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URBAN GEOGRAPHIES OF HOPE OR WHICH WAY(S) TO THE CITY OF OUR FUTURE(S)?

Cities have always been the Khôra for conceptualizing the future in western cultures, and throughout the timespan those conceptions have been transformed due to severe changes in human thought's 'structure of feeling'. These changes can be outlined as a successive prevalence of religious, scientific, artistic and philosophical overtones in envisioning tomorrow and they are saturated by historic and geographical notions. The paper attempts a poetic reflection on the diachronic relocation of the positionality of hope in western cities of Modern Times through an interdisciplinary urban geographical gaze that has been formed cumulatively within Religion, Science, Art and Philosophy's no-man's-land. On the one hand, the perennial response of western historic thought to the schema of the eschatological time is revealing a fundamental transition from the extroverted Era of Promise to the introverted Era of Fulfilment. On the other hand, those conceptions of the future tend to follow the evolution of geographic perception concerning fundamental concepts. The adopted methodology aspires to understand the current structure of hope in western cities through a critical consideration of both their historico-reflective temporal sequence (premodern, modern, postmodern and metamodern conceptions of tomorrow) and geographical references (landscape, space, place and imagined geographies as shelters of hope). The paper concludes that the diachronic interrelation of these historic sequences and geographical references has produced four psychogeographic schemas for conceiving urban hope: *Eden* (the Terrestrial Version of Heaven), *Utopia* (the Universal City for Supermen), *Imageria* (the Iconic Global City on Earth) and *Onirotopia* (the Cosmic City within, yet without Us). Hybrids of those four concepts compound the mosaic of contemporary future thought.

Urban Geographies of Hope, Premodern Eden, Modern Utopia, Postmodern Imageria, Metamodern Onirotopia.

Introduction

Cities have always been the Khôra for experiencing, conceptualizing and expecting future in western cultures, and throughout the timespan, those experiences, conceptions and expectations have been transformed due to severe changes in human thought's 'structure of feeling' (Raymond Williams' term). These changes can be traced at the junction point of: a)

the *historic conceptions* that are revealing a successive prevalence of religious, scientific, artistic and philosophical attitudes in the envisioning of tomorrow¹, and b) the *geographic references* that have inspired the positionality of tomorrow as hope. The paper elaborates a poetic reflection on the diachronic interchange of the positionality of hope in western cities through an interdisciplinary urban geographical gaze that has been formed cumulatively within Religion, Science, Art and Philosophy's no-man's-land of Modern Times. The goal of the methodology is to understand the current structure of feeling in western cities through a critical consideration of both their historico-reflective temporal sequences of premodern, modern, postmodern and metamodern conceptions of tomorrow and their geographical references to landscape, space, place and imagined geographies. What follows is a brief analysis of western thought's reflections on the notions of tomorrow and hope, according to their basic historic and geographical characteristics respectively.

Historic Conceptions of Tomorrow

On the one hand, during the *Era of Promise* (15th-mid 20th century), western societies had been conceiving tomorrow as a promise that could be fulfilled as a premodern afterlife reward for passive endurance and a modern effortful achievement of lifetime action. On the other, since the end of World War II and during the *Era of Fulfillment* (mid 20th – nowadays), western societies experienced the partly fulfilled promise of modernity. A new introspective Era for reconsidering hope was launched. Thus, tomorrow can be experienced either through passive, superficial and fetishized postmodern iconifications or active, performative and empathic metamodern appropriations. The following four historic periods are characterized by certain major historic events in the mane of the present analysis and can be grouped into two umbrella-Eras of equally numbered active and passive *structures of feeling*. Although the Era of Promise had lasted for five centuries (from 15th till the mid 20th) and its premodern and modern *structures of feeling* cover multiannual periods, the Era of Fullfillment began in the second half of the 20th century and lasts till nowadays with its postmodern and metamodern *structures of feeling* being rapidly altered. According to the authors, that fact can be justified through a political reasoning that is based on the economic transformation of late capitalism and the Time-Space Compression of contemporary societies (Harvey, 1991; Jameson, 1991; Bauman, 2000).

- i. **America: The Age of Explorations [sequences of premodern structure of feeling]** It is referring to the early period of Modern Times and roughly lies between the 15th and 17th century. In the pre-modern era, there was a religious attitude inside any social, economic

¹ The authors approach human thought holistically as a mosaic, which is consisted of Religious, Scientific, Artistic and Philosophical fragments. There is an obvious allusion to the Weberian categorization of modern human speech (Science, Art, Ethics – as referred in Habermas, 1985) and the Deleuzean stance concerning postmodern human thought (Science, Art, Philosophy - 1995), always in response to the phantom of premodern Religious Logos (DeCerteau, 1980/2011),

or ethical aspect of life. Social mysticism, total obedience to hierarchical traditional structures and blind faith in Divine Providence were setting up the scenery of an old era that was about to be disputed by the Renaissance and the Reformation. Despite the fact that the emancipation of the individual was gradually being brought to the fore during the transitional period from ancient to modern, the theocratic perceptions were still a stable common ground. Within that liminal phase, humans started conceiving earthly versions of what was previously considered as heavenly salvation (Ferry, 2014), so extensively that modernity's dawn was indelibly marked by the territorialisation of hope in envisioning tomorrow. The quest of paradise in the Age of Explorations was considered as a crystallization of that time's structure of feeling and Columbus' phrase about the vision of "*nuevo cielo à tierra*" (as cited in Liakos, 2014) ideally summarizes that. Thus, the envisioning of the paradise was topographically conceived as an enclosed garden that exists and is hidden somewhere waiting for its discovery. In the New World, humans were about to find a geographic romantic version of the eternal Kingdom's ethereal lands and the Paradise that was constantly evangelized by Christianity was revealed.

- ii. **Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité: The Three Humanistic Revolutions [sequences of modern structure of feeling]** It is referring to the late period of Modernity and lies between the 18th and mid 20th century. The great transition from pre-modernity to modernity was sealed with the development and extensive exercise of scientifically rational methods in understanding the world. The general attitude of those ideas also invaded Religion's field. The Age of Enlightenment guaranteed Science's supremacy in revealing the Truth through empirical observation and knowledge, against to any metaphysical mythification. Demands for liberty and equality were expressed through massive revolutionary movements (American Independence, French Revolution, Soviet Revolution), which were motivated by the humanistic spirit of cooperation for the constitution of fairer societies. The expected experience of a universal tomorrow, which had been related to History's linear progress, formed a leveling and overly optimistic modern structure of feeling that ended up in the two Great World Wars. Until then, tomorrow was being conceived, premeditated and formed within the epicenters of modernity. And despite the fact that those epicenters were multiple within the western world (par example, the American technological epicenter of Chicago or the European intellectual epicenter of Paris or London – Harvey, 1991), the envisioning of tomorrow was usually positioned in an anonymous, frenzy, dynamic universal city, somewhere on the planet or even far away within the outer space. Consequently, the modern structure of feeling for envisioning tomorrow can be regarded as an amalgam of an omni-modernized urban lifestyle and science-fictional imagination.
- iii. **Nostalgic Futures: The Post WWII Trauma [sequences of postmodern structure of feeling]** It is referring to the early period of Postmodernity (Habermas, 1987; Jameson, 1991) and characterizes the years that followed the end of World War II till the rise of the new Millennium. The years that proceeded the end of World War II were years of

restoration, collaboration and unification (e.g. European Union), which tried to manage the post-war traumatic condition. Through the exploitation of Digital Revolution's outcomes and during the first period of the Information Age, globalization was generalized, western economy was systematically internationalized and cultural interactions became a common phenomenon. The rise of pop culture promoted the extensive use of various artistic means ('pasted' artworks) for comprehending the progressively complicated –partly digital- reality. By the time that the idiosyncratic and emotional dimensions of experience had been brought to the fore, the omnipotence of suspicion to Metanarratives was torpedoing the finding of any common ground through ironic criticism and historic nihilism. Future had been considered as scary and uncertain due to previous bad experience and the counterfeited beatification of past seemed to be the one and only valid decompression point. There was a nostalgically selective gaze that was based on an anthology of culturally oriented memories. The postmodern structure of feeling was based on showing particular sensitivity to cultural heritage preservation and sustainability of the present (Laliotou, 2015). However, these hypersensitive cultural versions of the past produced fairy iconic, yet fetishized, inputs to future envisioning, along with its overly dystopic versions. The Imagineering of numerous thematic parks (e.g. Disneyland) depicted a postmodern tendency for iconifying the future in present (Kontaratos, 2014). Thus, postmodern tomorrow could be ad hoc spotted within the city (down-town, metropolitan areas or suburbs), while cross-referring to various architectural influences of real and imagined iconographies. During the first decades of the Era of Fulfillment, tomorrow was present and its superficial experience and consumption were promoted as the most crucial factors for accessing it.

- iv. **Overcoming Melancholy in a Hyper-connected World: The Global Uncertainty [sequences of metamodern structure of feeling]** It is referring to the metamodern period of Postmodernity and signals the contemporary historic period that has begun with the dawn of the new Millennium. The western structure of feeling seems to be changed once again due to several events (financial crises, climate change, terrorism, extensive digitalization) and phenomena (appropriation of the critique by the market, integration of *différance* into mass culture) (Vermeulen and Akker, 2010). The shaping of the current hyper-reality condition is characterized by general economic, geostrategic, technologic and environmental instability, which is accelerating the socially uneven progress of the world and is refuting Fukuyama's (1992) reassuring declaration concerning the End of History. History refutes its westernized point of view and its poles are reversed. Empathy is the key-word that synthesizes the metamodern structure of feeling and reveals a growing silent reaction to the on-going derailment of the western promise, while prosperity is turned into austerity. The blending of the rational and transcendently emotional aspects of human experience in envisioning tomorrow has created a neo-romanticized version of future that is characterized by philosophically oriented contrived depth and informed naiveté (Dempsey, 2015). The concept of presentism (Hartog, 2003) is now exploited as a deliberating realization that indicates a

way-out from the constantly narrowing limits of the postmodern Time-Space Compression. While the present is extended to the past and the future is regarded as present's projection, a peculiar meta-cogitation is being formed, where the conscious pretending of atemporality (being out of time) leads to an experiential displacement (being out of place). Perhaps, during the late Era of Fulfillment, humanity accepts the fact that modernity's global promise of tomorrow has been partly accomplished -mainly in technological but not in social terms- and experiences it moderately (postmodern legacy), while attempting reflections on that experience through an empathic re-conception of tomorrow.

The Positionality of Hope in Geography

The historical transition from the Era of Promise (modernity) to the Era of Fulfillment (postmodernity) was also experienced in Geography as a shift from the 'inconnu' and desired of the landscapes that attracted explorations and spaces that challenge actions to the familiar and lived places that are filled with memories and stories and the imagined geographies that try to invent teleological reasons to contemporary existence. It is also worth mentioning that during Modern Times, tomorrow started being anticipated to be experienced geographically. Here, the four geographic concepts of landscape, space, place, and imagined geographies are regarded as the crucial catalysts for inspiring perennially different topological envisionments of tomorrow and revealing where western hope could have been found throughout the timespan.

- i. **References to romantic landscapes:** During the early period of Modern Times (15th - 17th century), the transition from the ancient to modern also affected the formation of geographical thought. By the 17th century, Geography had been either considered as the natural science of analyzing geosystems (Physical and Descriptive Geography) or as the social science of treating locations as 'milieux' of natural, social and economic procedures (Human Geography) and those considerations led to the formation of two distinctive strands in geographical thought respectively: Determinism and Possibilism (Leontidou, 2005/2015). Within that liminal phase between antiquity and modernity, the concept of the landscape intrigued the premodern colonial gaze of the prevailing descriptive Geography. It was the time when the ancient conceptions of the animated nature of landscapes (Gold, 1984) began to gradually abandon everyday places (e.g. the premodern archetypes of natural and human landscapes in Norberg-Shultz, 1980) and started inspiring the exploration of exotic and untouched versions of unknown lands. The promise of the sacred was reconsidered as a great driving force for finding the paradise on Earth and that can be considered a positioning of spirituality beyond the status quo of heavenly afterlife expectations. The new lands were depicted in imagination as landscapes of lush vegetation and metaphysical mysticism, ready to be discovered by the

explorers, whereas the 'old lands' of the cities were prospectively envisioned as peaceful and quiet places that were ruled by harmony and symmetry (Kontaratos, 2011).

- ii. **References to dynamic space:** As long as the modern geographic perception was based on the Universal Ideas of European Enlightenment, the dynamic geographic concept of space monopolized geographers' thought. During modernity, space was being considered either empirically, as an absolute and finite Cartesian space (Hume's theory in Baxter, 2016), or rationalistically, as a prerequisite rationale for the human experience (Kant, 1781/1998), and always in relation to time. The great scientific progress assisted in the quantification of Geography through the extreme systematization of empiricism and rationalism and the structural mathematization of natural and socio-economic phenomena became modernism's anthem -special emphasis was given on quantitative research methods, such as models and rules, which were depicting and regulating objectivity. The Cartesian logic of space deteriorated the premodern static and animated conception of natural or urban landscapes and promoted an alternative spatial, universal and progressive future conception. Space was regarded as a dynamic tabula for envisioning the future, which could only be written, expressed or comprehended through Metanarrative tools. The premodern promise of the sacred was altered in a modern promise of telos (purpose) that was inextricably linked with an active attitude towards life (Ferry, 2014). The pursuit of hope was conceived as something that demands the action of the individual and its actualization could only be achieved within the limits of the pioneering urban space (cities as the epicenters of rapid modernization, e.g. industrialization). Consequently, the ever changing and gradually homogenized metropolises of the world and the imposed common mentalité for the appropriation of their urban lifestyle (Simmel, 1903; Benjamin, 1935) promoted the modern geographical return of hope to the cities.
- iii. **References to 'lived' places:** After the end of World War II, there was a period of restoration of the devastated European cities, when modernity's functionality was exploited, mainly in urban planning (Harvey, 1991). Subsequently, amid prosperity's development in western cities, the universal concept of space was considered as homogenous, flat and outdated, in comparison to the uniqueness, localness and vividness of 'lived' places. A retrospective attitude was promoted, which had as its geographical apex the revisit of the Transitional Geography of seventies (Behaviourist Geography, Humanistic Geography, Radical Geography and Psychogeography) (Leontidou, 2005/2015). A cultural turn in Geography was triggered (Knox and Pinch, 1982/2009) and the rise of the experiential dimension of place was recognized, both as a unique location of ideological -often fetishized- implications and a 'milieu' of exercising social practices and acquiring meaning (Massey, 1994). Thus, the epistemology of Geography was based on post-structuralist approaches and the sociospatial dialectics of Possibilism attempted an enhancement of classic spatial theories (e.g. politics, historical analysis, geopolitical analysis) with new postmodern practices (e.g. Art Theory, Critical Art, poetics). In parallel, the prevalence of capitalism produced four versions of the

postmodern places, which were inspired by economico-political (Neo-Marxist concept of place), experiential (Humanistic concept of place) and social (Feminist and Performative concepts of place) theories (Agnew, 2011), and consequently, the positionality of hope changed once again during the last decades of the 20th century. Postmodern hope always had a cultural overtone and it was being sought in places of resistance, familiarization, dialogue or performance, while being simultaneously influenced by the global flows of capital, information, technology, ideas, and cultures (Appadurai, 1996). The modern anonymous universal city was shattered and its fragments were placed within the eponymous 'global, glocal and local' cities of the world (Sassen 1991; Abrahamson, 2004; Mantas et. al., 2016).

- iv. References to imagined geographies:** By the late nineties, a period that can be characterized as cultural turn's apogee had been launched and human geographic thought was overwhelmed by cultural approaches to spatial matters, which were mainly based on the investigation of pop culture. However, since the new millennium and under the shadow of Big Data's revolutionary introduction to quantitative geography, human geography reinforced its cultural approaches with poetic extensions. One can observe that a new Humanistic perspective of imagination (Pile, 2005; Pinder, 2005) and imagery (Claval, 2001; Marcus and Neuman, 2007) recognized the important role of reflecting on the metaphysical ontology of contemporary urban experience. In addition, it is of grave importance to stress the fact that these metamodern poetic reflections are exercised within the current global fragile framework and thus, they keep at distance postmodern sarcasm, irony and playfulness, while seeking for a conscious reconstruction of systems of mythification. The metamodern geographic thought tends to promote the reinventing of myths beyond their modern secularization and postmodern deconstruction. A new, more sophisticated, moderate and sincere version of geographical hope has emerged and is based on original phenomenological expressions that try to reflect on contemporary experience (*metaexperience*) in the margins of hi-tech reality and unsatisfied imagination. In other words, western metamodern geographical hope is simultaneously fulfilled and omni-transformed through phenomenological reconsiderations of reality and interdisciplinary references to imagination and that real-imagined amalgam is lurking inside imagined geographies. Furthermore, the common roots of imagined geographies' and orientalism (Said, 1978; Gregory, 2000) are not accidental. There is an inversion of power that is taking place amid the current global climatic, social and financial change: western world faces austerity and deprivation of its rights, while eastern world is being plagued by severe geopolitical instability. Nowadays, western hope is exiled from its postmodern picturesque place and moves to the lands of imagination. Metamodern hope is approached through atemporality and displacement and it is anew enhanced with geographic references that give allochronic (elsewheness) and allotopic (elsewhereness) qualities to future. In that way, metamodern future blurs hope's positionality within any predetermined geographical limit and praises hope's poetic aspects through a phenomenological meditation driven by imagination.

Conclusions

The paper expresses as its crucial argument that the Eschatological Schema of Promise and Fulfillment exists in different versions during Modern Times and those versions continue to influence the unfolding of Human History. The contemporary Eschatological Schema seems to retain modernity's shift from the historic to geographical perception of promise and postmodernity's meditative stance towards the fulfillment of that promise. However, the phantom of the premodern expectation for an Apocalyptic historic End still lurks within the liberal geographical positionality of tomorrow. The Blochian hope of the '*not yet*' seems to be altered into a moderate Blochian meta-hope that can be summarized in '*not anymore*' [Bloch (1954) as adapted in Liakos (2014)].

Firstly, that transformation of western future thought has sealed the fundamental transition from the extroverted Era of Promise (modernity) to the introspective Era of Fulfilment (postmodernity). Around the historical turning-point of World War II, certain events were regarded as crystallizations of future gaze's alterations: the Age of Explorations, the three Humanistic Revolutions, the Globalization and the ongoing Global Financial Crisis. Those historical phenomena are considered to have triggered different conceptions of tomorrow during these Eras. Consequently, during the Era of Promise, the premodern metaphysical apocalypse of salvation and the modern scientific vision of egalitarian progress were based on warm future promises for a certain, universal and absolute future, whereas during the Era of Fulfilment, postmodern fetishized nostalgias and metamodern a-chronic reflections on existence were influenced by cool and critical future thoughts about a 'pasted' and ambiguously open future. Secondly, those future thoughts tend to follow the evolution of geographic perception concerning fundamental concepts. The sanctification of the untouched and unknown landscapes, the dynamic nature of space as an open field for action, the ability of place in retaining histories, meaning and memory and the a-topic performative nature of contemporary spatial experience through imagined geographies, are all geographic metonymies of hope that are determined in relation to the city.

Consequently, the paper concludes that the diachronic interrelation of historico-reflective and geographical aspects has resulted to four psychogeographic schemas for conceiving urban hope: a) *Eden*, the Terrestrial Version of the Kingdom of Heaven, where the evangelized earthly paradise is grounded in the form of Edenic Garden or idyllic landscapes (e.g. Quattrocento cityscapes), b) *Utopia*, the Mechanic Universal City for Supermen that is shaped through the scientifically optimistic modern geographical conception of an archetypal city for the positionality of hope, c) *Imageria*, the Iconic Global City on Earth that is made of fragments of various cities and is considered to be a 'pasted' spectacle, and d) *Onirotopia*, the Cosmic City within, yet without Us, where the superficially iconic experience of postmodern hope is succeeded by the semi-performative and dreamy archetype of an inner Cosmic City, and symbolizes the end of the perennial journey of hope from its externally perceived positionality to its internally conceived psychogeography.

Nowadays, the four psychogeographic schemas for experiencing, conceptualizing and expecting future are revealing the on-going construction of the mosaic of future thought and are giving the form of a Matryoshka-doll to contemporary hope. The negative versions of those schemas are revealing the psychogeography of contemporary fear: *Apocalypse*, *Dystopia*, *Marginalia* and *Nihilia*.

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