

**Tomorrow 125**

A practical path to a hopeful future



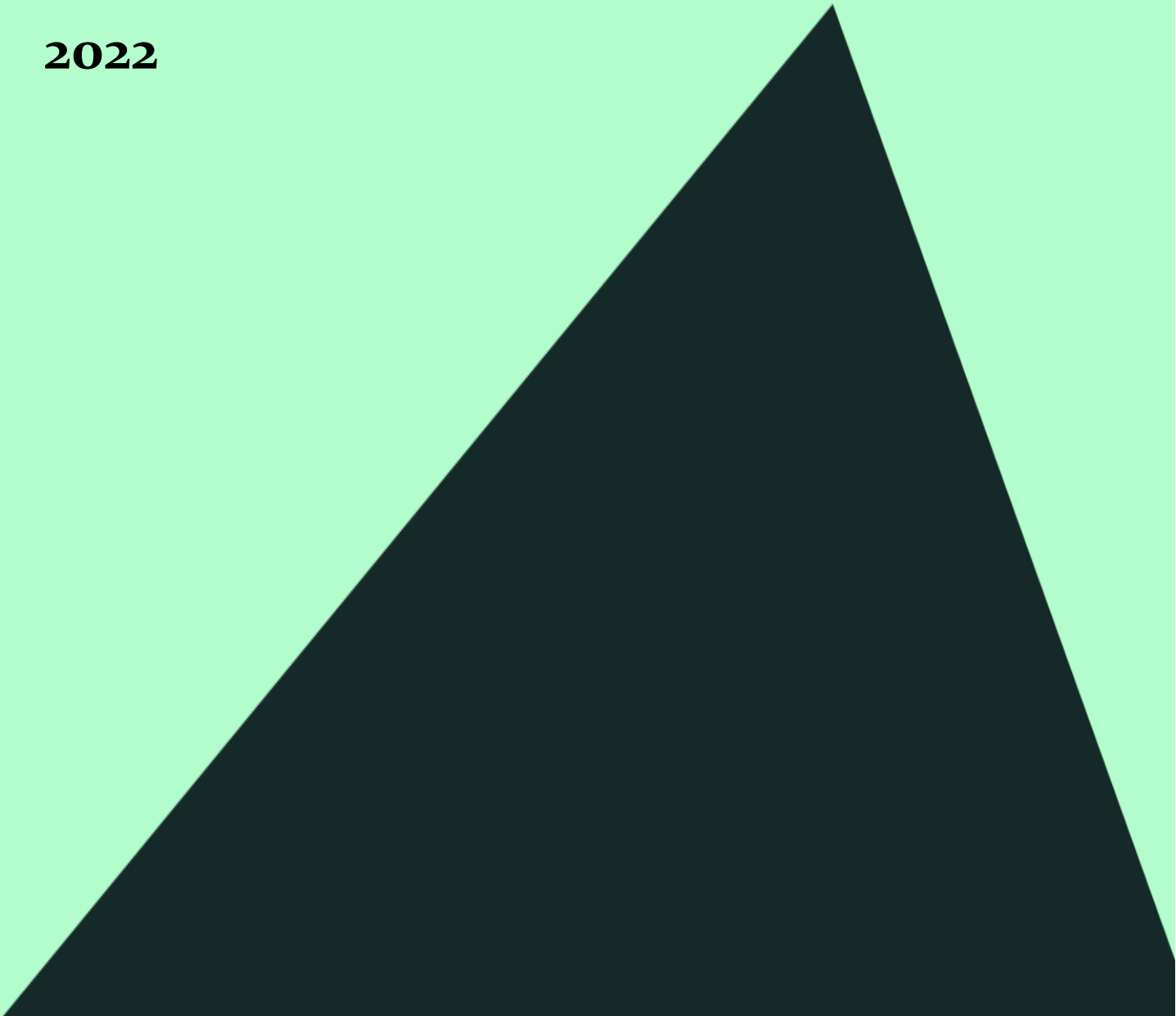
**tcpa**

# Land of Promise

Rediscovering the roots of a new society

**November**

**2022**



Whatever the defeats of the idealists from time to time in human history, we must always keep before us the greater constructive purposes of life.

C.R. Ashbee 1917

Get to know the people. You will never understand yourself or your work until you do.

Edward Carpenter to C.R. Ashbee 1886

You should make a point of trying everything once, excepting incest and folk dancing

Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

# Preface

'Tomorrow 125' is a project exploring how the Garden City idea can help us construct a pathway to a hopeful future based on a fairer society. At a time when the climate crisis is impossible to ignore, and we cautiously feel our way into the new post-pandemic 'normal', does the Garden City idea offer insights into a new way to live?

In 2023 the book written by the Garden City inventor Ebenezer Howard, in which he outlines a practical framework for a fairer society, will be 125 years old. Over the next 3 years, the TCPA, which Ebenezer Howard founded in 1899 to promote the Garden City idea, will lead an exploration of the relevance of the Garden City idea for our collective future.

We hope you will join us on this journey to return to the roots of these radical and ambitious ideas.

**Find out more at:** <https://www.tomorrow125.org.uk/>

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## Land of Promise

Rediscovering the roots of a new society

## Introduction

Welcome to the TCPA's performance piece 'Land of Promise'. Using words and music *Land of Promise* journeys through three and a half centuries of radical thought, writing, and song about the connection between art, social justice and the living environment. Through the words of radical thinkers and activists spanning William Morris and Edward Carpenter to Bruce Springsteen and Benjamin Zephaniah, *Land of Promise* explores that perpetual but urgent question at a time of global crises –

### **'How are we going to live?'**

We're sharing this story because 125 years ago, a shorthand typist and inventor Ebenezer Howard wrote a book suggesting there was hope of a just, compassionate, cooperative future. Howard's book transformed the way we thought about how and where we live. The Garden City was a covenant with the future, based not on forcing people to live a certain life, but liberating them from poverty and giving them a framework for 'the good life'. The question remains *'is any of that relevant to today's hard times?'*

Tonight, we're taking you on a journey through The British utopian tradition; to test whether we can renew that almost forgotten tradition of **practical hope**. We have some great readings and brilliant music and some wine to keep us going.

**This programme contains the words to the music and readings you will here tonight.**

## **The Diggers (1649-1651)**

Song: The World Turned Upside Down: Leon Rosselson, 1974

Including words (*italicised*) from a Diggers song of 1649

1649, St George's Hill.

A ragged band they called the Diggers came to show the people's will  
They defied the landlords, they defied the laws  
They were the dispossessed claiming what was theirs  
We come in peace they said, to dig and sow  
We come to work the land in common and to make the wasteland grow  
This Earth divided we will make whole  
So it can be a common treasury for all  
The sin of property we do disdain  
No man has any right to buy and sell the Earth for private gain  
By theft and murder they took the land  
Now everywhere the walls spring up at their command  
They make their laws to chain us well  
The clergy dazzle us with heaven or damn us into hell  
We will not worship the god they serve  
A god of greed who feeds the rich while poor men starve  
We work, we eat together, we need no swords  
We will not bow to the masters nor give in to the lords  
We are free men, though we are poor  
You Diggers all stand up for glory stand up now  
To conquer them by love come in now, come in now  
To conquer them by love come in now  
To conquer them by love as it does you behave  
For He is King above - no power is like to love  
Stand up now Diggers all  
From the men of property, the orders came  
They sent the hired men and troopers to wipe out the Diggers' claim  
Tear down their cottages, destroy their corn  
They were dispersed - but still the vision lingers on

1649, St George's Hill

A ragged band they called the Diggers came to show the people's will  
They defied the landlords, they defied the laws  
They were the dispossessed claiming what was theirs.

## **The Enclosures (1604-1914)**

**Song: Langley Bush, by Chris Ellis, 2011. Setting extracts from The Mores and Remembrances, by John Clare**

Far spread the moorey ground, a level scene  
Bespread with rush and one eternal green  
That never felt the rage of blundering plough  
Though centuries wreathed spring blossoms on its brow  
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene  
Nor fence of ownership crept in between  
To hide the prospect of the following eye  
It's only bondage was the circling sky  
By Langley bush I roam but the bush has left its hill  
On Cowper Green I stray – 'tis a desert strange and still  
And Crossberry way and old round oaks narrow lane  
With its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again  
I used to lye and sing by old Eastwells boiling spring  
Tie the willow bows together for a swing  
And fish with crooked pins and never catch a thing  
With heart just like a feather  
When beneath old lea close oak I the bottom branches broke  
To make us our harvest cart like so many working folk  
And then to cut a straw at the brook to have a soak  
Oh I never dreamed of parting  
On round Oaks narrow lane, as the sky grew black again  
We sought the hollow ash that was shelter from the rain  
Oh words are poor receipts for what time has stole away  
These ancient trees and the play  
Enclosure like a Bounparte let not a thing remain  
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill  
And hung the moles for traitors; though the brook is running still  
It runs a naked stream, cold and chill  
By Langley Bush I roam...

## The arts and crafts movement (1880-1920)

Reading: William Morris, *How We Live and How We Might Live*

A lecture delivered to the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist Democratic Federation at Kelmscott House, on 30th November 1884. It was first printed in *Commonweal*, 1887

And, again, that word art leads me to my last claim, which is that the material surroundings of my life should be pleasant, generous, and beautiful; that I know is a large claim, but this I will say about it, that if it cannot be satisfied; if every civilized community cannot provide such surroundings for all its members; I do not want the world to go on.

I do not think it possible under the present circumstances to speak too strongly on this point. I feel sure that the time will come when people will find it difficult to believe that a rich community such as ours, having such command over external Nature, could have submitted to live such a mean, shabby, dirty life as we do.

It is Profit which crowds people up into quarters without gardens or open spaces; Profit which won't take the most ordinary precautions against wrapping a whole district in a cloud of sulphurous smoke; which turns beautiful rivers into filthy sewers; which condemns all but the rich to live in houses idiotically cramped and confined at the best and at the worst in houses for whose wretchedness there is no name. When they are no longer slaves, the people will claim as a matter of course that every man and every family should be generously lodged; that every child should be able to play in a garden close to the place his parents live in; that the houses should by their obvious decency and order be ornaments to Nature, not disfigurements of it; for the decency and order above mentioned when carried to the due pitch would most assuredly lead to beauty in building. All this, of course, would mean the people - that is, all society duly organized - having in its own hands the means of production.

As to what extent it may be necessary or desirable for people under social order to live in common, we may differ pretty much according to our tendencies towards social life. For my part I can't see why we should think it a hardship to eat with the people we work with. I console myself with visions of the noble communal hall of the future, unsparing of materials, generous in worthy ornament, alive with the

noblest thoughts of our time, and the past, embodied in the best art which a free people could produce; such an abode of man as no private enterprise could come anywhere near for beauty and fitness, because only collective thought and collective life could cherish the aspirations which would give birth to its beauty, or have the skill and leisure to carry them out. I for my part should think it much the reverse of a hardship if I had to read my books and meet my friends in such a place.

Well, I will now let my claims for decent life stand as I have made them. To sum them up in brief, they are: first, a healthy body; second, an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present and the future; thirdly, occupation fit for a healthy body and an active mind; and fourthly, a beautiful world to live in.

And so take courage, and believe that we of this age, in spite of all its torment and disorder, have been born to a wonderful heritage fashioned of the work of those that have gone before us; and that the day of the organisation of man is dawning. It is not we who can build up the new social order; the past ages have done the most of that work for us; but we can clear our eyes to the signs of the times, and we shall then see that the attainment of a good condition of life is being made possible for us, and that it is now our business to stretch out our hands, to take it.

**Reading: Extract from 'Towards Democracy' 1881, by Edward Carpenter: 'In a Manufacturing Town'**

As I walked restless and despondent through the gloomy city,  
And saw the eager unresting to and fro – as of ghosts in some sulphurous Hades;  
And saw the crowds of tall chimneys going up, and the pall of smoke covering the sun, covering the earth, Lying heavy against the very ground;  
And saw the huge refuse heaps writhing with children picking them over  
And the ghastly half roofless smoke blackened houses and the black river flowing below.

As I saw these things, and as I saw again far away the capitalist quarter,  
With its villa residences and its high walled gardens and its well appointed carriages,  
And its face turned away from the wriggling poverty which made it rich;  
As I saw and remembered its drawing room airs and affections, and its wheezy pury church going and its gas reeking heavy furnished rooms and its scent bottles and its other abominations-  
I shuddered:



For I felt stifled, like one who lies half conscious- knowing not clearly the shape of the evil-in the grasp of some heavy nightmare.

Then out of the crowd descending towards me came a little ragged boy:

Came – from the background of dirt disengaging itself - an innocent wistful child face, begrimed like the rest but strangely pale, and pensive before its time.

And in an instant (it was as if a trumpet had been blown in that place) I saw it all clearly, the lie I saw and the truth, the false dream and the awakening.

For the smoke blackened walls and all the chimneys, and the dreary habitations of the poor, and drearier habitations of the rich, crumbled and conveyed themselves away as if by magic;

And instead, in the backward vista of that face, I saw the joy of free open life under the sun:

The green sun delighting earth and rolling sea I saw,

The free sufficing life-sweet comradeship, few needs and common pleasures-the needless endless burdens cast aside,

Not as a sentimental vision, but as a fact and a necessity existing, I saw

In the backward vista of that face.

Stronger than all combinations of capital, wiser than all the committees of representative labour, the simple need and hunger of the human heart.

Nothing more is needed.

## **The Garden City movement (1898 onwards...)**

**Reading: Extract from To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform, Ebenezer Howard, 1898**

‘to build home-towns for slum cities; to plant gardens for crowded courts; to establish a scientific system of distribution to take the place of a chaos, a just system of land tenure for one representing the selfishness which we hope is passing away; to found pensions with liberty for our aged poor, now imprisoned in workhouses; to banish despair and awaken hope in the breasts of those who have fallen; to silence the harsh voice of anger, and to awaken the soft notes of brotherliness and goodwill; to place in strong hands implements of peace and construction, so that implements of war and destruction may drop uselessly down.’

## **The First World War (1914-1918)**

**Song: The Worker's Song (Handful of Earth), Dick Gaughan, 1981**

Come all of you workers by hand or by brain  
Who toil night and day to earn your pay  
Who for centuries long past, for no more than your bread  
Have bled for your country and counted your dead  
In the factories and mills, in the shipyards and mines  
We've often been told to keep up with the times  
For our skills are not needed, they've streamlined the job  
And with slide rule and stopwatch our lives they have robbed  
Ay, but when the sky darkens and the prospect is war  
Who's given a gun and then pushed to the fore?  
And expected to die for the land of your birth  
When we've never owned one handful of Earth  
We're the first ones to starve, the first ones to die  
The first ones in line for that pie in the sky  
And were always the last when the cream is shared out  
For the worker is working when the fat cat's about  
Ay and all of these things the worker has done  
From tilling the fields to carrying a gun  
We've been yoked to the plough since the game first began  
And always expected to carry the can  
For when the sky darkens and the prospect is war  
Who's given a gun and then pushed to the fore?  
And expected to die for the land of your birth  
When we've never owned one handful of Earth

## **The Dustbowl (1934-1940)**

Song: This Land is your Land, Woody Guthrie, 1956

This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California, to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me  
As I was walking a ribbon of highway  
I saw above me an endless skyway  
I saw below me a golden valley  
This land was made for you and me  
This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California, to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me  
I've roamed and rambled and I've followed my footsteps  
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts  
And all around me a voice was calling  
This land was made for you and me  
This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California, to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me  
The sun comes shining as I was strolling  
The wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling  
The fog was lifting, a voice come chanting  
This land was made for you and me  
As I was walkin - I saw a sign there  
And that sign said - no tress passin'  
But on the other side... it didn't say nothin!  
Now that side was made for you and me!  
This land is your land, this land is my land  
From the Downs to the Western Highlands  
From the Oakwood forest to the Lakeland waters  
This land was made for you and me

## World War Two (1939-1945)

Reading: Postscripts, radio broadcast, J.B. Priestley, (21st July, 1940)

But we can't go forward and build up this new world order, and this is our real war aim, unless we begin to think differently, and my own personal view, for what it's worth, is that we must stop thinking in terms of property and power and begin thinking in terms of community and creation.

Now, I'll explain just what I mean. First, take the change from power to creation. Now, power – whether on a large or small scale – really boils down to the ignoble pleasure of bossing and ordering other people about because you have the hand-whip of them. All these Nazi and Fascist leaders are power worshippers.

I suspect it's simply a bad substitute for the joy of creation, which everybody understands, whether you're creating a vast educational system or a magnificent work of art, or bringing into existence a vegetable garden or a thundering good dinner. People are never so innocently happy as when they're creating something. So, we want a world that offers people not the dubious pleasures of power, but the maximum opportunities for creation.

And now we'll take the change from property to community.

Property is that old-fashioned way of thinking of a country as a thing, and a collection of things on that thing, all owned by certain people and constituting property; instead of thinking of a country as the home of a living society as the first test. And I'll give you an instance of how this change should be working.

Near where I live is a house with a large garden, that's not being used at all because the owner of it has gone to America. Now, according to the property view, this is all right, and we, who haven't gone to America, must fight to protect this absentee owner's property. But on the community view, this is all wrong. There are hundreds of working people not far from here who urgently need ground for allotments so that they can produce a bit more food. Also, we may soon need more houses for billeting. Therefore, I say, that house and garden ought to be used whether the owner, who's gone to America, likes it or not.

Now, the war, because it demands a huge collective effort, is compelling us to change not only our ordinary, social and economic habits, but also our habits of thought. We're actually changing over from the property view to the sense of community, which simply means that we realise we're all in the same boat. But, and this is the point, that boat can serve not only as our defence against Nazi aggression, but as an ark in which we can all finally land in a better world. I tell you, there is a stirring in us now, a desire which could soon become a controlled but passionate determination to remodel and recreate this life of ours, to make it the glorious beginning of a new world order.

## The 1947 Planning Act

Song: The times they are changing, Bob Dylan, 1964

Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin'  
And you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come senators, congressmen  
Please heed the call  
Don't stand in the doorway  
Don't block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt  
Will be he who has stalled  
The battle outside ragin'  
Will soon shake your windows  
And rattle your walls  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land  
And don't criticize  
What you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'  
Please get out of the new one  
If you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin'

## The Fall from Grace

Song: The ghost of Tom Joad, Bruce Springsteen, 1995

Men walkin' 'long the railroad tracks  
Goin' someplace there's no goin' back  
Highway patrol choppers comin' up over the ridge  
Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge  
Shelter line stretchin' round the corner  
Welcome to the new world order  
Families sleepin' in their cars in the southwest  
No home no job no peace no rest  
The highway is alive tonight  
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes  
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light  
Searchin' for the ghost of Tom Joad  
He pulls prayer book out of his sleeping bag  
Preacher lights up a butt and takes a drag  
Waitin' for when the last shall be first and the first shall be last  
In a cardboard box 'neath the underpass  
Got a one-way ticket to the promised land  
You got a hole in your belly and gun in your hand  
Sleeping on a pillow of solid rock  
Bathin' in the city aqueduct  
The highway is alive tonight  
But where it's headed everybody knows  
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light  
Waitin' on the ghost of Tom Joad  
Now Tom said "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy  
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries  
Where there's a fight 'gainst the blood and hatred in the air  
Look for me Mom I'll be there  
Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand  
Or decent job or a helpin' hand  
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free  
Look in their eyes Mom you'll see me."  
The highway is alive tonight  
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes  
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light  
With the ghost of old Tom Joad

## **The Practical path to a hopeful future**

Reading: The British (serves 60 million), Benjamin Zephaniah, 2000

Take some Picts, Celts and Silures  
And let them settle,  
Then overrun them with Roman conquerors.  
Remove the Romans after approximately 400 years  
Add lots of Norman French to some  
Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Vikings, then stir vigorously.  
Mix some hot Chileans, cool Jamaicans, Dominicans,  
Trinidadians and Bajans with some Ethiopians, Chinese,  
Vietnamese and Sudanese.  
Then take a blend of Somalians, Sri Lankans, Nigerians  
And Pakistanis,  
Combine with some Guyanese  
And turn up the heat.  
Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians, Bosnians,  
Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some  
Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese  
And Palestinians  
Then add to the melting pot.  
Leave the ingredients to simmer.  
As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish  
Binding them together with English.  
Allow time to be cool.  
Add some unity, understanding, and respect for the future,  
Serve with justice  
And enjoy.

*Note: All the ingredients are equally important. Treating one ingredient better than another will leave a bitter unpleasant taste.*

*Warning: An unequal spread of justice will damage the people and cause pain. Give justice and equality to all.*

## Reading: Rebuilding Hope, extract from Rebuilding Britain (edited), Kate Henderson and Hugh Ellis, 2014

We seem to have lost the art of thinking about a hopeful future. Not only have we abandoned any ambition for the ideals of 'utopia' we seem content to abandon people and places to be scared by poverty and inequality. We live with the lie that we cannot afford to invest in communities when we are rich nation, we have simply chosen not to care.

We are gripped by a collective fear of economic and environmental crisis, but we have no plan for future, no hopeful strategy to guide us. Positive change, we are told, is impossible. But our current conditions don't flow from some natural process. Our towns and cities are the product of human decision making and choice. It is deeply irresponsible to say that we cannot change the world we have built and also a convenient lie for those who have no interest in our collective welfare.

And so it is time we remembered that our purpose is to build a practical and hopeful future for all of us. This is not just a moral argument about justice and equality it's also a necessity for our survival. We live in a small Island and we are all mutually dependent on the social fabric of our communities. We should not deny our dependence but recognize it as the true heart of human relations and the springboard for individual achievement. Desmond Tutu argued that the concept of Ubuntu was the heart of a hopeful society. 'I can only be me if you are you'. We are only human because of our relationships. Your fate is my fate.

We believe that given the chance, human society can be more cooperative and caring and ultimately more satisfying to the human spirit. When people are liberated from inequality, surrounded by beauty and the natural environment and sharing in the benefits of technological innovation then there's a chance of the good life for all of us. The Garden city ideals offer us that practical hope not as a rigid blueprint but as the foundation for diverse lives.

The pioneers of the Garden City movement had a passionate and practical determination to build a better society and their inspiration is a message of hope. We all know change is coming. The climate crisis on its own will remake every aspect of our lives. The question is what will that change look like? For the first time in generation, we are confident that we have answer to that question.



It's a community founded on social justice which enables flourishing lives for everyone in a society proud of its diversity. It's an idea backed by meaningful democracy and

a caring economy. Utopian? Just dig around your local community and you will see the roots of change. People taking power over their future, tens of thousands of Ebenezer's working through food, renewable energy, housing cooperatives to build better, less lonely and more equal lives.

The times, as someone said, are changing.

### **Song: It's not what your born with, Si Khan, 1984**

You must know someone like him, he was tall and strong and lean  
With a body like a greyhound and a mind so sharp and keen  
But his heart, just like a laurel, grew twisted round itself  
Till almost everything he did caused pain to someone else  
It's not what you're born with, it's what you choose to bear  
It's not how big your share is, it's how much you can share  
It's not the fights you dreamed of, it's those you really fought  
It's not what you're given - it's what you do with what you've got  
Now what's the good of two strong legs if you only run away?  
And what use is the finest voice if you've nothing good to say?  
And what good is strength and muscle if you only push and shove?  
And what's the use of two good ears if you can't hear those you love?  
It's not what you're born with, it's what you choose to bear  
It's not how big your share is, it's how much you can share  
It's not the fights you dreamed of, it's those you really fought  
It's not what you're given - it's what you do with what you've got  
Between those who use their neighbours and those who use a cane  
Between those in constant power and those in constant pain  
Between those who run for glory and those who cannot run  
Tell me which ones are the cripples and which ones touch the sun

It's not what you're born with, it's what you choose to bear  
It's not how big your share is, it's how much you can share  
It's not the fights you dreamed of, it's those you really fought  
It's not what you're given - it's what you do with what you've got



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