

THE 3RD EXPERT MEETING

HOPE IN A HOPELESS WORLD: SKETCHES FOR A NEW SOCIETY



JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY
IN KRAKÓW



DOM UTOPII
międzynarodowe centrum empatii

JUNE 24, 2022

Jagiellonian University

Utopia Home – International Empathy Centre

Os. Szkolne 26a, Krakow, Poland

1. UTOPIAN THINKING IN DYSTOPIAN TIMES: IN SEARCH FOR HOPE IN A HOPELESS WORLD

21st century has started with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 which have shaken up our western world and proven that history had not ended yet, contrary to the utopian vision of the global victory of liberalism famously claimed by Fukuyama. These events revealed instability and vulnerability of our world order, further deepened by the economic recession, climate change, refugees' crisis, the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In his blog on political utopianism, Walzer has argued for the revival of utopian thinking, claiming that the most successful liberal regimes have adopted utopian ideologies. Utopia has three main functions, according to Ricœur: 1) **escape** from reality into a better world which is nowhere; 2) **critique** of social reality by introducing its alternative; 3) **reconstruction** of reality by imagination and by exploration of the new possibilities. The power of utopian thinking to transform social reality depends on hope, which should not be confused with wishful thinking, but rather understood as 'will-full action' (Levitas 2010). As Solnit claims: 'To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on the future, on your desires (...). To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk' (Solnit 2016).

Inspired by these ideas, we would like to invite you to the discussion about hope in our seemingly hopeless world and the usefulness of the concept of utopia in this context.



2. BOOK: "UTOPIAN THINKING IN LAW, POLITICS, ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY. HOPE IN A HOPELESS WORLD"

(ed. by van Klink, Soniewicka, van den Broeke, Edward Elgar Publishing, forthcoming 2022)

This innovative book explores the role of utopian thinking in law and politics, including alternative forms of social engineering, such as technology and architecture. Building on Levitas' *Utopia as Method*, the topic of utopia is addressed within the book from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Stimulating and provocative, this interesting collection tackles utopia from diverse disciplinary, theoretical, and political angles. Drawing on secular and religious traditions, contributors demonstrate utopian thinking's enduring vitality and significance. With hope, faith, humanity, and the imagination, at its centre, this book explores what utopia can and cannot mean, be, and do.

– Davina Cooper, King's College London, UK

Contributors include: Maurits Berger, Anna Bugajska, Danielle Chevalier, Lynne Copson, Marc J. de Vries, Carinne Elion-Valter, George Harinck, Zeynep İspir, Şükrü Keleş, Oliver W. Lembcke, Jan Willem Sap, Marta Soniewicka, Ernestyna Szpakowska-Loranc, Yannis Tzaninis, Britta van Beers, Leon van den Broeke, Bart van Klink.

3. THE 3RD EXPERT MEETING ON UTOPIA

Since we are interested in the revival of utopian thinking and in practicing of utopia in our societies, we have decided to organize the 3rd expert meeting on utopia in the Utopia Home – International Empathy Centre in Krakow, Poland. The Utopia Home creates space for art, culture, education, and social activism based on an assumption of the power of utopian thinking in promoting creativity and improving the quality of everyday life. Our meeting will start with a short introduction to the Utopia Home Project, followed by a tour in the building.

The meeting will end with a tour in Nowa Huta, an industrial district which was established in the 40. of 20. century as a working-class ideal city and is often called an unfinished utopia. The tour will be organized by Michał Wiśniewski representing the Ideal City project:

Ideal City employs instrumentally the phenomenon of Nowa Huta (Poland), a town imagined and made concrete from above, as a holistic urbanistic and social experiment, aimed at outlining prospective scenarios for the evolution of the concept of city. (...) The case of Nowa Huta is altogether exceptional because the experimental concept of the city created for the purposes of social engineering accumulates an infinite number of previous urban scenarios, universalising in this way the experience of city in the broad sense. The experience of Nowa Huta's unfinished utopia goes along with an equally multilayered visual archive. Although it only has two authors [Wiktor Pental (1920–2013) and Henryk Makarewicz (1917–1984)], their photographic practices



Fot. Henryk Hermanowicz

occurred on diverse planes, thus representing a number of simultaneous policies on working with the image. (...)

In between we will have a small seminar which will start with a talk by Dr Agnieszka Urbańczyk on the role of utopia in Science Fiction literature.

Dr Agnieszka Urbańczyk, Fully Automated Luxury Cook-Shops of the Future, or On the Uneasy Relationship Between Science Fiction and Utopia.

Science fiction – or at least many of its representatives – does not propose a world with miraculous technology but a world where said technology is distributed in a different way. From that perspective, science fiction serves the same function as the first literary utopias. In this talk, two approaches to utopianism and SF will be discussed: 1) by Aaron Bastani, the author of Fully Automated Luxury Communism; 2) and by China Miéville, an acclaimed science fiction writer famous for vivid imagination and political tenor of his works. Those two approaches exemplify two completely different ways to conceptualize utopia. For Bastani, it is an achievable and clearly cut-out goal, even though the use of science fiction tropes inadvertently makes the manifesto similar to a naïve work of fiction. Miéville, on the other hand, by adapting an apophatic tactic and refusing to define the utopia treats it, just like Ruth Levitas, as a method.

The talk will be followed by a discussion and a round table in which we will address the meaning and function of utopia in our world. The central questions which we will address during this meeting are focused around two main topics: apocalypse (despair) and salvation (hope and grace), and include such issues as:



- An Ukrainian author, Oksana Zabuzhko, writes about the Chernobyl catastrophe in terms of apocalypse. She claims that an apocalyptic experience can become a shock therapy by releasing energy of a deepest fear, and thus making us aware of our vulnerability and our common blame in destroying the world entrusted to us. Thus, it seems that we need apocalyptic upheavals in order to wake up and find new energy for changing the world for the better.
- Facing global existential threats such as the war in Ukraine, climate change and the pandemic, we don't need another utopia; we need direct action.
- The global problems in today's society are eschatological signs.
- Facing crisis after a crisis, each more horrifying than the previous one, we have lost our spiritual and cultural resources for hope.

PROGRAM OF THE EXPERT MEETING

Utopia Home – International Empathy Centre,
Os. Szkolne 26a

June 24 (Fri)

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| 10.00–10.05 | Opening of the meeting |
| 10.05–10.30 | Welcome speech about the Utopia Home project |
| 10.30–11.15 | Guided tour of the Utopia Home |
| 11.15–11.45 | Coffee break, Utopia Home |
| 11.45–13.30 | Seminar (chair: Leon van den Broeke) |
| 11.45–12.15 | A keynote lecture by Dr Agnieszka Urbańczyk (Jagiellonian University) – Fully Automated Luxury Cook-Shops of the Future, or On the Uneasy Relationship Between Science Fiction and Utopia |
| 12.15–12.30 | Discussion |
| 12.30–13.30 | Roundtable on utopia and hope in the apocalyptic times |
| 13.30–15.00 | Lunch break, Utopia Home |
| 15.00–17.00 | Guided tour of Nowa Huta by Michał Wiśniewski from the <u>Ideal City project</u> , starting point: Utopia Home |

EDITED BY
Bart van Klink
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UTOPIAN THINKING IN LAW, POLITICS, ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

Hope in a Hopeless World

