

**UTOPIA.** I dream of living in a city that is designed similarly to Fritz Lang's 1927 movie-city Metropolis: It consists of two parts - above and below ground. **T**he buildings above ground are not more than six or seven storeys tall. At ground level all buildings have shops, cafés, restaurants, wine-bars, pubs and galleries. **O**n their first level they house individual offices and public transport stations - mass-transport above ground is by above-street-level monorail; there is no ground-level combustion-driven transport - all roads are pedestrian, bicycle and electric scooter areas. In half of the buildings the top levels are apartments. Buildings that contain services - administration, businesses, hospitals - are not taller than the residential ones; there are no skyscrapers. **U**topia is divided into self-contained clusters of a dozen or so buildings. Each cluster has a central marketplace - there are neither shopping malls nor city centres one needs to travel to. Between clusters are islands of bushland with bushland corridors - to allow fauna to pass from island to island. Extensive commuter travel between clusters is not necessary; not many people commute - in Utopia most people live and work in the one cluster. **U**nderground are utility and industrial levels. The first level has roads to service drains, water supply and power & communication networks; for refuse disposal, emergency & delivery vehicles, inter-cluster traffic and loading bays for the shops. The second level has public transport with intercity and airport train links; the third has parking. The lowest underground levels contain industrial areas - powerstations, water recycling and automated factories.

**T**here are many aspects in which Utopia is very different from mainstream cities. This utopian model is an egalitarian, multicultural, social-democratic society, with relatively high taxation - but free education, health care, public transport, childminding and aged care. All buildings are publicly owned, there is no real estate speculation or profiteering - rents are cheap. To ensure quality of life, drunkenness is illegal - a legal limit for intoxication anywhere is enforced just like for drivers. Smoking is discouraged by treating it like any disease - tobacco and other drugs are available only on prescription. There are no firearms - police as well as security guards are unarmed. **U**topia does not have churches, synagogues or mosques - but interfaith meditation, library and learning centres. Furthermore, on all buildings the roofs are utilised with a mixture of market gardens and recreational facilities - in this Utopia no usable surface area is wasted.\* **T**he goal of a project such as this is to provide an environment that fosters Gross National Happiness (GNH), as opposed to conventional development models that have as their objective Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the measure of a country's economic performance. **T**he idea with a GNH-based community is that establishing a happy, healthy and well-adjusted human society requires material and spiritual development to occur side by side to balance, complement and reinforce each other. **T**he pillars of this utopian society are an unpolluted living space, sustainable development, nature conservation, preservation and promotion of diverse cultural values, self-sufficiency and establishment of good governance.

*\* this concept was pioneered by the Austrian artist/architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser, who strove for reconciliation of humans with nature*

*In Utopia quality of life and their citizens' happiness are paramount. A newspaper article stated that the Australia Institute had run a Genuine Progress Indicator, which took into account factors such as environmental damage, cost of crime prevention, leisure time, the negative impact of economic growth - including noise and air pollution. The institute's executive director, Richard Dennis, said:*

*"If we all put bars on our windows and buy face-masks to deal with pollution, guess what? GDP goes up. But does that mean we are better off?" The Himalayan kingdom Bhutan is the only country to put happiness at the heart of policy by means of their Gross National Happiness index.*

*'Never mind the debt, it's joie de vivre that counts'  
Lizzy Davies, Rick Feneley, SMH, 16 Sep 2009*

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*an ideal and perfect place, where everyone lives in peace, harmony and prosperity and all facilities are for the benefit of the entire community*