

## Ideas and Visions in 20<sup>th</sup> century Urban Planning

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This paper gives a short view on modern guiding images of building and planning, very often without knowledge especially by architects and urban planners of their roots. The most important of these images are remains from visions of ideal cities and utopian societies, evolved in Europe since 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century and - in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - also in the United States. Already the early visions were divided into an urban and an anti-urban way to solve the problems of the existing historically grown cities: the anti-urban line for example can be traced from Thomas Morus to Robert Owen, Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright, the urban one from Campanella to Etienne Cabet, Tony Garnier and Le Corbusier. The vision of utopia and ideal cities emerged in a close connection until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the barbarism of National Socialism, and the breakdown of communism, it seems that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the belief in a better society has vanished.

For modern architects and urban planners, planning ideal cities nowadays seems impossible. After the decline of so many ideologies architects seem to know the complexity of today's society and the impossibility of planning an ideal city in a closed system. But still many of the images are rooted in the European history as the actual discussions about the "European cities" show. Since 1999 i.e. created the Bauhaus-University in Weimar an international postgraduate course of studies "European Urbanity", inviting well-known experts in order to reflect the historical and future influence of European towns on the global urban development. (Hassenpflug, Dieter (ed.) *Die Europäische Stadt. Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Münster, Hamburg, London. This book collects the lectures of this experts in the winter term 1999/2000 of Bauhaus-University Weimar). For a better understanding I want to give a short review of this history and mention some of the newer – mainly German – relevant literature.

## Utopias

Utopias of an alternative to the existing society began in the Renaissance with the desire to overcome feudalism and - after the establishment of capitalism - with the hope of creating a communist or socialist society. Searching for new solutions utopias always had and has an important function in situations of historical crisis and radical change. They oppose the given state of affairs and show conceptions of a new and pacified society characterised by humanity and equality. Many literary utopias of a pacified human society have been produced in history and many of them described ideal cities, but only very few are visualised - visualisation always means a loss of utopian quality.

An interesting overview of the history of utopia is the new edited book of Ferdinand Seipt: "Utopica, Zukunftsvisionen aus der Vergangenheit", Munich 2001. Götz Pochat, (ed.) Utopie: Gesellschaftsformen, Künstlerträume, Graz 1996, In France: Utopie: la quête de la société idéale en Occident. Exposition organisée par The New York Public Library et la Bibliothèque National de France, Paris 2000; Arnhelm Neusüss (ed) Utopie. Begriff und Phänomen des Utopischen, Frankfurt 1986.

It seems that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the belief in a better society has vanished. But there still seems to be a need of utopia, especially in America. (Timothy Miller: The Quest for Utopia in the Twentieth-Century America, Syracuse Univ. Press 1998) Since 1976 the Society for Utopian Studies, an international interdisciplinary association, founded in the United States, gathers a wide range of experts on utopian studies, organises international workshops, newsletters, a bibliography of recent publications, reviews of books and films and maintains an electronic list ([H-UTOPIA@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H-UTOPIA@H-NET.MSU.EDU)) But following these literary dominated discussions I couldn't realise up to now any connections to architecture and urban planning.

## Ideal Cities

Ideal cities can never compete with literary utopias, but they have one thing in common: all are based on the belief of betterment and a "good order" of the community. Whereas utopia creates a vision of a possible future contrary to the existing reality, the character of ideal

cities lies in an attempt to give these visions a built form: they are - as Hanno-Walter Kruft describes them - "outposts" on the way to utopia. Hanno-Walter Krufts book: "Städte in Utopia. Die Idealstadt vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert" (Cities in Utopia. Ideal Cities from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century), Munich 1989 is one of the most important German books for the history of ideal cities and the beautiful catalogue of an exhibition: "Klar und lichtvoll wie eine Regel." Planstädte der Neuzeit vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert ("Clear and light-full like a rule". Planned cities from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century), Karlsruhe in 1990.

Many books give an excellent compendium to the general history of utopian and ideal cities. For Germany one of the earliest and best information was given by Mechthild Schumpp: Städtebau und Utopie. Soziologische Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von städtebaulichen Utopien und Gesellschaft" (Urban planning and utopia. A sociological survey of the relation between society and urban utopias) Diss. Uni Göttingen 1970, from early modern times to the post-modern visions of the 1960ies. Whereas her literary description of this subject is hard to surpass, her thesis cannot compete with later books concerning the pictures.

A better visualisation, a combination of pictures and documents, was given by Kristina Hartmann and Franziska Bollerey (ed.): 200 Jahre Architektur 1740-1940. Bilder und Dokumente zur neueren Architekturgeschichte (200 years architecture 1740-1940. Pictures and documents for a new history of architecture), Delft University Press 1987. It contents pictures and documents from the revolutionary architecture of Ledoux 1775 to the modern avant-garde after World War I.

A small but very informative book about utopias since ancient Greece is given by Georges Jean, professor for linguistic at the university of Le Mans, "Voyages en Utopie", published by Gallimard 1994. Also in 1994 Virgilio Vercelloni published his "Atlante storico dell'idea europea della città ideale, Milano (German: "Europäische Stadtutopien. Ein historischer Atlas, München Diederichs Verl. 1994) about European urban utopias, beginning with the Greek polis to the urban sprawl of 20<sup>th</sup> century' mega-cities. On 192 plates Vercelloni - head of the planning group UNIPLAN in Italy and professor for architecture history in Milano - gives a picture and a short description of the most famous but often also unknown ideas, models, paintings, plans and photography.

One of the most beautiful books, with marvellous pictures, photography and a wide description of European town history from the Renaissance to the 1970s is the recently

published book of the British historian Ruth Eaton: *Die ideale Stadt. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 2001 (“The Ideal City”, Fonds Mercator, Anvers 2001).

Two profound books on general urban history are: Charles Delfante: *Architekturgeschichte der Stadt. Von Babylon bis Brasilia*, Darmstadt 1999 (the French title “Grande histoire de la ville. De la Mésopotamie aux Etats Unis” is more correct, Delfante’s book illustrates only urban plans and maps and no buildings) and Mark Girouard: *Die Stadt*, Frankfurt 1987 (Original: *Cities & People*, New Haven/London 1985)

### **Utopian socialism**

At the end of the 18th century utopian visions and ideal city planning were stimulated by the French Revolution and the challenge of the new born industrialisation. The declaration of freedom, equality and humanity created numerous visions of a new society and a new mankind, but almost no new paradigm of architecture and town planning. The most famous concepts like the new city of labour “Chaux” in France designed and realized by Claude Nicola Ledoux and the ideal communities of early socialists like Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Etienne Cabet are based on classic building forms and town-planning theories.

One of the best information about these theories in German gives the book of Franziska Bollerey (professor for architecture and urban history at the Technical University of Delft): “*Architekturkonzeptionen der utopischen Sozialisten. Alternative Planung und Architektur für den gesellschaftlichen Prozeß*, Berlin 1991” (architecture concepts of utopian socialists). For general information about these early socialists and their theories: Michael Vester (ed.): *Die Frühsozialisten 1789-1848*, 2 Bd. Reinbeck b. Hamburg 1971

### **The vision of harmony**

The visions of famous German “classical” Architects like Friedrich Gilly and Friedrich Schinkel remained mere utopias. Their plans of ideal cities reflect the illusion of the German bourgeoisie, that the towns, being freed from feudal restrictions, would grow as a harmonious whole without any interventions – similar to Adam Smiths’ theory of the invisible hand of the

free market. Trusting in this self-constitution of harmony they believed, towns would grow organically, individually and spontaneously.

A very good description of these harmonious concepts and the historical background gives Helmut Bott: "Stadtraumkonzeptionen in der Vorbereitungsphase der industriellen Revolution: eine Untersuchung des Entstehungszusammenhangs neuer städtebaulicher Ordnungs- und Gestaltungsprinzipien, Diss. TU Darmstadt 1989 ("Spatial urban concepts in the preparation time of industrial revolution: an investigation about the rise and correlation of urban building principles").

The rapid process of industrialization and urbanism soon deprived this romantic vision of its mystique. Yet the picture of "organic growth" remained and is still a strong guiding image for urban planners (see "organic image")

### **Garden City: the dominating vision of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Suggestions for new solutions were provoked by uncontrolled growth of European cities and the consequences of industrialisation in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most utopian ideas of that time were part of a large-scale criticism of modern civilisation (vgl. Sieferle, Rolf Peter: *Fortschrittsfeinde? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1984, with an article to architecture): the destruction of society was due to the emergence of large cities and the subsequent disorderly agglomeration of people belonging to different social classes, causing misery, disease, criminality and disturbance. The only solution was returning to a society of distinct social classes and breaking up the large cities. Therefore many previously developed ideas became part of the bourgeois endeavours to reform society.

The most famous idea was Ebenezer Howard's "Garden-City". In his 1898 book, "Garden-City. Tomorrow a peaceful path to Social Reform," he suggested a model of small towns, combining the advantages of country and town, social and cultural opportunities. More humane conditions of housing were to be created by separating residential and industrial areas, all the land was to be public property. In the advanced industrial society of the late 19th century there was no chance to realise Howard's ideas. Nevertheless they found great imitations not only in Germany and in Europe but also in the United States.

Lots of books are written about German Garden-Cities recently: Pahl, Walter: *Die Gartenstadt: Vision und Wirklichkeit am Beispiel der Gartenstädte Dresden-Hellerau und Mannheim*, (The Garden City: vision and reality - the example Dresend-Hellerau and Mannheim), Mannheim 2000). Still outstanding for the German Garden-City movement is Kristiana Hartmanns: *Deutsche Gartenstadtbewegung. Kulturpolitik und Gesellschaftsreform*” (German Garden City movement), Munich 1976

Without considering the social concept and the question of private property and speculation Howards’ ideas degenerated into the model of detached housing outside the towns, provoking the negative development of sub urbanism. Nevertheless Howard influenced the sanitary reform movement campaigning for sun, air and light in the towns. There exists a wide range of literature to this reform-movement. German standard books to this subject are: Marianne Rodenstein: *“Mehr Licht, mehr Luft”*: Gesundheitskonzepte im Städtebau seit 1750 (“more light, more air”: sanitary concepts in urban planning since 1750), Frankfurt a.M. 1988; Fehl, Gerhard; Rodriquez-Lores, Juan (ed.) *Stadt-Umbau: die planmäßige Erneuerung europäischer Großstädte zwischen Wiener Kongreß und Weimarer Republik*, (re-planning the city: the renewal of European metropolis between Congress of Vienna and Republic of Weimar) Basel 1995; dies.: *Städtebaureform 1865-1900: von Licht, Luft und Ordnung in der Stadt der Gründerzeit*, (Reform of urban planning 1865-1900: light, air and order in the city of foundation) Hamburg 1983.

## **Modernism**

Fordism and Taylorism, the “Chicago School,” and the guiding principle “form follows function” became the ideal for the European avant-garde after World War I. Le Corbusier, influenced by Tony Garnier’s “Cité Industrielle” and Italian futurists like Antonio Sant’Elia adopted the American model in the most logical way, and transferred it to a new urban vision like his “Ville Contemporaine” from 1922. The CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne) founded in 1928 called for a strict division of all areas of life which had until then been integrated: dwelling, working, spare time activities, traffic. By the end of the 1920s, the principles of functionalism, led down in the “Charter of Athens”, had become the basis of international town planning. Modernist architects and technocrats like Le Corbusier radicalised the modern dream of order by science, progress of technology and

cultural education. They felt themselves like missionaries of modernism, but didn't really think about a change of society or economy. The image of modernism became the dominant guiding principle in 20<sup>th</sup> century urban planning - but it lost its utopian and ideal character.

It is impossible to single out books on this subject, because there are so many.

One of the most useful documentary summary for the ideas and concepts of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture is Ulrich Conrads and Peter Neitzkes: *Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Basel, Boston, Berlin, 2001. And indispensable: Kenneth Frampton: *Die Architektur der Moderne. Eine kritische Baugeschichte*, Frankfurt 1995. Leonardo Benevolo: *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, Rom u.a. 1999 (*Geschichte der Architektur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1964) and "Die sozialen Ursprünge des moderne Städtebaus (*Le origini dell'urbanistica moderna*), Gütersloh 1971. Still a standard book on LeCorbusier is Thilo Hilpert: *Die Funktionelle Stadt. Le Corbusiers Stadtvisionen, Bedingungen, Motive, Hintergründe*, Braunschweig 1978.

A critical analysis of Modernism is given in: Wolfgang Asholt; Walter Fähnders, (ed.): *Der Blick vom Wolkenkratzer. Avantgarde -Avantgardekritik - Avantgardeforschung*, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 2000

The young Russian constructivists had designed very similar models to Le Corbusier, but they went much further on a social level. They were also enthusiastic about the model of North American trusts. Despite their fascination, however, they were principally concerned about how to create a new communist society. Their buildings were conceived in a sense of "condensing" social life and social structure.

Good information about Russian Avant-garde gives a catalogue of an exhibition created by the Moscow Museum of Architecture, shown in the Art Gallery of Tübingen: *Avantgarde II 1924-1937. Sowjetische Architektur*, Stuttgart 1993.

### **Social planning and housing**

After World War I., the Weimar Republic of Germany – especially the "Bauhaus" – became one of the important centres of building in a modern, so called "New-Style". There are lots of

books about the Bauhaus, one of the newest: Michael Siebenbroth (ed.): *Bauhaus Weimar – Entwürfe für die Zukunft*, Ostfildern Ruit 2000, one of the most interesting: Jeannine Fiedler: *Bauhaus Utopias of the Twenties. Bauhaus, Kibbutz and the Dream of the New Man*, Wuppertal 1995 and last not least some beautiful catalogues (i.e. the catalogues of an exhibitions in Budapest: *Bauhaus Utopien*, ed. by Wulf Herzogenrath, Stuttgart 1988 and in the Folkwang Museum Essen: *Bauhaus: Dessau – Chicago – New York*, ed. by Georg W. Koetzsch, Köln 2000). In nearly all big cities, non profit-making building cooperatives erected large social housing projects in the outskirts, like the “Hufeisensiedlung” of Taut and Wagner in Berlin. This was the most important part of social policy, stressed by the Social Democrats, in place of demands for socialising the capitalistic economy. A much more effective step towards socialist ideals was made by Austrian Social Democrats. Although they also did not touch the economic system, they realised an enormous dwelling-program in Vienna. Between 1920 and 1933 they built settlements for more then 200 000 people, improving the living conditions of labourers in a way never realised before. They financed their huge “castles for the people” like the “Karl-Marx-Hof” not like the Germans by a rarely payable rent, but by a “luxury-tax” on the rich.

Most informative is Wolfgang Pehnt: *Die Architektur der Expressionisten*, Stuttgart, 1998; Norbert Huse: “*Neues Bauen*” 1918-1933. *Moderne Architektur in der Weimarer Republik*, München 1975; “*Von der futuristischen zur funktionalen Stadt. Planen und Bauen in Europa 1913-1933*”, a catalogue of an exhibition, Berlin 1977; a collection of relevant articles also to urban planning and housing in: “*Wem gehört die Welt - Kunst und Gesellschaft in der Weimarer Republik*”, Berlin 1977. Interesting critical contributions in: Christian Kopetzki, V. Lasch, F. Lüken-Isberner, J. Schlier: *Stadterneuerung in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus*, Kassel 1987; To Vienna: Alfred G. Frei: *Rotes Wien, Austromarxismus und Arbeiterkultur. Sozialdemokratische Wohnungs- und Kommunalpolitik 1919-1934*, Berlin 1984 and a catalogue of the Historical Museum Vienna: *Das Rote Wien 1918-1934*, Wien 1993.

### **The organic image**

After the rise of Fascism in Germany, urban planning was dominated by either monumental buildings, especially for Berlin and other “Gauhauptstädte” or traditional, anti-urban images, dominated by their “Blut- und Boden”ideologie. They called their biological and racist image “Stadtlandschaft”. (Town-countryside). The central element of this “organism” was the controlled “Ortsgruppe” as the cell of settlements. But although they were against modern architecture and forced modernist architects to emigrate they used functional and modern architecture for their industrial-building-programme.

The organic image is one of the most important, because it could be adopted by both sides: from the conservatives as a matter of “natural order” and from the modernist as an analytical model of natural science. The continuity of this image leads from Howards Garden-City, to Le Corbusier’s “Ville Radieuse”, to the satellite towns of Avant-garde architects, and to “new urbanism” after World War II. Also various images of Postmodernism are influenced by organic patterns. To the ideological background of the organic image still important: Heide Berndt: *Das Gesellschaftsbild bei Stadtplanern*, Stuttgart, Bern 1968; and outstanding: Richard Sennett: *Fleisch und Stein. Der Körper und die Stadt in der westlichen Zivilisation*. Berlin 1994 (Flesh and Stone, New York, London 1994).

For many years the period of Third Reich was a black-box not only but also for architecture and urban planning. Outstanding two books in the 1960ies: Anna Teut: *Architektur im Dritten Reich 1933-1945*, Berlin, Frankfurt, Wien 1967, and Barbara Miller Lane: *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918-1945*, Cambridge Massachusetts 1968;

The most important German literature dealing with the role of architects and urban planners but also with the continuity of guiding visions and images after World War II are the books and articles written by Werner Durth and Niels Gutschow. (Werner Durth: *Deutsche Architekten. Biographische Verflechtungen 1900-1970*, Braunschweig, Wiesbaden 1986; Durth, W.; Gutschow, Niels: *Träume in Trümmern. Planungen zum Wiederaufbau zerstörter Städte im Westen Deutschlands 1940-1950*, 2 Bde. Wiesbaden, Braunschweig 1988). For the re-building of West-German towns also remarkable: Klaus von Beyme: *Neue Städte aus Ruinen. Der deutsche Städtebau der Nachkriegszeit*, München 1992.

The best information about the development of architecture and urban planning in the German Democratic Republic in the years after World War II are given by the two volumes of Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, Niels Gutschow: *Architektur und Städtebau der DDR*, Frankfurt 1998; and the volumes of Durth and Gutschow: “*Architektur und Städtebau der 30er/40er Jahre*” and “*Architektur und Städtebau der 50er Jahre*”, Bonn 1994 (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz).

### **Continuity - Challenge - Response**

Since World War II the images of planning changed in the sense of a rapid “Challenge and Response”: from the anti-urban image “*gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt*” (the “devided and dispersed city”) to the image “*Urbanität durch Dichte*” (“urbanity by compactness”) -, from the idea “*autogerechte Stadt*” (“city adjusted to the car”) to the rediscovery of the “historical city” and Postmodernism as reflection to Modernism.

Short but good information gives Hans-Reiner Müller-Raemisch: *Leitbilder und Mythen in der Stadtplanung 1945-1985*, Frankfurt 1990 and the uncountable books and essays from Gerd Albers (i.e. “*Zur Entwicklung der Stadtplanung in Europa. Begegnungen, Einflüsse, Verflechtungen*”, Braunschweig 1997). A most important book for the reflection of actual guiding visions in Germany is Schäfers, Barbara/ Köhler, Gabriele: *Leitbilder der Stadtentwicklung. Wandel und jetzige Bedeutung im Expertenurteil*. Centaurus-Verlangsgesellschaft, Pfaffenweiler 1989, a research project interviewing 55 experts to their meaning.

### **Postmodernism**

In opposition to the image of modernism and its monotony and the problems caused by functionalism post modern images are marked by variety, complexity and contradiction:

So in the visions of “Archigramm”, “Superstudio”, OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) and star-architects like Aldo Rossi (Rossi, A. *Architettura della Città*, Padova 1966, dtsh. Düsseldorf 1973), Robert Venturi ( Venturi, R. “Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture” 1966). Postmodernism refers to Pop-Art, history, illusions. Venturi’s Las-Vegas-architecture” is dominated by consume. Postmodernism neglects the real complexity of urban structure and social urban life.

Literature to post modern images: J. Habermas: *Moderne und postmoderne Architektur*, in: *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, Ffm 1985; Klotz, H.: *Moderne und Postmoderne*, Braunschweig u. Wiesbaden 1985)

Many authors claim the loss of images and the surrender of city planning to managers and developers (Becker, Heidede; Jessen, Johann; Sander, Robert (ed.): *Ohne Leitbild? Städtebau in Deutschland und Europa*, Stuttgart, Zürich 1999) Or - like Thomas Sieverts, former TUD-professor for architecture - sees the future of development in the space between the cities. (Sieverts, Thomas: *Zwischenstadt. Zwischen Ort und Welt, Raum und Zeit, Stadt und Land*. Braunschweig, Wiesbaden 1997)

New technologies even predict the elimination of space, locating the future of the city in Cyberspace, in the “Digital City”, the “Virtual City” or “Teleopolis”. A broad interdisciplinary discussion about the chances and dangers of this development dominates the literature in the past decade. Christa Maar and Florian Rötzer, give an interesting summary of two important conferences in 1996, where the Burda Akademie, the Goethe-Institut, the cities Munich and Luxemburg invited an international group of well known specialists, architects, scientists and intellectuals for this discussion. (Maar, Christa/Rötzer, Florian: *Virtual Cities. Die Neuerfindung der Stadt im Zeitalter der globalen Vernetzung*, Basel, Boston, Berlin 1997). Bott, Helmut; Hubig, Christoph; Pesch, Franz; Schröder, Gerhard (ed.) *Stadt und Kommunikation im digitalen Zeitalter*, Frankfurt a.M./New York 2000, summarise an international colloquium “Stadt und Kommunikation im digitalen Zeitalter” organised by the University of Stuttgart.

But most of the actual German literature on guiding images deals with the real cities and the reality of their problems. Schwarz, Ullrich (ed.): “*Risiko Stadt? Perspektiven der Urbanität*”, (“The city - a risk? Perspectives of urbanism”) summarizes the contributions of the German “Architektentag” in Hamburg 1994, organized by the “Bundesarchitektenkammer” in

Hamburg and attended by most German Architect. Or: "Kursbuch Stadt. Stadtleben und Stadtkultur an der Jahrtausendwende", Stuttgart 1999 ("City-Life and City-Culture on the turn of millennium"), collects an interdisciplinary and international range of specialists, writing articles to actual problems and future developments of cities.

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