



Utopia as Method: A matter of inner work

This is a collaboration of LCC: MA Service Design and LCC: MA Design for Social Innovation and Sustainable Futures in partnership with [Inner Development Goals Network](#) – London Community and [Kiranjot Kundalini Yoga](#), consulting on spiritual and embodiment dimensions. With the support of [isITethical?](#)-Pluriversal Ethics Network.

Utopia as Method (Levitas, 2013), is an alternative futuring approach concerned with the transformative powers of collective imagination. Utopia as Method questions existing future methods, such as speculative design, critical design, anticipating methods, innovation, and policy-making models. It is not about imagining a better future (better for who?) and tracking back to the present across an imaginary timeline. It is about harnessing the power of **collective radical imagination to transform the present**. Utopia as Method is messy, plural, political, collective, material, and in tension. It engages with notions of time that are not linear and invites pluriversal ways of knowing.

This brief asks you to respond to the following questions:

1. What is the role of the utopian “changemaker” within a context of **degrowth**?
2. What tangible “frameworks” might support a structure, mindset, and/or language to guide this radical new role?
3. What is the **inner work** of the utopian “changemaker” - integrating spiritual, political, and pleasurable embodiment?
4. How and what can we learn from more-than-human systems?

You will be co-creating a tangible framework for utopian “changemaking” that integrates spiritual, political, careful, pleasurable, and embodied dimensions.

This brief asks students to respond to the following priorities:

1. **Design & Systemic Degrowth:**

The Systemic Design Framework for “changemaking” [The Double Diamond](#), and in general all design frameworks, are thought to provide a structure, language, and guidance to articulate the design process. The Double Diamond specifically is concerned with creating a vocabulary for “changemakers” in design and innovation while collaborating with other sectors. In the practice of creating solutions, services, objects, or commodities, designers find themselves always developing, growing, expanding, democratising, implementing, extracting resources, and creating revenue. Design then is in essence is - currently - extractivist, and has historically played a key role in capitalist (new)colonial systems, even when aiming towards sustainability, these are **frameworks for growth**.

*Q: What is the role of the utopian “changemaker” within a context of **degrowth**?*

2. **The Utopian “Changemakers” Role:**

Let’s imagine a caring future for all humans and more-than-humans in a post-capitalist world that imposes a systemic **degrowth**. In this utopia, designers and “changemakers” no longer have resources for mass production of goods and the commodification of a good life. Instead, their role is to be caring and repairing what exists. Holding spaces open, learning from and collaborating with the more-than-human world, and creating generative entanglements of pluriversal knowledges.

Q: What tangible “frameworks” might support a structure, mindset, and/or language to guide this radical new role?

3. **The inner work of the “changemaker”**

The premise of this challenge is that to *design for systemic change and eco-social justice, the current systemic frameworks (in research, design, innovation and academic expertise) are insufficient*.

[Inner Development Goals](#), has pointed out the insufficient success of the agenda for the UN sustainable development goals for 2030. They affirm: “SDGs have a vision of what needs to happen, yet progress towards this vision has been disappointing, as technical solutions and public policy, which comprise the majority of approaches today, are insufficient on their own.” They propose that changemaking should start with inner work and inner transformation.

Systemic Design’s common strategy is to map the complexity of systems to identify **leverage points** – these are points within the system that require minimum effort for maximum impact – however, the designer “changemaker”, very rarely is positioned within the system. System maps offer a god-like view of the system, but what if we position ourselves within the map? Certainly, the most important leverage point is

us, if we aim to become “changemakers”, *change certainly must start from us.*

This brief asks to co-create a framework that support the inner work of the “changemaker” by integrating these 5 dimensions into their practice:

- **Spiritual:** in terms of energy exchange – not so much about religious practice.
- **Political:** about the commitment to engage with power inequalities.
- **Embodied:** how we internalise values in our bodies, how we connect with our gut, our senses, and our internal systems.
- **Careful:** inspired by pluriversal ethics, this means act, think, and feel for worlds where many worlds fit.
- **Pleasurable:** how to integrate joy, erotism, humour, the laughable, the silly, and the illogical into our practices as a healing a regenerative strategy.

*Q: What is the **inner work** of the utopian “changemaker” - integrating spiritual, political, and pleasurable embodiment?*

4. Utopia as Method

We are taking Ruth Levitas' *Archaeology of the Future Approach*: in the same way, archaeologists make sense of the past - ways of living and societal systems from hundred years ago- based only on found material fragments / archaeological evidence: the top of an arrow, traces inside of a cave, accessories from rituals, etc. During this challenge we will become *archaeologists of the future*, by learning from fragments of the utopian futures that we find in the present, we will call these prefigurative futures.

Q: How and what can we learn within these new tools from more-than-human systems?

Project Partners*

- **Kiranjot** Kundalini Yoga: Consulting on spiritual and embodiment dimensions
- **Inner Development Goals Network** – The 2 London Hubs and their communities
- **IsiTethical?-Pluriversal Ethics Network.**
- Each student team will partner with a **more-than-human system**: you will be taking care and learning from a more-than-human system. The insights (lessons, values) from this relation will inform your proposal and your submission.

Guests Speakers**

- Facilitator of spiritual and body practices – Kiranjot
- More-than-human expert: Dr Rachel Clark, LCC: Design for Art Direction
- Silliness as political strategy Expert: Dr Keir Williams, LCC: Design for Data Visualisation
- Utopia as Method expert from [IsiTethical?](#)
- Fabrication workshop sessions: UAL: LCC
- More external guest TBC

Ways of Working

- 8 teams of students from the 2 courses (5-6 students per team).
 - Working together with the Project Partners* to establish needs at the beginning of the challenge, test work-in-progress ideas, and for final test outcomes.
 - A program of cross-disciplinary and cross-sector Guests Speakers**
 - 1 CRIT for work-in-progress feedback from a panel (formed by partners and guests)
 - It would be a final physical exhibition/event.
 - It would be an online exhibition as a legacy of the project as part of [IsiTethical?](#)
- ❖ Each team will be the carer of a more-than-human system. The lived experience of being part of, collaborating and caring about this system would be the basis of the project proposal. More-than-human systems could include: taking care of sourdough bread, yogurt/kefir, engaging seriously with diary meditation for several weeks, moving only by foot or bike for several weeks, composting in a community garden for several weeks, buying nothing new for several weeks, growing tomato plants, and other more-than-human systems that can be proposed by the students.
- ❖ Students will keep a diary with their reflections, observations, challenges, and lessons learned from being part of the more-than-human system. This is a physical workbook that collects different media, writing, materials that show the engagement with the more-than-human system. And these reflections will inform the Utopian Framework Artefact.

Theoretical Pillars:

It is key that students revise, understand, and engage with the main ideas of the following:

- **Inner Development Goals** - <https://innerdevelopmentgoals.org>
- **Utopia as Method:** Ruth Levitas. 2013. Utopia as method: The imaginary reconstitution of society. Springer
- **Prefigurative Futures** [LINK](#)
- **Pluriversal Design: Thinking-Feeling with the Body**
 - Leita, Renata M., Lesley-Ann Noel, Maria Rogal, Nicholas B. Torretta, Juan Montalvan, Sucharita Beniwal, Mariana Fonseca Braga, Dimeji Onafuwa, and Maria Cristina Ibarra. "Pluriversal Design as a Paradigm" (2024). [LINK](#)
 - Escobar, A. (2019). Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South. In *Knowledges born in the struggle* (pp. 41-57). Routledge. [LINK=](#)
- **Systemic Design Framework** for change-making -[The Double Diamond-](#)