Chapter 5
The First Ecological Steps in Architectural Utopias:
The "Nature" of Imaginary Smart Cities

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ABSTRACT

In the first appearance of living spaces and creating new ones, human being's fundamental aim was to be prepared for all sorts of natural circumstances, which can be "wild" and "cruel" sometimes. Protecting itself from these hard circumstances, the human being has aimed to create safe places. In this struggle which is occasionally named as "war", the spaces designed come out as the main fortresses. This chapter aims to seek out human beings' efforts in the struggle with the natural circumstances and especially the shift of it in the mid twentieth century, in the light of architectural structures of utopias. In other words, the chapter may be seen as a research of imaginary projects which have starting points as "peace and happiness, assessing them to see if they have peaceful approaches to nature or not." The chapter also aims to examine, from the first simple projects to notable ones, how nature was handled and how the projects responded to the scenarios of natural resource scarcities of the future. As smart cities try to meet the requirements of today with scarce resources, the question in mind in the examination of utopias is "May these imaginary projects be the first sketches of smart cities?"

INTRODUCTION

Some people who like to dream believe that living an ideal life is only possible by creating ideal living spaces first. Thus, for centuries, dreamers have developed projects in such an attempt. They have proposed strings of new ideas so their cities would have the traits they most want to have in their lives. It is perhaps due to this reason that things change in cities all the time: While the dream was to create clean, healthy, orderly, well-planned cities at one time, today's dreams are

based on intelligent, innovating, technological, digital, ecological and smart cities.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to examine the futures dreamed fifty years ago (perhaps our day coincides with the dreamed futures of utopias), and the imaginary projects which sought new and alternative human-nature-city relationships by using today's "smart cities" as a filter and lens. Although these sketches of utopia were not yet referred to as "smart" in their golden age, they reflect (and yet in many respects reject) the contemporary concept of "smart cities". This study seeks new ways for the cities of the future by starting from the city plans of the alternative "smart cities" in these sketches. In keeping with the spirit of a smart city dweller, the filters and lenses used in the study were obtained from the Internet: The six criteria detailed in the report entitled "Smart Cities, Ranking of European Medium-Sized Cities" (smart economy, smart people, smart governance, smart mobility, smart environment and smart living) were used to evaluate the strong or weak "smart" characters in projects that took the "nature" as their primary design criterion[1].

The starting point of the study was that there may be a similarity in terms of searching for alternatives and a close relation between some of the designers studied in this paper who created imaginary projects and those who are interested in 'smart city'.

Relations between humans and nature seem to have two extremes. On the one hand, it was noted that "peaceful relative relationships" like the one between the mother earth and her human child, which operates on the basis of mutual goodwill. The second one is closer to war. Here a cruel and challenging nature brings difficult conditions which are resisted forcibly by humans and eventually turns them into an enemy against this wild nature.

BACKGROUND

If we look at the first living spaces humans created, we often see the footprints of these relations. We observe that our ancestors were obliged to protect themselves from natural conditions and to use natural resources to build their living spaces. These two determining factors have played a very important role in the evolution of spaces. The early relationship of humans with nature only started to change with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Thereafter the association between humans, nature and technology was given a special emphasis. Modern technology was deemed necessary to counter nature – the "cruel" bringer of starvation, cold, illness and death. Technology was considered necessary because of these ills and because nature was still strong (Buck-Morss, 2000, p. 132). When we look at the changes in living spaces after the 1780s, we see the perception of nature as "wild" and the humans more willing to fight against nature. This conflicting relationship with nature takes root and begins to dominate our thinking.

In Utopias, we see the products of a modern idea to create ideal living spaces and formulations in a manner that challenges nature. Until the mid-20th century, most utopias offered spaces with clearly defined borders and walls to limit relations with nature[2].

The reason that nature and living spaces were strictly separated from each other in utopias might have been because of the difference between the *sine qua non* characteristics of utopias and the unique/origin structure of nature. As the basic characteristics of utopias were isolation, functionality, stability, order and dictatorship, nature might have been regarded as a threat.

A great number of future scenarios and "utopia sketches", which offered incomplete structures, were proposed in the 1960s. This decade came to be known as the golden age of utopias not only in the 20th century but possibly throughout the entire history. In this decade, a new type of rela-

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