_CIVITAS-SOLIS_ENG.pdf)



**Figure 2.** *Christianopolis*\_Johann Valentin Andreae (1619) (left) situates his utopia on an island enclosed by a wall, forming a rectangular perimeter of 700 feet<sup>4</sup>. **Figure 3.** *Victoria*\_James Buckingham (Buckingham, Childs, & Bell, 1849) (right) proposes a very similar urban footprint of his utopia two centuries later.

Aside from delineating the *mise-en-scène* of this isolated, perfect society, the motive for fortification and entrance control was security—from both attacks and disease<sup>5</sup>. These motifs reflect the author's lived context, marked by poverty, illness, and war, and represent an attempt to “recreate familiar surroundings in some alien land” (Lynch, 1981, p. 359). This includes hiding unpleasant sights and sounds, excluding unwanted people, and constructing a spatial order where one group dominates another (Ibid.). Such a scenario appears inevitable, given the separationist spatial narrative employed to depict utopian societies. The language of geographical isolation and enclosure serves to immobilize utopia in a static image

<sup>4</sup> The fundamental unit of the city consists of workers who live in equality and reject wealth (Mumford, 1965, p. 80). Accordingly, *Christianopolis* is divided into zones, based on the type of production that takes place within each area. *Christianopolis* can be seen as a precursor to the Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City* concept (Mumford, 1965, p. 81), anticipating later urban planning ideals that emphasize spatial order, self-sufficiency, and integration of work, residence, and nature.

<sup>5</sup> Plato ties justice to the limitation of desires by emphasizing the importance of achieving a basic physical standard of living. He argues that an unjust state arises from the increase in desires and surpluses, which generates the need for territorial expansion at the expense of neighboring states, ultimately leading to external conflict (Mumford, 1965, p. 35). Within his *Utopia*, Thomas More outlines justified reasons for war, among which is the occupation of territory (Ibid., p. 70). This suggests that the visualization of utopia is inseparable from the visualization of its physical integrity, defined by clearly demarcated territorial boundaries. The concept of a demarcated and fortified perfect city is deeply rooted in eschatological utopian representations found within the Abrahamic religions, as well (Bošnjak, 2020).

(Servije, 2005, p. 284) – denying the fundamentally human impulse to question socio-spatial arrangements and to respond to their (il)logics, a process that may lead to internal social unrest. Therefore, we might argue that the spatial framework authors use to construct utopian social orders is inherently uncanny or flawed, as its existence in a frozen present can offer contentment only to those positioned at the intellectual and/or social apex within that order. Those not positioned at the top are often portrayed as naturally unfit for such a role – a formulation that has historically underpinned and legitimized discriminatory practices.

Classical utopias rarely developed their spatial setting beyond what was previously described. They typically situate the utopia within a specific geographical image, define its physical boundaries and then shift focus to the social relationships that unfold within this spatial framework. However, they often establish fundamental urban principles and architectural themes that serve to reinforce the envisioned utopian way of life<sup>6</sup>. These principles tend to be nostalgic, drawing inspiration from traditional cities such as Athens. The rigid alignment of identical houses along straight streets that intersect at right angles, for instance, emphasizes the ideal of equality among citizens—an approach prevalent in utopian socialist thought, such as that of Robert Owen. Alternatively, some utopias adopt a depiction of the city as a symbolic whole, enclosed in self-sufficiency, representing a microcosm that seeks to encapsulate

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<sup>6</sup> Lynch (1981, p. 363) identifies instances in which utopian writers emphasize the desired perception and qualities of urban space, including “visual harmony, memorability, the expression of continuity or of grandeur orientation and a clear image, strong sequential experience, contrast, complex coherence, human scale, a sense of the natural site, good views or the concealment of something unpleasant. Occasionally, deeper symbolic issues are cited, such as the sacredness of places, celebration and ritual, the sense of history or of the cosmos, the sense of home.” Some writers are inspired by the qualities typically associated with city centers—such as power, vitality, and diversity— others idealize rural or suburban areas as spaces capable of fostering utopian calm and ease (William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Broadacre City*, which is a simple derivation of open suburbia), idealizing blurring the lines between urban and rural way of life.

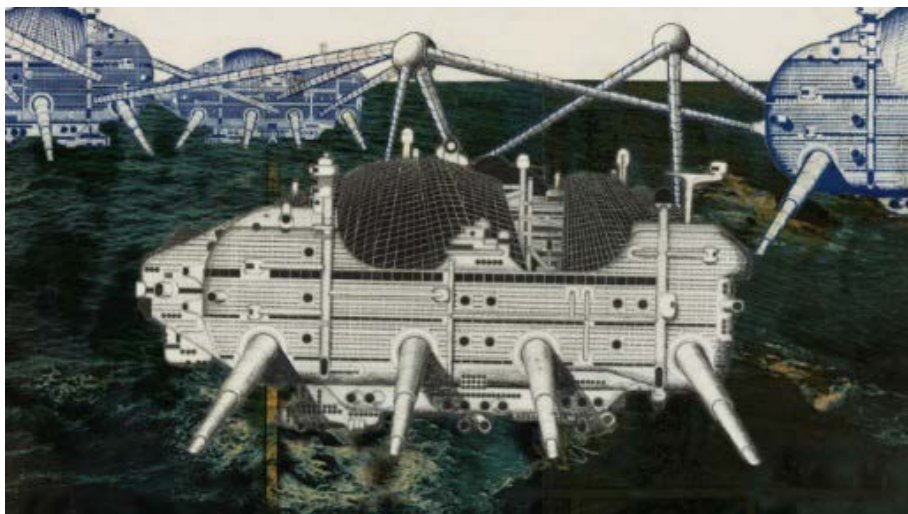
the totality of the world within itself, while neglecting the details of individual dwellings (Servije, 2005, p. 286). Nostalgic romanticization of space and lifestyle point to temporal boundaries, manifesting itself as a regression into the belief that the past was better and that the future should be resisted or postponed. This regression often stems from fears related to the failure of communitarian ideals in society. In contrast, utopian futurists – often architects and urban planners – followed a different trajectory, focusing primarily on the physical environment rather than the social one. This emphasis on the material realm allowed them to explore technology, innovation, and aesthetic complexity more freely, which resulted in physical proposals as “works of art, within which the social structure remains unchanged, or perhaps has been forgotten”<sup>7</sup> (Lynch, 1981, p. 363). While classic utopias focused on static image and lack of influences and change, futurists fantasized about impermanence and transience, questioning the relationships of cities and boundaries.

In projects such as *Walking City* and *Plug-in City* (Figures 4, 5), members of the Archigram group envisioned a nomadic mode of living as an antithesis to suburbanization. They deliberately disregarded the city’s territorial rootedness and the accompanying traditional organization of functions, instead attributing a dimension of mobility to the city as a whole. Furthermore, they questioned the permanence of the city as a geographical category and of its built structures, employing temporary components to explore new forms of habitation and the spatial transformation between the urban and rural environments, and vice versa.

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<sup>7</sup> Eugene Henard’s proposals for traffic level separations and underground cities, Tony Garnier’s new design for industrial town, Le Corbusier’s *Radiant City*, N. A. Miliutin’s *Linear City*, Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden City*, to name a few.



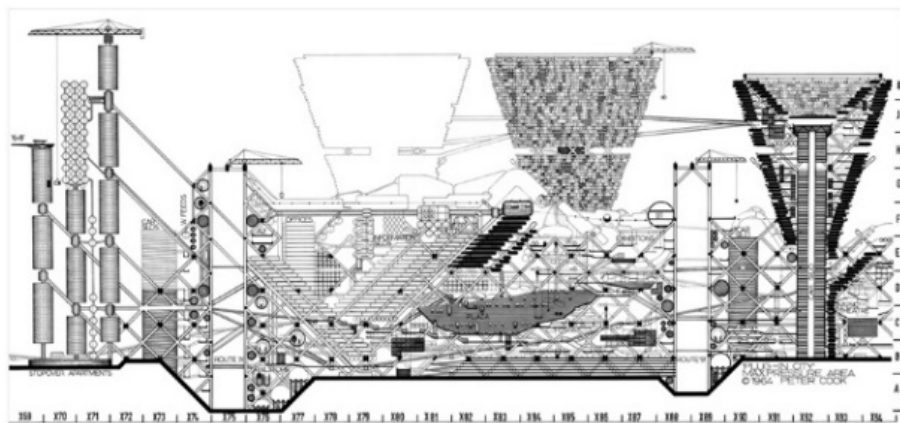


**Figure 4.** *Walking City*<sup>8</sup>—Ron Herron envisioned a city existing in a dystopian future, set in a New York devastated by nuclear war. The mobile city was conceived as a multitude of giant, semi-autonomous robots that could interconnect, when necessary, each containing all the essentials for a group of people to survive. However, the networking of these nearly self-sufficient units was crucial for the exchange of goods and mobility of people. Essentially, Herron proposed a model of urban development that could occur anywhere, offering more effective protection for inhabitants than traditional static cities, which rely on defensive perimeters. Urban planning principles, particularly those concerning the networking of cities and settlements, are not entirely rejected; rather, a new dimension of independence is introduced by challenging the possibility of a complete transformation of the broader socio-spatial context.

This can be understood as a form of mobile enclave, whose internal socio-spatial characteristics could have been compellingly examined in relation to spatial governance, governmental structures, ideological frameworks, and the perception of public space. However, this examination is absent.

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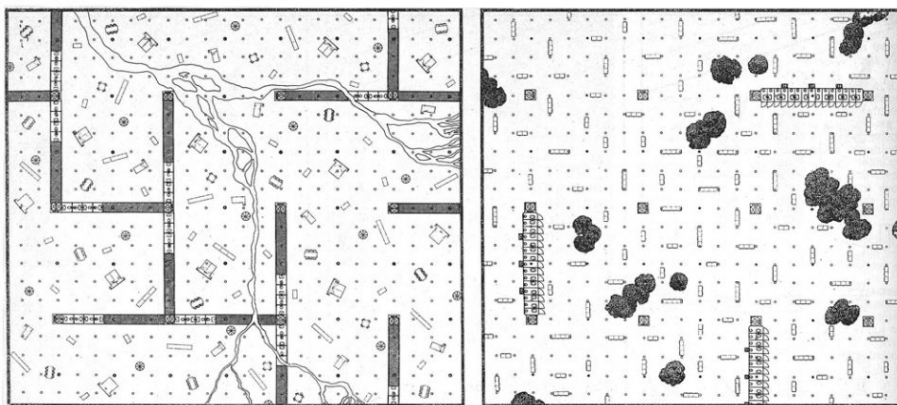
<sup>8</sup> Source: <https://archigram.net>, retrieved: 12.10.2023.



**Figure 5.** *Plug-in City*<sup>9</sup> \_This is not a city in the conventional sense, but a constantly evolving megastructure that imitates urban functions—encompassing housing, transportation, and other services—situated on giant cranes that enable continuous spatial transformation in response to the changing needs of its users. Peter Cook combines the concepts of extreme flexibility and spontaneity with prefabricated modules, wherein the entire planning process is delegated to the inhabitants themselves. A fixed, pre-defined base (infrastructure) establishes the basic boundaries of the city and outlines the potential directions for the formation of internal boundaries, which in turn become expressions of transformations occurring across social levels.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://archigram.net>, retrieved: 12.10.2023.

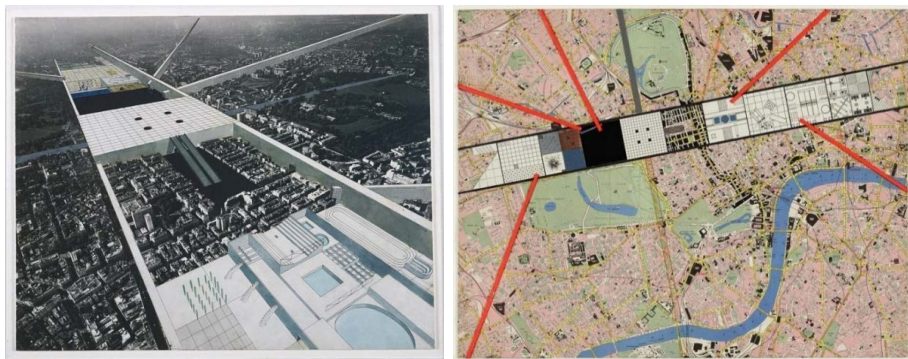
The questioning of the city and its boundaries was also central to the *No-Stop City* project (1971) by Archizoom Associates (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** *No-Stop City*<sup>10</sup>—This is a critical utopia that posits the city as an organically developed, constructed, and reconstructed space, with the potential for infinite expansion, entirely driven by the desires and needs of its inhabitants. Conceived as an endless grid interrupted only by natural barriers, it is structured by walls that impose order upon the natural landscape, which is inhabited occasionally and temporarily by a transient population. Utopia here functions as an emancipatory instrument through which society frees itself from its own alienation, within an entirely anonymous space that allows individuals to be anyone, anywhere.

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://speculativeedu.eu/the-radical-design-movement/>, retrieved 12. 10. 2023.

Furthermore, it is important to mention Rem Koolhaas's collage of drawings, known as *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* (1972), which presents an imaginary scenario for the contemporary metropolis (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** *Exodus, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*<sup>11</sup>—*Exodus* is conceived as a longitudinal, walled city that cuts through the urban fabric of London, creating a new urban culture driven by political subversiveness. This scenario illustrates a process of urban division into two distinct entities—mirroring the real-life division of Berlin—where one side is perceived as “good” and the other as “bad.” The population of the “bad” side begins to flee toward the “good” side, resulting in a scale of urban exodus which, if left unchecked, would lead to a doubling of the population in the “good” part and desolation in the “bad” one. In response, the authorities of the “bad” side construct a wall around the “good” side, aiming to prohibit further access. Koolhaas envisions an architectural element (used for destructive purposes) as a mirror of positive intentions: division, isolation, inequality, aggression, and destruction are here reimagined as components of an architectural struggle against undesirable living conditions though typically perceived as negative aspects of the Wall. Consequently, the inhabitants within this structure come to embrace it, becoming its voluntary prisoners—free within confinement (Koolhaas et al., 1972).

To summarize, spatial organization and the attitude towards the spatial boundaries of utopian cities reflects a fundamental preoccupation with separation and control. These spatial narratives, whether classical enclosed cities or experimental visions of movement and impermanence, physically manifest the aspirations that stem from author's respective socio-political contexts and their stance of it. Yet, while space sets the

<sup>11</sup> Source: ©Rem Koolhaas, MoMA Collection

stage, it is ultimately the social order enacted within that stage which defines the essence of utopia. Thus, the next chapter turns to the utopian sociosphere, examining how utopian spatial forms organize relationships, regulate behaviour, reinforce collective values and support particular structures, norms and hierarchies.

### 3.0 Utopian Sociosphere – Social Organization of Utopian Cities

Majority of classical utopian writings ponder about social order and relationships, using spatial organization as the backdrop for social shift and desired power relations. Utopian writers challenge existing societal conditions to propose *appropriate* social boundaries that, according to them, could establish and sustain an happy, healthy society, often disregarding the question of balance between individual freedom and social order. Plato, the writer of first utopia (before the word *utopia* even existed), examined the ideal physical standard of life as one characterized by a modest society in which individual desires for wealth accumulation are minimized. Such moderation, he argued, prevents the expansion of the utopian city at the expense of the environment and reduces the likelihood of war (Mumford, 2008, p. 35). Plato also established *biological* limits by setting the maximum population of his utopian community at 5,040 citizens<sup>12</sup>, a number based on certain algorithmic properties (Ibid.: 37). This population limit was to be maintained through a combination of eugenics (see: Servije, 2005, p.289), regulation of marriage and reproduction, land ownership and inheritance policies,

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of limiting population size was a prominent theme in early 20th-century urban thought. The *Garden City* movement, for instance, advocated for the development of satellite towns surrounding a central city, separated by green belts and capped at a population of 32,000 residents. Ebenezer Howard, a key figure in this movement, drew inspiration from Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward*. In 1904, Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker designed the first *Garden City* in the United Kingdom – Letchworth. However, despite its original intentions, Letchworth ultimately became unaffordable for blue-collar workers, housing middle class workers, implicating insidious class boundaries revealed upon the realization of utopian visions.

the relocation of surplus population to colonies, and *weeding out* the sick and the weak.

Within this, one can discern certain principles characteristic of a totalitarian regime, which, beyond the biological regulation of the population, also involve a stratification into distinct social classes - namely, a ruling elite, a military class tasked with the protection of the city, and a labor class responsible for supporting the former two. Utopian constructs often establish hierarchical structures under the guise of equality, which subsequently give rise to exclusive and discriminatory practices. For instance, Plato correlated each social stratum with a particular human virtue, thereby constructing a hierarchical model of society<sup>13</sup>. This model reveals certain internal contradictions. Namely, if the society in question is ideal and just, one must ask why there is a need for a military caste - why does such a society anticipate war and prepare for defense<sup>14</sup>? Furthermore, if this is a just society characterized by a fair distribution of roles and happiness, why is self-restraint the defining virtue of the class responsible for sustaining the ruling elites? To what extent was Plato conscious of the fact that the replication of existing social hierarchies within an idealized societal model does not inherently ensure a peaceful and harmonious community, unless the underlying impulses of human nature are deliberately restrained or suppressed? As Sułkowski argues (2011, p. 25), Plato's *Republic* is not a dialogue about justice, but rather the first in history apology of totalitarian control and power. Total control and power create a dehumanized, but at the same time a perfect and stable organizational system, maintained by a precise division of

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<sup>13</sup> Wisdom was ascribed to the ruling class, courage was identified as the defining trait of the city's guardians - warriors, temperance was considered a defining virtue of the producing class of farmers and artisans, and justice was the overarching virtue that binds them (Mumford, 2008, p. 41), emphasizing that every class is to be as happy as the other ones.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas More employs the notion of war in *Utopia* as a strategic instrument for the elimination of socially undesirable elements - social *cleansing*, thereby preserving the perceived integrity and stability of the community.



responsibilities, and the process of indoctrination of each social class.

Johann Valentin Andreae, in *Christianopolis* (1619), advocated for spatial organization based on the type of production and the needs of workers. The city functions as a workers' society in which social and economic equality is foundational, prompting Mumford (2008, p. 80) to describe it as a model of "guild communism". In contrast to Plato's *Republic*, the workers in *Christianopolis* are members of autonomous, self-governing groups; thus the social boundaries arise from differences between collectives rather than from the hierarchical class structures. However, Andreae also promoted the rigorous censorship, institutionalized inquisition, compulsory religious observance, and severe punishment as integral components of his utopia, based on his belief in the innate depravity of human nature (Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 52).

The definition of equality is one of the central questions in utopias, particularly following the French revolution. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Spence imagined an egalitarian society *Spensonia*, and land nationalization. The integrity of this society was to be maintained by secret voting and weapons – this idea reveals Spence's belief that the society needs to be changed in its roots, not by palliatives (Mumford, 2008., p. 127), as well as the inherent threat of a totalitarian regime under the guise of reform – a separatist subnarrative. A similar line of thinking can be found in Etienne Cabet's *Icaria* (1848), a society characterized by spatial and social standardization and uniformity. In this system, the only accepted diversity stems from the sexual division of labor—a regressive idea, even when compared to Cabet's contemporaries. His writing suggests a regime marked by heavy censorship, complete lack of democracy and support of individuality, labeling him as a "literary dictator"<sup>15</sup> (Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 95). In contrast, Henry Saint-Simon leans into the "natural" inequality of people, proposing a meritocratic society purged of "the lower level of poverty and the top level of aristocratic parasites"<sup>16</sup> (Ibid., p. 92). Saint-Simon's ideas,

<sup>15</sup> Cabet is one of the most known authors to attempt to found improved community.

<sup>16</sup> Political power in this system would be divided between two chambers: the *Inventi-*

along with those of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, mark a clear shift from the narrative fiction typical of Renaissance utopias toward the belief in the practical implementation of utopian schemes.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels proposed a vision of equality grounded in the abolition of the exploitative class structure. Their utopia of communism envisioned a classless society in which power was transferred to the proletariat. The elimination of social and national divisions was to be achieved through the abolition of private property, centralized economic planning, state control over all social and economic processes, and equal, free access to public services such as education, science, healthcare, and social welfare (Sułkowski, 2011, p. 27).

The ideas of growing social equality since 18<sup>th</sup> century onward were reflected in utopian portrayals of women, gender relations and marriage. While many utopian writers struggled to fully break away from traditional gender roles within the household<sup>17</sup>, some explored alternative structures that sought to deconstruct the nuclear family. Both Plato and Tommaso Campanella, for instance, proposed forms of communal marriage, albeit for different ideological reasons. Plato envisioned communal marriage primarily as a mechanism to obscure children's awareness of their biological parentage and to ensure that only the strongest, wisest, and most beautiful individuals reproduced (Plato, 1930). Cam-

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*ons and Examinations*, composed of scientists, engineers, and inventors – the intellectual elite, and the *Chamber of Executives*, consisting of entrepreneurs, bankers, and industrialists, who would hold economic power, but be subject to the oversight of the intellectual class (Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 92).

<sup>17</sup> In *Christianopolis*, domestic labor is equally divided between genders, with the exception of sewing and laundry, which remain designated as women's tasks. Notably, the father plays no direct role in child-rearing. The mother is responsible for the child during the first six years, after which the child is entrusted to the care of the community. From that point onward, children spend their childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood in an educational setting overseen by both male and female teachers (Andreä, 1619). Despite this communal model of education and care, Andreae, a devout Christian, strongly advocated for a puritanical nuclear family structure, in which sexual relations were maintained solely for the purpose of reproduction.



panella deconstructs family and home, in order to avoid the self-love that stems from a private utopia maintained by one's own property and household - the elimination of such attachments would allow individuals to redirect their loyalty and affection exclusively toward the community (Mumford, 2008, p. 99). Socially, Campanella's *City of the Sun* resembles the structure of the thirty-household unit found in More's *Utopia*. However, while More preserved the family unit within a patriarchal framework, Campanella viewed the family as a hindrance to the strength of the state and so should disappear completely. However, More proposed some bizarre and misogynistic marital rituals. Before the marriage is agreed upon, "the prospective bride, no matter whether she's a spinster or a widow, is exhibited stark naked to the prospective bridegroom by a respectable married woman, and a suitable male chaperone shows the bridegroom naked to the bride" (More, 1901, p. 97). The reasoning behind this custom is mainly for the benefit of the males who have most to gain in the marriage arrangement: "When you're buying a horse, and there's nothing at stake but a small sum of money, you take every possible precaution... but when you're choosing a wife, an *article* that for better or worse has got to last you a lifetime, you're unbelievably careless. You don't even bother to take off its wrappings. Marriage, once made, is final, and, 'if she turns ugly after the wedding, he must just resign himself to his fate'" (see: Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 31).

Utopian literature often devotes significant attention to defining the concept of motherhood—and, by extension, the idea of womanhood. A woman is frequently portrayed as a political metaphor: she appears as the virgin, the asexual wife, the mother of the nation. In many cases, the notion of biological motherhood is diminished or erased altogether, and the figure of the mother is transformed into a symbolic representation of the ideal society itself.

In his socialist utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, William Morris represents an altered version of the future Britain from the perspective

of a Victorian Narrator, who struggles to comprehend the advancement of women's rights, and more equality created through familial obligations, work and sexuality. For example, women and men could separate without any legal or social repercussions. He maintains the traditional gender separation of domestic labor roles and maintains women as primary caretakers of the home, however, he attributes highest of honors to motherhood and housekeeping, describing progressiveness as being rooted in the fact that women can thrive in these roles since the burden of anxieties over the future of their children is gone, making domesticity and femininity freeing and positive, rather than restrictive (Morris, 1890). Even though he tries to avoid anti-feminist stance, he has some questionable beliefs. Morris maintains that women are more fitted for the role of child-bearers and child-rearers, and that "it is a great pleasure to a clever woman to manage a house skillfully, and to do so that all house-mates about her look pleased and are grateful to her. And then you know everybody likes to be ordered about by a pretty woman: why, it is one of the pleasantest forms of flirtation." (Morris, 1890, p. 63). Morris's beliefs that women should still be the main focus in the domestic sphere appear to be a restraint that continues over from the previous, capitalist, society that the Narrator so despises (McLenaghan, 2017). Edward Bellamy<sup>18</sup> nearly eliminated domestic labor via technology and communalization of cooking and laundry<sup>19</sup>, but he did maintain gendered division of labor, according to 19<sup>th</sup> century views of women's inferior biology, limiting the scope of work available to women, under the assumption that women physiology requires special accommodations (Bellamy, 1996, pp. 124-125). He advocated for women's financial free-

<sup>18</sup> One notable aspect of Bellamy's vision is his proposal for a universal auxiliary language, intended to coexist with native tongues and thereby eliminate global linguistic barriers and facilitate simplified world communication.

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Levitas (1995, p. 68) argues that his rationale for this treatment of domestic work is less a concern for the lives of women than a general insistence on productivity, efficiency, and the abolition of waste – the same grounds on which he objects to the capitalist system in general.

dom and equal access to education as their male counterparts, simultaneously insisting on sexual difference and economic equality. In answer to certain critiques to the utopian concept he described in *Looking Backward*, Bellamy further elaborated and modified some of its concepts in a sequel *Equality*, where he abolished gendered division of labor in public sphere. Being influenced by Bellamy's ideas in *Herland*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman advocated abolishment of domestic labor and kitchenless houses as the central themes of her writing, reflecting her awareness of the relationship between space design and the social processes within it, and yet, she herself opposed to men doing household work, maintaining the natural division of labor, retaining women's responsibility for home and childcare (Levitas, 1995).

Imagining a gender equal society is inherently utopian, but some writers took it a step further. Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) imagined a women-only city, where influential historical women criticize the practice of writing out important women of historic and literary canon. As a literary subgenre, the feminist utopia offers critical historical and intertextual insights into evolving conceptions of power and relationality across difference<sup>20</sup>.

On the other hand, architects and urban planners hardly considered the before mentioned issues, even though architecture reflects and advocates a certain value system which is perhaps a reflection of the political regime, investor and economic logic and/or cultural imperative(s). Many urban planning proposals originate in utopian visions—either explicitly, as with Ebenezer Howard, or symbolically, through ideals embedded in the discipline's foundational narratives. While expressed as physical designs, twentieth-century urban schemes function much

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<sup>20</sup> Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* is considered the first feminist utopia. Feminist utopias not only reconsidered gender roles in society and labor division, they considered colonial and imperial Eurocentric narratives, even reconsidering the definition of utopian literature itself (see authors like Pauline Hopkins and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, whose writing is a reaction to C. G. Gilman's *Herland*).

like literary utopias: as imagined futures and blueprints for change. Despite accepting the city as something given, these plans aim to transform it according to overarching themes such as socialism, authority, communism, automation, or affluence<sup>21</sup> (Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 128).

It is evident that in the utopian narratives, social organization is inextricably linked to the spatial configurations that support it; the sociosphere cannot be analyzed independently of the toposphere. Turning to the realm of utopian ethosphere, we will explore how this interplay between spatial and social narratives generated distinct moral and ideological framework peculiarities.

#### 4.0 Utopian Ethosphere – a Reflection of Toposphere and Sociosphere Interplay

This chapter aims to understand the boundaries within utopian ethosphere as a mediating layer between the toposphere (space) and the sociosphere (social structures), reflecting their dynamic interdependence. These conceptual boundaries that reflect values and ideals, can refer to the moral, ethical and ideological framework that define what is considered acceptable or just within an imagined perfect society. As Lynch states (1981, p. 57), utopian thinking displays some persistent flaws, such as disregard for the process of development and an exceedingly narrow and static set of values, that can be observed as a product of moral, ideological, social<sup>22</sup>, political, cultural and emotional<sup>23</sup> boundaries and the boundaries that stem from the human – nature relationship features.

<sup>21</sup> Figures like Tony Garnier, Antonio Sant'Elia, Alexander and Leonid Vesnin, Taut, Le Corbusier, Paolo Soleri, and Yona Friedman, among others, exemplify this utopian impulse.

<sup>22</sup> As social and political boundaries have been thoroughly analyzed in the preceding chapter, they will not be discussed further here. However, it is important to acknowledge that they remain fundamentally interwoven with the other forms of boundaries explored in this chapter.

<sup>23</sup> Cultural and emotional boundaries primarily involve the control of cultural narratives and the suppression of emotional expression. As these themes are more characteristic of the dystopian genre, they will not be the focus of analysis in this chapter.

Moral boundaries within the utopian literature are primarily concerned with establishing the ethical foundations of an ideal society. As such, the utopian canon frequently delineates virtuous behavior and prescribes punishments for those who transgress societal norms, including criminals and adulterers<sup>24</sup>. These boundaries are directed inward, shaping the internal organization and moral order of a closed, self-contained community. However, in contrast to this internal moral rigor, the treatment of *Othered* external societies is often marked by a striking moral ambivalence. While utopian authors envision idealized societies - frequently at odds with the complexities of human nature - they paradoxically justify moral exceptions in the context of war. Many utopias permit the privileged society existing behind metaphorical or literal 'golden walls' to express disdain for those beyond their borders. Several authors identify overpopulation and the resulting demand for territorial expansion and resources as legitimate grounds for warfare, leading them to advocate for population control measures and limitations on urban growth. Despite their conceptual limitations, utopian texts generally uphold the principle of moderation<sup>25</sup>, regulated by clearly defined boundaries, as a mechanism for maintaining societal equilibrium.

Jean Servier (2005, p. 301) observes that the inhabitants of a utopia derive from their privileged position a rationale for accepting the necessary sacrifices required to sustain a particular form of communal life - one that excludes individual freedom, freedom of conscience, and autonomous decision-making. He maintains that this religious tolerance and soothing difference of utopia denies its inhabitants any anxiety (Ibid., p. 280). In this context, ideological boundaries denote the underlying belief systems, the negotiation between individual and collective interests, and the society's (lack of) orientation toward pro-

<sup>24</sup> Both Plato and Thomas More condemned adultery; More even advocated death penalty for individuals who repeatedly commit the offense.

<sup>25</sup> Moderation is intended to eliminate worldly anxieties - such as the traps of social status, economic disparity, unemployment, and housing shortages - which inevitably lead to the collapse of internal order and the disintegration of societal integrity.

gress. Religious beliefs within the utopian canon vary widely, ranging from Catholic doctrines and the worship of lunar and solar deities to the complete abolition of religion in favor of scientific rationalism, the latter perspective underscoring the mutually exclusive division between religion and science. More (1901) advocated for freedom and tolerance of religious faith, with the notable exception of atheism—a stance that reflects the common apprehension among religious adherents toward those outside established dogma. On the other hand, Rober Owen, an anticlerical utopian socialist, believed that education was the main means to reformation of society, with the ultimate aim being the production of happiness, the only religion of man (Tod & Wheeler, 2016, p. 83). Utopian literature frequently addresses the issue of land ownership, often advocating for communal possession of land and shared resources. This approach emphasizes commonality, equality, and social cohesion by rejecting the accumulation of wealth through private property. Such ideals are further reflected in the promotion of uniform clothing among utopian citizens, symbolizing a sense of collective identity and belonging. These elements together underscore a commitment to collective interests over individual ones. As Lynch states (1981, p. 363), the utopian key values most often have to do with the group identity, the strengthening of social ties, and the support for the sense of community. While these may be the core values, there is also frequent emphasis on equity and justice, health, cleanliness, “balance”, order, the avoidance of waste, and a close relation with nature. This relationship with the natural world constitutes a significant part of the utopian ethosphere.

Between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the utopian tradition underwent a period of relative decline, before re-emerging with renewed intensity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This revival coincided with a shift in focus: whereas earlier utopias often reflected imperialist ambitions through the conquest of foreign territories, later utopian visions redirected this impulse toward the conquest of nature. This transition marks the beginning of a conceptual division between labor and nature, reflecting

broader transformations brought about by industrialization and scientific progress. Most utopian writers have engaged with the question of soil or land in various contexts—whether in Renaissance visions of the ideal city, which controls enough surrounding land to ensure self-sufficiency, or in later industrial utopias, which take the idealization of technology so far as to sever the city from the ground entirely, allowing nature to recuperate from human presence and exploitation (as seen in architectural fantasies such as Archigram's *Plug-In City* or *Walking City*). On the other hand, Lynch (1981, p. 363) notes that these fantasies of high technology concern themselves with esthetic coherence, rich symbolism, and the expression of power, novelty, complexity, sophistication, or dynamic change. Productive efficiency is likely to be a goal, as well as high consumption, and perhaps such cognitive issues as conveying an understanding of man's relation to his technology, or to the universe. Dreamers may declare that they are creating a superorganism, the next stage in evolution, which is to be composed of a fusion of the human community and its habitat. However, the utopian literature at the same time remains saturated with retrofuturistic visions that draw on the static frameworks of the traditional city. These visions often rely on legal and moral coercion justified by appeals to cosmic harmony – a rhetorical strategy that ultimately conceals oppressive social structures beneath the appearance of universal order.

This dichotomy reveals the need to examine how utopian writers conceptualize the boundaries of human nature itself. As noted earlier, most utopian visions tend to privilege either space or society, often at the expense of the other. Spatially oriented utopias typically accept existing social structures, offering a reimaged spatial framework as a backdrop for organization and control. In contrast, socially oriented utopias frequently disregard or idealize human nature in order to construct a model of perfect social order. Charles Fourier was one of the few exceptions, who believed that these practices were just as much distortions of people's 'natural' and instinctive selves as were the practices of the

existing society. The new society should rather be based on a science of human relationships, and he believed that he had discovered that science in his “theory of passionnal attraction”<sup>26</sup>, revealing his belief in people as inherently good and hardworking.

All of these reflections ultimately point to an understanding of utopian literature as political metaphor. Within these imagined worlds, ideal societies and citizens are constructed through idealized spatial frameworks and systems of governance, education, labor, and social organization that embody and promote particular values. These values, inscribed within the utopian ethos, often reveal the culture-specific heritage and ideological positioning of their authors. Consequently, utopias operate not only as speculative thought experiments, but also as meaningful articulations of human aspiration, with tangible influence on real-world political and social frameworks.

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<sup>26</sup> He analyzed personality into different combinations and strengths of passions, in ascending and descending ‘series’. He invented ideal working and social groups in which the passions would be in equilibrium, for different passions were shown to have their main influence at different stages in people’s lives. A system of geometry, in which each passion had a characteristic shape, described the ‘harmonic’ inter-relationship of people and passions; and diagrams charts, plans, schedules and time-tables gave a precise description of daily life in the ideal community. Fourier’s ideal community, The Phalanx, would be placed into a new social palace, or phalanstery. At its center would be dining rooms, the exchange, meeting rooms, library, studies, a temple, a tower, a telegraph, coops for carrier pigeons, ceremonial chimes, an observatory and a winter courtyard. People were to work at a wide variety of jobs, and change jobs several times in each day. Each person would do a minimum amount of work and receive a basic wage, and there should be no moral or social pressure exerted to make people work. By making work attractive, Fourier hoped to liberate people from the work ethic as well as from the drudgery of work. The more difficult, uncomfortable or unrewarding the work, the higher was the wage paid for it. Fourier had little faith in the type of family in which he had been brought up. He replaces the family with a system of free love, with equality between the sexes, and with the Phalanx as a whole taking on the responsibilities for welfare and children. Fourier regarded the traditional household as a site of exile and oppression for women. He maintained that the advancement of gender roles was more likely to be achieved through their reconfiguration within communal structures than through the mere pursuit of sexual liberation (see: Fourier, 1901; Tod & Wheeler, 2016, pp. 90-91; Šoec, 1978).



## 5.0 Conclusion

At the core of separatist utopian narratives lies a paradox – while they claim to imagine a liberated, bettered society, they often rely on mechanisms of physical enclosure and social exclusion to define and preserve the ideal. Rather than transcending inherited divisions, utopian imaginaries are tethered to inherited structures, such as class division, slavery, and war. It was often easy to reimagine family structure, yet, nearly impossible to dismantle gendered division of labor. As a result of this selective reexamination of various lived narratives, utopias frequently take the form of projected separatist rigidities – homogeneity is privileged over heterogeneity, and isolation, stratification, and standardization are employed as tools of social engineering. Far from imagining multivalent, multicultural futures that transcend the boundaries of the idealized city, utopias are often enclosed, both literally and symbolically, paradoxically safeguarding a world that ostensibly renders war and conflict obsolete. Such features expose the deep cultural and historical imprints of their authors, many of whom envisioned ideal futures shaped by a past saturated with conflict, hierarchy, and control. Their imagined societies are shaped not only by hope but by fear of contamination, disorder, and the unpredictability of the *Other*. Hence, the utopian “outside” is rarely a space of encounter or exchange; it is a threat to be excluded.

Thus through the separatist interpretation, the utopian thought foregrounds the inherent role of boundaries in shaping human behavior and spatial organization. These imagined geographies reveal not only the difficulty of separating from the inherited socio-spatial paradigms but also the deep ambivalence about human nature itself - whether people are thought to be inherently virtuous or inherently susceptible to corruption.

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