

Utopian Urbanism in the Anthropocene

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Welcome to Nowhere

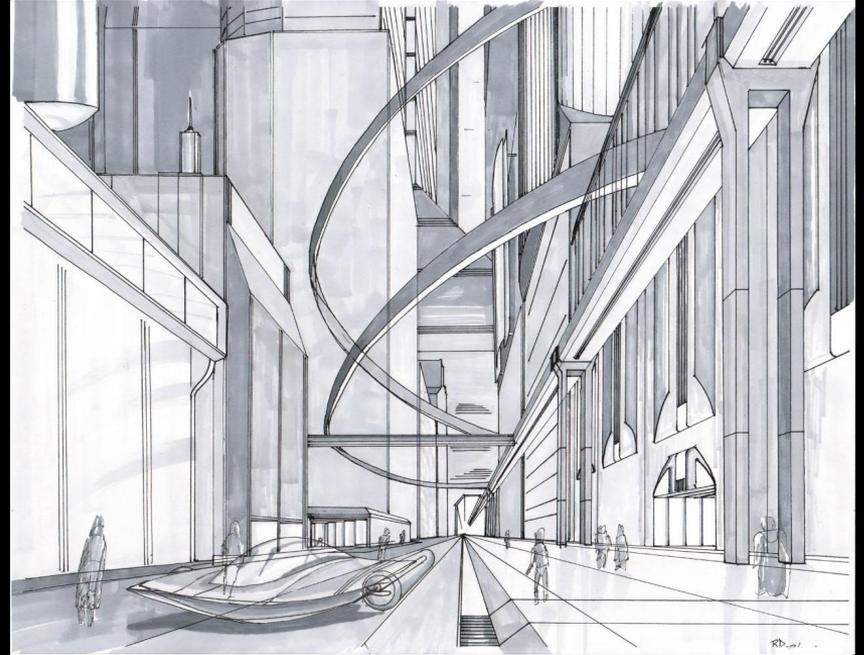
- Utopia from the greek *ou* for “not” and *topos* for “place.”
- Eutopia, a homophone in English from the greek *eu* for “good.”



Odysseus and the Lotus Eaters,
Wikipedia

Concrete utopias in the anthropocene

- Cities: utopias or dystopias?
- From the mind, through tangible designs and policies, to the physical plane.
- Anthropocene: concept of the world as fundamentally shaped by humans.



Rob Devine

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I. A brief history of utopian urbanism

1. City Beautiful & Progressive era utopias
2. High modernist urbanism
3. Urban Renewal: Backlash against utopia
4. Neoliberal/post-utopian cities
5. New directions?

19th century cities



Rapid industrialization
and urbanization

→ increasing
congestion, chaos, and
social conflict in cities

← Chicago in the late 1800s

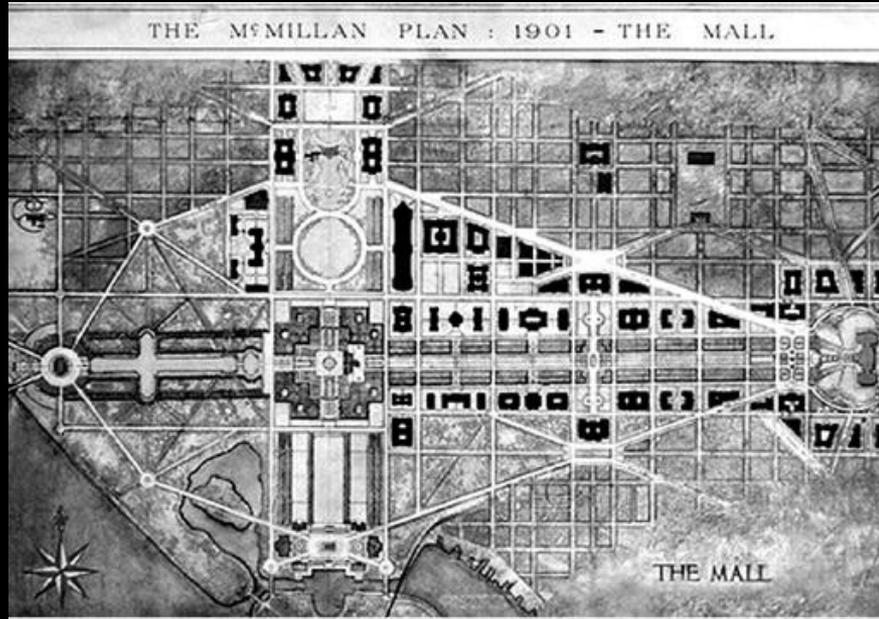
City Beautiful & Progressive Era Utopias



- ~1890s-1910s
- Grand, stately, neoclassical architecture
- Meant instill civic virtue (lots of libraries, museums, city halls)

1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago

City Beautiful, cont.



Burnham's 1901 plan for Washington
DC



Old Penn Station, NYC

The Modernist Urban Utopia

- Great faith in Progress
- Technological utopianism: better living through innovation and design
- High density, linear, efficient, rationalization of space



Le Corbu's 1922 "Contemporary City"

“...only architecture and city planning can provide the exact prescription for [society’s] ills...The house that can be built for the modern man (and the city too), a magnificently disciplined machine, can bring back the liberty of the individual—at present crushed out of existence—to each and every member of society.”

-Le Corbusier

Backlash against Urban Renewal



Slum clearance, Chicago



1973 protest against slum clearance in NE Portland to make way for Emanuel Hospital.

1989: The end of utopia?



- Conflation of 20th century utopianism and totalitarianism
 - Russell Jacoby (2005) calls this a “false conflation”
- Fall of Berlin Wall

Cities after the “death” of utopia



Fortress architecture in pioneer square?

(Right) Frank Gehry’s 1984 hollywood public library—which Mike Davis calls “the most menacing library ever built” →





← The Mall of America: a “degenerate utopia”?

Toward new utopias?



New Urbanist town plan



Rendering of Masdar Eco-city, Abu Dhabi

III. The Anthropocene: Revisited

- Change in Earth systems resulting from human behavior such as fossil fuel consumption.
- Impacts range from climate change to resource scarcity and social conflict.



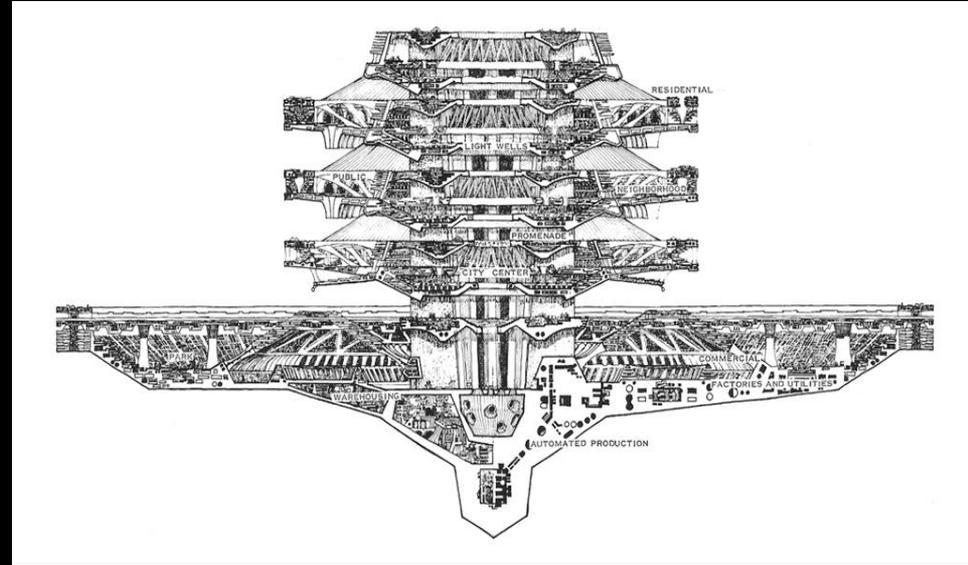
Unprecedented Challenges + Solutions

- Unprecedented challenges require unprecedented (read: radical, normative) solutions.
- Saliency of urban focus, yet there is no silver bullet.
- Utopianism is about the ability to look beyond what *is* (current material/ideological paradigm) and envision a fundamentally different and better future.



Utopian Urbanism in the Anthropocene

- "Utopia has been discredited, it is necessary to rehabilitate it. Utopia is never realized and yet it is indispensable to stimulate change" - Henri Lefebvre (1991)
- Utopian Urbanism as response to Dystopian Anthropocene.



Discussion Questions

- What should inform urbanism in the Anthropocene? (What should the priorities of urban planning in the Anthropocene be?)
- Is utopian urbanism in the anthropocene a legitimate hope for progress or merely a method for survival?
- How might the cities of today be adapted to become more resilient to the pressures of the Anthropocene? What current trends in urbanism should be (dis)continued?
- How might urban planning become a more inclusive process informed by community sourced concerns and visions for urban change?

Images

Part I:

1. "Chicago in the Late 1800s": <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft4779n9pn:chunk.id=d0e1245:doc.view=print>
2. "Burnham's 1901 plan for Washington DC": http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7c/McMillan_Plan.jpg
3. "Old Penn Station": [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Station_\(1910%E2%80%931963\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania_Station_(1910%E2%80%931963))
4. "1893 Columbian Exposition" <http://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/amerwom05/maincourtcolumbianexpo72.jpg>
5. "Le Corbu's 1922 *Contemporary City*" https://c1.staticflickr.com/5/4109/5015467532_c669ba524e_z.jpg
6. "Slum clearance, Chicago" <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uicdigital/7803412570/>
7. "1973 protest...Emanuel Hospital" http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historical_records/popup.cfm?doc_ID=0004CBF8-16F2-1ECD-A42A80B05272006C
8. "There is no Alternative" <http://i1.wp.com/www.scriptonitedaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/th11.jpg>
9. "Frank Gehry's 1984 Hollywood Public Library" <http://millenniumhollywood.net/2013/04/25/frank-gehry-the-hollywood-public-library/>
10. "Mall of America" http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a5/Mall_of_America-2005-05-29.jpg/1280px-Mall_of_America-2005-05-29.jpg
11. "New Urbanist Town Plan" <http://www.trbimg.com/img-517858c6/turbine/bs-md-co-crossroads-development-20130424-001/600/600x431>
12. "Masdar City" <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/media/Projects/1515/img0.jpg>