According to Hilde Heynen, The most challenging aspects of architecture today have to do with the necessity to resuscitate a utopian mode of thinking….Consider, for instance, the critical capacity that is inherent to utopian thinking. As social geographer David Harvey remarks in *Spaces of Hope* (2012), it is only by revitalizing the utopian tradition that we will be able to fuel a critical reflection that will help us to act as conscious architects of our fates. Yet, in the face of social inequity and environmental degradation if architects are not willing to support the status quo, we should recognize the need for a revitalization of utopianism, because it is the only strategy that enables us to sound the depths of our imagination in order to explore the possibilities of the “not yet.”

Hinting at the future, utopias radicalize the hopes and the anxieties that characterize our relation to the world. To explore these related issues, the seminar will be divided into four parts: First, we will excavate the history of the 20th century utopian projects. Second, we will critically investigate the imbrications of technology with utopian pursuits. Third, teams will research, propose and develop a visionary utopian project, and fourth, teams will write a research essay on their speculative project.

The seminar situates design theory & research within the framework of the utopianist project as a method to propose innovative solutions to difficult and complex problems, understanding that a continuum of design thinking need not stop within our own discipline. The focus on broadening the idea of design to include speculative works as a site of practice includes a range of alternative experiments, representing diverse clusters of potentially effective and strategically deployable interventions – from the scale of the individual to the scale of the mega-city.

Through readings and discussion we will explore the utopias of the 20-21st century. What are the histories and theories of these utopias? Do they differ from the utopian projects of other eras? Are contemporary utopian impulses critical, or projective, or business as usual? Do utopian projects operate as representations, realities, or by some other means? What roles do technology, aesthetics, and politics play in current efforts to renew utopian ideas? By the end of the semester, the answers to these questions will be uploaded onto the school of architecture’s blog to continue the public conversation.

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1 David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000, p. 159.