

Sustainable Futures Scenarios

1. End of oil: we have reached a point where the costs, economic and environmental, of lifestyles based on oil cultures are no longer feasible. This scenario would entail changes to commuting practices, to lifestyles and careers organized around air travel, and to commodity cultures which rely on long-distance transit of goods.
 - a. We create a single unified spider web across the sky that harnesses the power of the wind and the sun. The conflict comes in the form of weather disturbances that are a lingering affect of climate change.
 - b. Kinetic cities are built to harness the power of millions of people by converting their movements into energy. The conflict comes in the form of a desire for more individual power for a select few through the use of human slavery.
 - c. A new glorious age of human-powered flight. The conflict: there are still many in power who desire to monopolize the industry of building said vehicles.
 - d. Fusion energy becomes ubiquitous, while simultaneously reducing the need for said power by creating smaller, self-sufficient communities. The conflict: those who want growth of the capacity of fusion generation and a hunger for a return to sprawling cities.

Native wisdom: Acquire more or require less is the fundamental idea here. The creation of ahupua'a which are land divisions based around the needs of all living things within an ecosystem mirrors the efficiency of a living cell. Also add to this a profound immersion in a world of sustained wonder, where every tree has a name and stories are filled with nutritious information about what "is" rather than an escape from reality.

2. Arrival of aliens: as we have long been promised by science fiction, the aliens finally arrive and bring with them new technological marvels, but they also demand that we no longer live in a non-sustainable way. Imagining any technological breakthrough, posit the new future we might build with futuristic alien technologies.
 - a. Aliens are redefined as distant ancestors, and all of life in the multiverse is reunited. The conflict: lingering xenophobia amongst humans and a minority of other distant ancestor races.
 - b. The organisms that live within all humans, and who happen in reality to make up more of our bodies than our own cells do, collectively awaken via a celestial phenomenon, and in concert all of humanity becomes a single organism. The conflict: a race of human cyborgs who have purged all foreign organisms from their bodies and replaced them with nanotechnology, resist this unification of the species.
 - c. A race of beings that have always coexisted with humans on earth are able to transcend their previous mutually unperceivable state of existence, and bring this awareness to humanity by showing us a whole new earth. The conflict comes in the form of religious fanatics who deem these new beings as daemons, especially since they offer a counter narrative to the extremes religious doctrines.
 - d. All the planets in the solar system begin to gain sentience, and trigger the awakening of the greatest sentience of them all- the earth. This alters every aspect of life in the solar system. The conflict comes in the form of the sun, which has been last to awaken, and hungers for all the planets, and begins to consume them one by one.

Native wisdom: The obvious tragedy of unharmonious contact with ancient ancestors fits perfectly here, and so does conversely the nature of voyaging to a new place where a chance for a fresh society can bloom, with the desire to integrate into existing ecosystems and peoples rather than to subjugate it/them. Also importantly the story of the arrival of plants, animals, soils etc. and how these elements found harmony long before humans arrived.

Sustainable Futures Scenarios

3. Exchange without money: the various currency crises of international trade, derivative exchanges, and collective currency such as the Euro and the problems of debt they create have been abandoned. We are rethinking how to live without using money as a medium of exchange.
 - a. As in ancient pre-physical money cultures, all currencies return to trade economies, which also means that it is very difficult to hide wealth and corruption becomes nearly obsolete. The conflict comes in the form those who want to return to the financial systems we have today.
 - b. Humanity learns how to digitally map all the currencies around the world, and give all humans access to this information real-time. The conflict comes in the form of a small minority who desire to keep their wealth hidden.
 - c. All currencies become sentient through artificial intelligence, and begin to redirect themselves towards the areas of the world that is in most need, and in ways that is most needed. The conflict comes from those who seek to coerce the artificial intelligence into directing these funds to themselves.
 - d. A complete return to minimalism and neo-animism sees ancient systems re-implemented through digital systems of resource management. The conflict comes in the form of those who want to return to a consumer-based culture.

Native wisdom: Hawaiians did not build epic pyramids or construct great temples; instead their structures were invisible, and took the form of extremely complicated and strict systems of belief and resource management. Many are the tales of greedy chiefs who would meet a symbolic end at the hands of the commoners, the maka'ainana, which is translated as the eyes of the land. They commoners are always watching. Kind of a like a reverse big-brother:)

4. Climate change: the sea levels have risen, the growth seasons have shifted, and the parts of the planet hospitable to human habitation have shrunk. Imagine how we might reorganize global patterns of life to accommodate fewer and different places to live.
 - a. Humans learn to harness the power of extreme weather, turning hurricanes and tornados into opportunities to power massive batteries that can sustain weather-proof cities for months. The conflict comes in the form of mastering said technology, with many terrible failures due to hubris and greed.
 - b. Technological advances promote the re-freezing of the poles, reducing the increased human and ecological disasters related to migrations away from costal areas. The conflict comes in the form of a potential new ice age as humans overcompensate.
 - c. A complete shift to ocean-centered living for humanity, both on the surface and below. The conflict comes in the form of unresolved territorial disputes as the borders of nations are harder to define.
 - d. Weather control has finally become a reality, and some of the worst of the impacts of climate change are averted. The conflict comes in the form of those who seek to weaponize this technology.

Native wisdom: The demigod Maui, who shows up all across the pacific, lassos the sun to slow its course down to allow his mothers bark-cloth to cure into clothing. And so again we need to slow the sun down. The original metaphor in the Maui story has many meanings, and also refers to the speed by which humans were expanding, with the bark-cloth a symbol of the need for societal systems to cure into a more sustainable form. And also the nature of the changing shapes of the islands and how this relates to water levels globally and the amplification of the horrible migration tragedies we see today.

Sustainable Futures Scenarios

5. Posthumanism: we can modify our bodies in any way we imagine, again as long promised by science fiction. What kind of “body hack” do you imagine is necessary for humans to be able to live more sustainable lives in bodies that are differently designed? What will these lives look like?
- Humans begin to become as diverse as fishes in the sea and birds in the sky, and take up many of those said attributes. The conflict comes from those who refuse to adapt, and instead cling to an unchanging idea of humanity that they impose on the rest of the diversified species of humans.
 - Humans genetically begin to shrink, and over time they reach a new plateau of around 25% of their contemporary body mass, and collectively have much less of an impact on the environment. The conflict comes in the form of a race of human giants who instead seek to consume the slowly rejuvenating natural resources, little people and all.
 - Humans become part plant, and live in part through photosynthesis. The conflict is in the form of other humans which have instead become part insect, and, like locusts feed off of the more sustainable plantlings.
 - Humans crack the mystery of consciousness and learn how to displace their awareness into animals and trees and the land itself, creating a ghost-like reality. The conflict comes in the form of these displaced consciousnesses being susceptible to new forms of unanticipated madness as whole ecosystems can potentially become insane.

Native wisdom: All throughout Hawaiian legends we have shape shifters which symbolize, amongst other things, the need to adapt, as influenced by the unique flora and fauna of the islands. And truly this is not unique to Hawai'i. And the range of morals we learn from these shape shifters are broad, from Kamapua'a, the pig god who flees from Pele's wrath by turning into a fish (humuhumunukunukuapua'a) as a symbol for the transformation Hawaiians must make to outlive America; to Nanau'e, the shark man who would warn people away from fishing in certain areas because he knew he would have to kill them, as a way to understand addiction.

6. Alternative history: you can go back to any period of time in history you want, the time/place where it all went “wrong” and humans began to live in a way that led to our unsustainable present. What period would you choose to travel into and what would you change at that point?
- All light particles and sound waves ever to have been reflected off of the surface of the earth are tracked and reassembled to create a complete picture of everything, and scholars use this to untangle intractable conflicts by knowing the truth about everything. The conflict comes from those who seek to exploit this technology for their own personal gain, or to erase the truth about their nefarious legacies.
 - A pan-epidemic wipes out virtually all of life on major continents, leaving a few islands in the Pacific to reseed humanity. The conflict comes from the fear of this event and the impact it has had on the survivors, many of whom seek to control this new beginning for humanity for their own needs.
 - Humans never lose their animistic belief systems, and they take these beliefs into the future and it influences kinder and more pragmatic technologies, including ways to leave the earth's atmosphere without the use of metal and rocket fuel. The conflict comes in the form of techno-barbarians who instead brought the savagery of the human species with them, and who seek to rule their meeker cousin societies.
 - The end of war comes about by the reduction of all conflict into ceremonial battles, right around the time of the development of chess India. Be they giant games or massive dance-battles, humans learn to trap war and violence into another dimension. The conflict comes from the will to sustain and propagate this conversion globally.

Native wisdom: The body of work I have to share is called Polyfantasitica, and is my version of an alternative history where a pandemic wipes out the rest of the planet, leaving pseudo pacific cultures to become the predominant one. So no foreigners arrive, that is to say, living ones. Only ships filled with corpses. I created a parallel world to tell this story so as to be free from having to be bound to the limits of actually knowing how this could have happened in reality, but the idea here is simple, what would have happened if no one showed up.

Sustainable Futures Scenarios

7. Time travel: you can leap ahead the number of years you think it will take for humans to get out of our present trajectory and establish a sustainable global culture. How far in the future are you and what kind of world do you live in? How did we get from here to there?
- Humans learn to harness death as a form of time travel, allowing themselves to be reborn at different times in the past or the present. The conflict comes in the form of unscrupulous individuals who seek to steal this technology away, leaving thousands of other travelers stranded and not reborn.
 - Humanity goes into a collective hibernation which lasts for a millennium, allowing the earth to rejuvenate and the worst of climate change to pass. The conflict comes in the form of dissonance within the small "awakeners" society whose role is to wait out these many hundreds of years, as some wish to not to carry out their duty and want to claim the world for their own.
 - Through a process of temporal augmentation technology, swatches of history and the future begin to manifest in the present, allowing past, present and future to coexist. Conflict comes from the obvious dilemmas this creates when temporal distortions begin to undo major historical events.
 - Though it is not possible to physically travel through time, humans learn how to project their consciousness into the past and the future, effectively becoming ghost-like time travelers. The conflict comes from the unintended impact this has on the physical bodies, leaving many to perish while their minds are set free to travel through space and time, and this becomes an epidemic that is akin to mass drug addiction.

Native wisdom: "I Ka wa mua, Ka wa mahope": within the future, is the past. This is a Hawaiian proverb which is meant to articulate the perspective of living in a cyclical time frame, where the chronology of events is not as important as their collective implications. That is to say, if you forget your history, or see your self moving away from the past, you keep making the same mistakes as the responsibility of your actions will be somewhere else in time but not in space.

8. Pandemic: although this is largely a dystopian scenario, it is also impossible to deny that much of popular culture is focused on the spectre of the pandemic via its poster child, the zombie. Is there a way to imagine a non-dystopian response to a viral outbreak? Are there ways responding to a pandemic would force us to adopt changes that would ultimately lead to a more sustainable life?
- Humans create a single unified health system, allowing for the gradual eradication of disease globally. The conflict comes from the strain this has on the environment as populations continue to grow unsustainably.
 - Nanotechnology proves to be a vital tool to battle the mounting threat of illness related to antibiotic resistance around the world. The conflict comes in the form of those who seek to hack these nanotech systems, effectively enslaving whole populations.
 - A new kind of virus emerges that has the beneficial effect of speeding up human evolution, causing the rate of adaptation to become exponential. The conflict comes in the form of side effects much later in this process that causes societies to revert back in to single cell organisms.
 - A strange new virus that affects the psyche causes all humans to become unbound to any sense of nationalism, allowing for humanity to feel and think collectively. The conflict is that this virus has attained a dominant form of sentience over this new unified species.

Native wisdom: Here we touch on the most painful aspect of colonization as an invisible killer stalks the native people, and after the wave of the biological impact, we have generations of trauma. One tragic irony is the fundamental strictness of cleanliness and the kapu (origins of taboo) around human waste and frankly any thing that leaves the body. And the true meaning of kapu is not restriction, but very careful and mindful management.

Sustainable Futures Scenarios

9. Space travel/life: many of the current libertarian fantasies of response to global crisis imagine that we can escape this “used up” planet and find abundant resources or another or in a high-tech artificial satellite world. Is there a way to imagine life in space outside of these models rooted in a colonial imagination?
- Humanity seeks to purge themselves of the many ills that make up their history, be it war or greed or fear, before migrating away from the earth, so as to not take these unfortunate aspects of humanity with them. The conflict comes from the rebellious few who do.
 - The first people to crack the mystery of faster-than-light travel are artists and poets, by mastering the power of awareness, which is itself faster than light. The conflict comes in the form of the potential madness because of the feedback created by the awareness and perception of multiverse within the underdeveloped brains of the travelers.
 - Humans learn to harness death as a form of space travel, with the lead voyagers are actually projections of awareness onto distant moons which then begins a biological process out of native inorganic materials, creating birthing plants, allowing people to die in one place in the multiverse, only to be reborn through these plants. The conflict comes in the form of cosmic aberrations that send many travelers into an oblivion of true death.
 - The discovery of portal technology allows for instant voyages throughout the multiverse, effectively making space travel irrelevant. The mystery of the multiverse is deciphered and all things become known. The conflict comes from a deep collective sorrow that sets into humanity as all the mystery has gone from reality. Love and death become meaningless.

Native wisdom: Navigation and the connection with the stars is the most direct example here, but not as well known are all the other areas of data gathering, and it is said that around 21 different sources of information could be processed simultaneously. We have the rocking motion of the boat, the macro-organisms living on the surface of the water, the color of clouds on the horizon, the types of fish in the area, and most importantly, certain birds, for then they know land is a truth. And at its core, the profound sense of wonder and and adventure and discovery.

10. The end of gender: how would we organize life if we no longer had recognizable genders? What would families look like? What would sexuality look like? How would children be raised? Is there a link between patriarchy and cultures rooted in the heteronormative family and a lack of sustainability in our contemporary world?
- Homosexuality becomes the absolute norm, with heterosexuality almost unheard of. Population control is solved as the act of procreation is strictly ceremonial and pragmatic. The conflict comes from a select few who seek to violently ban all heterosexuality outside of ceremony.
 - Humans now come in millions of genders, and must seek their soulmate through a process of an intense match making system. The conflict comes from a secretive cult that seeks to return to the binary genders by sabotaging this gender alignment system.
 - All of life on earth has become genetically compatible for the purposes of procreation, and no true forms of human remain as hybridization becomes the norm. The conflict comes from the last remnants of pure humans who exploit this new state of being by creating absolute monsters of nature outside of the carefully controlled process of humans and nature becoming one.
 - Then end of the male species happens as females evolve to self fertilize. They also gain many attribute of men as humanity reaches a kind of androgynous state of existence. The conflict comes from the potential risk of lower rates of mutation making adaptation an important aspect of society.

Native wisdom: In Hawaiian culture, the homosexual (māhū) designation was one of reverence, for they were the ones who could break certain kapu that would be bound to gender when the need called for it. And it could probably be said that everyone else was just bi-sexual, as even great warriors would seek intimacy with each other without a second thought. And most importantly, if you live on an island, your number one concern is population control, and your second concern is making sure all children have loving parents irrespective of sexual orientation.

Utopian Studies Terms

Critical Terms

Utopia: The term is developed from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), a satiric work that critiqued the social and especially economic exclusions of contemporary England by playing on the potentially double meaning of the term as eu-topia, the good place, and u-topia, no place. Although colloquially utopian thinking can be taken to mean "unrealistic" plans for a better world, within the Utopian Studies tradition the emphasis is on activating the desire for a better world that exists as a buried trace in many daily practices, and in thinking about the role utopian representations play in helping us achieve such worlds.

Dystopia: A term coined to mean the opposite of utopia, the bad place. While the utopia functions to show readers a society that contrasts favourably with their own world, the dystopia shows a world much worse than the reader's own, and it generally functions as a warning of what might happen, in science fiction vernacular, "if this goes on." In eutopian studies, the dystopia, which has this critical function, is differentiated from the anti-utopian, which merely evacuates all dystopian hope in its negative vision.

Critical Utopia: A term developed by Tom Moylan which aims to acknowledge and disarticulate the tension between utopianism as a desire for another and better world from the reality that any definite program for a rigid utopia quickly turns into its opposite. Moylan writes, "A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the ordinary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives" (*Demand the Impossible*, 10-11).

Critical Dystopia: A term developed by Tom Moylan to acknowledge the ways in which dystopias can not only offer an alternative to contemporary reality but also respond to and critique earlier dystopias, showing how they fail to address perspectives of marginalized groups. Unlike the potential for political apathy that might be the result of the dystopian form's vision of the worst aspects of the present extrapolated into the future, the critical dystopia "go on to explore ways to change the present system so that . . . culturally and economically marginalized peoples not only survive but also try to move toward creating a social reality that is shaped by an impulse to human self-determination and ecological health rather than one constricted by the narrow and destructive logic of a system intent only on enhancing competition in order to gain more profit for a select few" (Moylan *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, 189).

Quotations to Consider

“A specter is haunting contemporary science fiction studies—the specter of Utopia. It will be a central contention of this book that Utopianism is not simply one among a range of possible themes or motifs in modern science fiction. ... Rather, Utopianism is fundamental to [the] very narrative dynamic of this vital modern practice. ... For it is precisely its Utopianism that distinguishes modern science fiction, the technically complex or so called ‘high’ cultural as well as the most popular or commercial expressions, both from precursors such as the fable, travel narrative, gothic, and *voyages extraordinaires*, and contemporary practices of prognostication or futurology. In short, what Fredric Jameson describes as the ‘desire called Utopia’ at work in all science fiction is also a matter of the *desire for narrative*. ... It is here where the practice of science fiction’s constitutive force and continued significance reside.” (Philip E. Wegner, *Shockwaves of Possibility: Essays on Science Fiction, Globalization, and Utopia*, xiii, xvi–xv)

“Its explicitly hypothetical character enables us to insist on utopia’s provisionally, reflexivity and dialogic mode. Explicit alternative scenarios for the future are fundamental to any kind of democratic debate. This means envisioning alternatives, but also setting out the images of the good society buried in the constant barrage of political rhetoric and policies. The utopian method involves both making explicit the kinds of society implied in existing political programmes and constructing alternatives. It entails also considering the kinds of people we want to become and that different forms of society will promote or inhibit.” (Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method*, xviii)

“Science fiction writers construct an imaginary future; historians attempt to reconstruct the past. Ultimately, both are seeking to understand the present. In this essay, we blend the two genres to image a future historian looking back on a past that is our present and (possible) future. The occasion is the tercentenary of the end of Western culture (1540–2093); the dilemma being addressed here is how we—the children of the Enlightenment—failed to act on robust information about climate change and knowledge of the damaging events that were about to unfold. Our historian concludes that a second Dark Age had fallen on Western civilization, in which denial and self-deception, rooted in an ideological fixation on ‘free’ markets, disabled the world’s powerful nations in the face of tragedy. Moreover, the scientists who best understood the problem were hamstrung by their own cultural practices, which demanded an excessively stringent standard for accepting claims of any kind—even those involving imminent threats. Here, our future historian, living in the Second People’s Republic of China, recounts the events of the Period of the Penumbra (1988–2093) that led to the Great Collapse and Mass Migration (2073–2093).” (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, 1)