Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics (CAPPE)
University of Brighton

10th Annual, International, Interdisciplinary Conference

Utopias

Wednesday 2nd – Friday 4th September 2015

University of Brighton, UK

Abstracts

Nicolai Abramovich, Université Paris-Sorbonne, France

Negative morality against utopia: A justification of political liberalism

People tend to confuse liberalism and status quo. In times of crisis, they feel the natural need to change things. If the situation is wrong, something must be done to arrange it. In this kind of context, one crucial question keeps coming back: « Why liberalism »? Public opinion generally refers to the same argument to attack liberal theory: The system seems to have proven its limitations. Indeed, global and local inequalities still exist, power abuse and corruption persist, even international conflicts seem to grow and get more complex everyday. It is in this kind of circumstances that one belief keeps raising back from ashes as a phoenix: The idea of utopia. In times of adversity, disenchantment and despair, the community feels ready to make any kind of sacrifice in the name of a beautiful idea that gives hope and promises solutions against the injustices that people have to endure in the current order.

The following paper pursues two main goals. The first one is to bring back the berlinian argumentation to show that although believing in utopia is an admirable conviction, it contains inherent inconsistencies that make it not only an impracticable idea but also a contradictory one. The second aim is to advocate for a deflationary vision of liberalism. For this purpose we will convey the principles of negative morality in order to sustain liberalism is an imperfect but coherent political structure where things can effectively be changed.

Dominic Alessio, Richmond University, the American International University in London, UK

Re-imagining empire and proto-fascism through utopia

"Re-imaging empire" takes as its starting point the novel *The Barsac Mission*, Jules Verne's last novel which was co-published with his son Michel in 1914. The work tells the story of a late 19th century French military expedition to the Sahara which is captured by European pirates who have established a secret dystopian mini-empire deep in the desert, one financed by slavery and defended by advanced technology. The plot for the novel

was based on real life events, namely the story of rogue French troops (the Voulet-Chanoine Mission) who tried to establish their own independent empire, one also based on a violent and militaristic-slave economy, in late 19th century Mali/Niger. This event, now generally forgotten, has been described as "one of the most notorious atrocities to take place during the European 'Scamble for Africa'" (Taithe, 2009).

The paper then proceeds to compares the Verne story/Voulet-Chanoine Mission with other similar fictional and historical proceedings, including, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Walkers short-lived takeover of Nicaragua in the 1850s, D'Annunzio's early 20th century take-over of Fiume, and a failed attempt by the leader of the Canadian KKK to secure control over Dominica in the 1980s. Using Verne's dystopian novel this paper will re-examine the dominant definitions of empire, in particular those which emphasise large polities as the prime/sole agents of imperial expansion. In doing so it will draw attention in the story of empire to the often overlooked role of filibusters and examine the bitter political legacy that has followed such forceful interventions. All in all, the paper will use utopia as a take-off point to critically re-think the story of empire and proto-fascism.

Stephanie Bender, University of Freiburg, Germany

Renegotiations of the utopian in contemporary fiction: Dissolving the boundaries between utopia and dystopia in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy*

In contemporary fiction, traditional utopias as blueprints for the perfect society or the perfect future have almost ceased to exist. However, most literary works from the past fifteen years dealing with visions of the future still comprise utopian aspects even if they are usually categorised as dystopian. The boundaries between utopia and dystopia have thus begun to dissolve. Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy* (2003-2013) renegotiates the concept of utopia on various overlapping narrative and cultural layers. In *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) corporate capitalism and technocracy as the dominant utopias of our time are pictured turning into a dystopian totalitarian regime culminating in an apocalyptic depiction of the erasure of almost all human beings on earth. The bio-engineered death of humanity and the creation of a genetically improved version of humankind in *MaddAddam* (2013) and *Oryx and Crake*, in contrast, turn from dystopia into a newly emerging cultural version of utopia: a posthumanist future for the good of the planet and its non-human lifeforms. In the context of the ecological crisis and global climate change, the God's Gardeners community, featuring mainly in *The Year of the Flood*, represents a further twist in the conceptualisation of utopia: a kind of heterotopia in the form of an ecologically friendly yet very rigid religious subculture radically different from mainstream culture. The ambiguity the trilogy expresses with respect to what can be considered a eu-chronia, meaning a good future, is symptomatic of the cultural insecurity concerning a normative notion of "good" in general and the lack of imagination of a desirable future in particular.

Julia Boll, University of Konstanz, Germany

Utopia at the theatre: the possibility of change

Theatre scholar Jill Dolan understands the theatre as 'the possibility of a better future, one that can be captured and claimed in performance'. Reading performance as a 'doing' in J. L. Austin's sense of the term, something that performs an action, Dolan argues that the theatre 'offers a place to embody and, even if through fantasy, enact the affective possibilities of "doings" that gesture toward a much better world'.

French theatre maker Ariane Mnouchkine's epic production *Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)* (2003-2005) for her Théâtre du Soleil explores the fate of contemporary refugees at a time when the political, geographical and cultural space commonly called 'the West' has turned into a huge gated community. In Mnouchkine's production, the refugees are imagined from a perspective of respect and recognition, and while we witness their odysseys and their often inconceivable plight, the affecting production also lets us experience a sense of hope.

In this paper, I will explore the theatre's potential for creating empathy and hope and directing us towards a realisable utopia. If we elect to understand the theatrical arts as the subjunctive, where utopia is 'always in

process', and if we decide to regard the utopian as a process involving human agency, then the experience of attending a theatrical performance such as Théâtre du Soleil's production allows for an active choice to be response-able, for the intersubjective creation of *communitas* in Roberto Esposito's sense as a 'gift to the other'. If we choose to read the utopian in this way, the theatre becomes an incentive to create a better future, together.

Noel Boulting, Independent Scholar, UK

Conceptualisations of utopias: Homeland, utopia and the utopian impulse

Different senses of Homeland can be distinguished. An Iconic sense characterizes being at home where, contrary to feelings generated by a possible sense of feeling at home, frustrated feelings may crave for what cannot be enjoyed, an ideal possibility improbable for its realization. Analogously, Plato's Republic provides a paradigm for an Iconic sense of Utopia, a pattern in heaven, impossible of exemplification in this world since a dualism is evoked between Being – generating a vision 'without place' – and Becoming, an ever-changing, transient world.

An Indexical sense of Homeland is illustrated by a refugee's plight: a place where one was once at home, no longer can be regarded as such since departure has been caused due to a change in social and political affairs. Similarly an Indexical sense of Utopia characterizes a place that may have once existed – Critias in Plato's Timaeus refers to some past destroyed city – yet no longer does so. But a condition fixed to provide perfect happiness is thereby embodied in some unified, pure, ideal existence.

An Intellective sense of Homeland is more cognitive and future regarding in character, even if it arises out an Iconic sense, focusing upon what feels missing in the present, as opposed to some ideal fixed condition. Accordingly, an Intellective sense of Utopia focuses methodologically on the way institutions can be reformed in the light of a negation of a presently existing state of affairs.

Both the Iconic and Indexical conceptions render something fixed as a state of perfect happiness embodied in some unified, pure, ideal existence cast as an end state within itself, whereas an Intellective sense, assigned as a Utopian Impulse, lacks any unique, certain utopian perfection since it can only be articulated negatively. The relationship between these three conceptions thereby requires exploration.[1]

Maria Erbia Cassia Carnaúba, State University of Campinas, Brasil

Utopia in the genesis of critical theory

The objective of this paper is to show the contradictions of utopia in the critical theory. Thus, we argue that a new conception of utopia, previously marginalized, arises from the text. The authors of first generation had to deal with a reality in which the disenchantment with their first experience of socialism in the Soviet Union, the experiences of European fascism and the destruction of the Jewish communities of Europe mined every hope of a revolutionary transformation of capitalism. The Critical Theory was faced with the task of thinking the "radically other". This meant, for Horkheimer, to have a clear distinction between *philosophical truth* and *scientific truth.* The first generated the utopia that strengthened the hope of another world and the second considered that this utopia was unattainable. Marcuse as Adorno and Horkheimer agrees on the diagnosis of blocked praxis, but in addition, they agree that the Critical Theory can not regress to "utopian socialism". The socialism advocated by these authors came to be called "utopian socialism", because of its theorists expounded the principles of an ideal society without specifying the means to achieve it. They believed that the establishment of a socialist system would occurs slowly and gradually, based on pacifism, including the goodwill of the bourgeoisie itself. They are still heavily based on ideas of the Enlightenment thought and, accordingly, are

---

[1] The distinctions between Iconic, Indexical and Intellective conceptions are explored and applied in
On Interpretative Activity: A Peircian Approach to the Interpretation of Science, Technology and the Arts Noel E. Boulting, Leiden: Brill 2006.

frontally as opposed to Critical Theory, as these thinkers continued to pursue rationalism in the output generated by the contradictions within the capitalist thinking. Moreover, they did not a radical critics of capitalism, since they still defended the maintenance of their most elementary practices. Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno and the first generation of Critical Theory perpetuated Marx's critique of the "utopian socialism". However, another different conception was perpetuated by Marcuse predominantly through Ernst Bloch. I think that the first step to understand the various criticisms of utopia begins with the criticism of Marx. Indeed, in his criticism Marx initially recognizes the complexity of the critical utopias and, in consequence, the chapter of the *Communist Manifest* is devoted solely to it provides the findings of a long and difficult theoretical work.

Peter Conlin, Independent Scholar, UK

Undischarged elements and retemporalisations: Notes on the retro-utopia tendency

This paper examines the current tendency of developing utopian possibilities through a reprocessing of the past. Although it is a bit of a simplification, there is no denying that for much of the 19th and 20th century utopian thought was largely entwined with the future, and that in recent times the utopian imagination has been figuring without a future largely through attempts to rework the past. Examples abound, often with Benjaminian twists, such as art historian Hal Foster, artist Zoe Beloff, rust-belt futurists, hauntological approaches, Owen Hatherley's rescues of modernism, and Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka's zombie media. There are certainly compelling reasons for these approaches: confronted with a unyielding continual present and/or depleted futures of blind techno-advancement and calamity the only way to go is backward; a reconceived past as a work-around for the problematics of the future; or a response to cultural amnesia and an attempt to deploy utopian thought beyond the 'new' which has been almost entirely subsumed by contemporary capitalism and the digital. In fact there are so many reasons to support this tendency that it has become almost a contemporary standard model of utopianism, perhaps an intellectual habit tinged with desperation. My paper will be assessing three different exemplifications of this tendency, including the Blochian derived utopianism of José Esteban Muñoz, Siegfried Zielinski's media archaeology of reactivating past potentials, and Evan Calder Williams' salvagepunk. What distinguishes these from what Simon Reynolds calls "retromania", that is, part of the nostalgia industry of revivals, reissues and remakes in a conjuncture obsessed with its own immediate past? To what extent do political challenges emerge from a reprocessing of the recent past, rather than perpetuating an endless cultural obsession which is itself a symptom of a society without a future?

Lars Cornelissen, University of Brighton, UK

The intellectuals and neoliberalism

As a political-theoretical project neoliberalism has always been astutely aware of its own utopianism. Its proponents found their arch-nemesis in socialism in any shape or form, and realised that combating the status quo required a utopian perspective. At the same time, however, neoliberals criticised socialism for being, precisely, utopian.

This paper engages with neoliberalism and its relationship to utopianism. It asks why neoliberals rejected socialism as utopian and what this means; it proposes a Mannheimian analysis of the neoliberal project as a thoroughly utopian project; it goes on to reflect on the possibility of using neoliberal insights regarding utopianism against neoliberalism itself by interrogating a possible left utopianism; and, finally, it calls this strategy into question by reflecting on its presuppositions and its possible pitfalls.

Mark Devenney, University of Brighton, UK

On the abolition of political parties in utopia

In a pithy article written in 1943 Simone Weil calls for the abolition of all political parties. She presents normative objections to their very existence. Many contemporary political theorists are critical of the party system. Most begin from an account of current political circumstances – lack of choice, party discipline, global challenges to nation state sovereignty, or vitriolic partisanship devoid of substantive differences which justify such apparent antagonism. Weil, by contrast, forces the reader to ask the simplest of questions: why do we take the existence of political parties for granted? Is there any good reason for their existence? Are parties a means or an end? If a means then what ends do they serve, and are they best suited to realise these ends? It is deceptively easy to reject Weil's critique of political parties, but I will suggest that there is more to her argument than at first glance. Despite this I will conclude that in a foreseeable Utopia partisanship, though not necessarily political parties, will remain. Reading Weil against the grain I try to think the possibility of what Jacques Derrida termed a New International.

Maria do Rosário Monteiro, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Evolution of ambiguous literary utopias: Comparative analysis of Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Telling*

In this paper, I propose an analysis of the evolution of ambiguous literary Utopias using as terms of comparison two of Le Guin's utopias, published with a thirty-year gap between them: *The Left Hand of Darkness and The Telling*.

The aim is to analyse how these two literary utopias try to respond and/or react to real specific social, cultural, and political conditions. Every literary utopia is an artistic and political reaction to reality. At the same time, both these Ursula Le Guin's works are open utopias, that is, projects of societies that tend to evolve believing they are the best possible answers to a specific time and culture, and assuming the need to transform and improve previous premises. The goal of the paper is to try to reach some conclusions regarding several issues: a) How these utopias suffered the influence of different political and cultural realities (both the world and author evolved during the thirty-year gap between novels). b) How the genre itself evolved from a fixed, rigidly structured society frozen in time to an evolutionary one. c) What kind of compromises are assumed in order to ensure the future of these utopian worlds. d) Which are the political and philosophical ideas that stand as foundations to Le Guin's utopian thought and see if they also evolved in time.

Robin Dunford, University of Brighton, UK

Constructing communities and enacting utopias: The politics of autonomous peasant struggles

Through the transnational peasant organisation, la Via Campesina, smallholder agriculturalists, pastoralists, fisherfolk, landless peasants, and others have developed a combined analysis of food, fuel and ecological crisis. Rather than being isolated occurrences resulting from spikes in fuel prices or unpredictable climactic events, and rather than being separable crises with a distinct set of causes and potential remedies, food, fuel and climate crises are deemed to be endemic to a neo-liberal model of agriculture. This model of agriculture, based on the mass production and importing and exporting of mono-crops, works to simultaneously heat up the planet, desecrate nature, and drive smallholder producers from the land, preventing them from producing and having access to food. Through this analysis, these diverse groups have been able to construct themselves as a single peasant community, facing the common threat of neoliberal forms of enclosure. Moreover, in creating alternatives to this agricultural regime through practices of land occupation, peasant movements have sought to develop a utopian 'food sovereignty' alternative, which enables them to produce food for themselves and their communities using low-input and sustainable methods. This paper highlights the processes through which this common analysis and identity have been developed internally, within peasant mobilisations, and explores the

practices through which an alternative utopia has been constructed. By so doing, it is able to draw attention to the collective learning processes and forms of political organisation that can enable political movements at a grass roots level to develop democratic understandings of, and utopian alternatives to, transnational dynamics that entrench neoliberal forms of domination.

Christos Efstathiou, Workers' Educational Association, UK

Rediscovering the Island of Utopia: Towards a history of contemporary utopian thought

Five hundred years after Thomas More depicted the island of Utopia, the portrayal of an ideal social system has not ceased to intrigue generations of authors. In the previous century, there were several utopian thinkers who believed that one could predict how life could unfold in the future and tried to provide a detailed description of an ideal society. From H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley to Arthur C. Clarke and Ursula Le Guin, contemporary literature showed a strong concern for future living and working conditions. Another important aspect of this literature is its connection to anti-utopian thought. It is not accidental that the same authors that wrote dystopian novels also wrote utopian ones as a counterargument. Despite the fact that several historians have written on contemporary utopia and science fiction, most of their treatises, even the ones published very recently, tend to focus on the literature before the 'short twentieth century', and then to quickly summarise the last hundred years. Moreover, they tend to neglect the strong ties between utopian and dystopian perspectives.

This paper will try to explain the relationship between utopias and dystopias in the twentieth century and hopes to provoke conversations and stimulate collaborations between researchers and activists. Firstly, it will offer an outline of twentieth-century utopian thought. It will briefly introduce the origins of the 'crisis' of utopian thought in the early twentieth century. It will show why several thinkers brought forth the idea of developing a dystopian future. It will also discuss the new wave of militant utopianism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which played a significant role in the development of late twentieth-century science fiction. Secondly, it will try to explain how the twentieth-century historical experience determined utopian literature and why several authors chose to offer a positive vision of a future society rather than a negative view. The relationship between utopian and dystopian elements will be shown not as a clear-cut distinction but more as a spectrum ranging from a pure negative picture at one end to an absolute positive at the other. Finally, it will discuss the criticism of utopian literature by those social scientists who either classified utopia as an inadequate reflection of social reality or a profound sign of contemporary ideological crisis. More specifically, it will try to understand why the utopian perspective was seen as unacceptable by several activists and radical scholars.

References:

Booker, Keith (1994) *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood)
Kumar, Krishan (1991) *Utopianism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press)
Levitas, Ruth (1990) *The Concept of Utopia* (London: Simon & Schuster)
Manuel, Frank & Fritzie (1979) *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Oxford: Blackwell)
Sargent, Lyman Tower (1979) *British and American Utopian Literature* (Boston: G. K. Hall)
Trahair, Richard (1999) Utopias and Utopians (London: Fitzroy Dearborn)

Cathy Gale, Kingston University /University of Brighton, UK

Heterotopia as a critique of contemporary design education

This paper proposes that design education consistently oscillates between the imagined and the real: it anticipates change and shapes possible futures. As such, Foucault's (1967) philosophical notion of heterotopia is adapted to the context of design to challenge contemporary notions of art and design education. Rather than envision a utopian society of knowledge producers, a heterotopic mode of the 'artschool' is proposed as a conceptual starting point. Here, the historical moorings of design pedagogy are converged with the (speculative) possibilities of an 'other' space of learning. While More's (1516) Utopia was imagined in a fictional (hierarchical)

island community, the educational heterotopia is envisioned as an alternative but tangible experience. Situated on the edge of existing design programmes, in the ambiguous (research/sport) space of Wednesday afternoons, traditional pedagogic modalities and tools are re-deployed for the purpose of productive disruption. This heterotopia of deviation is thematically led: Spontaneity, Ludic Consumption, Visual Rhetoric and Critical Play are intended as ambiguous frameworks within which to foster new approaches to the creative space of design education. In a collective enterprise (akin to a social utopia), students are participants not passengers here, all equally engaged in a critical discourse towards tangible strategies and visions. Each member is encouraged to ask dangerous questions instead of being urged to conform to an industry-ready (utopian /dystopian) student model. Drawing on Bourriaud's (2009) context of the 'altermodern' the 'otherness' of the educational heterotopia enables the participants to explore the 'what if?' of design's future by those already invested in the discipline.

David Hancock, University of Exeter, UK

The dilemma of the political and dreaming with our eyes open

Utopias are neutral, they are also both excessive and necessary. This paper will explore these themes under what should be understood as the dilemma of the political.

Utopia has long been recognised as constitutive of political action. Dreams of the future, whether achievable or not, have helped to inspire political action throughout modernity. But these dreams have also, during this period, enabled political excess. The sacrifice of community, culture and life itself has often been a 'price worth paying' for the coming utopia.

This dilemma has been perfectly illustrated through the work of F.A. Hayek. Hayek's critique of socialism rested on this tendency towards the politics of excess. For Hayek, the socialist dream could lead only to tyranny. However, Hayek also understood the political value of utopia and called upon members of the Mont Pelerin Society to imagine, dream and advertise the paradise to come. The neoliberal utopia of radical individualism and techno-efficiency has since relied upon these dreams to justify the 'price worth paying'. Meanwhile, blindness to suffering and the authoritarian tendencies, necessary to push through policy, have justified the original critique of utopia highlighted by Hayek.

Neoliberal utopias lead to the final theme of this paper, the neutrality of utopia. No form of politics owns utopia, the utopian impulse can point towards wealth redistribution as well as anarcho-capitalism. The utopian tendency can be developed by whomever and it will be succeed or fail on the rhetorical power of that person and the ability to inspire. This forces us to question what we should do with utopia. Now, perhaps more than ever, we must surely dream. But how can we wilfully open ourselves up to utopian excess? Somehow we must dream but do so with our eyes open, we must produce critical visions of the future that inspire but avoid blind excess.

Bernard Hay, University College London, UK

Negative utopia and autonomous art in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*

"Art is the ever broken promise of happiness" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*)

Throughout his work on art and aesthetics, Theodor Adorno insists on the inseparable link between autonomous art and the idea of utopia in Western Modernity: authentic instances of autonomous art make the viewer aware of the possibility and social need for utopia through negating existing social reality by means of formal developments. However, as is well noted, art does not positively represent utopia but rather reveals it negatively: as Adorno says, "all art is draped in black" (*Aesthetic Theory*). This raises the following questions, which shall be the subject of this paper. Firstly, how does artistic form negate empirical reality in such a way that

the possibility of utopia is expressed? Secondly, how is this expression consistent with the claim that utopia is not and cannot be positively represented? In this paper, I shall argue that Adorno has defensible answers to these questions.

Tim Heysse, KU Leuven, Belgium

The utopia of a society without coercion

This talk starts out from a double assumption about the role of utopias and from an observation about political culture and (liberal) political philosophy.

The *assumption about utopia* is partly inspired by Ernst Bloch, the philosopher of utopia *par excellence*. 1) We should understand utopia in connection with hope: utopias picture a future that is *hoped* for. 2) This hope for the future cannot be dismissed as a form of political daydreaming. Utopias have a cognitive function. We depart from Bloch, however, in understanding this cognitive function not in the sense that utopias are predictions of the future. Rather, utopias serve to make sense of the present by connecting it with a future that we hope for (we look at the present as part of a story that will end happily). In this sense, a utopia may be 'falsified' when it fails to throw interesting light on our current situation.

The *observation about political culture and political philosophy* is this: perhaps the oldest, certainly one of the most persistent and pervasive utopian ideas is and continues to be the utopia of a society free from coercive power. 'Coercive power' is here understood as the power to make people do or prevent them from doing things by threat of sanctions. The ideal is of a society where there is no fundamental need for coercion. Granted that politics is defined as the domain where we struggle over the exercise of coercive power, this is the utopia of a society without politics.

In this talk I analyse this utopia of a society without coercion and enquire what it tells us about our present social and political situation in order to assess its informative power. How should we understand this idea of a non-coercive society? Does it shed light on our current social situation? Or does the utopia of a society without politics betray some misconceptions in our thinking about politics?

Mikko Jakonen, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Utopia of work

Plato's *Republic* is sometimes seen as the first utopian book and a model for the future utopian genre. This interpretation is, however, wrong for two reasons. First of all, Plato did not use the term utopia – the word was only invented by Thomas More in 1516. Yet, the absence of the concept of utopia from the Greek political imagination is not the main thing that marks the difference between the Greek and the early modern and modern utopias. The main difference lies in the fact that for the Greeks work (*ergon*) was never seen as a way of achieving the "good life" that political philosophers imagined and planned. For Greeks the social change did not happen by reorganizing economy and work, but instead, by practicing the right kind of ethics and politics. On the contrary, ever since More's *Utopia* the restructuring of the society through the reorganization of work has been the key element of the utopian literature and thought.

This paper argues that in our contemporary neoliberal society the early modern and modern utopian idea of work as the key element in restructuring of society plays still a significant role, but in distorted sense. Wage work is the locus of high hopes and promises, yet they seem to concern only the individual or enterprise. Due to drastic changes in social and political structures, it seems that the wage work cannot contribute anymore to the peaceful and profoundly organized development of the society, which would promise the outcome from the impasse of five crucial crises: ecological, economic, political, social and mental. Hence, this paper asks whether

we can still learn something from classical, early modern and modern utopias. In short, do we need more Plato or More?

Andrea Jones, University of Sussex, UK

Envisioning real utopias: where do intentional communities in the South of England fit in?

'Intentional communities' are defined by their conscious intention to live more sociably and communally than 'naturally' occurring communities. My research explores why and how older people live in intentional communities in the South of England and involves qualitative research undertaken within communities listed on the 'Diggers and Dreamers' website directory. Many of these communities do not make claim to explicit ideologies but my research shows that they can be seen as utopian. Drawing on the work of Erik Olin Wright (Envisioning real utopias, 2010) I argue that these communities, and everyday life within them, can be seen as examples of interstitial practice within the dominant power relations operating within UK society (p. 322). Drawing on my research data I describe some of the practices within communities set up in the 1970s to explore whether or not these originally 'counter-culture' projects have become enduring examples of successful interstitial activities and interstitial strategies.

Andy Knott, University of Brighton, UK

Utopia: little and hetero-?

The notion of utopia has received declining attention in contemporary theorisations, although it is by no means absent. This paper interrogates two recent amendments of utopia, that of the 'little utopia' forwarded by Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, and Michel Foucault's 'heterotopia'. It does this to make some critical comments on Foucault's project, and to situate utopia within our contemporary neoliberal paradigm.

David Lea, American University of Sharjah, UAE

Sovereignty, linguistic imperialism and the quantification of reality

It is widely recognized that Giorgio Agamben further developed Foucault's concept of the bio-political in elaborating on a reality in which states of exception declared by sovereign authority create exceptional spaces in which legal identities lose their meaning. This is a reality that bears the elements of an anti-Utopia or dystopia. As the exception becomes the norm one increasingly encounters spaces in which the distinction between bare life and legal identity finds its application as individuals, designated as mere bare life, are exposed to an unconstrained sovereign will. However in the "Coming Community" Agamben offers the possibility of a Utopian resolution arguing that this state of affairs can be ultimately overcome when sovereign decision making becomes inoperable as the law is robbed of its force. This can only occur when the law is no longer maintained by a linguistic system that functions according to categories that can never be fully determinate and thereby susceptible to sovereign decision making. In moving beyond the identitarian politics and the distinctions of western political and legal categories, Agamben understands both Western politics, culture and metaphysics as tending towards the empty and indeterminate, exposing western subjects to the violence of sovereign power accordingly. But even given the appropriateness of this insight, this paper argues that Agamben fails to underline the importance of the Cartesian legacy that initiated a form of conceptualization in which the ordering of reality replaced qualitative distinctions with mathematical quantification.

Eli Lichtenstein, The New School for Social Research, USA

Utopia as truth: Class formation and the everyday

My essay asks the following question: what is the epistemic place of utopia in the knowledge relations of resistance? Or, put differently, what is the role of a utopian imagination within what many have called "class consciousness"? I take as a starting point the early, historical work of Jacques Rancière. For the latter, class consciousness isn't typified by a class subject become for itself what it is already in itself; it is not a subjective mapping of certain given sociological data. Instead, as E. P. Thompson indicates, "class formation is a process of self-making." Class, though a result of a given social order, is just as much the product of shifting identifications, of self-contradictory discourses, of an affective and imaginative dimension which necessarily *exceeds* the mute reality of social fact. Hence, in his *Proletarian Nights*, Rancière describes the nineteenth century "dream of another kind of work" shared by the artisans of Paris, the secret love harbored for "useless things," and the poverty which is made unbearable not by its exacting physical toll, but by the imposed "impossibility of choosing one's fatigue." In this early Rancière, however, one might track a worrying deconstructionist tendency which takes its critique of the typical epistemic arrogance of a certain revolutionary tradition a bit too far: the distance between thing and word becomes so great that the historical achievement of materialism is threatened. We are left, on a certain reading, with mere words.

The aim of my essay is to reinscribe the utopian ideal within the material conditions of everyday life, to reclaim it as a tool and a reality non-reducible to its purely fantastical connotations. By turning to the historical and ethnographic work of, respectively, E. P. Thompson and James C. Scott, I argue that the no place of utopia is found precisely in the cognitive appropriation of the objects and relations of common experience. Returning to the category of the everyday, I seek, however paradoxically, to locate an immanent utopianism both politically relevant, and epistemically justifiable.

Toby Lovat, University of Brighton, UK

Adorno, immanent critique and utopia

"In view of the concrete possibility of utopia, dialectics is the ontology of the false condition. A right condition would be freed from dialectics, no more system than contradiction." (T.W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics).

Adorno's use of immanent criticism has the virtue of providing a normative methodology without a 'transcendent' or 'trans-historical' normative standard. I take the method of immanent critique to be one that seeks to uncover the contradictions between aspects of social reality and the ideals which that social reality is supposed to instantiate. We are told, for example, that our society is based on liberal ideals of freedom and equality; yet it is plain that we are increasingly un-free and unequal, not least according to the liberal articulation of these ideals.

Of course, in so far as contradictions entail falsity, error or wrongness, immanent critique does in fact hold to a 'trans-historical' normative standard: that to be contradictory means to be wrong. Indeed, throughout his work Adorno claims that it is these contradictions, as symptoms of the logic of the social totality, which reveal that the social world is wrong, false, an error, evil, and so on.

It would seem to follow, therefore, that a society without contradiction would be, right and good, which is to say, utopian. This is a seductive conclusion because a social reality and logic without contradictions would be right precisely insofar as it would not be contradictory. Although Adorno criticised social reality for its contradictions, his response to the utopian dream of a world without contradiction was that because such a world would be wholly reduced to our categories or identifications, it would be entirely totalitarian.

This short presentation will consist of an examination of Adorno's use of immanent critique in light of his critique of the ideal of a non-contradictory social reality. It will then examine the ways in which Adorno approaches and

attempts to overcome this tension and his efforts to delineate what might be characterized as a positive (because) 'open' utopian perspective.

Anthony Leaker, University of Brighton, UK

"Work as much as possible or die" - The dystopia of neoliberal new media labour in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

Many reviewers viewed Dave Eggers' 2013 novel The Circle as an Orwellian satire of the latest incarnation of the internet age. However, less remarked upon is the significant way in which the novel is a critique of neoliberalism, semio-capitalism and info-labour. As such, it demands to be understood not only in the context of the dominance of Facebook, Google and other net-brand mega-corporations masquerading as radical and liberatory, but as a reaction to the 2008 economic crisis, its aftermath, and the fortification of neoliberal ideology and policy. The Circle is a reflection on the post-Fordist American economy, new work practices and the issues of precariousness, indebtedness, and hyper-competitivity; and on the dominant neoliberal ideology of responsibilisation, securitization and the entrepreneurial self. The Circle presents a dystopian vision of neoliberal disciplinary surveillance and biopolitics. The novel's protagonist is an ideal neoliberal subject. She consents to the neoliberal labour model, in which work is constant, frenetic, networked, and libidinally-charged; in which work is branded as vocation, as a means to achieving self-fulfillment, and in which self-exploitation is the norm and the boundary between work and leisure has dissolved. This paper will examine the novel in relation to Franco Bifo Berardi's theorization of info-labour and the fractilization of labour time and Wendy Brown's work on homo economicus, to show how the novel critiques contemporary forms of labour practice and subjectivisation, in which working subjects are enslaved to time, time gifted in return for the affirmation of their position within the social entity comprised by the workplace, and liberty is a juridical fiction to which nothing in concrete daily life corresponds.

Stella Marega, University of Trieste, Italy

"A New Heaven and a New Earth". Utopia and apocalypse

The search for the perfect society, far from the flaws and inequities of the real world, has been strenuously pursued during the course of history. There are two mainly means by which men tried to chase this desire: utopian constructions and political action. Both of these roads have been developed on the ground of secularization: every attempt to achieve an ideal world is, indeed, based on the belief that the creation of perfect society is a human – and not divine - task. In order to clarify these dynamics, this paper aims to analyze the relationship between the idea of Utopia and the concept of the Apocalypse.

In the first part I will refer to Manuel Garcia Pelayo's theory of political symbols [1964], which defines the characteristics of the concept of "the kingdom of the end of times", and to Eric Voegelin's theory of modern Gnosticism [1938; '52; '59], which consider the utopian perfectionism as the transfer of the Christian *eschaton* (finality of history) on the secular ground.

According to this assumptions, I will examine the correlation between Apocalypse and utopian thought as the consequence of a process of transfiguration of religious symbols, filled with new immanent meanings and connected with the future hopes regarding men's fate in the world.

In the final part, I will demonstrate as this theoretical background is helpful to justify the most recent theory of "apocalyptic politics". With this definition some scholars [Gray, 2007; Khalaji, 2008] refer to the overlap between messianic expectations for an ultimate order of perfection of the human condition and several contemporary geopolitical dynamics. In this perspective, apocalyptic politics may be considered the last derailment of Utopia, and its most extreme development.

Tania Messell, University of Brighton, UK

Design across borders: The establishment of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, 1957-1963

The International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) was founded in 1957 by designers representing professional organisations from Europe and the United States to establish international standards for the profession and to raise the professional status of designers (Constitution 1957), in a period in which the Enlightenment concept of "World Citizenship" permeated political and cultural post-war discourses (Sluga 2010). For the sociologists John Boli and Georges Thomas, NGOs act as 'transnational bodies employing limited resources to make rules, set standards, propagate principles, and broadly represent "humanity"' (Boli & Thomas 1997), a definition echoing ICSID's strategies to become a world reference of industrial design through its promotion of the discipline as a universal problem-solving activity aimed at benefitting 'Mankind' (General Assembly 1963). However, opposing design visions existed within ICSID, which alongside critiques of its predominantly Western leadership, were to challenge the organisation's Universalist design conceptions, inner workings and purposes.

Mark McGovern, Edge Hill University, UK

The Gorgon's stare: Surveillance, counterinsurgency, shame

In Drone Theory Grégoire Chamayou provides a powerful and incisive philosophical reflection on the 'actual existing dystopia' of 'dronised manhunting' and 'permanent lethal surveillance' as part of the US on-going terror wars. This paper will use a critical reading of aspects of Chamayou's work as a platform to examine the affective politics of surveillance and counterinsurgency. It will argue that the counterinsurgent deployment of surveillance is deeply embedded in long-established and more widely evident colonial and imperial practices. The primary affective end sought by such practices (it will be argued) is to engender a felt sense of unworthiness in a target population, to create an isolating fracturing of social life and political immobility; in a very specific sense, to petrify. The paper will conclude by considering some of the links between such contemporary lethal surveillance, counterinsurgency and the imperial practices of 'shame'.

Heather McKnight, University of Brighton, UK

Reclaiming the Night: Fatal intersections in concrete spaces

When Foucault's states "it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space" it has a particular resonance with Reclaim the Night, a march that highlights when the intersection of night changes the streets into a potentially violent and terrifying space.

During Reclaim the Night march in Brighton the space of the street becomes the site of direct action for not only women, but the diverse intersectionality of the feminist movement and other marginalised groups. It is a site where people can stand their ground, a space where visibility of violence and discrimination, all too often swept into dark corners, can be obtained. The streets become Foucault's heterotopian space, full of potential and conflict, thus a location for realising Blochian utopian functions. At the march utopia is realised as a critique of the here and now; diverse groups seize on the march as a way of embedding a geography of hope across the city. The march takes over the cities in which we live our day to day, or perhaps more appropriately, day to night lives.

Through examining how Reclaim the Night embodies Foucault's heterotopian principles we can begin to see a more nuanced picture of the utopian functions taking place on this site of action. In the broader Reclaim the Night movement we see the autopoietic process of heterotopias emerging within heterotopias, pushing the boundaries of how society moves and changes as a reaction to what it sees in the mirror. Far from having a

fixed significance or implication, the physical act of occupying this space is part of a complex and evolving movement that seeks to materialise a new world of tolerance and understanding, the edges of which are fractious and ever changing with the awareness of our own and others' identities, and the evolution of those identities themselves.

Patricia McManus and Cathy Bergin, University of Brighton, UK

Game on: Dystopia, gender and resistance

For Tom Moylan, "[d]ystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century". The expansion and intensification of systems for the 'scientific' extraction of surplus value, and the development of a state apparatus capacious, and flexible enough to mobilise for 'total war', these are the material and symbolic grounds worked by this historically new "underside of the utopian imagination", dystopian fiction (Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, (2000)p. xi).

But if dystopian narratives needed twentieth-century forms of oppression and of exploitation to begin their figurative work, so too have they dwelt on peculiarly modern forms of resistance to oppression and exploitation. Typically, these have been the forms of a 'heroic' (including 'anti-heroic') individualism. In the texts posited as 'classics' of the sub-genre, *Brave New World* (1932*), 1984* (1949*) , Farenheit 451* (1953*), Clockwork Orange* (1962) that individualism is not only gendered as masculine, it also involves a rejection of a world gendered as 'feminine' – the world of a sentimental patriotism, of indulgence of the senses, of emotion substituting for reason.

One other relationship is a standard in dystopian texts of the twentieth century: the sometimes suffering, sometimes complicit 'masses' are always present as a potential resource or a threat to resistance, never as the collective form of resistance itself.

This paper will explore a recent example of a popular dystopian text, *The Hunger Games,* to examine the intersections the form allows, or insists on, between resistance, gender and complicity. In what ways do the politics of a dystopian form cut across the surface politics of the story it tells? In particular, in both the telling and the reception of this recent dystopian narrative , are there any resources to bring the masses back into history as a collective agent?

Lucy Mercer, Independent Writer and Editor

Imprese and emblems: New(old) forms of thinking the radical future

Imprese were used by Italian elites in the 15-17th Century. A variant on a badge, they combine an image of an animal, plant or object ('corpo') with a motto ('anima') to create through dialecticism a statement about the individual who selected them.

Similarly, medieval emblems (such as Andrea Alciato's wildly popular book the *Emblematum Liber* (1531)) utilise a tripartite structure of a motto, image and poem to guide the reader to multiple and conflicting conclusions. Subject-wise they draw upon layers of Classical and Biblical myths, folklore and medieval superstition. As a result, emblems create an ambience of 'meditation and mystery' in the viewer.

In contrast, the dystopic landscapes of neoliberalism and late-stage capitalism (advertising, architecture and work-ethic) foster approaches to subject matter that are largely flat, hegemonic and anti-dialectical. Presenting confusions and contradictions is perceived as 'wrong' in both cultural narratives (consider the popularity of TV contests with clear winners) and in financial markets (so often throw into turmoil by unexpected news).

Like Frederic Jameson's perception of science fiction utopias and dystopias as strange currents that allow for critiques of the present through the future, this presentation will argue that the contradictory and ambiguous modes of thinking practised by imprese and emblems can be used to successfully envisage alternative futures.

I will outline my own four selected tools of conceptual analysis to read through imprese and emblems: *negative injunction, ambience, refraction* and *metonym*.
These terms highlight the 'dark' quality of emblems, their haunting negative spaces of loss and extinction, reversed meanings and the changing priorities and poetic values of certain symbols over time.

A comparative approach will then be used to draw some conclusions about the potential of this mode of thinking and the impact that these innovative combinations of text and image can have on writers, artists and philosophers.

Martin Nitsche, Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

How art creates utopia? A topology of non-entrances

In this presentation, I would access "utopias" through the question, how a work of art (painting, concretely) opens up its own specific space. Works of art indeed require a specific approach because our perception follows some special rules overlooking the common time-space understanding. In this light, works of art may create their own, specifically structured, space. But this obvious claim turns debatable when challenged with the question of how one enters this specific space. Phenomenologically seen, entrance is a phenomenon of space; the possibility to be let into grounds the sense of a space. Focusing on art, entrance indicates that a recipient of a work of art can be transformed by entering a different space.

The criterion of entrance applies also for utopias: Can be a special space of a work of art considered as utopia (non-place) when it can not be entered? Can we thus speak about a "non-entrance" in the case of utopias? Would it mean a mere absence of an entrance, or an entrance created beyond rules and logic?

I would analyse the problem in light of Foucault's account of mirror-image as both utopia and heterotopia in his short lecture *Different Spaces.* Foucault defines heterotopia primarily in terms of space as "counter-emplacement" thus approximating heterotopia to "realized utopia". Foucault's idea of heterotopia presupposes that entrances to these "different spaces" can be found in the structure of our lived world. Mirror images (and as I would claim also paintings), nevertheless, do not belong simply to the lived world, therefore they should be considered also as utopias capable to (paradoxically) create non-entrances – and to establish non-places.

The presentation would conclude by proposing an ontological model of "creating non-entrances" – applicable not only for paintings, but also for other works of art (including) literature.

Stephen O'Kane, Independent Scholar, UK

"Utopias" and limited conflict

It is normally assumed that a 'utopia' represents an ideal which would be conflict free, almost by definition. For instance, Megan Pryor has defined a utopia as a 'perfect world', and although the literal meaning of 'good place' (or 'no place') need not imply perfection, we customarily suppose the utopia would be both rid of sources of conflict like poverty, discrimination, and fear and accepted by its members to be the best possible world.
At least trying to minimise sources of conflict makes sense in terms of peace or even survival without an ideal of perfection, but I would argue that such an ideal can actually create conflict when people have different ideas of the perfect (i.e, different values). Indeed, a claim of perfection can appear as a denial of politics in the usual sense, or else leave public life as indistinguishable from the showplace of ideological rule. Accordingly, prospects of a better world may be more hopeful with encouraging a balance between different values. This is a challenge which democracy already needs to meet in reality.

Pluralist thinking illustrates that seeking such a balance is not a new idea, but in a world where conflicts run within cultures or states as well as between them recognition of difference is not likely to be enough. But a balance approach to a better world might serve to address the warning from the way dystopias sell better than utopias because of the scope in the former for dramatic conflict in a story. Any conception of democracy might be expected to require that drama be kept in the realm of argument – however vigorous – rather than something more lethal.

Russell Re Manning, Bath Spa University, UK

"It is the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia": Paul Tillich and the theo-political meaning of utopia

Utopia takes many forms. Three basic distinctions can be made, which will provide the structure for this paper. First, there is a key distinction between spatial and temporal models of utopia. Second, we can distinguish between progressive and regressive visions. Third, playing on the ambiguity in Thomas More's embrace of both *ou-topos* (no place) and *eu-topos* (good place), we can recognise a distinction between what we might call impossibilist and perfectionist ideas of utopia.

This paper draws on Paul Tillich's theo-political engagement with the idea of utopia (*Ideologie und Utopie* (1929), *Utopie* (1931), *Politische Bedeutung der Utopia in Leben der Völker* (1951) and *Kairos und Utopie* (1957)) to analyse these distinctions to defend the political (and theological) potency of utopia as an impossiblist, non-teleological re-imagining of the present.

The animating conviction of this paper is well summarised by Michael Larson, who writes in the concluding paragraph of his own defence of 'utopia in a precarious world' that,

> To talk of utopias today is to bring our imaginings to bear upon the present. It is to create an interstitial distance from which we might access *today* through another lens. From the utopian view of our social reality, might we see that the impossible is, perhaps, just barely...possible? To imagine the justice *to come* is not to think of an infinitely deferred future but to imagine the present otherwise than it is, to see the world as it is and, at the same time, to be able to think of what it might be. If there is 'hope' for us, it is in this attitude of permanent critique. (Larson (2010), 110.)

Or, in Tillich's terms: "it is the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia." (180).

Paul Reynolds, Edge Hill University, UK

No more utopias; misrecognising utopias as vision and not method

Utopian thinking occupies a critical space between idealism, futurism and the imminent possibilities of change beyond the contemporary moment. It speaks to the possibilities of perfectionism, of reaching from the corrupted material now to a more pure and imagined tomorrow. Eutopia (good place from the Greece) ironically becomes utopia (no place) in its historical application from Sir Thomas More onward, and raises the central political problem for Utopian thought – how should we understand its place in radical politics that seek change from extant arrangements.

Unfortunately, utopian thinking degenerates into either the elaboration of idealist or perfectible tendencies that require substantial change in the human condition or the composition of societies as historically and culturally constituted without a sense of the political terms of transition, or the reduction of politics to ideological strategies by which hearts and minds are won to competing political causes, where the utopian vision is never meant to be shared on a society-wide scale. Both of these approaches make utopianism dangerous, because they divert from the constitution of politics and change in material contexts.

This is because utopianism is often seen as a politics or vision in and of itself, whereas it should be regarded as a method – a means by which thought experiment seeks to intellectually deconstruct and reconstruct possible social arrangements, evaluate them and then, critically, lay them within a material context. This is utopianism as part of the notion of philosophical practice that informs politics, rather than a metaphysics and idealism that replaces politics.

Walaa' AbdelAziz Said, University of Marburg, Germany

The ustopian voice in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and Ahmad Khaled Tawfek's *Utopia* (2009)

The significance of contrasting Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and Ahmad Khaled Tawfek's *Utopia* (2009) for this discussion is to show how the two narrations are fueled by the dynamics of political and historical moments. Concerning Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, aside from how far the world she portrayed was realized, her text was triggered by her visit to the Berlin Wall, which divided the city leaving the eastern part of the city suffering from claustrophobia. Besides the rare production of dystopian fiction in Arabic literature, the importance of Tawfek's *Utopia* lies in relating the cruciality of the socio-political status in Egypt's pre-2011 revolution to the inevitability of a mass uprising. One common feature that marks the two texts is the oppressive media that centralize their dystopian protagonists' interaction with the hegemonic powers. In this oppressive frame, it can be useful to see those protagonists as subalterns. My aim in this paper is to explore the voice of these subalterns in two dystopian depictions against various cultural backdrops, namely, there of Canada and Egypt.

On the other hand, to avoid categorizing her 'dystopian' novels as Science Fiction, Margaret Atwood coined the term "ustopia" to describe the mixture of the utopian and dystopian qualities found in her texts. Therefore, first, I will draw the relation between utopianism and dystopianism through the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's key concept, dialogism, as an attempt to conceptualize Atwood's coinage of "ustopia". Second, by way of dialogically contrasting the two "ustopian" novels, I will show how the voice of the ustopian subaltern re-appropriates his/herself and how he/she articulates resistance. Finally, I will conclude my paper tracing the revolutionary sparks that lurk in the corners of the two narratives, motivated by the open endings the two texts share.

Simon Speck, University of Derby

The ubiquity of comedy, 'reflexive modernity' and the end of utopia

This paper engages with the ubiquity of comedy in contemporary culture in the light of the end of 'classical' modernity and the debarring of utopian hopes. In recent sociological theory the concept of 'reflexive modernity' has loomed large: the work of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck has sought to reframe the question of post-modernity as one concerned, primarily, with the encounter of modernity with *the unintended consequences* of its own institutionalisation. Thus, in a profoundly anti-utopian gesture, the miscarriage of the hopes embodied in modernity's attempt to subject the social and natural environment to conscious collective control is construed as necessitating a politics schooled by limitless risk which thereby compels the strict self-limitation of all projects of radical transformation. The paper argues that this new *doxa* is culturally registered in the valorisation of humour in mass entertainment and social interaction: the ideological inflation of a comic sensibility is intimately related to a culture of 'reflexivity' in which unintended consequences are immanent to grand plans and apparently rational norms ultimately revealed as contingent, relative and absurd. Comedy is thereby validated as the acknowledgement and celebration of the failure and futility inherent in human finitude – an essential prophylactic against modernist *hubris.* The paper seeks to explore the ways in which the ubiquity of comedy in contemporary culture thereby ratifies an anti-utopian spirit in a mood which purports to have done with nostalgia, melancholy and the 'seriousness' of ambitions for radical social and political change. Drawing on the treatment of comedy in Hegel and with particular reference to the work of Gillian Rose and Alenka Zupancic, the paper questions the apologetic and conformist quality of contemporary laughter and, adumbrating the

subversive and 'irrational' features of the comic, seeks not only to interrogate the lessons of the 'comedy of reflexive modernity' but also to explore the utopian resources which comedy, as the perennial refusal of 'realism', stubbornly preserves.

Jeremy Spencer, Camberwell College of Arts, UK

Utopia in the text of *The German Ideology*

The German Ideology (1845-46) elaborates an approach to social and historical analysis, which unlike the 'German ideologists', does not confuse linguistic with natural reality or materiality. The ideologists confused reflexes, echoes, phantoms and sublimates with, they took them for, the material existence of actual men and women; they were oblivious to their own ideological mystifications, which *The German Ideology* exposes. Marx's social and historical analysis begins with material existence rather than its representation in ideologies. However, this approach, which considers ideology to be illusory in comparison to empirical reality, seems to deny ideology's essential role in the historical life of societies (Althusser). Absolutely imaginary spaces or utopian themes appear within *The German Ideology:* a world without ideology or where ideology is transparent in the face of the theoretical enterprise; a utopian picture of an apparently pre-industrial future communist society, and the argument that artistic talent is an effect of the existing division of labour: in communist society, there will be no painters but instead, people who simply engage in painting. However, it is arguable that far from presenting 'imaginary satisfactions', these utopian ideas are intended politically to affirm 'the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and [take] the form of a stubborn negation of all that is' (Jameson). How do we understand the utopian ideas of *The German Ideology* and the revival of the negative in light of Tafuri's critical assessment of kinds of radical thought and practice that use utopian ideas but with the ultimate effect of merely renewing prevailing social relations and releasing their potential development? In dialogue with Jameson and Tafuri and also Althusser's and de Man's work on ideology, this proposed paper will address the purpose and effect of utopian ideas in *The German Ideology,* a critical text valued for its power to suspend ideological mystification, to explore their political efficacy or usefulness as they are employed in Marx's project.

Peter Stillman, Vassar College, USA

The visions of ecological utopias

In these neo-liberal times, where some assert that 'there is no alternative' to the market-centered, self-interested, free choice model suggested by the dominant economic theories, criticising what is and proposing alternatives has proven to be very difficult, even in environmental matters, where the pressing problems of climate change, resource depletion, and pollution are so apparent.

My current larger project involves examining selected ecological utopias and dystopias of the past fifty years, presenting their critiques and warnings of the contemporary liberal and neoliberal paradigm, and discovering, linking, and interpreting common themes for alternative societies and alternative ways of being and acting in the world.

Here I wish to focus on how ecological utopias and dystopias propose ways of generating and maintaining vibrant communities and ways of developing individuals to be competent and capable speakers and actors engaged with their world -- and how those individuals and communities are a part of a larger utopian alternative that is environmentally sustainable. These good societies are not presented as a blueprint, a set of institutional and structural arrangements, or a goal, so much as they are principles and practices, processes in which individuals participate and which they can change.

For this paper, I plan to examine Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge*, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, and (for the first decade of this century) an apocalyptic dystopia such as Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam*. I shall link the development of individuals in the communities they create with their

environmental practices -- within the contexts of the fictional utopia, with its own openness and development, as the fiction tries to take its readers from an acceptance of the present to a critical stance on the present and then to alternatives to that present.

Cristiano Turbil, University of Brighton, UK

Victorian utopia in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). Evolution and Machines: a race for supremacy

Published in 1872, Samuel Butler's Erewhon was one of the main utopian novels to appear in the second part of the nineteenth century. Set in the New Zealand countryside, the novel offered a critical reading of the main cultural issues of the Victorian period, underlying the important cultural reception of Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis. Mixing philosophical, literary and scientific languages Erewhon erupted on the Victorian cultural scene with a deep criticism of the main Victorian cultural trends. Considered, since its publication, as just a satirical commentary of Darwin's work, Butler's novel had much more to offer. Erewhon discussed complex topics such as animal rights, social Darwinism, and the implications of evolution on Victorian society, taking the idea of 'natural selection' to its philosophical extremes.

In the fictional world of Erewhon Butler described a society where technology was banished due to its 'unconscious' tendency to evolve and race humanity for supremacy. In writing this, Butler posed an important question regarding the evolution of technology and its relationship with the human kind. Additionally, Erewhon showed how Darwin's idea of evolution could be applied not only to the organic kingdom but also to the inorganic one.

This paper will look at Butler's use of 'utopian writing' with particular attention to his interpretation of evolution, use of scientific terminology and criticism of Victorian society.

Mathijs van de Sande, University of Leuven, Belgium

Of trouble and paradise: Why are we so madly in love with the political?

'Utopia', as the Wikipedia entry has it, is 'a community or society possessing highly desirable or near perfect qualities.' Not so long ago the mobilizing ideal for a wide variety of political movements; today, its desirability is widely contested. Utopianism is not merely foolish or deluded, many political theorists on the right as well as the left now tend to agree. The idea of a 'nearly perfect' or 'organic' society is essentially undesirable, as it connotes de-politicization and political passivity. It presupposes the preclusion of plurality and political action, and it at best confuses politics with the mere 'management of things' (Hannah Arendt). It implies an essentialist and universalist view of the good life and human nature, and thus limits both the democratic potential of a society and the individual freedom of its members (Chantal Mouffe). And, what is more: the ideal of an undivided society ultimately results in the violent repression of whatever way in which its divisions inevitably come to be staged politically (Claude Lefort).

And thus, it is concluded that the political will and must persist over the image of a utopian society. Whenever something can be presented as 'political' or 'politicizing', this is assumed to be inherently good or preferable, whilst playing the 'de-politicization' card often grants us a certain rhetorical advantage. We are, in short, madly in love with the political.

Although I am equally reluctant to endorse the image of an 'organic society', my question is whether and why we should one-sidedly favor or aestheticize the political instead. For does 'political'/'politicizing' not also, at the same time, always presuppose a certain extent of 'a-political'/'de-politicizing'? Can we even conceive of a politics that does not, one way or the other, entail the promise of a society free from politics – albeit, perhaps, an unfulfillable promise? Or is there, perhaps, something to be saved in utopianism, whilst remaining receptive to the abovementioned critiques?

Alexandru Vasiliu, University of Bucharest, Romania

The post-Stalinist Soviet socio-economic model and the survival of utopian discourse

The association between scientific feasibility and possible societies gained a decisive momentum through the works of Karl Marx. In adding complex theoretical components to the previous socialist views, mainly the method of G.W.F. Hegel, the political economy of Adam Smith and the philosophical materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx established a new and highly influential domain of political philosophy, in which it is argued that a global society free of inequality, exploitation, poverty and aggression can be achieved through the rules inherent to the materialist conception of history.

This methodological objectivity of utopia attainment was controversially adapted by Vladimir Lenin to the specificity of an economically developing country, the former Russian Empire, and even more so by Josef Stalin, through increasingly totalitarian and repressive methods. In 1956, after the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the denunciation of Stalin's legacy by Nikita Khrushchev, socialism, and, inferentially, utopianism, entered a crisis. I want to argue that, beyond the view that the Soviet utopian discourse had become limited to only a propaganda purpose, there are theoretical and technical characteristics of social and economic policies and goals during the two decades between the 20th Congress and the adoption of the 1977 Constitution, that can allow for an analysis of the continuing use of utopian discourse in the Soviet Union. Studies around this subject are scarce, the general assumption being that socialism, in its Marxist-Leninist formula, exhausted, by means of incorrect premises, its subjective appeal and practical function after 1956, leaving the Western New Left to gain momentum as a viable alternative, and to finally supplant it after 1968, as a more valid utopian generating discourse in the resistance against capitalist hegemony. Thus, I want to show that Soviet theorists and planners maintained and adapted utopian ideals through economic reforms, technological programs and cultural norms.

Phil Vellender, London South Bank University, UK

Shelley's republican utopia

Assessing Shelley's unfinished, yet startlingly radical 1819 essay, *A Philosophical View of Reform* (*APVR*), Kenneth James Cameron (1975) suggests

> 'It is this combination of the general and the particular, of vision and practicality, that
> makes *A Philosophical View of Reform* the most advanced work of political theory of
> the age'.

Taking *APVR* as its context, this paper examines the nature of the radical poet's practical utopianism by revisiting Shelley's identification of republicanism as the most perfect human state. In setting out his theory of history by referencing the most significant republics, as well as major social upheavals, such as the Reformation, Shelley reserves particular praise for the English Revolution, that radical ferment of John Lilburne, the Levellers and the Diggers, arguing it was the first national revolution of the modern world. Crucially for our purposes here, its most revolutionary adherents earnestly wanted to create a utopian commonwealth. Shelley highlights the English Revolution in his essay because he believes that the people of England, although laid low by Regency 'Anarchy', can still be a source of democratic inspiration to the world. Shelley explicitly warns feet-dragging reformers and reactionary opponents alike that a king has been tried and executed once and can be again. Finally, Shelley reminds us that the autocratic Charles I 'made war on the Nation' just as Regency 'Anarchy' visited violence on the crowd at Peterloo: a people having resisted once can 'rise like lions' and resist again.

Vladimir Vinea, Magda Juravlea and Andreea-Ioana Nicut, ION MINCU University of Architecture and Urbanism, Romania

Shy utopianism: Blueprints for new communities and re-invented identities in an Eastern European School of Architecture

As other post-socialist countries, contemporary Romania has settled in the past decades on a course of internalisation of Western-inspired, neo-liberal, and highly individualistic values and social norms. In the architectural domain, this has translated into an overwhelming emphasis on private property in dwelling. In this context, what is the fate of community-based approaches and what could be other ways of imagining and bringing to life non-individualistic utopias? We address these questions by focusing on a student project developed at the Architecture School of Bucharest and on the rather unexpected debates it has stirred. An inconspicuously radical (in the context delineated above) project brief asked students to design dwellings for "a community of eight friends". Two of the students, openly assuming their own Eastern Orthodox faith as a resource for architecture, developed a project for a closely-knit group of religious families. This project points to the ongoing process by which the nominally dominant Orthodox Church and its members are redefining their role in an increasingly secularised society. Drawing on the still present religious values and practices at the neighbourhood level, the students' project is a community-based utopian gesture, radically re-imagining the existing social and economic order. We are suggesting that in the particular Romanian context, a specifically Orthodox preoccupation with moderation and modesty could become, quite counter-intuitively, a decisive factor for bringing utopias to life, and even for enhancing their radical potential, by what we call a "shy utopianism". Approaching the architectural project as a means to investigate questions of autonomy, agency, and populism, we reveal how form and style are closely related to constantly evolving matters of Romanian collective identity. We also show how this particular project acquired a generally meaningful assertive role for questions of community and utopia, opening new ways of building Eastern European-specific alternative futures.

Camilo Vladimir de Lima Amaral, University of East London, UK

Overcoming silent utopias in architecture: social imagination as a process of political struggle

The 1960s and 1970s represented an important moment of reflection and critique of the body of the principles of modern architecture. The main targets of the critiques were the various forms through which the profession of architecture would assert its social role as a constructor of utopias. Nevertheless, this paper aims to delineate how the various critiques failed to deconstruct the principle of the architect as a Virtuous Prince, resulting in 'silent utopias'. To do so, we will investigate the assumptions of three key utopian critiques: the pacification of the utopia, which aimed to eliminate political and social pretentions among the profession; the accelerationist utopia, based on a progressive perspective (progress as a goal); and the negative utopia, which condemns all proposals as ideologies, resulting in anti-architecture as the only solution to the paradox.

On the basis of this analysis, I shall outline another form of utopia, in which the proposals are not virtuous ideals conceived by an enlightened humanist but reflect a process of struggle.

Aylwyn Walsh & Myrto Tsilimpounidi (Ministry of Untold Stories)

Cruising utopia: A riff on longing, desire and the yet-to-come in politics and performance

Setting: an urban nowhere. A dialling tone. A neon light flickers.

Hello? Are you there?
Can you hear me? The connection is -

> From this side
> The dirty secret seems like a promise

I can't tell if you are being serious -

> The missive on the back of the toilet cubicle
> Tells a story
> For anyone who still reads graffiti
> I <3 U
> For a good time, call 555-HOPE

But where are you? What hope?

You cannot take what you have not given, and you must give yourself. You cannot buy Utopia. You cannot make Utopia. You can only be the Utopia. Utopia is in the individual spirit, or it is nowhere. It is for all or it is nothing. If it is seen as having any end, it will never truly begin. We can't stop here. We must go on. We must take the risks.

Sorry. Come again?

I'm harnessing the power of the cruise
The potency of willing revolutionary change through the everyday
The edging towards a future that is not yet in place
The disappearance of the here and now

Wait. You just got all robotic.
Are you just talking about sex again?

Staging a queered dialogue between Plato's prisoners, Jose Muñoz, Tim Etchells, Ursula Le Guin and Jill Dolan, this performance lecture seeks relationality between pedagogies of resistance and mapping spaces of desire. Ministry of Untold Stories explores politics that camp beyond the melancholy of the left.

Darren Webb, University of Sheffield, UK

Critical pedagogy, utopia and politics

Critical pedagogy presents itself as a hope-driven practice of political engagement, grounded in the everyday but animated by a utopian longing for something more and something better. What I argue in this paper, however, is that the way in which utopia is conceptualised within critical pedagogy places limits on its capacity for political intervention. Taking as an analytical frame the distinction between 'utopia as process' and 'utopia as system', the paper highlights, firstly, the way in which critical pedagogy now accepts, almost without reservation, the standard liberal rejection of 'utopia as system' and, secondly, the rather emaciated practice of politics that follows if one restricts one's understanding of utopia to an open-ended process of becoming. The paper concludes by arguing that effective political engagement requires critical educationalists to abandon an uncritical adherence to liberal sensibilities and embrace 'utopia as system'.

Gilliane Williams, University of Brighton, UK
Secret trials as dystopia of denial

As we celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, it is disconcerting to consider that the UK has become more and more engaged with the facilitating of closed material procedures within the courts and tribunals of the legal system. Those subjected to form of house arrest (TPIMS) face an appeal procedure which prevents them from knowing the evidence against them. The Justice and Security Act 2013 made it lawful to extend the use of secret evidence procedures to civil hear, public interest immunity principles have long been available to allow for non-disclosure in the interests of national security. Recently a judge allowed a criminal trial to be held partly behind closed doors with a proportion of the evidence withheld from the defendant. This research paper raises the contention that the nascent notion of utopian liberties heralded by Magna Carta has reached its apex and we are presently suffering the throes of a decent into dystopic pacification. This contention will be discussed through an examination of the process of the normalisation of the secret trial. Through this technique the tool of law has been utilised to discourage discourse through a denial of truth, voice and autonomy thus serving to obfuscate the imperative power of law makers to restructure ideas of neo liberalist justice.

Julia Winckler, University of Brighton, UK

Fabricating *Lureland:* tracking a utopian vision for Peacehaven via the *Peacehaven Post* magazine Vol. 1, 1921-22

In Peacehaven, as in many speculative developments, we can find evidence of collision between the ideas articulated in marketing discourses and their actual realization. A post WW1 development, the town was started by developer Charles Neville's South Coast Land and Resort Company. An astute, and well-connected businessman, Neville drew on a range of discourses and means to attract buyers for this freehold development. In 1921 he brought together a host of "celebrities" - writers, composers and artists - who helped "fabricate" and endorse a vision and a marketing strategy for the new estate.

The artist Gordon Volk was instrumental in visualizing Peacehaven's promise through cartoons he made for the monthly *Peacehaven Post*. George and Felix Powell (composers of WW1 hit *Pack Up Your Troubles*) wrote the song *Come to Peacehaven*, with George Powell becoming the *Post's* first editor. The writer George R. Sims (author of *Horrible London* (1889), *How the Poor live* (1883) and *Dagonet Ballads* (1879)) came up with the epithet of *Lureland* in the Post's first editorial.

> "Land ahoy" "What land?" "Why, my land, your land, our land. Care free and freehold happy land – LURELAND" (Vol 1, p.1, Sept. 1921).

Volk's cartoons and drawings for the *Post,* alongside editorials by Sims and the Powell's epitomize the "two faces" of Utopia. Not only do they already anticipate a future for Peacehaven, a place that is itself only beginning to emerge. Moreover, they articulate expressions of a shared past in a not yet existing present, giving the impression of reliability, solidity and connection to tradition. By using polysemic symbols such as anchors, pillars, a globe and a shepherd and his flock, the *Post* deployed visual metaphors to create a connection, or the illusion of a connection, to the past. George R. Sims also referred to Peacehaven as "a second Eden" (Vol. 1, No. 3, page 59) using semantics that Philosopher Mircea Eliade has referred to as the myth of the eternal return.

A drawing entitled: "The Twelve "Posts" of Peacehaven" imagines a shared present defined by:

> Health, happiness, contentment, recreation, satisfaction, freedom, hope, rejuvenation, home-life, prosperity, peace, and a haven (Vol.1).

Already imagining an entire community of not yet existing settlers, Volk's cartoons also show what is "not seen at Peacehaven!" Rent collectors, pawnshops, factories, city congestion and child poverty. (Vol.1, No.6, Feb 1922)

On the one hand, these were of course reassuring lines that located the idea of Peacehaven where developers

wanted it to be – by the same token, they captured the imagination of a Post WW1 public afraid of the health risks that overcrowding and squalor brought with them in the capital and the social reform movement. This narrative further appealed to entrepreneurial folk who liked the idea of taking on smallholdings after the war and also tapped into Ebenezer Howard's Garden city ideal.

Working with the conference call suggestion that the idea of *Utopia* has always been "two-faced" – "imagining a not yet existing place" versus "the place where the good life could finally be realised", and the invitation to "play both faces" – I propose to track how a utopian vision for Peacehaven was first articulated through cartoons and editorials published in the *Peacehaven Post* when building at Peacehaven had only barely commenced.

Clare Woodford, University of Brighton, UK

Productive utopia? How to respond to utopian presence in poststructuralist radical democracy

This paper draws on the work of recent post-structuralist thinkers (Rancière, Badiou, Zizek) to observe that a particular thin concept of utopia appears to be very difficult to separate from radical democratic practice due to the need to motivate and inspire social movements. Drawing on Rancière's police/politics schema and his emphasis on the importance of dis-identification for the moment of political rupture it will suggest that a thin notion of utopia may always be present on the horizon of any reconfiguration of police order, but that this could be used in a productive way and hence need not restrict or close our potential to move towards an ever more open and inclusive democratic politics.

Joseph Young, Artist, UK

A People's Manifesto

A People's Manifesto started life at InTRANSIT festival 2014 as part of a commission called Revolution #10. Revolution #10 was inspired by a track on The Beatles' White Album, Revolution #9 - a radical collage of sounds released at the height of the social and political upheavals of 1968. John Lennon would later refer to this track as 'the sound of protest'…

I was concerned that in the wake of the both the parliamentary expenses scandal and a general lack of trust in our elected politicians that our democracy was under threat through complacency, borne out a general perception that all politicians are the same and that voting doesn't change anything. So I set out to challenge that notion by asking the public 3 Questions.

Question #1:
——————
If you were elected as Prime Minister in May 2015, what would be the first thing you would say to the nation?

Question #2:
——————
Does democracy matter?

Question #3:
——————
We need a revolution because… (finish this sentence)

The answers to these questions were recorded on a campaign stall set up in various public spaces and also through a dedicated project website at www.revolution10.uk, as part of a commission for Brighton Digital Festival 2014. The space for dialogue that was opened up during my 3-4 minute encounters with members of the public allowed them to openly express their views without fear of criticism or challenge (with the caveat that

I would not allow any overt discrimination or hate speech). This in many ways turned out to be the most valuable part of the project… The manifesto also accurately reflects the everyday poeticism of people's political beliefs. Common themes centre on social justice, the environment and the need for tolerance, cheek by jowl with support for immigration controls and concern about benefit fraud.

The presentation begins with some background information on the project and genesis and then moves onto a performance of the manifesto itself, which last about 12 mins.

A People's Manifesto:
http://issuu.com/josephyoung1/docs/a_people___s_manifesto.docx?e=6673610/11886248
YouTube: https://youtu.be/WDr673AfDjw

Mareike Zobel, University of Cambridge, UK

Documentaries that fix the world: Present enactments of utopian futures

This paper discusses present actualisations of utopian visions in contemporary documentary film. Located in the borderland between fiction and non-fiction, entertainment and social criticism, feature-length documentaries have become increasingly popular over the last decade. They frequently portray protagonists who cross present/future boundaries, envisioning and enacting potential futures in order to impact the present. The 'Yes Men', for instance, attempt to 'fx the world' in their 2009 documentary by defamiliarising and destabilising the present through their "honest representation of what [people] should be doing", thereby assuming agency over future events in a practice of speculative imagination.

The discursive and non-discursive cultural practices of documentary films can be characterised, I argue, as a 'rehearsal' of future possibilities which serves to assess the potential of utopian ideas to change the present, while pragmatically testing the obstacles and limitations individuals face in shaping, defining, and controlling the future within present-day value structures. Eschewing an ethically charged utopian/dystopian dichotomy, these documentaries creatively balance complex, conflicting and even competing notions of the future. My analysis considers contemporary documentary films as paramount examples of a current compulsion to engage with the future through the dynamic process of a two-way imaginary exchange. Based on a praxeological understanding of culture, it asks how the present actualisation of the future adds complexity to the concept of 'utopia', how it crosses temporal borders to inscribe in the present the ideal, material, and practical conditions under which certain futures become more likely than others, and how it plays into the stabilisation or transformation of social, cultural and economic orders. In addition to *The Yes Men Fix the World* (2009), examples include *No Impact Man* (2009), *Erasing David* (2010), *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010), *Chasing Ice* (2012), and *Project Wild Thing* (2013).