

THE GLOBAL HISTORY OF UTOPIAS

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The history of utopias is, above all, the history of an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary cultural code. As such, utopia can be examined through a wide range of philosophical, literary, political, pedagogical, religious, and artistic perspectives. However, no single disciplinary framework is capable of fully capturing all the dimensions of utopia. It transcends the constraints of analyses grounded in narrow epistemological paradigms, requiring instead a broader, "global" approach. The epistemological framework of "global studies" provides a way to explore how utopias can be studied within this field, highlighting the historical influence of utopian ideas and demonstrating how even small or marginal utopias have had a significant impact on various forms of life.

As an object of study, utopia poses the challenge of developing an epistemology capable of "understanding"—in the Weberian sense—the object in its various manifestations. However, it is difficult to conceptualize utopia purely in abstract terms. As Pierre Macherey and Thierry Paquot have noted, the study of utopia inherently involves certain forms of practice. In this sense, utopia requires an epistemology that incorporates a performative dimension. The dual nature of "utopology" is thus intrinsic to the fundamental characteristics of the utopian code. Engaging with the study of utopia also implicates us in the utopian spirit. As a collection of imaginative constructs—non-places or idealized spaces—utopia points toward a profound need for the transformation of modes of living.

The first decisive component of a utopian epistemology can be traced to history: studying utopia necessitates a historical understanding of the images and practices that constitute it. As a history of paradigmatic figures—such as the model of the "lost island"—the history of utopia must, following Foucault's approach to historical methodology, incorporate both archaeological and genealogical modalities. This entails investigating not only the origin, but also the complex processes that shaped the formation of a paradigm, as well as the traces through which certain figures or practices were influenced, such as the reception of Platonism in early humanism or the development of religious utopias.

A second, equally critical component of "utopology" is its comparative dimension. As a cultural code that spans various disciplinary and practical-theoretical domains, utopia must be distinguished from other codes, such as ideological or prophetic frameworks. However, a comprehensive comparative study of utopia—one that examines how models and paradigms are repeated or differentiated across diverse cultural contexts—remains largely underdeveloped. How does utopia manifest in the revolutionary attitudes of different eras, at times shaped by religious values and, at other times, entirely atheistic?

Finally, a third decisive aspect of "utopology" involves studying the "spirit of utopia." As Ernst Bloch emphasized, utopia always entails a yearning for the transformation of existence—*incipit vita nova*. Since antiquity, the history of utopia has been intertwined with humanity's major spiritual crises. Utopia can be situated within the broader historical context of human spiritualities, which, by their very nature, are tied to the anthropological consistency of the desire for transformation that is common to all cultures. If utopian spirituality often appears to imply some form of "conversion," the history of utopia must be connected to a history of conversion practices and recognized utopian figures. Approaching utopia requires both a historical and comparative perspective on the figures and practices associated with forms of "spirituality," as described by Foucault and Hadot. For this reason, "utopology" is inherently linked to an anthropology of spirituality.

If a historical epistemology centered on utopia is thus proposed, it follows that a catalog of utopian objects should also be established. In this respect, an epistemology rooted in global studies could prove particularly valuable.

Throughout history, many utopias have claimed a "global" aim, directed toward all of humanity rather than a specific group. Utopian thought, in its various forms, is grounded in anthropological assumptions tied to the worldview of a particular era or the ideas of specific thinkers. These configurations were often envisioned not only for the present but for the entirety of humanity. In

the history of religions, for instance, global utopias frequently align with the Church's universalist vision, from the conversion of St. Paul to the Reformation. Political-religious utopias with a global scope are exemplified by the Jesuit movement, which also produced a "global" pedagogical model, materialized through the prototype of the College—a precursor to modern global pedagogy.

This "universalist" aspect of utopia often encompasses designs that, if realized, could ironically subvert the original intentions, transforming the idealization of a happy life into totalitarian practice. It is within this strand of utopia that we frequently encounter the risk of utopias devolving into dystopian forms. Yet, it is also through this strand that we find, in critical or satirical writing, a spirit aimed at the liberation of society's most vulnerable and a comprehensive understanding of human problems. Literary dystopias—such as Orwell's *1984*—serve to inform or warn the present about the potential prefiguration of a negative future. It is no coincidence that political and spiritual movements, as well as Fourier's productivist and socialist utopia, the 19th-century utopias of Saint-Simon and Proudhon, and numerous declarations regarding "human rights"—such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)—are products of the utopian spirit of their respective eras, shaped also by the historical tragedies they sought to address.

Alongside this "universalist" strand of utopia, there exists a more isolated and communitarian, "isolationist" strand, which envisions the utopian transformation of a small portion of humanity. At the very origin of modern "utopia," linked to humanism, Thomas More presents a segregated humanity residing on a lost island in the New World. This remote setting, separated from the rest of humanity, is also exemplified by the utopias of Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* and Francis Bacon's scientific *New Atlantis*. In this context, utopia represents a humanity disconnected from the rest of civilization, and through this isolation, it attains an ideal of happiness or the "good life" that would otherwise be unattainable. Emphasizing Platonic and Neoplatonic influences, the way in which utopia manifests in different contexts and with various objectives suggests that these utopias can be approached as a recurring paradigm across human cultures, meriting a genealogical, comparative study with a "global" scope.

The recently established epistemological field of "Global Studies" offers a novel approach to the history of utopias. On one hand, it is dedicated to the inter- or transdisciplinary study of codes and practices; on the other, it enables us to understand how a framework or system of thought was defined or created within a particular historical period or projected into another.

The image of the city as the world—a decisive figure in the constitution of civilization during Roman antiquity and in the Western *translatio imperii*—reappears in the decline of urban forms such as metropolises, megalopolises, and contemporary global cities, reflecting the persistence of a utopian code in which the relationship between city and world is constructed. Utopian thought has not only reshaped the forms of cities over the centuries but also transformed living spaces, design, and fashion. Global-reaching utopian forms can be found in the *Passages* of Paris studied by Benjamin, the universalist vision of the World Expositions, and the 19th-century model of working villages, often inspired by Fourier's phalansteries. In the 20th century, all major capitals were indebted to the utopian ideal of the "city that rises," epitomized by the painter Umberto Boccioni and realized globally through the construction of skyscrapers and modern housing centers. The inauguration of Brazil's new capital, Brasília, in 1960, marked the creation of a new paradigm for urban utopia. Urban utopia remains essential for understanding global urban transformations, the construction of the "global city," and even the possibilities for reform or resistance, as exemplified by Lefebvre's *right to the city*, which continues to inform contemporary urban political movements.

In the definition of habits and forms that give consistency to the way of life—the *bios*—of existences that are geographically distant, an economic utopia, such as the post-Fordist capitalist utopia, does not cease to be "local" when it integrates the specific life forms of a given population. In this sense, engaging with utopian thought allows us to understand the "glocal" characteristics of contemporary life forms, as well as the efforts of resistance, contrast, or even revolt, which are utopian in their opposition to governing paradigms. As an instrument of historical powers and forms of resistance, utopia manifests its "global" characteristics by clarifying the persistent nature of utopian imagination across all contexts where conflict exists between different ways of life or forms of imagination. The same code may also adopt different utopian meanings, serving as symbolic representations of power and resistance. In fashion, for example, the use of jeans, initially associated with the trope of the American Nation, became a global utopia of resistance among

young people during the 1968 movement, and eventually a commercial utopia. Similarly, in the history of the great *logos*, we can observe the transformation of global resistance utopias into standardized ones.

If any epistemology and historical need arises from a demand that emerges from the present, an approach to utopia through a Global Studies epistemology must be rooted in the very characteristics of our time. Thinking about the present entails considering the forms of globality that define it, and approaching "utopology" today necessitates reflecting on the diverse utopian figures and practices that are being generated in the present. This approach provides tools for shaping lifestyles and resisting homogenization.

The concept of "globalization," as a product of modernity, also necessitates an analysis of the utopian content that has underpinned various cultural movements aimed at conceptualizing the world as a whole. Over the past three decades, we have witnessed phenomena whose speed and novelty remain only partially understood. On one hand, there has been a rapid acceleration in digital technology and the financial turnover of the capitalist economy; on the other, the apparent creation of a world defined by increasingly uniform ways of life and shared challenges for all of humanity.

If, for Marshall McLuhan, the "new world" interconnected by emerging technologies once appeared as a "global village," today it is the paradigm of social networks that reveals how the "utopian spirit" of computer science has played a crucial role in constructing the new technological world in which we live. This transformation translates the notion of a physical square into a vast virtual square.

Global Studies, which explores the phenomena shaping our globalized world, as well as historical efforts to attain a global perspective, must regard utopia as a decisive force in any historical process of "globalization," alongside the concept of globalization itself. Contemporary political and scientific utopias are exemplified by new ecological initiatives, astronomical projects aiming to extend humanity's reach beyond Earth, and advancements in medical and neuro-technological sciences that seek to transcend human biological limitations. These examples illustrate how utopia remains a crucial historical driver in today's globalizing processes.

Sebastian Conrad identifies three domains in which the paradigm of global history has evolved: first, a vision that seeks to encompass everything, often beginning with the study of a specific theme; second, the examination of connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena occurring globally at a particular moment; and third, an approach that links internal historical developments in specific contexts to broader, contemporary transformations. In this context, the study of contemporary globalization can benefit from a utopian perspective. A global history of utopias allows for the exploration of the evolution of utopian ideas and practices across various contexts, revealing how these are connected to shifts in spiritual, political, artistic, and economic imaginaries unfolding simultaneously in different regions. Thus, utopia can be understood as a determining factor in the historical forms of globalization.

The creation of a complex school of thought capable of understanding the innovative interconnections within a globalized culture, as proposed by Edgar Morin and Peter Sloterdijk, is intrinsically linked to utopian thought. In this context, the epistemology of Global Studies aligns with its subject matter, prompting a self-reflection that positions it as a form of utopian epistemology.

By integrating the legacy of past global utopias and generating new forms of global utopia, "globalization" and the phenomena defining our contemporary civilization can be studied as utopian constructs. This approach enables the development of a methodological framework that places them within the history of global utopias, examining the global scope of utopian forms and fostering the emergence of a utopian epistemology that continually redefines itself in response to its object of study.

Thus, the global history of utopias opens a novel field of inquiry, offering insights into the diverse ways in which societies and individuals define the theoretical and practical frameworks for rethinking and transcending their limitations. In addition, while acknowledging the practical implications inherent in any exploration of utopia, this investigation necessitates reflection on the anthropological foundation that utopia reveals—both global in scope and deeply subjective. It manifests in its relentless drive to transform the present and propose new, alternative paths for humanity, even when the horizon of a historical form of humanity appears to be closing.