

Goede Consultants

Utopia 2065

Ideas, Hope and Inspiration

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Utopia 2065

Ideas, Hope and Inspiration

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Preface

I was glad to start this book after the publication of my previous book in Dutch, *Bizar bestuur*,¹ because it was a wearisome process. It is not amusing to make the bizarre explicit. It was necessary to emphasize the urgency for change. In this book I explain that good governance is possible. It is utopic, but it is what we need.

Utopia is an impossible reality, a happy non-existing society. It is also a philosophical tradition, typified by the authors who describe an ideal society. The most renowned of these is Thomas More, who wrote his book *Utopia: The Ideal Society* in 1516, exactly five hundred years ago.

The future has changed.² Change has evolved from constant change to the era of change (Kotter, 1996), and now we are experiencing a change of era.³ I admire those who talk about the future with conviction because the future is unknown. Some have said that the best way to predict the future is to create it. Others believe it is a matter of analysis, looking at the rise of American power, the end of population explosion and the development of technology (Friedman, 2010). Some have actually tried to create utopia in experiments in communes. One example is the village Mirnaleda in Spain. It functions based on principles of cooperatism and socialism and has had better results than other villages with low unemployment, affordable housing, and no budget deficit (Boer, 2015). Even on the small island of Curaçao, we have communes like Eco Village Sol.⁴ I do not know. If we do not create the future, we might end up in a society as presented in the movie *Idiocracy* (Judge, 2005), a dystopian⁵ world governed by idiots. Nevertheless, I suspect the changes are

going to be big, dramatic and swift. It is going to be a tsunami.⁶ That is what I sense and in this book I meditate about the new society.

This book is directed to learners who think about the current society and the future of society. To encourage further learning, links are presented to access other sources.

I felt less alone in my quest after I read *Vlaanderen 2055* by Johnathan Holslag (2015) while visiting Europe. In November 2015 I stayed in Maastricht, close to the place where Thomas More worked on his book five hundred years ago. Holslag, however, does not consider his work utopic but realistic. He inspired me to add 2065 (not 2055) to the title of this book: fifty years from now.

Introduction

The title of the book refers to *Utopia: The Ideal Society* by Thomas More (1516). For centuries people have been thinking about utopia. It is a Greek word meaning “no place” or “nowhere” and today it means “the good place”. For a while the idea of utopia was not much discussed. We were fascinated by technology and capitalism. Some claim that capitalism has brought us progress.⁷ Now the system is in crisis, and it seems that we need ideas, hope and inspiration.⁸ Maybe this vibration was also picked up by the Dutch television producer of the program *Utopia*,⁹ a program where a group of people tries to create an ideal society. What are the changes needed in our society? I propose to contemplate utopia again and to get inspired to come up with ideas for change and creation. Actually, it is not about change because change happens. Creation is what you make when things are changing fluently.

Each one of us ought to “exercise” our imaginations and share our images of a more just and peaceful neighborhood, community, nation and world with others, for the purpose of dialogue. We may find ourselves supporting rebellions, but we ought to oppose revolutions. To adhere to the idea of a messianic revolutionary spirit that will create utopia is to fail to imagine, as Camus did, the absurdity of human nature and the human condition. The fundamental problem with the idea of utopia is that utopians are incapable of imaging this absurdity. (Hufford, 2009)

It is obvious that old institutions and systems do not function any longer in the year 2016. The old systems are based on

market principles, money and liberal democracy.¹⁰ For example, the implementation of market principles in higher education in the Netherlands has led to a perverse system that caused the university community to protest in February 2015.¹¹ The new systems are based on brotherly love. They are about helping others. They are about other people.

There are more reasons to discuss utopia. Currently, we face several paramount issues and wicked problems: increasing poverty^{12,13}, climate change and terrorism to name a few. These issues are not only addressed by political leaders but also by spiritual leaders like the Pope¹⁴ and the Dalai Lama.¹⁵

Thomas More wrote his book *Utopia* in 1516. In that book, he describes the ideal society from the perspectives of his society at the time. It was written in Latin and it was illustrated.

More was not the only writer who taught about the ideal society. One of the most important works that did so is *A Modern Utopia* by H. G. Wells (1967). Some authors trace the idea of a utopian society back to thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre (Hufford, 2009).

Every project for an ideal society is an attempt to invent the future. That is what distinguishes utopianism from ideology. As Karl Mannheim, the author of *Ideology and Utopia* (1929), put it, utopias bear a message of hope in the sense that they signify that change is possible. Whilst ideology is a vehicle for the world view of people in power, utopias are by their very nature subversive: they oppose existing authority and challenge the view of the reality that it imposes.¹⁶

In 2014, my daughter dragged me to the movie *The Giver*, another story about an ideal society. *The Giver*, in essence, is a scenario of the future. The society is a closed and seemingly harmonious one in which everything is pre-arranged from cradle to the grave. Children born with a defect are “put to sleep” and the elderly, at a predetermined age, go on their “last journey”. Children follow a tailor-made educational program based on their unique talents and are later on employed based on their education. It is a rational society with no room for emotions. In the story, the rediscovery of emotions brings about the end of this utopia.

While preparing this book, I took notice of a column by De Waard in Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* in which he refers to the book *Postcapitalism: A Guide to the Future* by Paul Mason, a journalist for Channel 4.¹⁷ They agree that we need to discuss utopia because, due to technological developments, such a society is now at hand. They bring forward three arguments: first, jobs are becoming rare due to robots; second, price mechanisms no longer work because “things” are often not scarce; and last but not least, “things” including services are often free because of generosity, sharing and the sharing economy.

I am convinced that to strive for a better world, a better society, a better human being is the only viable option for the future. It is more about “Us” and “We” and less about “Me” and “I”. It is about inclusion and not exclusion. It is about living together and integration. Love and belonging.

Holslag (2015)¹⁸ states in *Vlaanderen 2055* that utopia is about creating a safe society with true well-being, sustainability, higher productivity, small and efficient

government, cohesive society, entrepreneurship and green city development and surroundings. Culture and quality are the engine of progress, not luxury.

The Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater (Savater, 1998) states that utopia is, by definition, a totalitarian state where the “correct” way of living is “enforced”. He goes on to state that this has not worked. This thought of Savater is illustrated in books and movies like *Fahrenheit 451* which describes a totalitarian state where books are forbidden (Bradbury, 2012). Savater advocates that we should not try to create utopia, but instead we should try to materialize some of its ideals. Not everyone wants to live in an ideal society, but many people want to live in a better society. The idea is not to design such a society and implement it. The idea is to inspire people to bring changes for the better. Even small changes.

I believe, as many others, that the design of the ideal society is influenced by the time the design is made. Utopia must be understood in its historical context. The thinker starts with the current state and seeks solutions for current challenges. That was also the case with More. He was inspired by discoveries by Columbus, Vespucci and Marco Polo. The New World was not its source though. Instead, the book was a critique on Catholic European societies. More was opposed to the aristocracy, the guilds and merchants, and their oppression through unjust laws. Utopians in the 1800s romanticized common property and extensive state planning. The book also inspired the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

That is why every generation should rethink utopia because society has changed.

What are the challenges faced by our societies?

One of the challenges for the (neoliberal) society is to find the balance between individual freedom and collectivity. The question is if this is a static or dynamic equilibrium. Up to now, it seems like this point has never been reached and/or that it is very dynamic. Could it be that countries that nowadays are ranked as the happiest countries in the world have reached this point? We will get back to this later on in this book.

Another reason we must seek utopia is because the current systems based on neoliberalism are broken. Neoliberalism has brought out the worst in us.¹⁹ We don't need neoliberalism, but neoidealism. Neoliberalism has reduced human beings to a commodity. From my high school days, I recall being taught that capitalism and liberalism state: "Every man for himself and God for us all." Communism states: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Christian Democrats preach: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Communism was dismissed as utopic. Now we can establish for ourselves that capitalism as we know it does not bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

According to Holslag (2015), from the perspective of Flanders, we face the following challenges and needs: to restore self-confidence; to eliminate public debt; to critically embrace technology as a driver of change; to deal with the aging of the population; to make better use of human capital by taking demographics into account, i.e., to offer the youth the opportunity to carry the load; to solve the energy problem; to

improve logistics so that lines get shorter and resources don't come from too far away; to create smart, beautiful, human-friendly cities.

It is ironic that More started writing *Utopia* in Flanders in 1515, five hundred years go.

What are the issues Curaçao is facing moving beyond 2016?

There are several big issues the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)²⁰ have to face. For example, take the case of Curaçao.

First of all, the youth unemployment rate was 37 percent in 2015. Many youngsters cannot get a job after they finish their education. Those who study abroad do not return to their home island.

The social security funds are under pressure due to demographic changes caused by the fact that the baby boomers are retiring and young people are leaving the island. This leads to the need to restructure healthcare financially and operationally. Everything must be digitized and integrated. Of course, privacy is an issue.

There is no significant economic development. There has been no significant economic growth in the last ten years. The exports must increase. New companies must be started or investors must be attracted.

The hundred-year-old oil refinery must be upgraded or dismantled. On the other hand, transshipment of oil at Bullenbaai is very promising.

Green energy is the new norm. We need to move towards 100 percent renewable energy.

The educational system must be reinvented. It must start with the learner in mind. There is no question that the local language Papiamentu and English should both fulfill an essential role. The new system should not focus primarily on learning by memorizing. The school that reflects a factory from the industrial age is something of the past. It is also not about producing professionals but people who can resolve problems. Students teaching teachers is an alternative. Learners learn by executing real projects, solving real problems, facilitated by “teachers”. The system should be completely digitized and should totally integrate family, corporations, churches and sports. In other words, the educational system should transform from a silo approach to a holistic one, from a school starting at eight o’clock and lasting till one o’clock to a 24/7 process. Education and learning should continue after school hours.

Currently, 75 percent of the graduates from universities are female. The objective is to raise the number of male graduates to 50 percent.

Startups of graduates must be the norm as there are not enough jobs. They will create their own jobs.

The government should be the benchmark for good services. This means, among other things, being entirely digitized. All contact with the government and requests to the government should be digitally submitted. The government must be small in size and enabling but with a strong leading presence where needed, including in the areas of legislation, infrastructure and education.

The government will be driven by big data, process management and constant innovation.

On a very frequent basis, the parliament will host town hall meetings to engage with the voters and to improve democracy.

Politicians need to be held accountable by the voters in a transparent manner. If they fail to comply, they will be dealt with in a democratic matter.

Due to climate change, water will become a scarce resource. Ecological balance will be essential for survival. Biological farming will be the norm.

New indicators will replace the GDP. It is not primarily about economic growth but also about sustainable development.

The challenges of the SIDS are more or less the same as the ones mentioned by Holslag.

What can we learn from the happiest countries?

There is a list of happiest countries in the world. What do they teach us about utopia? This idea of looking at the “best” countries of the world is shared with thinkers like Francis Fukuyama.²¹ In 2013, Sustainable Development Solutions Network published the “World Happiness Report 2013”. It measured a country’s happiness rate.

Denmark was rated the happiest country in the world and the Dutch were rated number four. How do these countries do it? What are the criteria?

There are six criteria:

- GDP per capita
- Life expectancy
- Level of corruption
- Social cohesiveness
- Level of freedom to determine one’s own life
- Level of generosity

The six criteria, in other words, are GDP per capita, healthy years of life expectancy, social support (as measured by having someone to count on in times of trouble), trust (as measured by a perceived absence of corruption in government and business), perceived freedom to make life decisions, and generosity (as measured by recent donations, adjusted for differences in income).

What the list shows is that a high GDP alone does not make people happy. That is why a team developed the Social Progress Index in 2014.

The Social Progress Index determines what it means to be a good society according to three dimensions: Basic Human Needs (food, water, shelter, safety); Foundations of Wellbeing (basic education, information, health and a sustainable environment); and Opportunity (do people have rights, freedom of choice, freedom from discrimination, and access to higher education?).²²

It is notable that the countries of Northern Europe score very well. Western countries perform very well. Another remark: democratic countries perform very well. The average population of the happy countries is not too large.

What can we learn from the Danish? They are very trusting. They trust others very easily. They feel they are in control of their circumstances. They are non-judgmental. They believe that everybody has the right to make their own choices. The Danish are non-materialistic. Money is not an end but a means to an end. The Danish have long parental leaves. Healthcare is a high priority. There is gender equality. They bike as a way of transportation. The Danish feel responsible for each other and are willing to pay taxes for social security. They have a good work-life balance; they do a lot of volunteering and show up for elections. The Danish like coziness.²³

What are the principles in utopia?

Based on the best practices of the happiest countries, I state that the principles of the next utopia are:

- Love. In a utopian society it is all about sharing love, especially among people.

- Trust. Utopia is based on trust. Trust is the result of people being trustworthy: say what you do and do what you say. This is contrary to More's version of utopia, which was based on distrust (Burton, 2003).
- Maybe the motive is not altruism but self-interest. I am reminded of the teaching of one of my mentors, the late Wim de Vrijer, who always referred to Adam Smith to state that: "We are good for others because we understand that this is in our own best interest. It is all about the balance between 'Me' and 'We'. If it is driven by altruism or self-interest, it does not make a difference. The effect is that people serve the common good by serving others."²⁴
- Is utopia an equal society? Yes and no. Everybody is respected. Everybody has the right to develop their talents to their full potential. Everybody will have their basic needs met, but everybody will be unique and different.

This book is inspired by the Utopian Small Island Development State (in the Caribbean). It covers the following topics:

The individual

The family

The education

The neighborhood

Living

Work

Governance

Powered by information, technology and communication.

Transportation

Money

Healthcare

Spirituality

The individual

The future is about the balance between the individual and the collectivity. A better world, a better society, a better human being: it is the only viable option for the future. It is more about “Us” and “We” and less about “I” and “Me”. It is about inclusion and not exclusion. It is about living together.

At one extreme we have individualism and at the other we have collectivism. Almost nobody can live without being part of a collectivity. And no collectivity can ignore the individual entirely. Societies are categorized as either being more individualistic or more collectivistic. I believe that over history we see a convergence between the two: individualism becomes more collectivistic and vice-versa.

Contrary to More’s version, utopia is not about perfection expressed in uniformity (Burton, 2003). It is about diversity in uniformity.

In Spiral Dynamic²⁵ terms, utopia is Turquoise.

There is no absolute wall around an organisation. To Turquoise, all people and other life-forms exist in an infinitely complex and awe-inspiring web of interdependent connections.

Turquoise takes a holistic, global perspective. There is less separation of individual and collective needs, since we’re all connected like neurons in a brain. Compassion — relief from suffering — is the driving force. Some ancient wisdom cultures describe this as a journey towards enlightenment,

where all suffering disappears. Individuals driven by compassion source initiatives and others join them to help, whilst also starting their own initiatives.²⁶

In utopia, there must be a universal collective understanding of privacy, transparency and freedom. This cannot be delegated to an institution because it will end up in dictatorship.

The fulfillment of needs²⁷

Will all of Maslow's needs be met in a sharing economy or utopia?²⁸

Is the sharing economy the new utopia? The sharing economy is a strategy of young people that have no access to the things they aspire to. This strategy is becoming mainstream and is enabled by social media.

Not everybody seems to think so. Again, we are creating utopia as a mind exercise, not as a design to be implemented. In utopia, a person ultimately finds himself by dedicating himself to a higher goal.

Physiological needs

Physiological needs are the physical necessities for human survival. If these necessities are not met, the human body cannot function well and will ultimately fail. Physiological needs are believed to be the most important; they should be met first.

Air, water and food are metabolic requirements for survival in all animals, including humans. Clothing and shelter provide necessary defence against the elements. While maintaining

an adequate birth rate shapes the intensity of the human sexual instinct, sexual competition may also shape said instinct.

In utopia, these needs will be met. Both parents will get two years of leave to take care of their infant. The environment will be clean. All waste will be recycled and all pollution will be reversed. The options for clothing will be limited and standardized to avoid waste. People will be able to adapt the standardized clothing to express their uniqueness.²⁹

Safety

With their physical needs reasonably satisfied, the individual's safety needs will become a priority and it will govern behavior.

In the absence of physical safety – due to war, natural disaster, family violence, childhood abuse, etc. – people may (re-)experience post-traumatic stress disorder or transgenerational trauma. In the absence of economic safety – due to economic crisis and lack of work opportunities – these safety needs manifest themselves. In utopia this is not the case.

The family

The purpose of existence is to experience love: giving and receiving love. All you need is love. In utopia, the family, which is formed by marriage, will be the primary group of individuals to relate to.

People will love and bond, have children, nurture them and raise them. The children will leave home to start their own family around the age of twenty-one, but they will still take care of their extended family. Staying close to the parental home will be the norm. Children will take care of the elderly.

Thanks to better matchmaking, the divorce rate will be very low. This matchmaking will be possible due to progress in the field of psychology.

The purpose of marriage will be to have children. Medical technology to enable reproduction will be applied in an ethical manner.

If children are not born after five years, the marriage may be dissolved. The well-being of children will be monitored even before conception.

Both parents will be allowed to work from home for the first four years of the child's life.

The family will live in a smart house that will also be green.³⁰

It will be a place for living, learning and working. Working from home will be the norm. People will leave the house to socialize, not to work.

The house will even be a source of production for food and energy. Technology will make it possible for the family to produce part of its own water, energy and food needs. The roof will be an important area of production.

One of the other collectivities an individual is part of is a generation. The collectivity of society is changing because the baby boomers are fading out and generation Z is inheriting the labor market. A generation shares a common experience and set of values.³¹ The generation gap will be very intense as the younger generations come to blame the baby boomers for the poor pension system and all the other problems, such as climate change, that humanity faces. This conflict will be resolved by those who build bridges between the generations and build an inclusive society.³² In utopia, there will be no generation gap.

Love and belonging

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. This need is especially strong in childhood and can override the need for safety, as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents. Deficiencies within this level of Maslow's hierarchy – due to neglect, exclusion, isolation, etc. – can impact the individual's ability to form and maintain emotionally significant relationships in general such as:

- Friendship
- Intimacy
- Family

Esteem

“What a man can be, he must be.” This quotation forms the basis of the perceived need for self-actualization. This level of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can do to become the most that one can be. Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically. For example, an individual

may have a strong desire to become an ideal parent. In another, desire may be expressed athletically. For others, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures or inventions. As previously mentioned, Maslow believed that to understand this level of need, the person must not only achieve the previous needs but master them as well.

Self-actualization

The self only finds its actualization in giving itself to some higher goal outside oneself in altruism and spirituality.³³

In the later stages of life, people will be invited and given the opportunity to leave a legacy.³⁴

The education

What will schools look like in utopia? Learning will be a long life experience. The role of institutions in this area will decrease (In 't Veld, 2015). People will be able to learn anything, anytime, anywhere. This will be enabled by internet connectivity. People will be able to communicate with experts and a community of practitioners to learn. People will still meet face to face to learn because there is tacit knowledge that must be transferred. Learning will be defined by a new education paradigm.^{35,36} Education will no longer be about degrees and so on. It will be all about building a track record, a portfolio, and proving what the individual is capable of.

Education will include moral education and empathy, bringing both babies³⁷ and elderly people into the schools. It will also be about justice, beauty and happiness. In this sense, I agree with More's concept.

Learners will learn life skills,³⁸ including how to grow food and produce water and energy. They will also learn citizenship, competencies to work and entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship.³⁹

The neighborhood

Families will spend more time at their house because they will both work and learn more from home. Therefore, there will be different requirements for both the house and the neighborhood. There will be more facilities in the neighborhood and people will have closer relationships with their neighbors. The goal will be to achieve globalization while maintaining local identity. This will be part of the new mindset⁴⁰ that is all about experiencing love and compassion, that is more about giving and less about receiving. Less is more. Some people talk about awakening.⁴¹

The majority of people will live in smart cities^{42,43}. These will be highly integrated ecosystems with no impact whatsoever on the environment. The smart city will be an integrated network of high-rise buildings.⁴⁴ The temperature will be regulated with deep sea water and wind. The buildings will produce energy, food and oxygen. The main form of transport will be public transportation by metro and monorail. The roads will produce energy.⁴⁵ Energy will be 100 percent from renewable sources, and waste will be 100 percent recycled. This will maximize efficiency and create more free time for people to enjoy each other's company.

There will be no boundaries and countries as we currently know them. People will be able to travel freely and to work everywhere. For many today this is still hard to do.⁴⁶





It is a smart planet; it is spaceship earth. Earth has small divisions on other planets in the universe like Mars. This is a consequence of the never-ending quest of humans.⁴⁷

Work

The baby boomers are retiring, and there will be much demand for workers in healthcare and elderly care. Work as we know it today will become rare due to the internet and robotization. There will not be enough jobs.⁴⁸ This development is also referred to as the fourth industrial revolution.

Navigating the next industrial revolution



| Revolution | Year | What happened? |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------|
|  | 1 1784 | Steam, water, mechanical production equipment |
|  | 2 1870 | Division of labour, electricity, mass production |
|  | 3 1969 | The computer, electronics and the internet |
|  | 4 ? | The barriers between man and machine dissolve |

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Keep in mind that jobs are much more than an opportunity to earn an income. They are the main interfaces for an individual to engage with or be part of the collectivity or society. Individuals feel useful when able to work, to contribute, to create and to be part of something bigger than them. So if jobs become scarce, we should create alternatives for jobs. Because just like in More's utopia, everybody works and there is no poverty.

Bill Gates also shares concern for the future of work.⁵⁰

Bill Gates: People Don't Realize How Many Jobs Will Soon Be Replaced By Software Bots

Julie Bort

Mar. 13, 2014, 5:15 PM

Big changes are coming to the labor market that people and governments aren't prepared for, Bill Gates believes.

Speaking at Washington, D.C., economic think tank The American Enterprise Institute on Thursday, Gates said that within 20 years, a lot of jobs will go away, replaced by software automation ("bots" in tech slang, though Gates used the term "software substitution").

This is what he said: "Software substitution, whether it's for drivers or waiters or nurses ... it's progressing. ... Technology over time will reduce demand for jobs, particularly at the lower end of skill set. ... 20 years from now, labor demand for lots of skill sets will be substantially lower. I don't think people have that in their mental model."

He's not the only one predicting this gloomy scenario for workers. In January, the Economist ran a big profile naming over a dozen jobs sure to be taken over by robots in the next 20 years, including telemarketers, accountants and retail workers.

Gates believes that the tax codes are going to need to change to encourage companies to hire employees, including, perhaps, eliminating income and payroll taxes altogether. He's also not a fan of raising the minimum wage, fearing that it will discourage employers from hiring workers in the very categories of jobs that are most threatened by automation.

He explained: “When people say we should raise the minimum wage. I worry about what that does to job creation ... potentially damping demand in the part of the labor spectrum that I’m most worried about.”

In this context, we will pay people for not working: free money. Local governments in the Netherlands are already testing this concept.⁵¹ This is also the case in Finland.⁵² Sweden is reducing the working day from eight hours to only six. This is also increasing productivity.⁵³

Modern agriculture will be essential in utopia (Burton, 2003). Not only does it provide food, but it also creates much needed jobs and social interaction, which will lead to integration and cohesion.⁵⁴

Crafts will return to the cities. This will create jobs and a bond between producer and consumer. Products and services will be individualized and of high quality. Logistics will be more efficient. Work commute time will be shorter. The time it takes for the consumer to travel to the producer will also be shorter.

Governance

Politics was once about beliefs and society. Now it's a worship of money.

Armando Iannucci

Remember when elections were about society, health, literacy, welfare? All bow now to the god of business.

For the past 40 years, politicians have been in thrall to the world of business.

As elections draw near, the discussion shrinks to one simple question: are you better off now than you were five years ago? Maybe we don't need a TV debate after all. Other issues come out for an airing but in the end, no matter how passionate you are about the NHS, devolution, immigration or the environment, if you can't talk competently about money, you're nothing.

If instead, as Green party leader Natalie Bennett showed us recently, you go on the radio to outline your spending plans but have a brain fade or a touch of tongue-stroke or whatever it is she called that jumble of mouthfarts that came out as policy – if you do this, you're cast to one side as an inadequate buffoon. This is no country for the uncosted.

Election 2015: The Guardian poll projection.

Money is the root of all politics. It sounds so obvious it's hardly worth writing down. Yet I was amazed by how

shocked and surprised we were meant to be at that footage of Jack Straw and Malcolm Rifkind selling their services and talking hourly rates. The film made them look like two hungry foxes backed into a pile of brambles, a bunch of feathers in each mouth: but really, this was no different from what Rifkind and Straw's bosses do all the time.

Suppose, instead, the secret filming had been of David Cameron, Nick Clegg, Ed Miliband and the entire government and opposition front benches sitting down in a dowdy, but very crowded, hotel room with a group of generous CEOs. Suppose also they started saying things like: "Look, I'm not promising anything but I can get you access to, well, me. I can have you sitting next to me at a dinner, if you like. If you can't afford that I'll certainly contrive to bump into you in a corridor or meet at a private party. But be assured I can have a word with my policy team about those tax penalties. I'm sure we could 'simplify' them a bit." That footage wouldn't be too far off what happens.

Any major political movement needs big money to fund it, and rich business people get access and influence proportionate to their party donation. Tory and Labour donors we read about all the time, but it's worth remembering that the Lib Dems, SNP and Ukip also rely on the generous backing of the rich and tax-complex. If anything, Rifkind and Straw seemed to have committed the crime of being disarmingly frank and human. It was in stark contrast to the two representatives of HSBC who appeared before the Treasury select committee: they may have said they were embarrassed and appalled by what

the Swiss branch of their bank did, but took no blame themselves.

Culpability is something big business doesn't recognise. Nor is it something political leaders want to pursue. It has no market value. Banks fail, financial centres crash, Swiss branches help evasion, but no one is arrested or put in any kind of dock. Monoliths such as Vodafone come to gentlemen's agreements with HMRC over reduced payments in back tax. Meanwhile, vans circulate telling foreigners to go home, posters go up telling us to snitch on benefit scroungers and letters are put through people's doors warning them to get worried about their spare bedroom.

But dare to express a single doubt over the supreme rationale of having the business community running the whole show, and you're derided as an economic nincompoop, unfit for office. We can launch inquiries into the police, the war and the press, but it's the stuff of fantasy to imagine we'd ever launch a full-blown investigation into why our business community lives under permanent impunity. That's because this belief that, fundamentally, we should all be like businesses, has expanded exponentially. It is political life itself. There's nothing left. It's taken on the status of an unshatterable truth: if we are to have any credibility, business is what we must do.

There's no phrase more guaranteed to get a politician jumpy and defensive than: "This is bad for business." If someone from a boardroom says it, Whitehall snaps into action to do something about it, Oppositions scurry to

explain what they mean. Policies are swiftly adopted or modified, depending on exactly how “Bad For Business” the accusation implies.

It doesn’t happen when bishops say: “This is bad for poor people,” or health experts say: “This is bad for the mentally ill,” or tenants say: “This is bad for me and my family.” But somehow to be Bad for Business is an unquestionable wrong that must be righted before anyone has time to work out whether by Bad for Business they just mean Bad for their own Business, or even just Bad for their Shareholders.

There’s something sinister in how huge embarrassments for business can easily be deflected and reduced. Days after the HSBC story broke, the media had collectively been diverted to talking about Ed Balls’ window-cleaning receipts. Similarly, calls for a EU in/out referendum to happen as early as next year only really gained traction when business leaders piped in and said an early vote was needed to end financial uncertainty. Never mind that a two-year lead-up to a vote is required to allow time to negotiate reform or reach out to European partners (the very conditions on which a vote was predicated in the first). No: financial uncertainty trumps uncertainty over time or logic.

It used to be that we went into elections being asked some pretty big questions about what sort of country we wanted to live in. Did we aspire to free health treatment, safety at work, votes for women, a stronger navy, an end to child labour, higher standards of literacy, a welfare safety net, the dismantling of an empire, the nationalisation or privatisation of the nation’s resources?

For the first 70 years or so of the 20th century, politics debated the power and limits of the state: the manifestos of the parties reflected how much or how little each party felt the government should involve itself in the lives of the individual. Everyone accepted there was such a thing as society, and we were given regular chances to define it. Politics was about passion, and imagination, and foresight. Now it's just accountancy.

From the early 1980s those grand but difficult questions about what kind of a society we wanted to build were replaced by a much more direct calculation: how much money could we make? Economics could still be dressed up as a moral passion for social improvement, crystallised in Margaret Thatcher's assertion that the Good Samaritan wouldn't have been able to be good if he didn't have any money. This political recalibration was later undersealed by Peter Mandelson's remark that New Labour was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich as long as they pay their taxes".

It didn't matter that we stopped making things. Deregulating the financial sector allowed us to puff up a whole new industry we could then christen the new engine-room of the British economy. Politics and finance were one: business leaders trooped in and out of No 10 as frequently as heads of state. Some of them were made ministers.

Politicians doted on business people; they swooned and twerked in front of billionaires; they ran after the likes of Richard Branson and Philip Green like giggling teens chasing Harry Styles down an alley and begging him to autograph their body parts.

Soon cabinet posts were filled by people with very little life experience outside politics but with a stark directive: talk about money, and run your department like a business. Education became all about getting us ready for jobs. Culture became a commodity that could be quantified by how much it fed into the economy. Health became a mysterious and un-debated obsession to turn our hospitals into market economies, where GPs are obliged to buy into the unquestioned belief that market forces can improve our wellbeing, and that doctors, nurses and paramedics can reduce a fever by competitive tender.

None of us knows where this mania for business practice comes from, or why it must be applied to every aspect of life. Every man is an island that has to be self-financing. This was articulated by Michael Gove who spoke in the Commons in 2013 of the 900,000 who use food banks as if their poverty could be reduced to the simple dynamics of a balance sheet: "I appreciate that there are families who face considerable pressures. Those pressures are often the result of decisions that they have taken which mean they are not best able to manage their finances."

It's so tempting to conclude that the subjugation of politics to business is just the political class prepping themselves for lucrative directorships and consultancies when their parliamentary career is over. I think that's what we're meant to take from the Rifkind and Straw story. Snouts in the trough, good 'uns gone bad.

I'm not convinced. My pet theory is that politicians with no real experience of work outside Westminster are paranoid that they don't look grown up enough unless they act as

though they run something. So they run things like business, since business is most of the outside world they encounter. The tougher they talk business, the less they'll be laughed at by the grown-ups in boardrooms they meet daily. Outwardly, politicians act like company directors because inwardly they actually feel like eunuchs. I could be wrong. But if you think my theory pretty mad, consider how sane the reality is we have now.

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Governance is to steer. What is the objective of good governance? The greatest possible happiness for the largest group of people possible. Good governance starts with good intentions.⁵⁵ Governance has evolved:

We refer to the evolutionary pattern of democracy as knowledge democracy because the interactions between politics, media and science have adapted a new shape with far-reaching consequences, in many nations, regions and localities and on a global level. Representative democracy, as the dominant concept, appears to be in decay. Its ability to govern the present complex problems is met with wide spread scepticism. The mediatization of both politics and science has changed the character of both, but also their interaction. As a consequence, the problem-solving potential of societies is affected. (In 't Veld 2003)

In utopia, there will be a new operating system.⁵⁶ Utopia will be governed based on a long-term master plan. In modern utopia, this plan will be, contrary to More's idea (Burton 2003), very flexible and dynamic and updated constantly in an

interactive dialogue within society. It will be all about continuous improvement.

Leadership will be based on merit. As in Plato, the philosophers will be king⁵⁷ and they will steer the dialogue with the people. This will not be a benevolent dictatorship.⁵⁸ There will be a group of wise counselors with no political power aiding the leadership.

In modern utopia, three features will be balanced and focused toward sustainable development: political accountability to the citizens and their representation, effective or responsive state and rule of law, and the idea that nobody is above the law.⁵⁹

Governance taps into the collective consciousness and makes use of the wisdom of the crowd.⁶⁰ From vertical to horizontal, governance will be organic and self-steering. The shift from government to governance will be completed and taken to the next level.⁶¹ This is possible due to transparency created by technology.⁶²

Politics and Democracy. Democracy as we know it has a life cycle and we have reached the end of it. It starts with idealism, turns into pragmatism and cynicism, and then becomes opportunism. The hope is that at the end of this life cycle there is a neoidealism. Politics was once about beliefs and society. Now it is about the worship of money and power.

Democracy is the norm,⁶³ but it seems like a great part of humanity is reaching objectively to a more autocratic form of government. Examples are China and Singapore. Less democracy leads to more swift decision and implementation.

Leaders do not need to bother about coming elections. So, will utopia know two versions: a democratic version and a more autocratic version?

In utopia, there will be no corporate governance because there will be no corporations. There will be governance of organizations, but the objective of organizations will be to serve the common good. Cooperatives will be mainstream,⁶⁴ legal entities owned and democratically governed by their members. The members will be actively involved in the organization.

In utopia, there will be no war and, hence, no military.⁶⁵ Instead, there will be a social army to execute big projects in cities and villages.

According to Fernando Savater (1998), utopia is not an open society. The open society is a concept originally suggested in 1932 by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and developed during the Second World War by Austrian-born British philosopher Karl Popper. Popper saw the open society as standing on a historical continuum: reaching from the organic, tribal or closed society, through the open society marked by a critical attitude to tradition and up to the abstract or depersonalised society lacking all face-to-face transactions. In open societies, the government is purported to be responsive and tolerant, and political mechanisms are intended to be transparent and flexible. Advocates claim that it is opposed to closed society (authoritarianism).

Because utopia is not an open society, I am against creating utopia.⁶⁶ But one can dream about utopia and generate more practical ideas.

Powered by information, technology and communication

Technological innovation will shift from ICT to social⁶⁷ and healthcare innovation, but also to the growing of food.

We will need a solution for the fact that people are living longer. One innovation is to keep people productive as long as possible. Productivity is not the concept. We will have to find ways to keep people involved and engaged and to give them a sense of being a member of society by being useful and having a sense purpose. This will be possible because the household will be a multi-generational unit of people caring for one another.

Transportation

Transportation in utopia will be totally different from the industrial-age system of transportation we know in 2016.⁶⁸ Transportation will be driven by economical and social needs. For the first time, the social needs for transportation will surpass the economic needs for transportation. Most of the economic transportation will consist of data moving through the electronic highway. The use of cars will further decrease because people will share cars and have less interest in owning a car. The car will be smarter, meaning more compact, intelligent and connected. It will consume less energy. It will be safer and more ecologically friendly. The driver will be less relevant.

Currently, we see the development of the driverless car, the flying car and other sorts of automobiles.⁶⁹ However, utopia will not be about the iCar but the WiCar, a car we share and a car that connects and becomes a train. The car will be a hybrid and powered by muscle power, solar power and other renewable power.⁷⁰

Roads will also collect energy from the sun and the movement of cars.⁷¹

Traveling by airplane, boat and train will also be revolutionized. Traveling will be more efficient and comfortable. The bike will become totally revolutionized and increasingly important because it is personalized, flexible and clean.⁷²

Money⁷³

Money will transform and disappear. Finance, making money from money, will collapse. Once more, money will be a means to an end and not an end in itself. The objective of money is to enable the exchange of goods and services.⁷⁴

Technology and the Internet are bringing us full circle. The money of the future will be the money of the past—a past before banks. It's not a distant future. It's a liberation waiting to happen. The Internet is not yet done transforming our world. Here's our bold prediction: Ten years from now, the world of finance will be a completely different animal from what it is today.⁷⁵

In utopia, the citizens will pay taxes, but they will do so on a voluntary basis.⁷⁶ In many cases, they will pay by donating their time, services and goods. There will be no need for international tax constructions because there will only be one universal tax system.

Healthcare

Science will not only prevent many illnesses but also find cures. In many cases, life will be prolonged. The decision to treat a patient will be determined by the patient and his family based on the expected quality of life.

Moral dilemmas like euthanasia, abortion and artificial fertilization will be resolved (Sandel, 2012).

One of the other big issues resolved in utopia will be how to deal with the elderly and the weak. Some envision a “Brave New World,”⁷⁷ where we will terminate them. This is also the vision of *The Giver*. I envision a more compassionate world where we will have a preventive system, and where people will care for the old and weak, because life is sacred and not a technical thing. This will be possible because doing so will create much-needed jobs for young people. The young and the old will enrich and nurture each other. There already are successful pilots in the Netherlands, where students live in elderly homes for free in exchange for taking care of the elderly in the building.⁷⁸

Justice

Utopian justice will be all about prevention just like in healthcare and education. It will be about the early diagnosis of children at risk and mentoring them and their surroundings.⁷⁹ It will be about creating jobs and social programs and recreation. Income differences will be kept within a certain range. Everyone will have the opportunity to develop oneself.

Just like in More's Utopia, pride will be eliminated because private property will be irrelevant, and there will be no social stratification and wealth (Burton, 2003).

Justice should be objective and swift. I suggest the use of expert computer systems to generate the first sentence and then have the verdict revised by one or more judges. The panel code will be very simple.

The aim is for everybody to be self-steering. Utopian justice will not be primarily about laws, rules, regulation and the enforcement of these. It will not be about surveillance cameras everywhere. Punishment will focus on victim restoration and the damages and on the resocialization of the offender.⁸⁰ There will be no capital punishment or even jails as we know them in 2016. People can be isolated, if necessary through the use of technology, and they will be kept productive to finance their own care but also as a form of therapy and resocialization.

Spirituality

Religious differences in 2016 are still an issue and one of the big challenges faced by today's society. Islam is the fastest growing religion. Islamic extremism is a big concern. Catholics have a Pope with a rock star status. Meditation in all forms is an alternative path also sought by many in the West. Does religion matter in utopia?

A utopian system, when established by men, is likely to be synonymous with a dystopian depression. The only way for perfect peace by man is absolute control of all wrongs. Bully-cultures find this: with each and every mistake, another village idiot is shamed into nothingness and mindlessly shut down by the herd. This is a superficial peace made by force and by fear, one in which there is no freedom to breathe; and the reason it is impossible for man to maintain freedom and peace for everyone at the same time. Christ, on the other hand, transforms, instead of controls, by instilling his certain inner peace. This is the place where one realizes that only his holiness is and feels like true freedom, rather than like imprisonment, and, too, why Hell, I imagine, a magnified version of man's never-ending conflict between freedom and peace, would be the flesh's ultimate utopia - yet its ultimate regret.

— Criss Jami

Herbert George Wells (1866 - 1946) was an English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian. He wrote *A Modern Utopia* in 1907. Religion in Wells's Utopia is a personal need – as natural a part of life as hunger and thirst. The culture of Wells's Modern Utopia is rational and scientific, but it is also rooted in mystical beliefs and spiritual disciplines.⁸¹

In utopia, all religions and science will converge. Malan (2014) refers to Beavis, reminding us that Jesus' kingdom of God might be utopia.⁸²

There will be spiritual leaders (male and female) and organizations. State and church will merge again, but spiritual leaders will have an advisory role.

Race, ethnicity

A few other phenomena of today's society in the year 2016 do not make sense after all these years of evolution: race and inequality. Racism is still an issue. It is remarkable that there are many cases of racist behavior by police. This is just an illustration. Another illustration is the attitude against refugees in Europe and especially Italy. Another example is the attitude towards Mexicans in the United States. Things are changing. An example is the transformation of Black Pete in the Netherlands.⁸³ After many years of protest by minority groups, Black Pete is transforming.

In utopia, there will be no more discrimination. In a utopian society, issues such as sex, race and religion will no longer be an issue. Not even education level will matter. Individuals will define their personality differently, individualistically. It will be about the right man in the right place.

The rich and the poor

Today's statistics show that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. On the other hand, the United Nations announced that there has been progress in the fight against extreme poverty. This is only possible if there is a shift in income from the middle class to the poor.⁸⁴

In utopia, people will define themselves by their expressions, by what they create and less by what they earn and possess. Hence, wealth will be immaterial. Accumulation of material wealth will be considered absurd.⁸⁵

New World Order, conspiracy theory and utopia

What is this New World Order mentioned in conspiracy theories?⁸⁶ In essence, it boils down to the idea that there is a global elite planning and creating a world government. What is wrong with that? There are concerns that diversity might be eliminated, and there are concerns that the world government, the elite, wants to reduce the global population because the world is considered overpopulated. According to conspiracy theories, secret societies are an important part of the elite's strategy.

First of all, the world population is decreasing according to Hans Rosling's statistics,⁸⁷ so there is no need to intervene unethically to decrease the global population. Studies in the Netherlands confirm this claim.⁸⁸

Global governance is necessary to address issues like climate change, poverty and refugees⁸⁹ because they are global problems trespassing national borders (Stout, 2015: 136).

The United Nations will evolve to a global government, and there will be continental governments in Europe, America and Asia. This is illustrated by the General Assembly of the UN in 2016.⁹⁰ In other words, global government is already a reality. And even a non-independent territory like Curaçao is represented as, for example, a non-voting member of UNESCO.⁹¹

Sooner or later, secret societies will end, because everything will become transparent as a consequence of technology and a shift in norms and consciousness.

Conclusions

Do we need utopia? The answer is yes; we need to dream about a better society. We need to do so for inspiration and new ideas to solve today's problems, but we should not try to implement a grand plan because it will lead to totalitarianism.

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While you are reading this, I encourage you to join the private Community of Caribbean professionals, business owners and public sector officials designing a new Caribbean.

Join my Facebook “Caribbean 3.0” community group for professionals, business owners and public sector officials. Search on Facebook for “Caribbean 3.0”. If you send a request to subscribe, my team will let you in.

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