

The International Library of Environmental,
Agricultural and Food Ethics 36

Angela Kallhoff
Eva Liedauer *Editors*

Greentopia: Utopian Thought in the Anthropocene

 Springer

The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics

Volume 36

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The ethics of food and agriculture is confronted with enormous challenges. Scientific developments in the food sciences promise to be dramatic; the concept of life sciences, that comprises the integral connection between the biological sciences, the medical sciences and the agricultural sciences, got a broad start with the genetic revolution. In the mean time, society, i.e., consumers, producers, farmers, policymakers, etc, raised lots of intriguing questions about the implications and presuppositions of this revolution, taking into account not only scientific developments, but societal as well. If so many things with respect to food and our food diet will change, will our food still be safe? Will it be produced under animal friendly conditions of husbandry and what will our definition of animal welfare be under these conditions? Will food production be sustainable and environmentally healthy? Will production consider the interest of the worst off and the small farmers? How will globalisation and liberalization of markets influence local and regional food production and consumption patterns? How will all these developments influence the rural areas and what values and policies are ethically sound?

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Angela Kallhoff · Eva Liedauer
Editors

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ISSN 1570-3010

ISSN 2215-1737 (electronic)

The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics

ISBN 978-3-031-56801-5

ISBN 978-3-031-56802-2 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-56802-2>

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This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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Acknowledgements

This volume is the outcome of several years of research and cooperation on *greentopia* at the Chair of Ethics at the University of Vienna. It is also related to the project “New Directions in Plant Ethics” from 2015 to 2019, which was supported by the Austrian Science Foundation (FWF, Project no. P27172-G19). That project investigated plant life and plant behaviour in the context of ethics and ended with a very stimulating and thought-provoking conference on *greentopia* in Vienna in 2019. At that time, we thought that widening the perspective of the project and addressing the human-nature interface with a forward-looking and possibly even utopian eye was a good thing to do. Indeed, many researchers convened in Vienna and investigated new ways to address nature and the human-nature interface. We then decided that parts of the conference should be published. Since then, more authors have joined us in debating *greentopia*. We are glad to present a volume that invites readers to think about the Anthropocene and to discuss with us new methods that address the human-nature interface.

We wish to thank the University of Vienna and the Austrian Science Foundation for supporting the conference. Our special thanks also go to those who engaged in organising the conference, who collected and revised the papers and who prepared the manuscript in its final stages. For the conference organisation, we wish to thank Eva Bobst, Wolfgang Damoser, Linnea Gustavsson-Englund, Marcello Di Paola, Maria Schörghenhuber and Anna Wieder. They all did a wonderful job. We also wish to thank Eva Bobst for corresponding with authors. For excellent proofreading, we wish to thank Ruadhán J. Flynn. We are particularly grateful to Sophie Kroiss for corresponding with the authors and the publisher, and for spending many hours preparing and editing the manuscript, which has benefited greatly from her attention and skill. Finally, thank you to the editors of this series and to Springer for their very helpful and pleasant cooperation on this project. We wish to thank Paul Thompson

in particular. Thank you for having an open eye to serious environmental concerns and for the support we have been offered!

Vienna, Austria
December 2023

Angela Kallhoff
Eva Liedauer

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Chapter 1

Introducing Greentopia: Content, Meaning and Framing of Utopian Explorations at the Human-Nature Interface



Angela Kallhoff  and Eva Liedauer

Abstract This chapter serves as an introduction to the volume *Greentopia: Utopian Thought in the Anthropocene*. It first explains the context and theoretical frame of *greentopia* as a method of investigating the interface between human beings and nature in the Anthropocene, and offers a working definition of *greentopia*. The second section presents a framing of the central themes in the volume. Section three provides a prospect of the content of the individual contributions.

Discussing the interface of humankind and nature in a utopian spirit might look like a particularly untimely endeavour. We are currently facing the worst mass extinction of species for tens of millions of years, climate change takes its toll and devastates vast areas all over the world, its effects—on the seas, on the land, on life cycles, and on people’s conditions of living—being not only severe, but irreversible and harmful. It might seem that dystopia, rather than utopia, is the currency that helps to understand ongoing events.

However, authors in this volume propose engaging with utopia in order to apprehend and reassess the unfolding drama. For two reasons, we think that this is a worthwhile endeavour. *Firstly*, over the last decades, utopianism has developed in an entirely new direction. Whereas it used to be interpreted as a kind of storytelling that allows for the imagination of a comprehensive alternative to the current way of life, recent scholarship interprets it as a method that helps to spur narratives not necessarily about particular alternatives, but about a possibly hard-to-imagine diversity of alternative futures. Whereas the old utopia is situated on an island, new utopias can

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be found in all kinds of places because they are primarily interpreted as ways to stimulate our imagination and to work not on the creation of comprehensive new worlds, but on problems, frictions, and even catastrophes. And whereas the old utopia drew a picture, new utopias primarily work on methods to invent new narratives. *Secondly*, the human-nature interface itself is changing swiftly, as nature undergoes dramatic changes and suffers from human impact on an unprecedented scale. In the Anthropocene, we face disruptions and frictions regarding possible experiences with nature, and regarding the expectations we previously had. The climate crisis, experiences of severe and irreversible loss, and disruptive occurrences like the recent pandemic do not only call for action; they also call for new thought-provoking ways to address those developments. For both reasons, a new utopianism that addresses the ecological conditionality of our lives appears to be a direction worth exploring. In this spirit, the present volume offers investigations of many different facets of what we call *greentopian* thought. It aims not only at contributing to a fresh debate on utopianism but also at investigating new ways of exploring *greentopia* as a very special approach to utopia.

As already stated, discussing green utopianism seems only at first glance an untimely project: there are even several recent contributions arguing that this is precisely the time for reinventing utopian thought. In particular, recent approaches to utopia already employ it to define new ways of living with nature and of confronting the severe problems for life on our planet that, in their view, result from a loss of the ability to imagine a good future. In this spirit, Mathias Thaler poses the question of how best to confront the fact that “there is no other planet” and focuses on methods of utopianism to imagine alternatives to our current lifeform on earth (Thaler 2021). By combining political and fictional narratives, he offers better and worse visions of our common future, confronting one of the biggest challenges of our time, which is a world suffering from climate change. Gregory Claeys, instead, focuses on how past and contemporary utopia can help to develop a habit that rejects waste and a wasteful style of capitalism. His exploration aims at exploring new ways of living after consumerism (Claeys 2022). In addition to utopian endeavours like these that focus explicitly on the ecological crisis and its causes, Ruth Levitas develops a more general approach to “utopia as a method” of stimulating our imagination in order to give expression to our wishes for a better life in a meaningful way (Levitas 2013; see also 2011). And, last but not least, Erik Olin Wright is now an often-cited author when it comes to “real utopias” (Wright 2010). In developing his view of utopia, he makes a credible argument amounting to the claim that “another world is possible” (2010: 23). Precisely because humankind is facing problems as severe as climate change, it is urgent to develop not only visions of a better life, but also ways to realise good futures. Altogether, recent utopianism does not present comprehensive narratives of what a truly good life could look like, theoretically. Instead, it regards utopia as a very concrete and down-to-earth endeavour, looking to reconcile hope with realism. It is to this discourse that this volume aims at making a genuine contribution.

The promising new approaches to dealing with utopia do not suffer from the old accusations of presenting either wishful thinking or, on the other hand, preparing totalitarian programmes for social life. New utopianism is indeed promising in a very

specific way. It does not intend to present invented islands or planned-through alternatives to the current states of affairs but presents itself primarily as a thought-provoking practice of imagination. Recent utopian writers highlight the love of experimentation and the open-mindedness that utopian thought requires—and this is precisely what is needed when it comes to the ecological crises of our days. We think that ‘green utopia’ or, in short, *greentopia*, is a timely endeavour.

In this spirit, the volume *Greentopia: Utopian Thought in the Anthropocene* explores multiple *greentopias* in order to stimulate our imagination regarding the human-nature interface. It does not present conclusive utopias, but rather investigations of many different facets of *greentopian* thought. In particular, it aims to contribute to new ways of imagining and conceptualising the fragility of our situation as living human beings and the vulnerability of nature. This volume, as a collection of several different approaches to the topic, aims at opening our minds to new ways of thinking about the future, and what that future is to start from. In doing so, it wishes to stimulate imaginations that reach beyond the status quo.

The authors assembled in this volume explicitly do not negate or ignore the deep troubles that are emerging at the interface between us as human beings and our natural environment, in the new Earth age for which the term ‘the Anthropocene’ has been proposed. Instead, they engage in *greentopia* as a critical method to confront some of the enormous problems of our time. The concept of the Anthropocene indicates that humanity is creating a footprint on the planet that is deep, irreversible, and already changing the Earth system—admitting, though, that there are immense differences between the extent to which different parts of the actual human populace contribute to this footprint.¹ In particular, the climate crisis and the sharp decline of biodiversity do not give much reason for hope, and they do not allow for a simple escape by imagining just another place or even another planet. Yet, the acknowledgement of extreme vulnerability at the human-nature interface does not predetermine the answers we give to that situation, nor does it predetermine the direction of inquiry. Therefore, the very specific lenses we, as well as the authors contributing to this volume, choose when talking about *greentopia* aim at imagining a new beginning that starts where we actually are.

In order to introduce content and structure accordingly, this introductory chapter will proceed as follows. Firstly, we start with a working definition of *greentopia* (1.1). This shall provide some orientation regarding the idea which launched the original concept of this volume, and which underlies the more or less explicit interpretations of *greentopia* in the various chapters. Secondly, we introduce the structure of this book by providing a frame: the many different ways to address *greentopia* collected in this volume cling together in a way that we wish to render explicit in a section about “Framing and Central Themes” (1.2). Thirdly, we give a prospect of the chapters of this volume by shortly presenting the content of the contributions within that framing (1.3).

¹ For an elaborate overview of the discussions around the concept of the Anthropocene, see Chap. 4 by Eugenio Luciano.

1.1 Greentopia: A Working Definition

Utopias have a long-standing tradition in philosophy and in literature. They are so diverse that it is hard to give a conclusive definition of even their most fundamental characteristics. However, all utopias are dedicated to exploring a terrain that is new and that does not (yet) exist. In the traditional way to narrate utopias, they do not focus on particular aspects of a vision of how things could be; instead, those utopias are narratives about another society at another place in another time. As we have stated above, recently, utopianism and utopias have received not only new attention, but also a more modest twist. Although they still imply social visions, and even though they still mingle different aspects of what life could be like in certain surroundings and under certain fictional or factual circumstances, the most exciting strands of recent utopianism have more or less explicitly turned towards understanding utopia as a method of thought. Our own approach is very much informed by what Levitas has developed (Levitas 2013). She works through a wide range of utopias from history up until today and recalls elements that surface again and again: hope, better social living conditions including socialism, new visions of economics, and foremost the “education of desire.”² Practicing utopian thought is not reserved to utopians. Instead, Levitas thinks that the never-ending practice of utopia is a method

that is already in use whenever and wherever people individually or collectively consider what the future might bring and how humans might choose to shape it. [...] Utopia as method is not and cannot be blueprint. Utopian envisioning is necessarily provisional, reflexive and dialogic. The utopian method allows preferred futures—including the survival of humanity on earth—their proper causal role in the emergent future, rather than leaving this to the potential catastrophe or projected trends. (Levitas 2013: 218)

By aligning with this modest approach to utopian thinking, this contribution certainly does not join the rich tradition of utopian literature and philosophy. Instead, it focuses on that recent twist in the interpretation of utopianism: thinking in a utopian way means looking at the world in a way that opens new spaces for conceptualisation of social affairs and the interface between humans and nature in particular. As this is to be an investigation of *greentopia*, we wish to focus on the interface of human affairs and the natural environment, meaning the environmental conditions of any utopia imaginable, as well as the ‘green’ element in utopianism itself, that is, the utopian desire for a good relationship between all proponents of the human-nature interface. However, things already get complex there, since speaking of a separate nature as such gets problematised by some authors:³ as the concept of the Anthropocene indicates, the earth as it appears today has already been shaped by human doings even at its most fundamental levels. In dealing with this, *greentopia* neither lines up with positive imaginations and hopeful narratives of a better world, nor does it suggest dystopia. Instead, *greentopias* emerge from a twofold desideratum. This desideratum has a content-related face and a methods-related face, relating to the reasons we gave in the beginning of this introduction for *greentopia* being a timely endeavour.

² For an explanation of the concept’s history and its use in Levitas’ work, see Nadir (2010: 31).

³ For more on this, see, for example, Chap. 2 by Lisa Garforth.

As for the content of this desideratum, the desire for green utopias, or *greentopias*, is grounded in a profound concern about our ecological future and the biophysical conditions of our lives. This concern is coupled with a lack of imagination regarding how it can be addressed, concerning the most fundamental practices of civilisation when it encounters the non-human such as in farming and in the breeding of animals, but also unprecedented tasks like acting on climate change. We appear to be stuck in a situation in which good ways to escape are either non-existent or seem as yet inconceivable. *Greentopia* confronts the desire to change this. It can do so because, as for the methods-related face of the *greentopian* desideratum, the meaning of what is realistic and the use of the word ‘utopia’ appear to have changed in a fundamental way. While utopian thought has always given space for unrealistic imagination, we believe that making realistic assessments of the future requires nowadays just as much imaginative effort and ability—for the most unrealistic outlook is the perpetuation of the status quo. Thus, it is within the very same situation that can be perceived as a dead end that speaking of utopia takes on a new sobriety. Because being realistic is actually a very challenging task, we desire for *greentopias* to show various ways of approaching it.

Having discussed the circumstances in which *greentopia* emerges as a desideratum, we now aim to introduce our working definition of it. In our understanding, *greentopia* has three characteristic features. Firstly, it tries to find ways to spur our imagination about different futures, since one thing is for sure: things are and should be about to change, and it is not at all clear in what way. Secondly, its impetus is to re-think the interface between humans and what is not human, and thirdly, it begins with a desire to find something in which to reasonably ground hope and to reconcile hope with the factual. In other words, *greentopia* is a way of rethinking human-non-human coexistence in a way that emancipates itself from the status quo by juggling the reconciliation of hope and realism in one or another, possibly even paradoxical ways.

This approach to *greentopia* has immediate consequences. *Greentopia* is a practice of imagination that focuses on processes, not on end states. It is itself an open process of engaging in a different way to narrate the future. Moreover, concrete or ‘implemented’ *greentopias* are not top-down explanations of what should happen. Instead, they engage with current practices and highlight the moments of crisis, friction, and potential. It is not the goal of this kind of utopianism to dissolve tensions; on the contrary, the moment of crisis is the only thing that we can take for granted.

1.2 Framing and Central Themes

The present volume *Greentopia: Utopian Thought in the Anthropocene* presents insights and truly forward-looking ways to address the multiple crises of nature and of the Earth systems through methods of *greentopia*. However, despite us employing a working definition, the scholars invited to contribute to this volume are free to explore their understandings of *greentopia* and to present their own emphases and

pathways to discuss the frictions and the open future we are facing. In particular, they also present new pieces of research against a multitude of backgrounds. Each author investigates how the future might look in their respective field of inquiry: for example, in agriculture, climate studies, animal studies, food studies and city studies. Each author also tries to apply the theoretical tools of contemporary utopian thought in order to open windows of imagination and new narratives in each respective field. The volume draws an arch from very fundamental debates on what *greentopia* as a practice of imagination and possibly even as a method of thought might include, through contributions that dig deeper into particular cases and incidents of crisis, before finally leading back to a contribution that tries to tie all these various thoughts together. In the concluding remarks, we aim to demonstrate that *greentopia* is more than a desperate attempt to jump into a new narrative; rather, it is a fine-grained approach that applies and transcends new utopianism in a distinct way. This opens the eyes to a true and methodologically sound alternative for addressing the multiple crises of nature in our contemporary times.

This collection also corresponds to a characteristic trait of the recent more general reinvention of utopia as a method as already recalled in Sect. 1.1. It presents itself not only as a shift away from an interpretation as literature or as philosophically inspired narration; the recent turn to utopia as a method of thinking also gives space for a tentative and possibly even fragmented approach to what our imagination allows. In short, we need many different small approaches, narratives, and thoughts about our fears and our hopes in order to assemble *greentopias*. This compilation is not a coherent story, but its approach responds to the desiderata we already mentioned. Our time is one of deep uncertainty with no overarching methods for discerning between good and bad visions of the world; we do not even know precisely what a “new story” would mean. We sometimes even lack a language for what we might regard as utopian thought. In this context, *greentopias* search for their own anchors. The authors of *greentopian* inquiries start with a certain problem, a friction, sometimes also with a certain practice in order to develop their ideas of *greentopia*. The context is chosen and narrated by each author and resonates with their expertise in their respective fields. An interesting aspect of the outcome of this approach is the multitude of *greentopias* that emerge: the practice of looking at the garden through *greentopian* method differs from *greentopia* in smart farming and from *greentopia* in the climate crisis.

In inquiring into *greentopia* not as a consistent and comprehensive narrative of an imagined better world, but as an assemblage of more or less concrete *greentopias*, this book is nevertheless organised along a common thread that begins with the above working definition. It ends with our conclusive endeavour of presenting a network of the features that are recurring throughout the individual contributions, and of embedding the gained insights in a systematic reconsideration of why *greentopia* is needed, what it is, and what it can be. In between, the book consists of four parts that assemble a group of *greentopian* approaches along a common subject or trait, respectively.

The first part, *Inquiries into Greentopia*, presents three pieces that examine the basic conditions of greentopian concepts and visions. It does not aim to be a conclusive introduction into *greentopian* method. Instead, it primarily raises questions that are important to discuss at the beginning: how can we speak of, conceptualise, and imagine *greentopia*? What marks the difference with *greentopia* as compared to former discourses on utopia, and what are the conditions for recent *greentopianism* as compared to those of traditional environmental utopias? In which sense do we discuss a new way of thinking—is it worth widening our focus or should we rather narrow it? How can we conceptualise the normativity of *greentopia*?

The second part comprises texts which do something very different: instead of asking basic conceptual questions, this part contains very concrete examples. Based on these examples, the common thread that runs through this part is the topic of learning: *Greentopia*, here, is a task to learn (and unlearn) in a very concrete environment. Thus, *greentopia* is narrated here as a very thoughtful and deliberate approach to navigating between tangible *Problems and Opportunities*. At its very heart, engaging in *greentopia* is a way to not capitulate when problems arise, but to explore the problem and to take it as a chance to do better. On a theoretical level, the contributions in part two confront concepts as important as property or legal rights within the current situation of climate change and life in the Anthropocene. Such thought-provoking juxtapositions induce not only re-examinations of these concepts, but also the claim that we need to learn from the mis-fit of long-standing interpretations of the human-nature relationship precisely at the point where frictions become apparent. Thus, we should take the multiple crises in our foundational concepts for society as an opportunity to reframe our concepts and our way of thinking. The contributions collected in this section suggest ways of doing this by confronting specific cases.

In part III we have collected three texts that present concrete visions of human-non-human coexistence in *Agriculture and Cultivation*. Agriculture and cultivation of the land are not only the most fundamental activities of civilisations; they also play an important role in utopian stories of a better life. Here, *greentopia* does not aim to unidirectionally inform practice. Instead, an interesting effect of working with *greentopia* is that we find practice already comprising traits that can be re-interpreted as features of *greentopia*. How people feed themselves, how they use natural resources, and which property regimes decide over this usage is driven by the ideas of the practitioners themselves, and these ideas have some utopian content. This part of the book carries the insights regarding *greentopia* one step further: instead of presenting visions of better practice, it explains how actual agricultural practices and ideas about cultivation comprise *greentopian* content. Rendering this content explicit might help to stimulate new and possibly more hopeful approaches at the human-nature interface.

The fourth part of the volume elaborates on utopian concepts that concern non-human agents of very different kinds, namely *Animals and Technology*. Whereas, for utopia, it appears evident that we as human beings are at its heart, *greentopia* helps to shift the focus. To look upon the subjectivity of animals and upon the inherent dynamics of technology requires a certain change of perspective that differs from the

centrism of the autonomous *anthropos*. Interestingly, this is the point where many utopian concepts appear questionable at best, dystopian at worst.

Concluding these four parts, the editors present a reflection on the experiment undertaken by the volume as a whole. In Chap. 14 (Part V), we do not give a summary, but try to deepen our understanding of *greentopia* by reflecting the frictions, hopes and narratives in a content-driven way. The final chapter systematically unfolds the themes and approaches that recur throughout the volume, and gently correlates those which differ.

1.3 Prospect of the Content

As displayed above, the main part of the volume is organised in four parts according to which we now wish to provide a short prospect of the individual contributions. This section will highlight how each article contributes to the themes of the four parts. We wish to do so by carving out here their respective understanding of *greentopia* as a concept.

Part I: Inquiries into Greentopia

Greentopia can be conceptualised in many different ways—evaluative or non-evaluative; widening or narrowing our focus. Part I assembles three pieces that approach basic *greentopian* questions in very different ways.

Lisa Garforth asks how climate change has altered the conditions for green utopias. She explores *greentopia* in a “deliberately encompassing” manner as “explicit attempts to envision better ways of living for and with others both, human and non-human” (p. 19). *Greentopia* is about human-non-human coexistence and responds to what is perceived as wrong about our present reality. Garforth emphasises how climate change renders utopian thought and practice more likely and necessary just as any utopian state itself seems to become more and more unlikely. This, we might suggest, indicates a paradoxical structure at the root of hope that becomes the more visible the more “radical” hope becomes.⁴

Philip Thapa, after dismissing the “dictionary definition” of utopia as an “ideal society” (p. 41), employs a very different concept of *greentopia* (or, in his words: “ecotopia”). Introducing the concept of utopia as a term for any “concrete and holistic vision of a social world” (p. 44), which withholds value judgements (i.e., it is irrelevant whether the social world in question is desirable or not), we gain a theoretical tool that may then be combined with normative theory. Hence, Thapa examines the potential of combining utopian theory with environmental ethics, which he calls ‘ecotopianism’.

Similarly to Garforth, who asks what the conditions for green utopianism look like in an increasingly heated world, Eugenio Luciano starts with the question: is

⁴ We borrow the term “radical hope” from Lear’s (2008) work *Radical Hope. Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*.

greentopia, as a “pleasing and desirable society where human and other-than-human conditions are at their best for an indefinite time” (p. 62), possible or even thinkable, given the Anthropocene? Luciano’s contribution seeks to face these challenging questions by investigating the theoretical and ontological implications of the Anthropocene as a historical concept. With regard to *greentopia*, the Anthropocene appears as a constraint towards the possibility of the desirable, and Luciano indeed concludes that our historical trajectories, which constitute the conditions of the Anthropocene, are unlikely to lead us towards the *greentopian* ideal he has in mind.

Part II: Problems and Opportunities

Unlike the first part of the book, the second part delves into the exploration of concrete examples of frictions and troublesome concepts. The three pieces collected here abstain from general or holistic aspirations, for the sake of following one respective pathway that begins right in our reality. In this part, the *greentopian* narratives anchor in concrete facets of the human-nature relationship—be it concepts of property applied to nature, be it concepts of rights and their extension to non-human beings, be it inter-species collaboration. Each of the narratives tries to convert real crises and problematic recent circumstances into opportunities to reframe our relationship with nature.

Sarah Espinosa’s study sets out from a kind of human-non-human relationship that is pivotal to the status quo, namely property regimes, and asks if they can be conceptualised differently. For Espinosa, *greentopia* is an imaginative project (see p. 72). As with the other papers in this part, her contribution emphasises the dynamic aspect of *greentopia* as the formation of and movement towards more-than-instrumental relationships between humans and their non-human environment. Also here, *greentopia* does not present itself as a vision of what could or should encompass a good life. Instead, it seeks an anchor in something that is going desperately wrong to then put forth an alternative that corresponds to the detected friction. Espinosa tackles the very core of why we need to think about *greentopia* at all: the nowadays more-than-evident over-exploitation of natural resources. That being the case, she presents an alternative model of property conceptualisation that aims at preventing the over-exploitation of natural resources. She argues in favour of a normative concept of property.

The subject of legal relationships, of which property is one, corresponds to the subsequent piece by Tracey Skillington. Here as well, nature’s legal standing is debated, but in another way: non-human entities are looked upon as potential subjects of rights. Skillington discusses crisis as an impulse of learning—one might add, of a kind of learning that entails de-learning a purely instrumental framing of human-non-human relationships. The emphasis here is on collective crisis experiences and their emotional qualities that allow for “institutional learning” (p. 90), as they expose the violence of the normal. The collective crisis experience Skillington starts with is the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Alexandra Brylska, too, starts in the here and now, but in a place that is in a sense ahead of its time. Taking radioactively contaminated areas as test cases, or objects of

examination, reveals many opportunities to learn. *Greentopia*, here, enters the discussion as a “lens” (p. 106) which focuses on forms of “multispecies collaboration” (p. 106) in the object of examination to which it is applied. This collaboration can, amongst other things, also consist in us learning from plants. Contaminated areas are interesting test cases because they combine specific traits that mirror *greentopian* conditions: formerly a symbol of homo faber’s mastery of nature, nuclear power plants now have good chances for a renaissance under the banner of sustainability. Furthermore, as Brylska observes, the passage of time adopts unfamiliar manners in these areas—a phenomenon of disruption we are also confronted with through climate change and in the Anthropocene. Eventually, by looking through the *greentopian* lens, Brylska detects unexpected flourishing. This makes up for a second meaning of the term ‘*greentopia*’ in her text: disturbed but abundant areas where wildlife has a chance to flourish, and where new attitudes are formed.

Part III: Agriculture and Cultivation

New attitudes can also be formed in and by agriculture and cultivation. The production and acquisition of food is in a way the most existential manifestation of the relationship between humans and the non-human, since it is its basic condition. Moreover, the question of how we cultivate the land and how we grow plants has been at the centre of utopian thought throughout the centuries. In working the land, humankind produces food and nourishment. The way we do it, how it corresponds to values, and how the needs of humans as human animals can be met by agriculture, is a centrepiece of *greentopia*. *Greentopian* approaches to agriculture and cultivation explain that practices of cultivation mirror values and ideas of a good life with nature, and that investigating those practices and the virtues that come with them can advise our *greentopian* thinking. *Greentopia*, here, is conceptualised not only as something to inform such practices, but also and primarily as a way of thinking that is informed by them. This part assembles three papers that focus on concrete visions of agricultural and cultivational practices and virtues.

Paul Thompson inquires about “key features of an agriculturally based environmental utopia” (p. 121), with ‘utopia’ meaning a respective “construct for coalescing social ideals” (p. 130). After acknowledging that there is a plurality of possible utopias, depending on an interplay of contesting values, Thompson puts forward some traits of a green utopia informed by his concept of the “agrarian mentality” (p. 128). He suggests that at the core of a utopia worth pursuing there is not an easy, but a meaningful life, enabling the connection of “world and word” (p. 134, with reference to Steiner 2001). Paul Thompson provides insights into the history of thought relating to agriculture with regard to agrarian, environmental utopia. He identifies two principles that shape current agrarian-utopian thinking, and which derive from an industrial understanding of agriculture: efficiency and non-maleficence. Thompson takes us back to agricultural values and procedures *before* industrialisation and suggests a re-consideration of long-forgotten paradigms that may help shape visions of an environmental utopia.

Ngozi Unuigbo presents food sovereignty as a concrete *greentopia*, that is, as an “ideal whose realisation has already begun” (p. 141). This vision is concrete in

pertaining to specific people and their respective place; it is *greentopian* since it is a project with socio-economic, environmental, and political aspirations. Ngozi Unuigbo presents us with the *greentopian* vision of Indigenous food sovereignty by reference to a case study of food sovereignty in the Sahel, promoting a self-determined and regardful relationship with nature. Although they are institutionally neglected and marginalised, Indigenous food systems have considerable potential for the conservation of biodiversity and provision of nutritious food for people.

Maria Schörghenheimer's paper looks upon *greentopia* from a slightly shifted perspective: her preliminary definition as "good life in harmony with nature" (p. 153) indicates that this contribution does not start with society, how it is and how it should (not) be, but with individual existence, that is, with somebody's way of life. Navigating a space of tension, Schörghenheimer explores what happens when she asks how far paradise, as the paradigmatic narrative of a "good life in harmony with nature", can be realised—namely, in the garden. As soon as this question is posed, paradise fragments into promise and practice. Leaving behind the paradisiac conditions of temporal endlessness and spatial confinement, Schörghenheimer harvests *greentopian* desiderata from paradisiac promise, and *greentopian* virtues from gardening practice.

Part IV: Animals and Technology

In the last part of the book, the focus shifts to animals and towards recent developments in technology, both looked upon not as motionless objects in the hands of humanity but as agents maintaining their own interest or spin. As with those in Part II, the contributions assembled here deal with exemplary cases. In distinction from Part II, though, Part IV's examples are not primarily about humans in situations they have created or co-created but tend to emphasise the perspectives of subjects that are non-human. This certainly applies to the role of animals in *greentopian* thought, but it can also serve as a lens to look upon technological change maintaining its own logic and impetus. Dealing with the role of animals and technological smartness in utopian thought, respectively, all three contributions collected here examine existing narratives or projects—utopian literature, agro-technological visions and outlooks of city planning. This is the second common trait of the three contributions assembled in Part IV: in investigating third-party utopian ideas, they become critical, exposing ambivalences, lack, and even dystopian potential.

Joshua Bulleid locates utopia close to science fiction and examines ecotopian science fiction literature with regard to how it employs vegetarianism on the one hand, and its 'carnist' implications on the other. While what utopian and science fiction pieces of literature essentially do is thinking radical difference, their radicalism seems to be diminishing in one particular area. Bulleid detects a paradigmatic shift in ecotopian literature since the 1970s: Whereas originally, the abandonment of animal slaughter was an element found regularly in ecotopian literature, contemporary works embrace a 'carnist' attitude that sees meat consumption as inevitable—despite our awareness of the contribution of meat production to the climate crisis which only adds to the traditional arguments for vegetarianism.

Christian Dürnberger observes a transformation in the themes of utopian literature from an earlier aspiration for domination over nature to a more contemporary desire

for harmonious coexistence. He defines *greentopia* not as a utopian sub-genre, but as the contemporary appearance of utopia as such. Utopias, and therefore also *greentopias*, are “conceivable, alternative and above all better forms of social existence” (p. 200)—which leaves us with numerous possible viewpoints on how a given alternative is to be evaluated as better or worse, and for whom. Dürnberger offers an inquiry into the utopian potential of new developments in industrial animal farming. After outlining recent developments and possibilities, he raises the question of whether so-called Precision Livestock Farming might be perceived as a form of utopia, or a “better wilderness”. Would this perception be more or less likely to hold true when considering the (supposed) perspective of the animals? Alternatively, might it instead resemble a dystopia—and from whose perspective(s) would it do so?

Marcello Di Paola examines the city as the paradigmatic utopian venue. Being regarded as the place where everything has been shaped by human intention, the city is utopia’s emblematic form, regarding technological as well as political and moral imaginations. Di Paola examines the discrepancies between urban smartness and urban greenness as presently understood and pursued: there is a growing consensus that cities ought to be smart and green, and a diffused rhetoric that tends to conflate urban smartness with greenness or treat them as coincident or reciprocally entailed. Both do have, according to Di Paola, a utopian core in their character as political projects, entertaining a critical and dynamic relation towards the status quo and striving towards realisation. Eventually, the chapter aims to show that the discrepancies are far more profound than the convergences and that some features are in fact irreconcilable.

Part V: Concluding Remarks

The volume closes with a systematic chapter by the editors which follows up on the introduction in elaborating on why *greentopia* is not only a timely endeavour, but why it is indeed needed. It then goes into depth about the traits *greentopian* approaches share with new utopianism. Subsequently, the concluding chapter does the work of tying together some main threads which have emerged throughout parts one to four. In this, it follows up on the working definition we gave earlier in the introduction, according to which *greentopia* conflates three elements: it emancipates itself from the status quo via imagination, it is concerned with the interface between humans and what is not human, and it pursues a reconciliation of hope and realism. Interestingly, this initial working definition of *greentopia* proves viable as a common thread running through all parts of the volume, since it is possible to fill its three aspects with content: the contributing authors find new and sometimes ingenious ways to emancipate their imagination from the status quo by exploring *greentopia* as a method, or narrative. They apply this method to rethinking the interface between humans and nature in terms of human-non-human coexistence, thereby addressing *greentopian* areas of friction. And they do so amidst conditions of disruption and tension aiming to reconcile hope and realism, and to offer approaches to hopeful realism without disregarding the alarming facts: disruption is the *greentopian* condition. It is along these three “complexities”⁵ that we combine the contributions of

⁵ See Sect. 14.3.

this volume in the final chapter and explicate how they charge our tentative working definition with content.

Despite our attempt of bringing together the collected contributions in a somewhat systematic way, the book must ultimately end with a rejection of any attempt to create or obtain closed systems, be it in thought or in action. So we try to provide, in closing, an opening.

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Part I
Inquiries into Greentopia