

Selena Duarte Lage
e Lage

U

RBAN UTOPIAS THROUGHOUT
HISTORY: DO UTOPIAN
LUCUBRATIONS STILL HAVE A
PLACE IN THE POSTMODERNITY?

pós- | 1

ABSTRACT

The first utopias associated to urban spaces are dated from the fifteenth century. Since then, many urban utopias have been arisen over the centuries, but the Postmodernity seems to have caused the death of utopian ideas related to Urbanism. However, if we borrow the conception of Utopia advocated by Ernst Bloch, we can consider the urban-social movement called “Cidade que Queremos BH” (“The city we want, Belo Horizonte”) as an example of contemporary urban utopia. It is about an utopia that do not state only in the future, but mainly in the present, that is understood as the only temporality that holds the possibilities of transformation of what may come.

KEYWORDS

Utopia. History of Urbanism. Urban movements.



[HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.11606/ISSN.2317-2762.POSFAU.2019.134307](http://dx.doi.org/10.11606/ISSN.2317-2762.POSFAU.2019.134307)

Pós, Rev. Programa Pós-Grad. Arquit. Urban. FAUUSP. São Paulo, v. 26, n. 48, e134307, 2019.

UTOPIAS URBANAS AO LONGO DA HISTÓRIA: AS ELUCUBRAÇÕES UTÓPICAS AINDA TÊM LUGAR NA PÓS-MODERNIDADE?

RESUMO

As primeiras utopias relativas aos espaços urbanos datam do século XV. Desde então, muitas foram as utopias urbanas elaboradas ao longo dos séculos, mas a Pós-Modernidade parece ter provocado a morte das ideias utópicas no Urbanismo. Entretanto, se tomarmos de empréstimo a concepção de “utopia” defendida por Ernst Bloch, podemos considerar o movimento social-urbano “Cidade que Queremos BH” como exemplo de utopia urbana contemporânea. Trata-se de uma utopia que não está apenas no futuro, mas, principalmente, no presente, entendido como única temporalidade detentora das possibilidades de transformação do porvir.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Utopia. História do Urbanismo. Movimentos urbanos.

THE FIRST URBAN UTOPIAS

The aspiration to a harmonious society can be verified from the Greek philosophers of the 5th century¹. But it is in the 16th century, from Thomas More², “Island of Utopia”, that the word “utopia” becomes the title of a literary genre, and it gains countless variations and meanings throughout history.

Jerzy Szachi states that “[the utopia is born when in consciousness there arises a rupture between what is and what should be; between the world that it is, and the world that can be thought.” (SZACHI, 1972, p. 13). Not satisfied with present reality, the utopian imagines another human order, which he considers to be the ideal. This opposition between reality and ideal implies the fact that utopian ideas are always historical, that is, they are related to the time / conditions in which they are created.

The first utopias relating to urban spaces as to their physical characteristics go back to Renaissance Humanism³, when, breaking with the Christian tradition based on theocentric and dogmatic thought, one then proceeds to value man and his attributes of freedom and reason. From the 15th century onwards, the ideal cities described or painted by literati and painters have, in all their versions, extreme geometric rigor, with pure and symmetrical forms, where rationality was imposed in the organization of the physical spaces and the life of their inhabitants.

“The City of the Sun”, idealized by Tommaso Campanella in the early 17th century⁴, is representative of the faith in reason and the scientific knowledge proper to modern man. Situated on a high hill, it divides into seven circles designated with the names of the seven planets known at the time. Each circle communicates with the other by four different paths, ending in four doors, facing the four cardinal points of the Earth. Circles are surrounded by walls adorned with pictures representing all sciences (figures and verses referring to astrology, mathematics, grammar, geography, history, natural sciences etc.), through which the inhabitants can learn spontaneously, without fatigue. At the top of the hill is the beautiful temple of the Priest-defender of the city (called Hoh, also translated as Sun), whose authority is absolute (CAMPANELLA, 1602). (CAMPANELLA, 1602).

In addition to the physical organization, The City of the Sun deals with the organization of an ideal society, as well as the Island of Utopia of Thomas More. Like this one, the City of the Sun also exposes a communist system of life. In it would reign political and economic equality sustained by a high technological and scientific level. The physical space would not only be part of this ideal society, but would participate in its construction and maintenance, either by highlighting, in a central and higher place, the sacred temple, or by using the walls in the continuous and permanent education of its people, or, and especially, by demonstrating the possible well-being of a Cartesian spatial organization, fruit of human reason.

In practice, the Renaissance period did not undergo major transformations in existing urban organisms or the founding of new cities (BENEVOLO, 2012). Thus, the urbanistic lucubrations of this period remained a theoretical goal⁵.

¹ Of antiquity, stands the Republic of Plato as a description of an ideal society.

² Thomas More's publication of 1516 bore the title: Booklet indeed precious and no less useful than agreeable on the best of the state regimes and the island of Utopia hitherto unknown. It is the description of a prosperous and happy island found by a Portuguese traveler.

³ Earlier in this period, as a well-known example of a utopia with an urban traces' description, we find Plato's Critias, which describes the island of Atlantis and served as reference to Thomas More and his contemporaries (PESSOA, 2006).

⁴ The first publication, with original title “La città del Sole”, dates from 1602.

⁵ As an exception, we can mention Palmanova, a city built in northeastern Italy in the early 16th century. Previously designed from mathematical and aesthetic precepts – in which logic, rigor and beauty coincide – it has the shape of a nine-pointed star.

In the 18th century, the culture of the Age of Enlightenment questions a world view dictated by religious dogmas and turns to explanations / knowledge of scientific background. The neoclassical architecture of that time is the fruit of the cultural, technical and territorial transformations through which society passed, which later culminated in modern architecture (FRAMPTON, 2008). "Visionary" architects of the period, such as Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, at the same time as they returned to the vocabulary of antiquity, left as legacy a new understanding of the relation man-nature.

In the 1770s, Ledoux designed and built for Louis XVI, in Arc-et-Senans, the complex of a salt factory that can be considered one of the earliest experiments of an industrial city. The ideas elaborated for this undertaking later became the central nucleus of his proposal of ideal city – the city of Chaux. In this proposal, the houses were organized around an elliptical square, which represented the trajectory of the sun (PESSOA, 2006). Here again a cosmic reference is used to generate the urban form. According to (2006, p. 34), "*until the 18th century there is the notion that the city is part of a whole, and that whole encompasses not only the solar system, but the whole universe*", so that elements of nature will serve as a starting point for the design of the city and buildings.

The recurring cosmic reference in urban utopias until the 18th century is lost in the industrial city of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, we will see that other ideas of Ledoux will continue to influence later urbanistic proposals, such as his notion of hygiene (which can be considered avant-gardist), according to which he proposed to the City of Chaux isolated buildings and very wooded avenues. In addition, the architect paid attention to the utilitarian buildings of the city, treating each one individually: the shapes and / or ornaments of the buildings were related to their function.

⁶ Choay (1979) uses the term "generalist" as opposed to "specialist". In the case of Urbanism, the architect was consecrated as a specialist.

⁷ In some cases, criticisms of the city and society of the 19th century did not give rise to physical models of occupation, such as the publications of Marx and Engels.

THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE EXPLOSION OF UTOPIAS

In the 19th century, in the face of the accelerated demographic and spatial growth of European cities as a result of industrialization, the movement of observation and reflection on urban spaces gained strength. Françoise Choay (1979) calls "Pre-Urbanism" the set of proposals and reflections related to the urban problems that, during the 19th century, were posed by generalists, such as historians, economists or politicians⁶.

The pre-urbanists, like Campanella, did not dissociate the physical spaces of the sociopolitical structure of the cities. They also describe ideal models of physical and social organization⁷. These models are, for the most part, very detailed and rigid, in the sense of not permitting variations in the previously stipulated ideal. Choay (1979) divides the models of Pre-Urbanism into "progressive" and "culturalist".

While culturalist models, based on criticisms of the industrial city, turn to the past and take medieval cities and the way of life as their reference, progressive models are oriented towards the future, based on the idea of ??progress. This group includes the proposals of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Étienne Cabet

and Jean-Baptiste Godin, among others. These, heirs of modern thought originating in the Renaissance, believed that reason, science and technique would make it possible to solve the problems of men in their relationship with the environment and with each other.

Thus, they proceeded from the assumption that rational analysis would allow the determination of an order type, that is, that it could be applied to any human group, regardless of place and time. The physical spaces of these models present rational tracings and obey a functional organization – urban functions, such as housing, work and leisure, are analyzed and installed separately. The built spaces are interspersed with empty spaces and greens, hygiene requirement; the buildings, as well as the urban set, are prototypes previously defined from the human demands and needs determined scientifically.

In relation to socioeconomic organization, many of the models of the 19th century present a socialist way of life, in which the goods of the land and of the human production were distributed equally. Marx and Engels, with the aim of disqualifying the discourse of those who proposed such models, called them “utopian socialists” (CHOAY, 1979)⁸. “Utopian” was the term used to designate proposals as insusceptible to be applied in practice, since, according to Marx and Engels, they did not depart from a scientific foundation that explained the roots of the problems and, therefore, did not present the “real” means of overcoming them. However, in linking their proposals for socio-economic organization with proposals for spatial organization, utopian socialists can be considered to understand physical space itself as a means of transforming society.

There were few concrete achievements of the utopian socialist models: in Europe, the buildings of Owen in New Lanark and Godin in the phalanstery of Guise; in the United States, the “colonies” founded by the disciples of Owen, Fourier and Cabet. All enterprises carried out on a reduced scale and that have been disorganized with a few years of existence. In addition to Marx’s criticism, Choay believes that the failure of these attempts can be explained “by the limiting and repressive character of their organization, and especially by its disruption with contemporary socioeconomic reality.” (CHOAY, 1979, p. 15).

Situated on the threshold of unrealized urban utopias (achievable?) and those of practical repercussion⁹, is the proposal of Ebenezer Howard’s garden city, published in the late 19th century¹⁰. The idea assumed that it is possible to unite in one place the advantages of city life and country life. Thus, alongside the built spaces, many parks and woods are proposed, conforming beautiful countryside landscapes, and a “green belt” would limit the spatial and demographic expansion of the city. Howard’s garden-garden proposal has a rational physical organization¹¹ and presents hygienic concerns and technological innovations characteristic of progressive proposals, but emphasizes aesthetic issues and issues related to the spatial and demographic limitation of the culturalist proposals (HOWARD, 1902).

In relation to socioeconomic organization, Howard found that the lack of green areas in cities, especially in the central areas, is due to the high price of land, which leads landowners to an intensive use of them; in addition, the

⁸ Opposed to utopian socialism is the so-called scientific socialism, created by Marx and Engels.

⁹ In both cases, the urbanistic proposals do not escape the dimension of the imaginary, therefore they affirm themselves in a utopian movement. Moreover, one must not forget the historical dimension of the “utopian” category, so that an impossible project at one time may be possible at another time.

¹⁰ Howard publishes in 1898 *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*, whose second edition will be entitled *Garden cities of tomorrow*.

¹¹ In his publication, Howard outlines some designs for the garden city, but recommends that they be considered as simple schemes. It is a circular form with six boulevards that cross the city from the center to the last circle, dividing it into six parts.

concentration of interests stimulates a progressive growth of the cities, pushing the field more and more. In this way, he concentrated on solving this problem, proposing that the garden city be governed by a corporation formed by the collectivity of the inhabitants, owner of the land, but not of the dwellings, services or economic activities. The lots would be leased to the inhabitants-partners and the income from the rents would be used for maintenance and improvements in the city itself.

Howard's ideas were put into practice in 1902 with the construction of Letchworth – the first garden city – located about 50 km from London. The urban layout was designed by architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, who were inspired by the formal and aesthetic ideas of the culturalists, especially Camillo Sitte. The civic and commercial center was delimited between important avenues, which have larger widths and absorb the greater flows. The other streets have sinuous paths, accompanying the topography, and configure open and semi-open meshes. The green was guaranteed by the squares and parks, by the afforestation of the streets and avenues and by the extensive areas of gardens in the lots. Detailed regulations aimed at guaranteeing the aesthetic quality and harmonious coexistence of the residents.

Planned for 35,000 inhabitants, Letchworth was populated very slowly. The ownership of the land ended in the hands of external shareholders, not keeping with the collectivity of the inhabitants. In 1919, the town of Welwyn, located about 15 km from London, was Howard's second attempt. By its proximity to the capital, Welwyn was quickly populated, but as a neighborhood in London, Howard's self-sufficiency did not take place. The agricultural belt was progressively diminished and, in both Welwyn and Letchworth, it was reduced to a green belt of no economic relevance (BENEVOLO, 1976).

Thus, as a legacy of the city-gardens was the organic layout of the streets, the generous distribution of green areas and the uniformity of the buildings, which provided an elegant and pleasant scenery. These physical characteristics became references in the implantation of new European cities and neighborhoods, as well as of the North American suburbs. They have also inspired and still inspire neighborhoods and closed horizontal condominiums in underdeveloped countries such as Brazil. Maintaining the traditional land structure, the high proportion of green areas / built areas increases the price of land, which makes this type of occupation unfeasible for low-income people, especially in poor countries.

THE MODERNIST UTOPIA: LAST SIGH OF FAITH IN REASON

From the mid-19th century the urban model that consolidates throughout the Western world can be called "post-liberal" (BENEVOLO, 2012). This model, to a large extent influenced by the utopian socialists and reformers of the 19th century, respects the freedom of private initiatives since obeyed the limitations

imposed by the public administration. Its characteristics are still decisive in the organization of contemporary cities.

It is an agreement between the public administration and real estate owners, in which the spaces of action of each are delimited. It is an agreement between the public administration and real estate owners, in which the spaces of action of each are delimited. Public administration manages what is necessary to make the whole of the city work (works and services related to circulation, sanitation, energy, etc.), while the owners manage the rest. On private lands, the public administration only indirectly influences, through regulations that aim at good coexistence or refer to collective interests.

In this way, the shape of the post-liberal city becomes that of maximum real estate income. Thus, some of its most recurrent problems are the excess of thickening in the central areas, the spreading towards increasingly distant suburbs and the lack of housing for those who cannot afford the real estate values. These problems are mitigated by some correctives, such as improvements in the circulation and construction of public parks and popular homes. However, in the urban dynamics established, these palliatives are never enough and they charge, increasingly, the public administration.

The modernist utopia emerges as an alternative to this model of city. The Modern movement, in its various artistic expressions, aimed for a different world, independent of traditional models. From the second decade of the 20th century, modern architecture' masters translated these aspirations into the built environment, treating it in all its scales – from objects of daily life to urban and regional space.

In relation to urban proposals, the Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier (FRAMPTON, 2008) stands out¹². As heir to progressive thinking, Le Corbusier believed in techno-scientific and industrial progress towards the construction of environments capable of generating psychophysiological benefits for man with the least material and financial expenditure. using the conception of man-type to, from rationalization, standardization and industrial mechanization, achieve modern "efficacy". These ideas found shelter, reinforcement and diffusion in the group of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM)¹³, in the heart of which the Athens Charter was drawn up, an urbanistic manifesto dated from 1933 (fruit of the IV CIAM) and published in 1943.

Concern over effectiveness is mainly due to the importance given to health and hygiene. In the Ville Radieuse (Radiant City), a city model developed by Le Corbusier in the 1930s, the built volumes are arranged at great distances from each other to provide generous solar incidence on them throughout the year. Horizontal rarefaction is balanced by vertical densification, with multi-story buildings. In addition, the buildings and streets are raised on the ground by pilasters (*pilotis*), releasing the entire surface of the ground to create green areas for public use. The welfare and health of man above the interests or profit of a group is thus prioritized. For better urban planning, the Ville Radieuse was organized in bands (zones) each destined to an urban function (FRAMPTON, 2008).

¹² Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) recorded his ideas in several publications, of which we can highlight in relation to Urbanism: *Urbanisme* (1925), *La Ville Radieuse* (1935), *La Charte d'Athènes* (1943), *Propos d'Urbanisme* (1946) and *Manière de Penser l'Urbanisme* (1946).

¹³ The Ciam constituted an organization and a series of events of which the main names of the modern architecture were part. The first took place in 1928 in Switzerland and the last in 1956 in Yugoslavia.

For Le Corbusier and his co-religionists, urban beauty and legibility are obtained by order and formal simplicity. The city has four key functions – to live, to work, to recreate and to circulate – which must be arranged in specific sectors to offer the most favorable conditions for the development of its activities. Housing is the key function from which to plan others. A group of housing cells (the dwellings) is a housing unit, which must be provided with all the services necessary for daily life, such as water supply, health, education, leisure, etc.¹⁴

Such ideas inspired the housing estates deployed around the world since 1945: large apartment buildings with several common services, such as recreational and sports areas, laundries, restaurants, among others. It should be noted that these proposals are halfway between the collective socialist dwelling (like the Fourier phalanstery) and the bourgeois apartment building (FRAMPTON, 2008).

In addition to housing developments, the influence of Le Corbusier's ideas can also be seen in the urban development of many cities. We must mention Brasília, a city entirely designed under the precepts of the Charter of Athens. The architect Lúcio Costa¹⁵, The architect Lúcio Costa, author of the project, started from an elementary, cross-shaped layout to organize all sectors of the city. The parts destined to the houses were divided in super-blocks where they implant in *pilotis* the residential buildings. Four super-blocks make up a housing unit, each of which has shops and services. In addition, the monumentality demanded by the capital function of the country was under the responsibility of Oscar Niemeyer, who projected the main institutional buildings of the city like loose sculptures in the immensity of the plateau.

The design and implantation of Brasília are from the second half of the 1950s. The modernist utopia is concretized, therefore, at a time when the hope of building a better world was torn apart. After World War II, faith in scientific progress begins to be questioned, and a cloud of pessimism and skepticism looms over men. Nevertheless, there was much to be rebuilt in countries devastated by war and much to be done in peripheral countries, where industrialization and, with it, urbanization were strengthened. For so many new demands, the austerity and economic efficiency of modern architecture were well accepted by the real estate market. Especially in the case of Brazil, the symbol of modernity helped to build the idea of ??progress, stability and order sought by our politicians at the time.

But once again the ideas materialized were reduced to the formal question. Insofar as private ownership of the land and the "post-liberal" pact between landowners and public power remained in capitalist societies, it is difficult to manage intermediate spaces between public and private land use, as proposed by the modernists, as well as the democratization of urban improvements.

Thus, in Brasília, once again the benefits of the model were restricted to the more affluent classes. Due to the high real estate costs of the planned city (the "Pilot Plan") since its inauguration, the poorest have settled in the surrounding satellite cities. Although foreseen in Lúcio Costa's plan, these cities were not previously planned before they were occupied, and many of them are still devoid of urban planning, infrastructure and adequate services.

¹⁴Town planning guidelines in the Charter of Athens. Available at: <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/Carta%20de%20Atenas%201933.pdf>. Accessed on January 15, 2017.

¹⁵Lúcio Costa, graduated from the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (National School of Fine Arts) in 1924, pioneered modern architecture in Brazil. He participated in the group of Ciam and contributed to the reformulation of the architecture courses in the country from his acting as director of the National School of Fine Arts.

END OF UTOPIAS IN POSTMODERNITY?

Postmodernity seems to have caused the death of utopian ideas. The overthrow of the socialist system, accompanied by the intensification of consumer culture and the exacerbation of individualism, seems to have destroyed the sense of the common good that is the hallmark of utopian narratives. In Urbanism, since the modernist utopia, there are no proposals for models of cities to be reached or built.

Concerning urban spaces, the so-called counter-utopias (or dystopias) have become more prominent in many artistic expressions, especially in cinema, such as those seen in the films *Alphaville* (1965)¹⁶ and *Blade Runner* (1982)¹⁷. They are works that present an imaginary society that cannot be considered ideal and is not seen as such by its creators; on the contrary, they are intended to provoke horror and repulsion.

Szachi (1972) classifies counter-utopias as negative utopias, thus considering them as participants in the genre of utopias. While portraying negative spaces, while positive / "classical" utopias produce perfect worlds, the two types of utopia should not be considered opposites¹⁸. On the contrary, their consanguinity is emphasized, insofar as they depart from a dissatisfaction with reality and, in this way, both are a call to transformation. But while in positive utopias the ideological struggle is made by the opposition of the ideals themselves to the ideals of others, in the negative utopias are presented the ideals of adversaries distorted or potentialized in such a way that they appear as repulsive. Szachi (1972) reminds us that this artifice is not a discovery of our times, having been used at other times in history even in a way complementary to positive utopias.

Nevertheless, an important difference between the two types of utopia must be emphasized: negative utopia does not present us with an alternative to what is being criticized. Excluding cases of its application as a tool of conservative or reformist propaganda, "*we must recognize it as a conscious or unconscious manifestation of the need for a better world perceived by men who are unable to discover it by themselves.*" (SZACHI, 1972, p. 123).

Contemporary authors of negative utopias protest the existing world, but do not seem to have the faith necessary to engage in the propagation of what they regard as good. In the postmodern world, the ideal sounds as something dubious, or something doomed to fail.

In relation to Urbanism, the search for an ideal city model starts to be criticized as the city is no longer seen as an object, but rather as a process, always being constructed and reconstructed by its various actors. Within this new perspective, the category "future" cannot be idealized and detailed, as did the classic urban utopias.

However, the emergence of other utopian narratives, contrary to the great stiff narratives: the new or postmodern urban utopias deal with specific or localized issues (even if their influences and repercussions are comprehensive), do not present finished models and, mainly, focus on the participation of the city's

¹⁶ Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 movie. Original title: *Alphaville, une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*.

¹⁷ Movie by Ridley Scott, from 1982.

¹⁸ On the question, it should be emphasized that human ideals are quite heterogeneous, depending on historical, cultural, class, and even personal interests' questions, so that the utopias of some may seem horrible to others. Thus, for the classification of a work as utopia or counter-utopia, one must search the author's intention, the reception by the public and the historical context in which the ideas were formulated.

builders. However, insofar as they present a critique / rupture to the present system and propose transformative alternatives, they can be considered utopias.

We can cite as an example of postmodern utopia the movement “The City We Want, Belo Horizonte” (also called “Many for the City We Want”)¹⁹, formed by activists of several social movements, collective and organized groups of the city of Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais, which are engaged in cultural, social and environmental issues. In the manifesto of the movement made available on its website was this excerpt: “*We dare to dream another future, in which the possibilities of free and happy life, integrated with nature, based on collective interests and citizen democracy, will expand. Another city is possible*”²⁰.

The movement was born in 2015 with the intention of taking part, actively, in the municipal elections the following year. In meetings held in different public places of Belo Horizonte throughout 2015, various themes related to the urban question were discussed, some of them with the participation of theoreticians and activists from other Brazilian cities. As a result of these face-to-face discussions and of online discussions and sharing, ten proposals were developed for the city of Belo Horizonte, considered as a partial result of the process of collective construction of proposals and programs. The ten proposals are: 1. Free occupation of public spaces; 2. Public transport, free of charge and of quality; 3. Less viaducts, more subway; 4. Housing is right; 5. Pedestrian, cycling and low carbon city; 6. No to privatizations and more parks; 7. Diverse and free art and culture; 8. Public resources for the common good; 9. Stop racism, machismo, transphobia and all forms of violence; 10. Democracy for citizenship²¹.

Some principles were also developed to guide popular and citizen candidacies in the 2016 elections²². Sixteen candidacies for city councilors and a candidacy to the city hall – all linked to the Party of Socialism and Liberty (Portuguese acronym: PSOL) – were supported by the movement. Two city councilors were elected: Cida Falabella and Áurea Carolina, being the latter the city’s most voted councilor. Both are committed to the proposal that their mandates be transparent, open and shared. They have joined a single cabinet in the Municipal Chamber and are holding open meetings to discuss proposals and holding an alternation among the activists in the works of cabinet. In addition, they are using social networks for greater democratization and transparency of the Municipal Chamber’s daily life.

In 2016, “The City We Want” has developed a digital platform for collaborative proposals, where anyone can submit proposals to the city, as well as discuss, vote, comment and suggest improvements in published proposals. The proposals are divided into four broad areas, subdivided by objectives. The areas are: real democracy and open government; social right and racial, ethnic and gender equality; urban cultures, art and education; urban environment and health. The platform also allows the organization of proposals by region or district of the city²³.

¹⁹The information presented in this article about “The City We Want, Belo Horizonte” movement was obtained on the website www.muitx.org (access in November 2016, currently inactive) and through questionnaires answered by participants of the movement in November 2016: Áurea Carolina, Cida Falabella, Felipe Magalhães, Henrique Gazzola and Roberto Andrés.

²⁰Excerpt taken from www.muitx.org (access in November 2016, currently inactive).

²¹Available in: <http://nossabh.org.br/2015/12/10-propostas-para-a-cidade-que-queremos/>. Accessed on June 20, 2019.

²²They are: collective construction of proposals and programs; expansion of city participation in party decisions; open and shared mandates; applications that bring to the protagonism the subjects of social struggles, that express the diversity of gender, race, sexual orientation and territory, looking for parity; candidatures not compromised with private interests and critical to the millionaire campaign system in Brazil; commitment to the freezing of the high salaries of the elected representatives and to the end of aid that is not necessary..

²³The digital platform of “The City We Want, Belo Horizonte” is currently unavailable.

CONCLUSION

Unlike the classical urban utopias, the perspective of the future of The City We Want is not a rigid and orderly idea of ??a city. However, their proposals can also be called utopias, insofar as they foresee another future reality, different from the one in progress. It is, however, an idea of utopia quite different from that of alienated and alienating connotations discussed by Marx. The connotation of utopia defended here is aligned with that proposed by Ernst Bloch (2005): as an anticipatory action and promoter of future possibilities. Bloch defends the re-signification of utopian thought in its propositional role, as desire and construction from the nonconformity to what is in the present – a non-submission to the insufficient, the scarce and the unjust.

The category of the utopian possesses, besides the habitual sense [thoughtless fantasy, abstract and gratuitous lucubration], justifiably derogatory, also another that is not necessarily abstract or alien to the world but is entirely directed towards the world: the sense of surpassing the natural course of events. (BLOCH, 2005, p. 22).

In the contemporary view of the city as a process, therefore something in permanent construction, one cannot think of it as a finished and fixed object, not even in its technical, esthetic and politically “perfect” version (for whom?). However, the hope of living in a better society remains in man, desirous to change his reality of misery, violence and injustice. The utopia of contemporary Urbanism, like The City We Want, focuses on the process of building the city, always with a horizon ahead to direct the way, but not to plaster it. The utopian will is the mood that drives in the course of the process and is also constantly being built.

Thus, the fantasy of the utopian function, built on dreams for a better life, should not be understood as mere chimerical fantasy, for it does not move by an empty possibility. They are ideas that lead to thinking and planning its elaboration, constituting what can be called the praxis of concrete utopia: road that leads to what is sought (APOLINÁRIO, 2008).

In this sense, a militant optimism (opposite to contemplative optimism) is unconfigured, which is based on conscious hope, that is, that capable of recognizing the set of real possibilities that enable the transformation of the conditions to be transformed. It is a utopia that is not only in the future, but especially in the present, as the only temporality that holds the possibilities of future transformation. The future of cities – and our future – is under construction according to what we do in the present, so it is not in a distant time, but in the reinvention of the now.

REFERENCES

- APOLINÁRIO, José Antônio Feitosa. A práxis no pensamento utópico de Ernst Bloch. *Cadernos de Ética e Filosofia Política*, São Paulo, n. 13, p. 43-56, 2008.
- BENEVOLO, Leonardo. *História da arquitetura moderna*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1976. 813p.
- BENEVOLO, Leonardo. *História da cidade*. 5. ed. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2012. 728p.
- BLOCH, Ernst. *O princípio esperança*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2005. v. 1. 437p.
- CAMPANELLA, Tommaso. *A cidade do sol*. [S. l.: s. n.], 1602. *E-book*. Disponível em: <http://www.ebooksbrasil.org/adobeebook/cidadesol.pdf>. Acesso em: 17 jun. 2019.
- CHOAY, Françoise. *O Urbanismo – utopias e realidades: uma antologia*. Rio de Janeiro: Perspectiva, 1979. 350p.
- FRAMPTON, Kenneth. *História crítica da arquitetura moderna*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2008. 529p.
- HOWARD, Ebenezer. *Garden cities of to-morrow*. London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902. *E-book*. Disponível em: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/46134/46134-h/46134-h.htm>. Acesso em: 21 jun. 2019.
- PESSOA, Denise Falcão. *Utopia e cidades: proposições*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006. 198p.
- SZACHI, Jerzy. *As utopias ou a felicidade imaginada*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1972. 132p.

Editor's note

Date of submission: 07/09/2017

Acceptance: 04/18/2018

Translation: RMO Empresarial

Selena Duarte Lage e Lage

Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Faculdade de Engenharia Civil, Arquitetura e Urbanismo. Programa de Pós Graduação em Arquitetura, Tecnologia e Cidade. Rua Saturnino de Brito, 224 - Cidade Universitária, Campinas - SP, 13083-889
 ORCID: 0000-0001-9976-1034
selenalage@yahoo.com.br