MUO-E8023 - Values in Design Futures

Eeva Berglund – 02.5.2019– Utopia

Today – on the many uses of Utopia

- Utopia as an idea in European history
  - *READING DISCUSSION – CHANGE OR PROGRESS (Morgan)*
- Practical and material utopias
- Visualisation assignment – begin group work

BREAK

- Utopia as method
- Essay assignment discussion
- Visualisation – begin group work

UTOPIA – AN IDEA

Utopia as a desirable future

Outopos   = no place

Eutopos   = good place   **idea(list)**

An imagined perfect society

materia(list)

$\Rightarrow$ **Draws attention to gap between**

              FACT and VALUE or
              IS and OUGHT

Utopia as vision or a plan for change

A (better) alternative

- Manifestos, political programmes, social and political theories

- Commercial and state communications

- Doing things differently

My utopia might be your **dystopia**

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New World, New knowledge, New social structures

Thomas More's *Utopia* 1516

A different place

A different time

Different laws and morals

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* 1624

Technology, resources, unknowns

⇒ **The scientific revolution**

On the island of Utopia, as recounted by the fictional character Raphael:

'They keep very few horses, and no really tame ones, as they only use them for riding practice. Ploughing and pulling carts is done by oxen. … The Utopians say they are less trouble and less expensive to feed.... Corn is used solely for making bread..."

"They never force people to work unnecessarily, for the main purpose of their economy is to give each person as much time free from physical drudgery as [possible]... Now, I'd better explain their social arrangements. Each town consists of six thousand households, not counting the country ones…"

One of Renaissance Europe's key innovations: progress

"the idea of progress and the modern image of the future were conceived as dynamic, realizable pursuits for humankind. For the first time in history, the idea of progress and the image of the future took hold of the social consciousness and imagination, exerting a powerful influence that formed the motif of the modern era" (Morgan 2015)

Religious, utopian, colonial elements mingled in European identity

IDENTITY AND THEORIES OF TIME

- **Not just the 'protestant ethic' and its future guaranteed in Heaven, but the pull of the Land of Milk and Honey here, perhaps, on this Earth…**

IDENTITY AND SPACE

- **A colonising, expansionist mindset**

MODERNS ARE EUROPEANS ARE MODERNS…?

COMPETING UTOPIAS – WOMEN AND OTHER SUBORDINATE GROUPS

E.g. Christine de Pizan *The Book of the City of Ladies*, c. 1405

"Things could be different…"
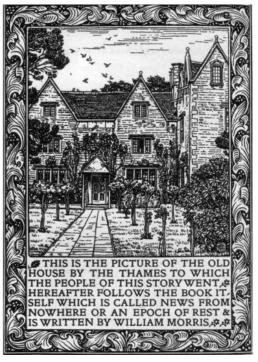
"What will come..."

Master of the City of Ladies, Wikimedia Commons

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* 1818

- It's not the monster that is the villain of the story, but the scientist who created him

- Frankenstein monsters have an established role in Western popular culture

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Utopian social thought and fictional social worlds – late 19th century

THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE OLD HOUSE BY THE THAMES TO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THIS STORY WENT. HEREAFTER FOLLOWS THE BOOK IT. SELF WHICH IS CALLED NEWS FROM NOWHERE OR AN EPOCH OF REST & IS WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS

19th century *simple-lifers* and other *'cranks in the garden'*

Artists and crafts people protesting against industrial alienation

Intentional communities
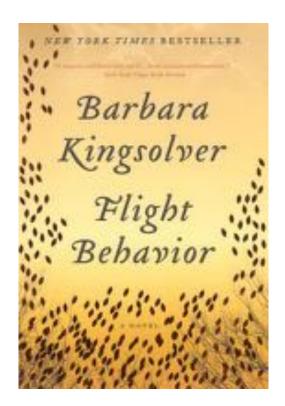
William Morris *News from Nowhere*
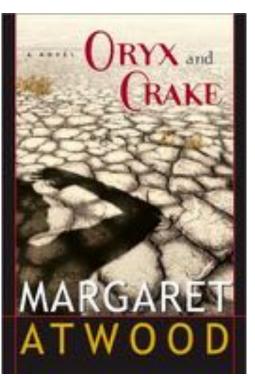
Science Fiction and Eco-Futures

Ursula Heise

- Imagining future relationships between humans and others
  - Nature
  - Technology
- Dealing with transformation "something has changed"
- A mode of anticipation – preparing, impacting, but not forecasting
⇒ A future that is almost here, has incompletely arrived

Science Fictions

Frederic Jameson: future visions are better understood as a way of apprehending the present as history - of a possible future

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Group discussion: modernity and the idea of progress

Discuss the reading in groups of 4-5 Run through all the questions and then choose one of those on the right to discuss in depth

What was the key message you took from this text?

What surprised you and what did you disagree with and why?

Consider the different uses of the term 'utopia'

How could you 'think with' Morgan to better understand 'futures thinking' (cf. Session 1)
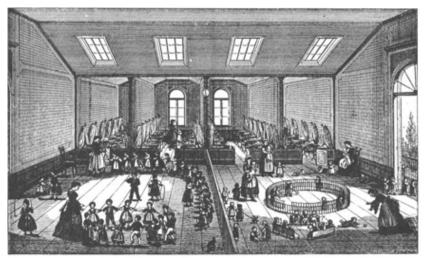
Designing a better world – practical and material utopia

Prefigurative activism: Do It Yourself Do It With Others

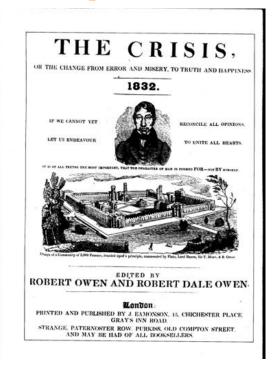# Architectural experiments to improve society

Child care facilities, the Familistiere, *Social Solutions*, translated from French to English 1873

Socialist feminists campaigned against the 'hatefully monotonous' drudgery of preparing 1,095 meals a year and then cleaning up.

Dolores Hayden 'Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses', *Signs*, Vol.4(2), 1978.

Literally building new worlds: radical and utopian socialism

THE CRISIS,
OR THE CHANGE FROM ERROR AND MISERY, TO TRUTH AND HAPPINESS

1832.

IF WE CANNOT YET   RECONCILE ALL OPINIONS,
LET US ENDEAVOUR   TO UNITE ALL HEARTS.

EDITED BY
ROBERT OWEN AND ROBERT DALE OWEN.

London:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. EAMONSON, 15, CHICHESTER PLACE, GRAY'S INN ROAD.

- Communitarian ideals – a world in miniature
- Power and property in the domestic economy
- Who has money to experiment with housing?
- E.g. Charles Fourier: the single-family dwelling is the greatest obstacle to improving the position of women

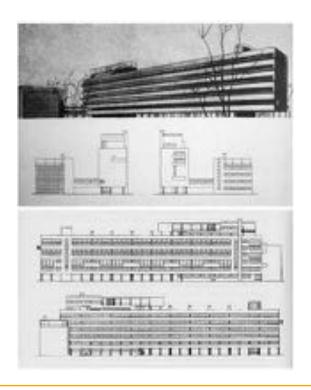# Literally building new worlds: reformist and philanthropist utopias

Port Sunlight for Lever 1887

Model industrial housing for model industrial workers

Swimming pool, hospital, allotment gardens. Religious buildings.

Compare to 'garden suburbs' and 'garden cities' around Europe

Literally building new worlds: Soviet architecture

- E.g. Dom Narkomfin, Moscow, completed 1932

- Architecture for the collective

- An explicit intervention into the everyday lives of the inhabitants

- No kitchens (supposedly)

Arts, crafts and new technologies
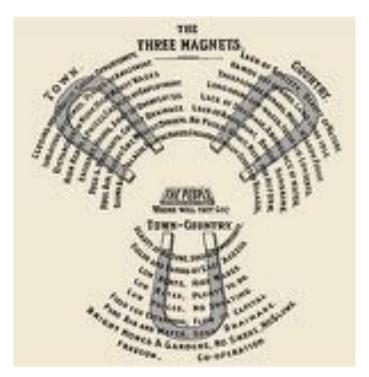# And new identities and political units

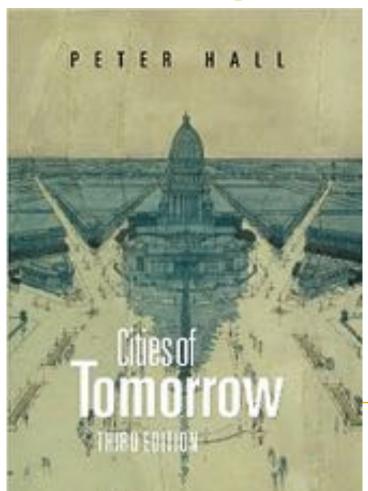# Appeal of gardening and return to nature as a route to a better future?

Garden City activist **Ebenezer Howard's** three magnets:

"out of this joyous union will spring … a new civilization"

- To appeal to Tory (right-wing), Anarchist, Socialist alike

George McKay (2011) *Radical Gardening*

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The anarchist roots of spatial and economic planning

'Many … of the early visions of the planning movement stemmed from the anarchist movement, which flourished in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth'.

Peter Hall

The problem was the giant city

Industrialism and slums a ubiquitous problem.

Hall: many utopian solutions were proposed

- Suburbia
- The city in the garden
- The city in the region
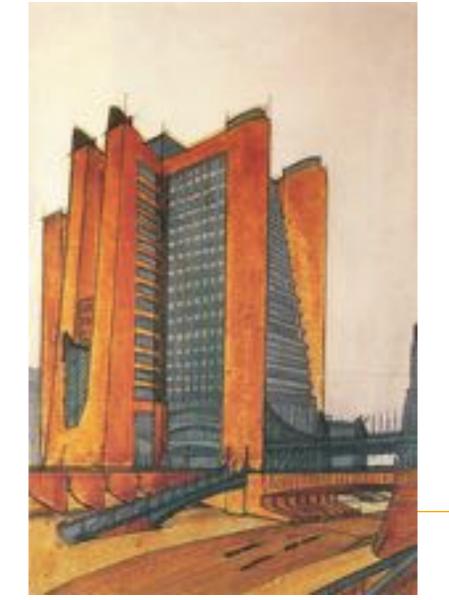- The city beautiful (monumental)
- The city of towers
- And so on…

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Utopianisms to totalitarianisms left and right

Battles over the definition of Utopia

"Nazi Germany was the first European country to establish nature reserves, the first country to insist that new tree plantations should include deciduous as well as conifers and passed laws in 1940 protecting hedgerows & small woods. The rise of the technocrats among the leadership of the fascist regime eventually led to open hostility towards the mystics and ecologists and after Hess's flight to England all such groups were tainted with treason in the eyes of the Gestapo, who started a campaign of harassment of organic farmers and other such groups."

Chris Coates *Utopia Britannica*

Futurist fantasies

Città Nuova by Antonio San'Elia

"the utterly new world we have created"

- 'furore of experimentation' in pre-World War I Europe

Theresienstadt concentration camp, World War II, organic garden

The modern movement

http://architecturalvisits.com/en/2013/09/17/weissenhof-le-corbusier/

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Utopia Now! Prefiguring the good life here and now

1960s & 1970s a new surge of social experiments

consumer culture and Viet Nam war

$\Rightarrow$ Antiauthoritarian return to nature

$\Rightarrow$ Technological optimism

See Iain Boal et al. *West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California*, 2012.

Counterculture and hippie modernism

""We are as gods and might as well get good at it. … a realm of intimate, personal power is developing – power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested."

Stewart Brand, *The Whole Earth Catalog,* 1968

Breaking free, dropping out, claiming autonomy

"We feel few compulsions. We make things. We are dedicated to not being employed, being employed truly by ourselves in the making of things."

Peter L. Douthit,
aka Peter Rabbit, in *Arts Magazine,* 1967

Drop city: exit from the capitalist-spectacular society of passive consumption…

Simon Sadler 'Drop City Revisited', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 2006.

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Flower power and occupations

Continuation or re-working of 19th century alternatives

- Utopian gardening for an alternative future
- Continuation of earlier romantic traditions
- New significance from environmental movement

People's Park, Berkeley, CA: "we shall build our new culture on the vacant lot of the old"

Again: communal living

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Creating tools to live differently, de-schooling society

"Ever bigger machines, entailing ever bigger concentrations of economic power and exerting ever greater violence against the environment, do not represent progress: they are a denial of wisdom".

E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful,* 1973

"People must learn to live within bounds. This cannot be taught. Survival depends on people learning fast what they cannot do. They must learn to abstain from unlimited progeny, consumption, and use.

Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* 1973

Utopia as method – designing society

Levitas inspired by H. G. Wells

- Author of *War of the Worlds* and many other science fiction classics

- Political reformer and educational activist

- Enthusiast of the discipline of sociology

See Ruth Levitas (2010) 'Back to the future: Wells, sociology, utopia and method', *The Sociological Review*

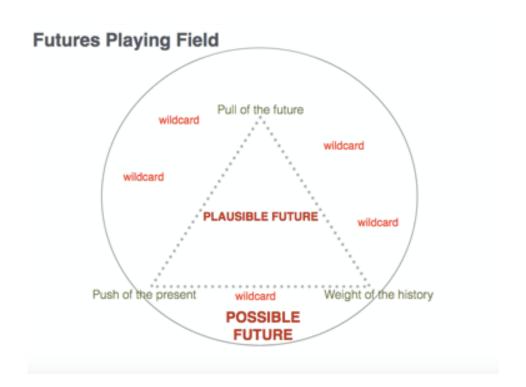# From Levitas: IROS – Imaginary Reconstitution of Society

The context is commodification of knowledge and standardisation of ways of **designing life**

Wanting to judge what we *are* doing in relation to what we *could* or *should* do

The method: Utopia as archaeology

"   as ontology

"   as architecture

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Futures Playing Field

PPPP. Illustration by Dunne & Raby.

From Dunne and Raby
*Speculative Everything:
Design, fiction and
social dreaming*

Peter Frase: *Four Futures – Life after capitalism*

Communism: Equality and abundance

Rentism: Hierarchy and Abundance

Socialism: Equality and Scarcity

Exterminism: Hierarchy and Scarcity

Is it easier to imagine the end of the world than of capitalism? (Fredric Jameson)

Ecological catastrophe

&

Automation

- Technophilia / -phobia

- Scarcity / abundance

Utopia as a desirable future

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Eutopos   = good place   **idea(list)**

An imagined perfect society   **materia(list)**   **?**

⇒ Affects the relationship between

FACT and VALUE or
IS and OUGHT

About your final assignment

An essay on the film *Twelve Monkeys* More information to come on MyCourses

Film viewing Wednesday 8.5. at 14:30, room Q202

What does the film tell us about how futures could be imagined when it was made? Pay attention to material and immaterial qualities of those futures.

Submit your essay as a PDF not later than May 31, 17:00. The essay should:

- Have a cover page with assignment title, title of your essay and your name;

- Use a language appropriate for scholarly work;

- Be max. 2000 words, use figures, images and illustrations as needed to support the ideas and arguments presented;

- Be grammar/spell-checked and formatted and referenced in line with APA convention (if needed do a search on how to write reports and how to reference materials in APA convention).

See 'Eeva's Essay Writing Guidance' for tips (file in MyCourses)

About your group assignment

Shopping centres in Finland

Finland's first shopping centre 1956 – in Herttoniemi, Helsinki

Increased cooperation between Chambers of Commerce, companies (in Finland S and K chains in particular) and municipal authorities

Urban development thought of as regional with Finland's rapid urbanization in the post-war era

Restructuring of retail trade but also of everyday life in the 1960s. Different approaches in residential areas (Tapiola) versus traffic hubs (Puhos)

Ongoing "creative destruction" and "crises of over-accumulation"

See also: deadmalls.com

What is it for? Who is it for?

Produce a visual image of a future cityscape (a single image of a scene that is also a vision of a possible future). Through brainstorming, realizing and annotating your image, you will collectively explore how values can become materialized in actual places. The exercise is based on real locations. Think of any shopping centre you know or can get to know in the Helsinki region.

Your visualisation should be around the year 2050.

How are the features of the social world you imagine made MATERIAL?

What SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS PRIORITIES could go with the following features?

Valuing:

- Technical novelty

  Efficiency & consumerism

- Political decentralization

  individualism

- Well-being

  hedonism

- Heritage

  inclusivity