UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS IN LANDSCAPE AND CULTURAL MOSAIC. VISIONS, VALUES, VULNERABILITY: AN INTRODUCTION

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This edition of the IPSAPA/ISPALEM conference, just like previous ones, aims to stimulate critical reflection and debate, by drawing not only on the dreams of beautiful projects but also on the disappointment of unrealised ones and on the distortions that rise when different tendencies clash. Greater attention has been given to the ever so important issue of assessment, which is in a way an exaltation of critical reflection: how much is what we know about "worth"? How much is it worth for *whom?* How *long* will be worth for?

We must not be scared off by mythical names such as the *City of the Sun, Utopia, New Atlantis,* and we must not give in to the chanting of their Mermaids. Let's start from Friedman and his definition of urban utopia and dystopia: "*utopian thinking: the capacity to imagine a future that departs significantly from what we know to be a general condition of the present....In the peculiar form of dystopias, utopian thinking may alert us to certain tendencies in the present, which, if allowed to continue unchecked and carried to a logical extreme, would result in a world we would find abhorrent*".

Emphasis will not be placed on the urban utopias of the perfect city since this field has been widely and finely explored by urban planners and architects. It was, after all, the first topic that was dealt with by many utopians in their description of their little perfect worlds. Rather, we want to explore the abstract spatial forms of utopia and dystopias. The term dystopia is not only used to refer to the extreme consequences of the mistakes of mankind, but also to the conflicts arising from different utopias and particularly between utopias and the real world. Such conflicts will enable us to consider spatial forms in their temporal development, not only as a starting and finishing point but also as a process having intermediate phases that are often concealed by the saying "the ends justify the means".

The age-old dystopia between city and countryside must be overcome. Border areas have never been well defined and are formed by the combination of numerous tesserae that, at times, are juxtaposed like proper mosaic tesserae, and at times represent mixed areas where the single components become blurred and indistinguishable. One's desire to classify and separate must give way to the analysis of merging, dissolution and enlargement of borders, just like Gottman did in his much praised (but also criticised) *Megalopolis*.

There are two ways of viewing spatial utopias: one perceives order as separation, seclusion, destructuring into distinct layers, the other considers totality in terms of access, holism, polymorphism. The utopian dream of totality

often causes a loss of roots and identity, creates a vast indefinite area where each individual becomes interchangeable, while the opposite dream of order prevents from seeing the bigger picture because focus is placed on the intricacy of tiny details.

Utopian order is often associated with richness and waste. Just think for example of the stadiums that are used for one sport only, such as velodromes, greyhound tracks, and even tennis courts, or think of the more absurd existence of equipment for one sport only, such as shoes or trousers or t-shirts. Richness is not multifunctional, or it may only be at very high levels of technology and design. On the other side of the spectrum there is multi-functionality, that is multipurpose spaces, such as lofts, where participants are involved in everything and lose any residue of their private life.

A more complex utopia regards the dimensional jump. The most typical one is the leap between two to three dimensional space, reflecting the most ancient aspiration to conquer landscapes with the erection of taller and taller towers, with daring and challenging climbing, with flying machines closer and closer to the freedom of birds. Equally important is the transition from one to two dimensions, when exploration paths are no longer sequential and imposed – in this way there are no choices – and become free and resemble labyrinths, just like in the high seas, or in some parks or indeed in playing fields. Borders, as we have said, lie in an intermediate dimension between the line and the surface. Mathematics has provided a framework for understanding these phenomena long before Mandelbrot published his fractals. Nonetheless, uncertainty about dimension is always deeply felt along sandy coastlines, in lagoons, on cliffs, and along the alleys of medieval towns. To this end, let me remind you of the panoramic roads that have been constructed to create bi-dimensional penetrations through a tool that is by nature one-dimensional. Today, these roads no longer seem to be in fashion – also due to their invasive nature – but some fascinating examples still remain in the Dolomite passes and in the full, rich harmony of the celebrated Viale dei Colli in Florence.

The utopia of time is another idea that stimulates invention. Looking to the future may be presumptuous, but it may help our descendants. Not only literary works must live forever for future generations (many have indeed written like Horace *exegi monumentum aere perennius*), but also everyday objects, not only in graves, but also in the specialized museums of manufacturing companies. Today, the tendency is to reconstruct the fragments of the past, whether they are more or less coherent and complete, more or less philologically correct, more or less synchronous. Utopia is the museum of civilisation which has been pictured in a specific year, even though we know that it never really appeared that way at any given moment because each person, house, monument showed signs of belonging to different eras.

Time is full of anachronisms, which is what makes our urban world beautiful, fascinating and multi-faceted. There is the ecological and philological tendency

not to accept anachronisms in the hypothetical rural world, in a quest to find the original value of the landscape. The reconstruction of a perfectly synchronous landscape is a contradiction and must therefore be part of a large-scale holistic project. Public clients created proper geometrical parks rich in hills and ponds. Nowadays, we find not only lake basins created to meet industrial needs, which - we must admit - have good landscape and tourist effects, but we find also interesting experiments of re-usage of quarries, mines, heaps of waste. Anything that is ugly can be converted – at a more or less high price – into landscapes that are not only acceptable (mitigation) but also beautiful and creative. These are utopias that from the project are turned into reality. All this is possible as long as the intermediate period – that of fractional interventions, of "one lot after the other" – is not eternal and does not represent the end, as it is often the case in urban parks. An incomplete utopia is almost always a dystopia because it creates an unfinished environment that will be reused for other purposes that elude project control also in terms of their social impact.

The distorted or dangerous use of utopian landscapes is a typical defect of projects that solely seek beauty without considering economic sustainability and usability of the work, which may lack connections, accessory services, or even a sufficient number of users to make it safe. Public parks, particularly those parks that are complex enough to block any view, just like the narrow alleys of medieval towns, do not guarantee safety to their users and favour the creation of social self-perpetuating outcasts. Not even the other utopia of the "Big Brother", with its electronic spies installed everywhere, with programmes of automatic analysis of anomalous behaviour, can provide enough guarantees, even though they may constantly annoy average people, and have stepped up from the times of "God doesn't see you" to the Orwellian era of the "Big Brother".

The great utopian landscapes have been created by nature through its various geomorphologic movements. Amongst the most suggestive there are the sequences of cylindrical structures and the spiky paraboloids, like the ones that can be admired on Asian mountains. The architects have in some way copied them in their vertical elevations but only a few have managed to reproduce their original natural harmony (let us think about Niemeyer's shapes). In bi-dimensional space, the appeal of the superfluous can be perceived in the meanders, in the canals of lagoons, in atolls. Organic urbanism influenced by the roughness of nature can reproduce the effects of a miniature fractal creation, but also in this case the perception is that of a whim. In other cases, utopia is designed purely as a whim, and we discussed this during the Wonderland conference.

The most beautiful sign of utopia may be the helicoid, where the line conquers three-dimensional space and at the same time enhances verticality, as in the spiral staircases leading up the bell towers of cathedrals, or the double helicoidal staircase of the well of San Patrizio (and also at the entrance to the Vatican Museums), or in dull multi-store car parks where only the signs help us

understand which floor we are on. Interesting is the effect of the helicoid at the hotel La Torre in Sestriere, which overlooks an empty space in the middle and the rooms are all on different levels and theoretically the floors do not exist.

"Blessed are the last for they shall be first". The Gospel saying is not only utopia. So many times we see the most degraded suburbs in a city and we avoid them, but these will be the places where the new super-modern city will be born (London is a perfect example to learn from). The value mechanisms underlying this phenomenon are well known, but it is not easy to forecast where the phenomenon of resurrection will occur.

As the Italian writer Calvino has taught us in his unforgettable "The invisible cities", the utopia of total knowledge and complete order has deep hidden roots of new forms of freedom and creation.

According to the call for papers four plenary sessions were foreseen, namely:

A.   Revisiting or re-living the landscape-cultural mosaic?
B.   Changes of scale between project and perception
C.   Contingent changes and secular changes of value
D.   Different levels, different players, different scales

The papers collected in this book correspond almost faithfully to the foreseen structure. We list them according to their progressive position in each section.

Revisiting or re-living the landscape-cultural mosaic?

A1   From the industrial building to the lab – museum: fruition and environmental - energetic issues

A2   St. Ignatius's Fort in Cagliari: a project by Girolamo Massei?

A3   The cultural landscape of linguistic minorities in the Calabrian region: cultural premises for intervention and a study case in the Grecanic area

A4   Mediterranean urban landscape. Integrated strategies for sustainable retrofitting of consolidated city

A5   Space and time boundaries in utopia

A6   Landscape policies and practices in Europe. Approaches, methods, tools

Changes of scale between project and perception

B1   Transitions of cultural landscapes, relationship between drawing, shape and context

B2   New landscape and comprehensive urban project in the reconstruction process. The case of L'Aquila (Italy)

B3   Light and colour technologies for the valorisation of cultural heritage: the Forte Marghera case study

B4   The ecological infrastructure of the agro-ecosystem as element of biodiversity of the rural landscape

B5   Dynamic and adaptive surfaces on tall buildings

B6   Overcoming the anachronistic utopia in ancient quarries: the restoration project of an abandoned quarry site in the monumental cemetery of Bonaria in Cagliari, Italy

Contingent changes and secular changes of value

C1   New needs *vs* "desired" values into personalization of (social) housing
C2   The solar age: utopia and dystopia. How to transform green waste externalities in energy and biochar
C3   Principles of reality and fantasy in contemporary urban planning
C4   Utopias of perfection and their dystopias
C5   The enhancing of the environmental landscape and the cultural heritage by a project of agricultural park
C6   A socio-ecological based feasibility assessment for developing sustainable elderly education programs in the Latgale region (Latvia)
Different levels, different players, different scales
D1   The event city: new society and new public spaces. The case of L'Aquila
D2   The Appian Way today, vestige of a great utopia
D3   From *Ecotopia* to *For the win*: from ecological utopias to dystopian technophilia?
D4   *Genius loci*: useful utopia or real need? Rules of technological design
D5   Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and territorial marketing: the websites as an instrument to enhance the territory.
About one hundred more communications have been admitted to synthesis sessions or to presentation either in poster form or as a written text, according to three cultural frameworks:
1. *Vision and project (Vision)*
    1A From the idea to the project
    1B Flexibility and rigidity of territorial projects
    1C Beyond forecasts, in good and in evil
2. *Local values, global values (Values)*
    2A Exaltation and neutralization of values in the contact of different scales
    2B Nature as an active player in the realization of utopias
    2C Information networks and changes of value
3. *Construction, deconstruction and renewal (Vulnerability)*
    3A Utopia guides culture, culture guides utopia
    3B The deconstructed landscape in everyday perception
    3C The old, the ancient and the new in élite designing
A selection of these contributions will be published on Italian journals.

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