Preface

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What if you study planning, but think you lack fundamental ideas about society? What if someone else studied urban design and had not learned to radically reimagine our human world for the better? What if an architecture student set out to revisit what she studied and realised that something she thought of as essential to architectural education about cities and how they are built is entirely missing, absent, or at least in crisis? This book is driven by exactly these questions: What is it that we are seeking to learn from architecture these days when we think of the relation between how we build and how we live in cities and urban spaces?

This book is about the potential role(s) of architecture as a discipline, and of architects as urban professionals. Carolina Crijns centres her book on what architecture means to citizens when societies seek to achieve a good life, yet simultaneously experience a decade of crises. This question is essentially philosophical in nature and yet relevant to ask in these unsettled decades. From the perspective of a deeply curious young architect thirsty for knowledge in broad areas, Crijns initially delves into social theory and explores conceptions of social imaginaries as they become relevant to describe, analyse and interpret the normative and pathbreaking roles of utopia and architecture during a decade marked by multiple crises. Basic understandings of the works of Karl Marx, Karl

Mannheim, Paul Ricoeur and Cornelius Castoriadis are elaborated on, thereby making them accessible for future generations of architecture students and urban professionals alike. Crijns raises an alarm about the current ethos in architectural education and professional praxis which seemingly renders any type of utopianism as incommensurate:

> If utopia has …been sent to the back of our minds, it is either because other concepts have become more prominent in our imaginary (…) or because our ontological conception does not allow it (…) The current narrative of rendering every form of utopianism unreasonable is (…) especially troubling (…) as it is imagination itself that is being threatened. (Crijns, this volume, p. 43)

Imagining architecture without providing the capabilities and skills needed to radically envision the new, the other and the different (*Vorstellungskraft*), explores a profession in crisis. It reaches unerringly the sore points at the very heart of a discipline proud of its capacity to envision that which had never been seen before.

To spotlight in a different way how architecture is thought of and how it is taught, this book takes the reader out of the traditional ways of thinking about urban development as it invites us to wander off the beaten track. Crijns uses tactics of *estrangement* to first come to terms with key words that shape our contemporary urban experience, that is, transformation, crisis and crises, (post)modernity, (post)politics and de-politicisation. This section ends with a proposition to think of utopianism first, instead of utopia, and secondly, to think of transformative utopianisms that:

> have to be a *continuous movement* made of analytical as well as creative thinkers, lay people as well as professionals, from various and differentiating fields and parts of the world. They need to exchange, (un)learn from each other, build alliances, and envisage together, re-evaluating everyday anew. (Crijns, this volume, p. 64, original emphasis)

If urban transformation, particularly socio-ecological transformation, is thought of as a key vehicle to trigger architectural thought in times of repeated and agitated moments of crises (and as a way to avoid talking about the pros and cons of growth), then architecture has to philosophically explore its intrinsic connection to crisis as a mode of capitalist urban restructuring. While architecture has usually depicted itself in a position of the saviour, redeemer or rescuer from crisis, Crijns introduces the idea that "architecture, in some ways, *is* materialised crisis." (ibid., p. 66, original emphasis).

This is not just a single moment of provocation; this results in deep philosophical deconstruction of architecture's current educational ethos. Yet deconstruction is constructive in the sense that it allows to re-construct and co-construct what has been absent or missing in terms of values, beliefs, positions, and ideas. To do so, Crijns explores two routes to sustain her arguments when she proposes (1) to consider architecture in the crisis society; and (2) when she invites the reader to decipher crisis in architecture. It is in crisis-contexts in which architects hardly ever envision the unknown in utopian ways but seek to preclude the present or to repair it, which actually contributes to the emerging immanent speculatory crises in the field of architecture itself. This is framed and further explored by theorising space, and time, in and for urban utopianisms. This part resembles the socio-theoretical heart of this book as it interweaves the temporal and spatial, that is, relational focus, with a conception of social change while approaching a new utopianism pertinent to all types of contemporary learners and learnings in architecture.

Against this newly established conceptual-theoretical pillar contemporary ideas from urban development praxis and architectural theory are categorised either as (1) *problem-solving-utopianisms* or as (2) *question-raising-utopianisms*: The former (1) relates to space-times of control and is portrayed by sharply analysing *Degenerate Utopias* which lean towards a disavowal of crisis; *Junkspace* triggering anti-utopianism and an idea of omni-crisis, as well as *Techno-Utopias* serving as the toothless utopianist attempt to solve a crisis. The latter (2) takes on a feminist twist and refers to triggers to revisit architectural agency's political dimension, re-

think architectural education and to constitute *embodied utopianisms of care*. This part convinces the reader by placing dynamic analytical dialectic between crises and utopia(nism) and by taking it to quite different and enlightening directions.

This book cares about utopia as method: Carolina Crijns has used this method herself to envision her own appropriation of *embodied utopianisms of care* (p. 120) as a dialectical method which is used to cater towards a radically changed architectural praxis. In that sense, utopia serves as a method that works with a complex conception of care that may orient action and might ground the emergence of any contingent social structure along different temporal and spatial aspects.

This book concerns architecture as a knowledge field situated in a societal realm which is, on the one hand, increasingly marked by crisis, yet on the other hand, utopia is every bit as relevant as it has been throughout times of modernist urban development. However, the nature of utopia itself has changed, which is why this book evolves around the idea of utopianisms. This is not just a new proposal to understand utopian thinking in architecture, planning, urban design, etc. differently, it is also an approach that directly opens this thought for re-construction and co-construction of utopia in these contemporary fields. This manuscript follows an oscillating movement between social theory, philosophy, and architectural sociology, sometimes letting go of direct learnings. It transfers between the social sciences and architecture, and then swings back to explore in detail the relevance of social theory for the spatial arts, and all professions involved in building cities. Some readers might be tempted to read this oscillating movement as inconsistency or rupture, while it truly follows the dialectical method of *estrangement* which is a basic feature for this hermeneutical text production: Only by taking some distance from professional debates in architecture and related fields, critical interspace is gained towards the discipline's inherent conceptual-theoretical mechanisms as regards utopia. These ruptures, or rather: this type of *estrangement*, are nothing but a point of return which allows for a constant interweaving of social theory and architectural sociology learnings. In that sense, thinking about utopia in architecture through an everyday-theory based

lens towards care allows one to situate utopianisms beyond unfulfilled promises for a better future, and beyond the ancient Greek idea of fixing one model of society in a certain bounded territory: Utopia is relevant for today as it is actualised by critiquing everyday life in the 21st century. Utopianism – understanding utopia as a method – is a seesaw in which one learns by going further both on the side of theorising how we build cities, and on the side of how we want to live them.