New York 1997-2001; Approaching the Future - The Asymptote Experience (NAI)
Published with permission by The New York Stock Exchange Figure 3: Lev Manovich: Soft Cinema, Ambient Narrative, digital film (sequence), 2003 © Lev Manovich Figure 4: Asymptote: Interior of the New York Stock Exchange, New York Stock Exchange - the wall as the screen, New York 1997-2001, Approaching the Future - The Asymptote Experience (NAI); photograph: Eduard Hueber.
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The Phantom Menace of City in Graphic Novels

1. The popularity and unculturedness of comics

Comics. A series of pictures with texts. Spoken words or thoughts of the depicted people are usually added as clouds. In older comics or those, where additional explanations are added to reinforce the narrative, texts are added next to or below the drawing. The drawings and texts complement each other. The narrative is read and observed. Series of drawings without texts are also possible, similar to those in the pre-historical cave wall paintings that actually depict motion, success, fears and victories. The Dance of the dead in Hrastovlje [1], Trials and tribulations of Christ seen on many hills in the Slovenian countryside [2] or decorating walls of churches, are actually drawn narratives. Commonly with a definite, directed teaching, for the illiterate. They are often perfect depictions of morality, sometimes even the living environment.

Today comics are one of the many visually acceptable and/or easily understood creative fields or media for communicating narratives. In societies where only the written or (properly) spoken language is valued, drawn narratives are clearly seen as less valued communication forms. In societies where comics are accepted as a legitimate form of expression such products are known as graphic novels, placing them alongside other fields of cultural creativity. Today comics often take on the dramatics, settings and iconography or language typical for films, although the latter is a much younger form of communicating messages. However the lack of necessary realism, possibility for selection, right to reduce (in the sense of the narrative) are typical in comics, thus (directly) affecting the reader. There are no special effects in comics, except classical effects of drafting, lately also computer-generated renderings. They are not necessary; we are dealing with a drawing, which is an effect in itself. Emphasis is of course given to the visual component, since there is no graphic novel, or film for that matter, without pictures.

In Slovenia graphic novels are only now gaining in recognition, although they have always been recognized media of artistic creativity. Single-strip comics have been printed in daily newspapers since their advent. Older readers may recollect Gospod Kozamurnik, while middle-aged readers knew Zvitorepec, Trdonja, in Lakotnik, drawn by Miki Muster. The magazines Pavliha, Stop and Tribuna held the banner during the 70s. Writers that participated with artists were Milan Jesih, Marko Švabič and Stojan Černigoj. Somewhat in the spirit of Robert Crumb and his hippie ideas, anti-urbanity, political incorrectness and declared free love the Slovene cultural scene was spectacularly penetrated in 1977 by Kostja Gatnik with his collection of comics drawn on various themes, the famous Magna Purga. In the introduction Igor Vidmar wrote: »... the only bad aspect of this book of comics is ... today and never again«. Indeed, for a long time there was nothing. Attempts by the group CAC in the early 80s [3] didn't provoke much national enthusiasm for comics.

In the other Republics of former Yugoslavia circumstances were different. Comics had a legitimate right to exist there. In protest against the overbearing quantity of imported older »pulp« comics, generally printed in weekly magazines for the younger generations, e.g. Phantom, Superman, Mandrake, Flash Gordon and Johnny Hazard or translations of Italian comics predominantly dealing with themes corresponding to spaghetti westerns, such as Commandant Mark, Big Black, Zagor, Ted Viler etc., in the early 80s publishers began to intensely magnify the scope of comics production. Thus they organised serious exhibitions, workshops and competitions. They even published comics drawn by domestic authors. This was also a time of vigorous publishing of translations of the World's best graphic novels artists in specialised magazines (Bilal, Herman, Hugo Pratt, Moebius, Milo Manara, Milazzo etc. in the magazines Stripoteka, Stripart, Spunk, Gigant). When one of the awards in a competition organised in 1988 by the Serbian student's magazine NON was taken by Marjan Amalieti, a distinguished Slovenian architect and illustrator (for the graphic novel Seven fathers of Nena's child), the explanation read »we were truly surprised by this completely unknown author ...«, although he was indeed one of the most important Slovene illustrators during the 50s and was said to be under (political) scrutiny.[4]

Pre- and post-independence comics, published in the magazine Mladina, widely opened possibilities for comics artists in Slovenia, e.g. Hardfuckers or The Last war by Zoran Smiljanič [5]. The author mercilessly dealt with stereotypes of Slovenian identity, such as roadside chapels, the mountains, idyllic family farms, as well as known xenophobic fears about the poor and foreigners (basically Slovenian citizens of non-Slovenian ethnic background), usually with both simultaneously. Recently authors gathered around the group Stripcore and the magazine Stripburger enabled important advancements in graphic novels. Today there is hardly any serious Slovenian daily newspaper that doesn't carry at least one single-strip comic, at least on the pages dealing with entertainment. There we can recognise certain urban icons, such as street lamps, benches, traffic, buildings etc.

2. The narratives and motif of city in graphic novels

The renaissance romantic Luciano Laurana drew three famous paintings of the ideal city and showed types of buildings and principles of composition, which should emanate the spirit of the time. A condensed thought describing his

ideas is the sentence: The daily practice of architectural creativity is to envision buildings and cities that will be built in the future and in visualising imagination in perspective drawing. The work of the architect, artist, is therefore depicting one's visions, which will or will not be built. The talented individual with the skill of presenting one's ideas should therefore draw the image of the world for the less talented. There are no people in these drawings; there is only architecture, imaginary physical forms, drawn by the individual. Nothing happens in these drawings, architecture and city are empty vessels; the author doesn't delve or get directly involved with real use of the space. Even today most specialised architectural magazines follow this pattern, very rarely can one distinguish an integrated image of a person using a space or architecture or at least admiring it.

Several centuries later Robert Venturi and associates wrote the book »Learning from Las Vegas« and triggered a lively discussion about the responsiveness of architecture to desires and tastes of »ordinary« people. They also called for less immodesty in building heroic self-promoting monuments. By reflecting on stylistic history and symbolism they tried to recognise new forms of buildings (cities), structures that directly respond to speed, motion, corridors and changing life-styles. Classical narrative powers of architecture apparently cannot satisfy contemporary needs in communication. They described a kind of new vernacular architecture built from nominal »ignorance« of its builders, which doesn't emerge slowly in ateliers of suitably educated professionals, but quickly and in reality, and disappears even faster, or rather is substituted with newer ones, adequate to the moment and pending needs.

Comics - graphic novels, as a literary form and simultaneously type of artistic expression, can be understood as a new vernacular art of depicting life and processes as images and texts, easily accessible and understood by all, similarly to the previously described architecture. Contrary to un-illustrated literary work that uses only words to expand, limit or direct a readers imagination, graphic novels also use images. Such images, devoid of all rubbish of reality, which aren't in the narrative's function, can be understood as a model or a purposefully devised setting for it. These settings are nevertheless as realistically as possible, at least aligned to the narrative, as its physical framework. Similarly to the mentioned trials and tribulations of Christ, they are models of the story's hero's morality and living circumstances.

3. The model of city as the comic's setting of graphic novels

When urban models are the topic, they have to be differentiated by their purpose. In more complex, multi-layered urbanistic and planning theory models, developed at first to control development and quantities of automobile traffic in large industrial cities, they are fundamentally merged gravitational models conditioning social interaction and macro- economic theories. Physical elements are often only the framework for experimenting. They are therefore spatial interaction models linked with elementary economic mechanisms. Lowry-Garin's model for example, describes cities as sums of various land uses that can be described with measurable economic and demographic.[6] Recent models that are more suited for contemporary information-based cities contain at least three groups of elements: urban policies, urban forms and urban processes. The spaces they describe are formal-mathematical (basic database to which all other data is applied); physical-social-economic (where quantities and levels of interaction and mutual cohesion are established) and subjective-experiential (as a criterion the most important element, since they are the basis for decision-making, i.e. they are conditioned by the cognitive capabilities of individuals or groups).

In graphic novels the matter is much simpler, but simultaneously complex and subjective, since the selected urban model and its motifs or images are full of other or hidden meanings. Links between social and physical components are in the hands of the author or each depiction. The urban model, the setting, is always manipulated to the novel's narrative. Even with a quick historical review of urban models presented in graphic novels, we can establish that ideas about physical development and use of space are generally shown in extreme form.

The first episode of the Star Wars trilogy uses an excellent physical representation of city, which serves as a metaphor of a decadent society caught within the bounds of its own rules that can be easily manipulated to the advantage of a wellorganised targeted group. In the film Phantom Menace the Parliament of the inter-planetary federation is on the planet Coruscant I[7]I. Nothing exceptional, if the whole planet wasn't one large city, the place of decision-making is a vast urbanised environment! The Parliament itself is a vast hive of mobile cells, occupied by MP's, representatives of a particular planet's interests. Although this article mainly deals with graphic novels, one has to mention that in the genre of science fiction, the link between film and graphic novels has always been very strong, e.g. Flash Gordon, Judge Dredd, Star Wars etc. Only in the recent decade have breakthroughs in computer graphics enabled filmmakers to show imaginary environments, motion, machinery and creatures with a high level of believable realism and probability. Formerly this was the domain of graphic novels; after all, they weren't for real ...

4. Settings and images of city and the narrative of graphic novels

4.1 Setting of big brother's control

In many older Christian churches, somewhere in the church's ornaments, often there is an image of the patron saint of the town where the church stands. The town is always only an object, which exists only in the safe protection of somebody - an individual, its master, or a saint - the physical transfiguration of the bearer of an idea. Sometimes the image even shows the town's environment - the protector is stronger, the power exercised covers larger expanses. Sometimes at the bottom of the image of the protected object, the protector's subjects are shown going about their day-to-day activities, such as farming, trading, building, hunting, tending to livestock etc. Even the oldest representation of city, for example the Egyptian hieroglyph, depicts the city with such symbolism, but with a twist. The symbol for city integrally contains a wall and crossroads, i.e. it shows a place of exchange and security. It simultaneously points out that it is a controlled space, into which undesirable elements cannot enter.

Utopian setting

Enki Bilal (Enes Bilalovič, a Serbian emigrant to Paris) shows such an extreme reality in the graphic novel *The town that didn't exist* **[8], i.e. a decision-maker's patronizing care about ones subjects or an extreme depiction of a welfare state. The heiress of a crumbling industrial giant, with a strong guilty conscious, directs all her property into the building of a utopian (ideal) city. This place should become the home of all the vacated city's inhabitants, most of them her employees, since she feels an unbelievable Tolstoy-like duty towards her subjects. The presented ideas about the idleness of most individuals that comply to such specific rule and control of their »benefactor« and leave their historical home for a new** *ready-made* **living environment, provided by the Master (employer) are rather interesting. Even more interesting is the small group of rebels that escapes the offered pattern of selected, perfect and definite city, a specific Disneyland of ideal former icons, and goes fishing in the (now) wilderness.**

Distopian setting

Multi-national companies control the hyper-urbanised environment depicted in the science fiction graphic novel *Rank Xerox* [9]. **The masters children are taken care of by programmed androids. The apparent rulers of the world are well-paid adolescents, but true control is exercised from the top floors of skyscrapers with monitored entrances, whose masters take decisions about everything. Images of the city, for example public urban spaces, are miserable, dark, poorly maintained, violent and overcrowded; they are outside the ruler's or decision-makers interest. The masters on the contrary live in spacious, expansive, empty, well-lighted, safe and clean places.**

A different dramatic framework is shown in the graphic novel *Teddy* **bear, [10] where a group of freedom-loving individuals live in conspiratorial seclusion on a magnificent ship somewhere on the world's oceans, away from the continental population controlled by media multinational companies. These provide the »games«. Apparently there is no problem with providing »bread«. The geographical and climatic hypothesis of the novel is that the Arctic and Antarctic icecaps have melted and that the surviving population lives in new cities built on higher ground. The image of these cities doesn't differ much from the present ones. The ship resembles those that contemporary designers are planning as completely secure and controlled tax havens for the sophisticated affluent modern-day individuals, floating around the globe outside territorial waters. The** *establishment* **sinks it, but the conspiracy nevertheless succeeds.**

Post- or pre-apocalyptic setting

The time depicted in most fantastic graphic novels is the time after the Third World War, a nuclear apocalypse, when the few remaining survivors created a new World. On purpose or by chance elements used to depict this World are reflections on pre-industrial times. In the graphic novel *Storm* **[11] the hero is a surviving astronaut who after protracted aimless wandering in space lands on Earth, a planet quite different from what he remembered. The setting is in fact the bottom of the sea - it vanished after the apocalypse - while the towns themselves resemble those of impoverished Northern Africa or the regionalistic** *pastishe* **known from many Mediterranean tourist resorts (e.g. Port Cervo in Sardinia), built in the early 60s of the 20th century. A similar environment, but in a dilapidated form, was shown in the Mad Max films.**

The Mercenary **I[12] is a graphic novel that cannot be positioned in real time easily. The hero is an operative of a militant monastic order (defender of good), commanded by a supreme priest (always dressed in white). They are engaged in a fight against the followers of a disgraced and expelled member of the order (always dressed in black). The setting is the whole planet, while the motifs used for depicting cities and architecture can be found in Mediterranean Christian and Moslem societies of the middle ages.**

4.2 Degraded urban setting

Setting of social stratification

In the known graphic novel *Alan Ford* **[13] the seat of an exceptionally efficient non-institutional intelligence company, employing underpaid, emotionally immature types gathered from all winds, is in a degraded urban area. The group successfully battles against generally overfed and correspondingly emotionally unfit representatives of the** *establishment.* **The urban imagery shows two extremes of the living environment - total poverty and total affluence. The main actors nevertheless, whatever their social standing or economic power, successfully live in both environments. In short, degraded urban environments are not those where the visual image is bad, but those, where there is no innovation, libido and passion for change or dynamics.**

In the graphic novel *Slovenian sauna* **[14] Kociper and Moderndorfer portray a discussion between seven middle- aged men sitting in a sauna. The setting is definitely an enclosed space but urban motifs can be recognised from their discussion, e.g. traffic (one of them has parked his car improperly and he is afraid that it will be towed away), football and public spaces (separated from private space by a miserable door), in which the loudest player will end up completely naked. Although the prevailing theme of the story is marital infidelity, many other themes pop up, such as alcoholism and mistrust of politicians »politics is to blame for lousy football«.**

Setting of infrastructure illusions

In the episode Siberian Fire in the graphic novel *Gypsy* **[15] a two-layered World is shown. The first layer is completely technological, fast moving, with emphasis on exchange. This layer includes control over modes or buildings of technological infrastructure and is physically raised above the layer of day-to-day life and nature. Somehow it resembles the megastructure of Isozake and other architects from the 60s. The central urban setting and spaces of exchange are in communication nodes, or more precisely, on the intercontinental highway C3C, whose owner is, of course, a multinational company. The second layer is far below, which is ruled by laws of nature, hordes of savages, cruel climatic conditions (the novel is positioned in the extreme environment of Northern Siberia) and fight for survival. In the other episodes, the hero, a Romanian Roma, experiences various adventures while travelling on the mentioned highway. An interesting twist is that only the space lying directly along the highway sustains life, as we know it today, and is generally accepted as civilised. Everything else is wilderness.**

A Slovenian artist, Ciril Horjak very imaginatively showed representation of distance in the graphic novel *Ride* **[16]. The setting is the road between Ljubljana and Ravne na Koroškem. [17] The heroes, Cyril and Mishima, an anthropomorphic mouse and driver, travel on the old road. Not even by chance do the heroes of the story stray onto the highway**

(at least until Arja vas, the exit used when travelling to Ravne from Ljubljana) and thus shorten their voyage. For two days! During their voyage they observe crumbling vacated industrial buildings and gravel pits. They rest in Trojane (Atrans, a mountain pass known since Roman times, today known for its scrumptious doughnuts) and Huda Luknja (a gorge where the railway to Ravne ran). From their discussion we can discern that in the recognition and knowledge of most Slovenians living in the capital city, Ravne is truly very, very far away. They are nevertheless delighted that the factory in Ravne is in trouble »before, the factory was very important ... tanks and anchors brought revenue«, and cleaner environment with slight ecological scepticism »since the river Meža became cleaner even the herons returned ... actually I'm not sure, whether there ever were herons on Meža.«

4.3 Symbolically packed setting

Political setting

The multi-layered and emotionally intense novel *A Jew in Communist Prague* [18] shows the traumatic state of the city after World War 2. The religious categorisation of the main player is a marketing gaff, thus he is twice stigmatised member of society. First he is the child the establishment's enemy and second, he is a member of a stigmatised people. The story shows Prague realistically, but without any expressiveness. The images of the city are just a physical backdrop or framework of events and don't figure in the player's traumas, one can easily recognise iconic buildings in Prague, such as the Charles« Bridge, the Castle Hradčany, the Ventzeslas Square etc. Contrary to the other presented examples, in which predominantly radical spatial conditions and the domination of technology are stressed intentionally, maybe because of the poor dramaturgical framework or single-oriented stories, here no interplay between the used imagery and events occurs. The individual's story has the advantage.

The city as fetish

The graphic novel *Fever in Urbicand* [19] starts with a plea by the *urbatect* (town architect - urbanist) to the municipal council, to embark on the building of a direly needed third bridge across the river and connect the east-lying parts of the city. Then he finds an unusual square on his desk, which begins to grow incessantly. It is a living thing that gradually bridges the river, until then successfully dividing the city into two distinct parts. The first is aesthetically perfect (built in stone on an orthogonal grid, with imagery taken from drawings by Boulle and Sant'Ellia), the second irrational. The inhabitants of both cities soon recognised that they can use this frame to cross the river and visit the unknown other city. A bridge is surely and always a good metaphor for preventing social segregation. Therefore, the phenomenal structure first caused alarm, the city's aldermen were afraid of the people from the »wrong« side of the river. Then it stopped growing and at first triggered enthusiasm, then commercial exploitation and finally control, when individuals erected pay-booths on the structures prongs and started collecting bridge tolls. When the *urbatects* fiance expressed her desire to visit the other part of the city »because she had never been there«, he scolds her »I really don't see why you wanted to come here. This part of the city has never been as nice as ours. Look how dirty and disorderly everything is« She replies »maybe its not so bad the way it is!« Then the structure started to grow again and everything the people built on it collapsed. It grew until it completely vanished from the city and became a cosmic structure. The *urbatect* who spoke for the structure and pleaded against its commercialisation was then invited by the aldermen to build it again. He refused since even the first one wasn't a product of human endeavour.

The presented understanding of cities is quite illustrative: the first, where everything is planned, thought out and controlled, and the second, which is a self-regulated spatial structure that is intentionally left over to its own inertia and develops unhindered thus defying trodden paths of the mind. Between the rational and irrational there is a river or, as a metaphor, a void. Simple crossing is impossible without the use of the, until then, unknown means. Even emotional responses to the novelty by the players in the novel are disturbingly predictable and trivial. Although in effect it (at least temporarily) improves their quality of life and perception of space, in most people the unknown, free structure, nevertheless, invokes fear.

5. Conclusion

The subject of this article was the image of city in graphic novels; the city, which is not drawn by architects or other professionals, but individuals capable of storytelling and drawing. Comics are a »fast« media, similar to fashion, popular music and advertising. Comics are a legitimate mode of expression, they are (at last) seriously discussed and similar to other environments even in the domestic one, they have become a motif that is used often, whatever the genre of the product.

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Notes

[1] The Dance macabre is a series of frescoes in the Holy Trinity Church in Hrastovlje, a small Istrian village. The church was built in the 12th century while the artist Janez of Ka- stav painted the illuminations in 1490. The frescoes depict the Genesis, passion and Dance of the dead. The latter is a pictorial guide about the Ten Commandments.

[2] In the Slovene countryside many churches occupy vantage positions on hilltops. Often they have a series of chapels running from the foot of the hill to the church, in which there are typical images of Christ bearing the cross on his passage to Golgotha to be crucified.

[3] The group CAC were: Sašo Jankovič, Branko Drekonja, Bogo Zupančič, Polona Kresal, Boštjan Debelak, Fatih Hodžič, Igor Ribič and Ivan Stanič.

[4] The competition was organised by the editors of the magazine NON from Belgrade and Stripoteka from Novi Sad under the brand name »Stari mačak«, a borrowed nickname of the Croatian comics legend Andrija Maurovič. The winning competition entries were published in a special edition of the magazine NON in January 1988. The publisher P. Amalieti reprinted the mentioned graphic novel in the Slovene language in 1990.

[5] Smiljanič, Zoran [alias Vittorio de la Croce] (1999) 1991 - zadnja vojna, Mladina, Ljubljana; Smiljanič, Zoran [alias Vittorio de la Croce] (1999) 1945; 1943, Mladina, Ljubljana.
[6] Star Wars, Episode 1:The Phantom Menace, 1999.
[7] More in Wegener, 1994.
[8] Bilal, Enki; Christin, Pierre (1989) The town that didn't exist, Catalan communications, New York.
[9] Liberatore, Tamburini in Chabat (1997) Ranx 3 - Amen, Heavy metal books, New York.
[10] Gess (1997) Teddybear: Djumbo warrior, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 2.

[11] Lawrence, Don, Lodewijk, Martin (1997) Storm: The living planet, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 6.
[12] Segrelles, Vicente(1983) The mercenary - The cult of the sacred fire & the formula, NBM, New York.
[13] Magnus, Bunker (1973) Alan Ford, Super strip, Vjesnik, Zagreb.
[14] Kociper, Marko, Modendorfer, Vinko (2001) Slovenska savna, Strip-core, Ljubljana.
[15] Marini, Smolderen (1997) Gypsy: Siberian Fire, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 5.
[16] Horjak, Ciril (2003) Ride, Forum, Ljubljana. In Slovenian the word *Ride* translates as winding road.
[17] Ljubljana is the capital of Slovenia; Ravne na Koroškem is a small industrial town, known for its formerly bustling steel works and armaments industry, now undergoing restructuring with all inherent social problems. The distance between them is about 150 km.
[18] Giardino, Vittorio (1994) A Jew in communist Prague, 1. episode: Loss of innocence, NBM, New York.
[19] Schuiten Francois, Peeters, Benoit (1990) Fever in Urbani- cand, NBM, Jackson Heights, New York.

For sources and literature turn to page 21.

Illustrations:

Figure 1: *The cover of the famous collection of comics Magna Purga, drawn by Kostja Gatnik, from 1977 (reprint 1997). The words in the foreword written by Igor Vidmar: »today and never again«, almost came true.*

Figure 2: *Cover of the compendium Strip Strup by the CAC group, published in 1984.*

Figure 3: *»The town that didn't exist« (utopian city) during construction and the abandoned city.*
(source: Bilal, Enki; Christin, Pierre (1989) The town that didn't exist, Catalan communications, New York, p. 45 (table 43 and cover).

***Figure** 4: Teddy bear - post-apocalyptic World. The first image shows the Scottish Highlands, now a totally urbanised and degraded environment, the second shows the »mega-ship«, home of refugees from the »civilised« and controlled world. (Source: Gess (1997) Teddy Bear: Jumbo warrior, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 2, pp. 14 and 104).*

Figure 5: *Storm - the city travelling across a sea of magma. The novel was drawn thirty years after the first presentation of the Archigram group's project Mobile city from the sixties of the last century. Parallels with the project are of course possible. »Large« architectural and urbanistic ideas are therefore still quite lively, despite the politically declared sustainable orientation of urban development.*
(Source: Lawrence, Don, Lodewijk, Martin (1997) Storm: The living planet, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 6, p. 33 (table 10)).

Figure 6: *Gypsy - large infrastructure is extremely vulnerable, especially in radically stratified social environments. (Source: Marini, Smolderen (1997) Gypsy: Siberian Fire, Heavy Metal, Vol. XXI, No. 5., p. 120)*

Figure 7: *Schuiten's representation of the divided city and the freely growing structure (Source: Schuiten Francois, Peeters, Benoit (1990) Fever in Urbanicand, NBM, Jackson Heights, New York, p. 86)*

Laurant-Paul ROBERT

Vesna PETREŠIN ROBERT

New media of urbanity

1. Digital utopias

The concept of a utopian city, which by definition exists in a place that doesn't exist, represents an important influence on the development of web-communities, virtual cities, and hybrid e-consuming cities. At present times when we are witnessing a decay of democratic values and of national state formations it is quite possible that it is the historical memory of the dangers of literal understanding and blind convictions to different utopias, which helped to a more sceptical relation to a global economy and to the World Web.

Utopian cities are not global, they are rather small and legible (for instance the ideal city of Palmanova), they don't greatly challenge the social and moral codes, and they don't challenge the possibility of existing in anonymity. Ideas about bigger utopian cities were developed after the industrial revolution, especially garden cities, which, as a linkage of smaller more controlled units defied the growing agglomeration and mass culture. Marshall McLuhan's utopian vision of a society based on electro-communications from the sixties also spoke about a totally connected world like The Global Village.

Cyberspace or better yet virtual environments appeared during the decline of modernistic ideals about the development and fulfilment possibilities of an individual in the framework of society. The beginnings of cyber-architecture and neo-futurism obviously came from the ideas of futurism and avant-garde: *»We have lost our taste for the monumental, the heavy, the static, and we have enriched our sensibility with a taste for the light, the practical, the ephemeral and the swift... We-who are materially and spiritually artificial - must find... inspiration in the elements of the utterly new mechanical world we have created, and of which architecture must be the most beautiful expression.«* **(Sant'Elia, A. In: Apollonio, U. (ed.), 1973) [1]**

The non-organic world of the future, which was charted in the manifests of the Futurists, in many ways resembles fictitious cyberspaces; as Florian Roetzer I²I emphasized the only places of difference inside virtual worlds are the spaces of wars and disasters.

In the world of science fiction the computer and cyberspace are frequent synonyms for man's thinking cyberspace as an electronic utopia offers dangers and pleasures. The fact that digital technologies change us along with the changes they bring upon our environment has been pointed out quite often in electronic pop-culture.

2. Virtual city

Where are the beginnings of the virtual city?
In the western culture the idea of a surreal city comes as a heritage of the Christian mythology, and as a consequence of modern problems of living in the urban environmment