

Project Utopia

In class we talked about one of the essentials for play being a safe environment. These seem rare in our globalizing world. Even though some of the old social structures may have been very repressive for the majority of citizens (at least by our standards), they at least provided some continuity and familiarity that seems lacking nowadays. Perhaps gaming the system was more fun, and was certainly easier, in times when there was a clear system to begin with.

To me, Utopia must be a vision of the best society that we can imagine. It lives up to the ambiguity in its name (meaning both *no place* and *good place*), because imagining the best society is a dynamic endeavor. Our imagination is situated in our current circumstances, and upon realizing any of the ideals that are contained in a utopian vision, we should be able to imagine something even better.

The core elements of my Utopia are as follows. Governance focuses on long term welfare for people, which with our current knowledge seems to mean that we must keep biodiversity and geocycles intact. The industrialization stage of civilization is over, and Utopia features a more organic way of structuring social interactions. We stop thinking of ourselves as advanced, biological computers and get rid of common expressions as "updating a friend" and "the output of a company". Rather, people recognize themselves and each other as organisms with spiritual ambitions.

In Utopia, broadcast media have lost their prominent role as a regulatory system for society. People decided that, in the end, they'd rather listen to each other than to the well disguised marketing buzz of the corporations. The nation state has lost the position of main political entity. Instead, the human world is a diverse landscape of local communities which cooperate in a living, global network.

We need to change our collective behavior to increase the chances of this global civilization having a future. Persuasion seems necessary to achieve this, because an ideology of individualism has become common in the last 50 years. And perhaps persuasion can best come in a playful package. But a wealthy elite seems to have the idea that games can best be used to make them and their corporations more wealthy and powerful, instead of making society nicer to live in.

In our society we reward the most competitive and individualist, both financially and in reputation. They have been the big winners of the recent decades. I have been much inspired by Douglas Rushkoff's ideas on how to overthrow this cultural bias. In his recent dissertation, he has proposed that we view corporatism as a distinct game within society. We, by default, participate in this game, but by learning the rules, we may learn to play *with* the rules instead of *by* the rules. Hopefully, serious games can be an important tool for learning how to become players instead of pawns.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In writing this essay, I have been inspired by the following books.

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