abstract

This dissertation concerns itself with the post-modern city and its need for transformative inspiration as the edge of the millennium approaches. The thesis argues for the relevance of Utopia in response to the dilemma of post-modern urbanism. It asserts that the post-modern city is in need of its Utopia, but that previous conceptions of Utopia cannot cope with the increased complexity of urban forces. A re-conception of Utopia is postulated.

The paper opens by examining post-modernism's rejection of Utopia, contesting that it is actually totalitarian modernist Utopias, and not the concept of Utopia itself, which have failed. It then moves to criticize post-modern anti-utopian responses to urban needs and problems. The paper argues that such replies to modern homogenization of cities are in themselves fraught with fundamentally regressive and self-defeating problems.

The boundaries of the concept of Utopia are subsequently investigated in order to uncover a broader definition than that of modernist Utopia, one which allows for flexibility under varying urban forces. It is postulated that Utopia and post-modern concerns need not be seen as adversarial positions. This aim is pursued by investigating the history of not only Utopia's physical forms, but also the social intentions behind Utopianist proposals.

Finally, the dissertation seeks to investigate possible trajectories for a re-written Utopia. It is argued that Utopia for an increasingly complex and ever-changing city can no longer take on a deterministic form. Instead, it should emerge from an engagement with the diverse urban systems. The dissertation speculates that Utopia can evolve in terms of an arena of discourse, an elastic framework of engagement and response to the heterogeneous, diverse and ever-changing forces acting in the contemporary city.