About the published content on each section: integrating and reevaluating utopian ideas within different fields of study

Pedro Leão Neto and Maria Neto

The inaugural theme of scopio Magazine AAI – Vol. 1 centered around Utopia explored this concept from various angles and perspectives in each section, which involved integrating and reevaluating utopian ideas within different fields of study.

The separate sections allowed for the investigation of broader societal concerns, encouraging interdisciplinary discussions across realms such as Architecture, Public Space, Cities, Territories, Technology, Digital Media, Sustainable and Inclusive Environments, and Civic Engagement.

Thus, starting with Visual Spaces of Change section we have the Visual Essay of James Smith “Temporal Dislocation” that navigates the dialectical tension between the destruction and renewal of our relationship with landscapes, both contemporary and historical, and the intricacies of activities evident within constructed environments. The photography series highlights the cyclicality of the natural world after human intervention and is driven by a significant phenomenological intent that bridges the gap between the photographer’s deliberate framing and the casual viewer’s passive encounter with these constructed landscapes. The photograph becomes a subtle language inviting viewers to reevaluate the ostensibly banal and ubiquitous.

In the same section, Lorenzo Iannizzotto presents us with “Urban Wilderness: A Journey through Lisbon Terrain Vague”, a Visual Essay that embraces the fragmentary and uncertain nature of the spaces known as “Terrain Vague” or “Urban Voids”. The author uses photography as a means of urban exploration to gain insight into and describe these areas, and his visual essay depict these spaces in a haphazard and fragmentary manner, respecting in this way their inherent characteristics. In doing so, the work reveals the hidden beauty of those spaces and highlights the substantial potential they hold for the city.

In the section “Image, Space, and Cinematics”, the visual essay “The Earth from Above: from Below” by Rafaela Lima explores the history of aerial imagery and its profound impact on surveillance and cartography. It begins by noting that at the start of the 20th century, the ability to discern patterns from the sky was quite basic. However, the necessities of war and advancements in aeronautics soon made aerial photography a critical tool for reconnaissance and mapping, providing vital insights into terrestrial landscapes. This period’s rich collection of aerial images led to significant advances in camouflage techniques, crucial during World War II. These developments were notably documented in Harun Farocki’s film “Images of the World and the Inscription of War,” which detailed the camouflage strategies employed by German
forces. In a parallel advancement, the Pratt Institute of Art pioneered the conversion of aerial photographs into three-dimensional models for concealment, signifying a significant leap in visual interpretation strategies. Presently, cutting-edge technology facilitates intricate and almost instantaneous global surveillance. The photography series interpellates our interaction with the world’s landscapes—from unknown expanses to thoroughly mapped environments—showcasing a dramatic shift in our visual and conceptual comprehension of the Earth from above.

In the section “Contemporary Archeology,” the article “Techniques of Discovery: Cryptography and Design” by Roberto Bottazzi presents an interdisciplinary exploration of the intersection between the historical methods of cryptography and the contemporary practices of design, particularly within the digital realm. It posits that cryptography, though traditionally associated with secret communication, provides valuable insights for design processes, especially with the advent of Machine Learning (ML) models. Bottazzi argues that the core principles of cryptography, such as encoding and decoding, can be applied conceptually to design, aiding in the abstraction and interpretation of data. The essay distinguishes between analog and discrete computation, asserting that the latter’s non-mimetic, sign-based nature expands the potential for speculative design. It discusses critical historical moments, such as Alberti’s polyalphabetic cipher and Bacon’s biliteral cipher, to illustrate the evolution of cryptographic techniques and their relevance to design thinking. These historical techniques are compared with the capabilities of ML models to identify patterns and create meaning from large datasets. Bottazzi’s work highlights the strategic implications of ML in design, suggesting that the core challenge lies in the organization and instrumentalization of knowledge. This understanding shifts the conversation from creating novel forms to strategically using computational methods as tools for discovery and innovation in design. The essay concludes by framing ML models as modern extensions of cryptographic logic, which offer a methodological lens to uncover and understand the complexities of design in the digital age.

In the section Landscapes of Care, Inês Osório writes the paper “Sense of Place: How Should We Think About Urban Planning Practices Today?” writes a comprehensive analysis into the evolution of urban planning in response to socio–technological and cultural shifts. The article challenges the architectural hegemony in urban space creation and urges reconsidering diverse spatial practices. Proposing a collision path between architecture and contemporary art, it views this nexus as crucial to redefining public space and urban territory. The paper advocates for a Bauhausian approach, integrating architecture, art, and design as a symbiotic urban design triad to foster a pluralistic dialogue and reimagine urban landscapes. The author suggests transcending conventional methodologies and encouraging an artistic contribution to urban regeneration, thereby enriching the experiential quality of urban environments.

In the section Invisibility, we have the paper “Rite of the Waters: procession through the Campanhã Washhouses” of Chloe Darmon and Gabriela Manfredini, which addresses the hidden aspects of women’s work, particularly the undervaluation of domestic labor and the neglect of public washhouses as historical spaces for women. The research combines insights into the history of Porto’s washhouses, the connection between domestic labor and performance art, and multidisciplinary work in fine arts and architecture. The Des/oriente project unites these areas, leading to a performance in three washhouses that revitalized these spaces, exploring narratives around domestic work and restoring them as communal meeting places.

In the section Architecture, Urbanism and Technology, David Viana, Telma Ribeiro and Jorge Maia write the article “SI3 for urban resilience: a human–nature driven paradigm shift” that introduces the concept of SI3 (Social, Environmental, and Technological Inclusive and Innovative Solutions) for enhancing urban resilience. The article emphasizes the urgent need for a paradigm shift in our relations with each other and the built environment due to environmental challenges and climate change. It is pointed out, on the one hand, that this shift requires immediate action to reduce the impact of daily activities on the planet’s resources and adapt to the accelerating changes in natural systems. On the other hand, that working with existing urban environments to build resilience involves active community engagement, co-creation, and data–driven approaches. The article underscores the importance of connecting SI3 with everyday places and activities to ensure the sustainable operation of the “spaceship Earth” for future generations, making it a tangible and achievable goal.

In the section Utopia, Inês Nascimento writes the paper “Exploring Radical Pedagogies: Utopia (H)As The Future In Architectural Education” pointing out how architectural education finds itself at a crucial crossroads, requiring innovative approaches to adapt to evolving sociocultural contexts. The article explores the nexus between radicalism and utopia in architectural education, taking into account the pioneering experiments of the 1960s and 1970s. These experiments, marked by their critical, revolutionary, reformist, and transgressive nature, often had utopia at their core and this study seeks to revive these concepts, emphasizing their relevance and potential. The study introduces the concept of a “Utopian Lens” to categorize and analyze a range of case studies, identifying utopia as a driving force manifesting in diverse forms and principles within radical pedagogical approaches. The research provides valuable insights into the interplay of radicalism and utopia, shedding light on recurring patterns and contributing to ongoing research in the field.

2. The Editor responsible for this section is Mário Mesquita
3. The Editor responsible for this section is David Viana
In the section **Landscapes of Care**, Inês Osório writes the paper “Sense of Place: How Should We Think About Urban Planning Practices Today?” writes a comprehensive analysis into the evolution of urban planning in response to socio-technological and cultural shifts. The article challenges the architectural hegemony in urban space creation and urges reconsidering diverse spatial practices. Proposing a collision path between architecture and contemporary art, it views this nexus as crucial to redefining public space and urban territory. The paper advocates for a Bauhausian approach, integrating architecture, art, and design as a symbiotic urban design triad to foster a pluralistic dialogue and reimagine urban landscapes. The author suggests transcending conventional methodologies and encouraging an artistic contribution to urban regeneration, thereby enriching the experiential quality of urban environments.

In the section **Rethinking Civic Engagement**, José Carlos Mota and Alexandra Ataíde are the authors of the paper “Civic Innovation in Portugal. The potential and limitations of citizen labs to experiment new urban futures” that addresses democracy challenges in Portugal, including citizens’ disengagement from decision-making and declining trust in politics. They point out that despite low voter turnout and increased radicalization, there is a growing interest in participatory initiatives. The research underscores the potential of collaborative efforts between citizens and communities, serving as valuable platforms for resource mapping, knowledge integration, and low-risk social transformations. Their bottom-linked approach shows promise in civic labs’ governance models, compared to top-down institutional or bottom-up community-based approaches.

In the section **Research**, Gabriela Vaz-Pinheiro writes the article “From address to outcome, a proposal for discussing research in the art academia towards the idea of a critical landscape” that explores student involvement in actions related to landscape and knowledge, generating research processes. Landscape is approached dynamically and critically, transcending limited rural or urban descriptions and knowledge is seen as a collective process, empowering students in research and analysis. While not aiming to provide definitive answers, the text raises questions about evolving practices in art and academia, like trans or post-media practices. It questions how academic research in the art field can navigate these contradictions and differentiate roles, embracing technological shifts, reimagining education, or fostering civic engagement, reshape these spaces, emphasizing the educational significance of spatial configurations. Case studies are presented that explore cultures emerging from these interactions, spanning school spaces, urban communities, and contributions from urban artists.

In the section **Featured texts, Research papers or Projects**, Peter Bennett presents us with the series “An Ideal for Living” that explores the convergence of photography and computer-generated imagery (CGI) in portraying the future urban landscape. It closely examines London’s ongoing urban redevelopment, shedding light on how architecture serves as both a visual narrative and a construction process. The image editing in this series subtly not only mirrors CGI’s influence but also crafts a dystopian urban future hanging in the balance. These visuals provide a sneak peek into an unsettling time and space that already envelops us. They convey the unspoiled freshness of new buildings while hinting at the inevitable impact of time. “An Ideal for Living” aims to archive a simulated memory of the city’s evolution.

In the section **Exhibitions / Reviews**, Alexander García Düttmann presents us with the critical review “STONEHENGE UFO” which is focused on James Smith work published in this volume. Düttmann points out, besides other things, how the distinctive images of Smith aren’t solely defined by the objects captured, but by the angle’s transformative power, where time and space intertwine, blurring past and future and the photography becomes evidence of the impossible, an enigmatic testimony that retains art’s essence.

Finally, it can be said that across all sections, a common thread of utopian ideals weaves through various fields and perspectives, each offering a unique lens to explore and redefine the notion of utopia itself. Utopia, often depicted as an idyllic and unattainable dream, takes on diverse forms and meanings within these sections. Then, we can also perceive how the overarching theme of change unites these sections. Whether through visual transformations, reevaluating women’s roles, embracing technological shifts, reimagining education, or fostering civic engagement, change is a constant. Utopia and change together represent an enduring human quest for a better, more harmonious future, expressed in various forms across these sections, each offering a distinctive perspective on the intersection of utopian ideals and the ever-evolving landscapes of our world.