Utopia as method

A guiding practice for thought and action

Dr. Elke Van dermijnsbrugge

As education researchers and practitioners
we have the responsibility to do
more
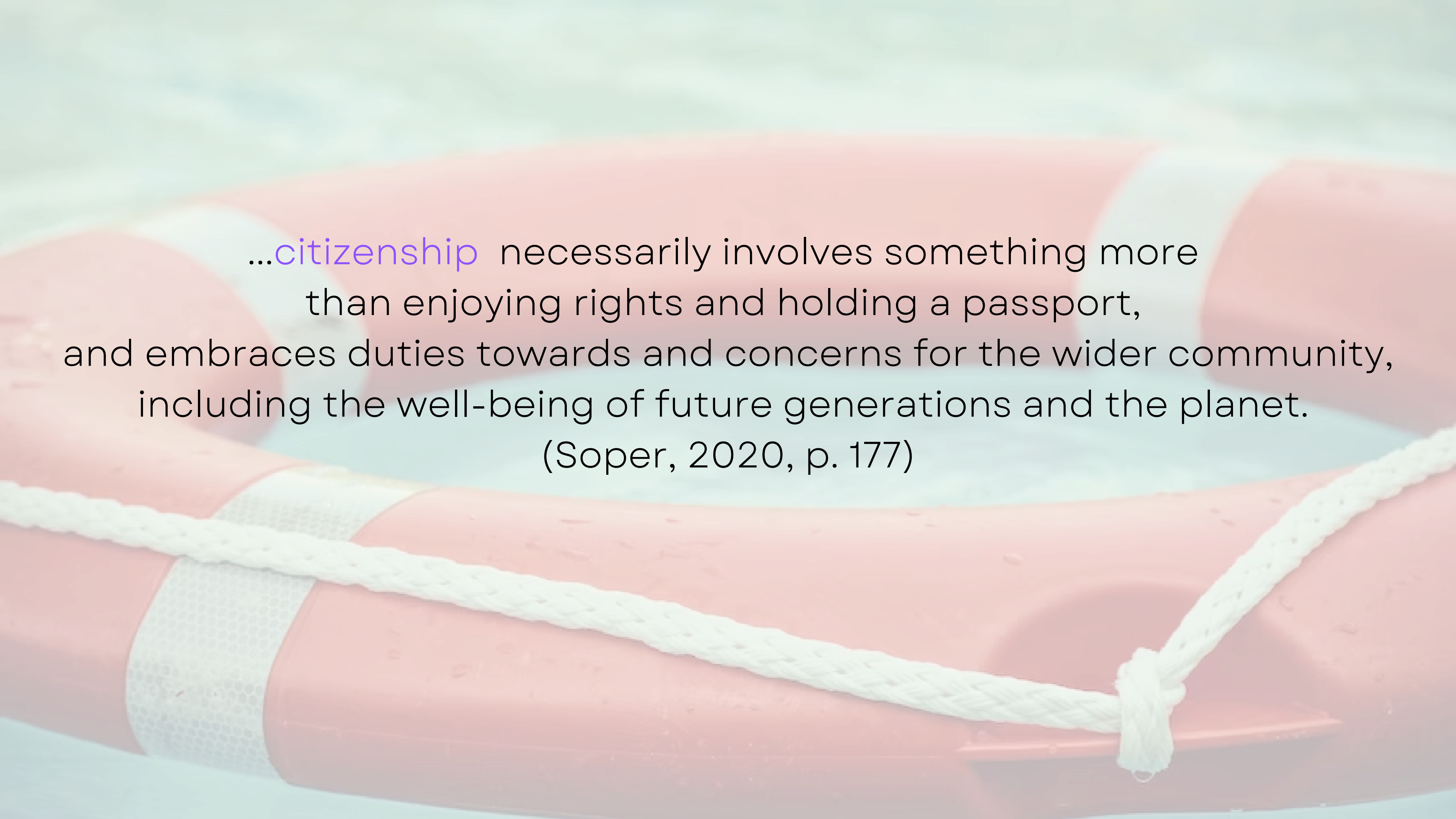than merely mirroring and articulating crises
(Gergen, 2015).

This often critical work is important,
yet it does not engage in actions that
'create what is to become'
(Gergen, 2015, p. 294)

We have to 'build non-coercive, non-oppressive, non-hierarchical and non-exploitative relationships and institutions today that would be worthy exemplars of the world we want to create' (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, p. 2).

'imagining ourselves otherwise' (Levitas, 2013, p. 177)

...citizenship necessarily involves something more than enjoying rights and holding a passport, and embraces duties towards and concerns for the wider community, including the well-being of future generations and the planet.
(Soper, 2020, p. 177)

'An education
worthy of
the present'
(Braidotti, 2013)

Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson

STREETWORK
The exploding school
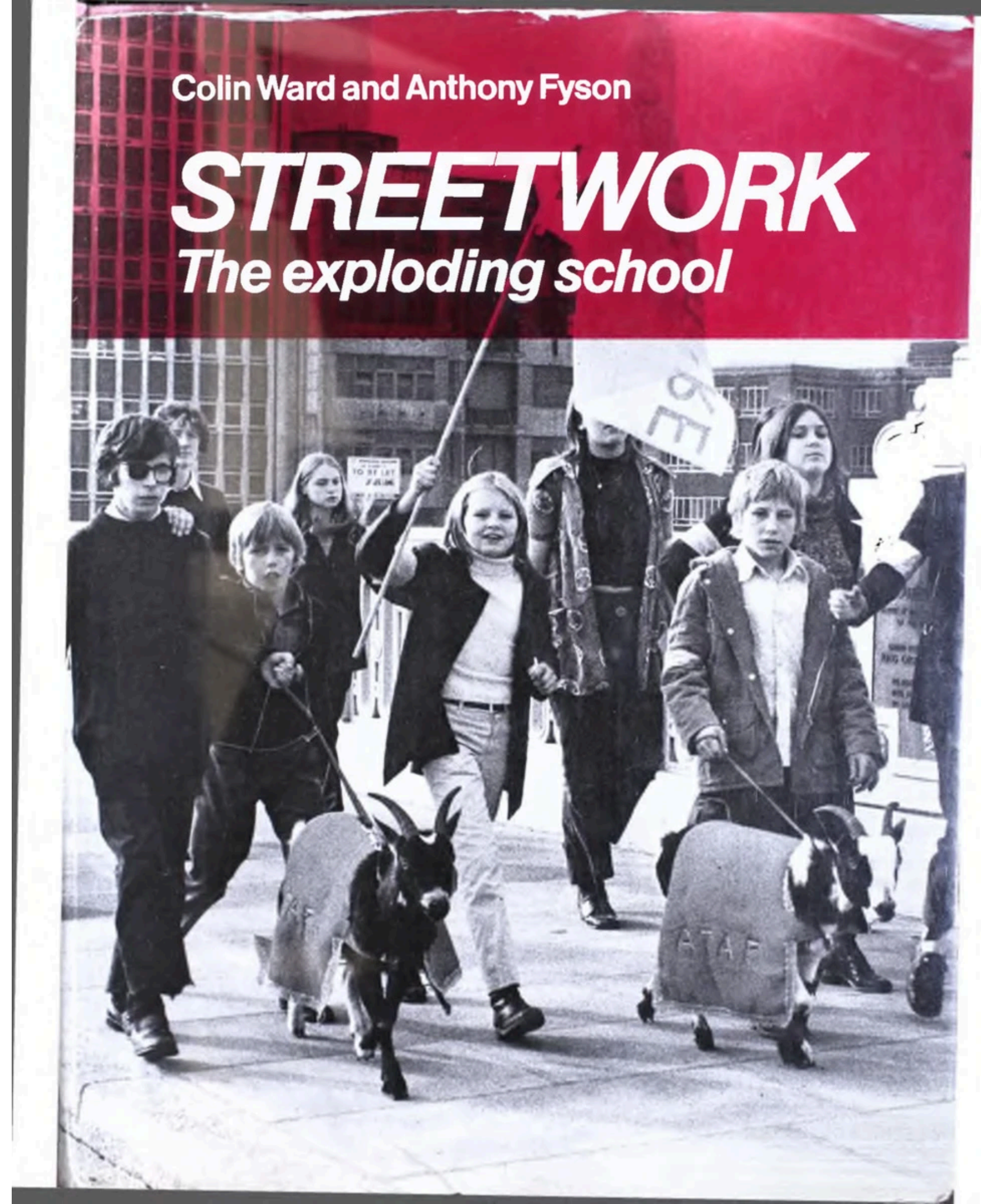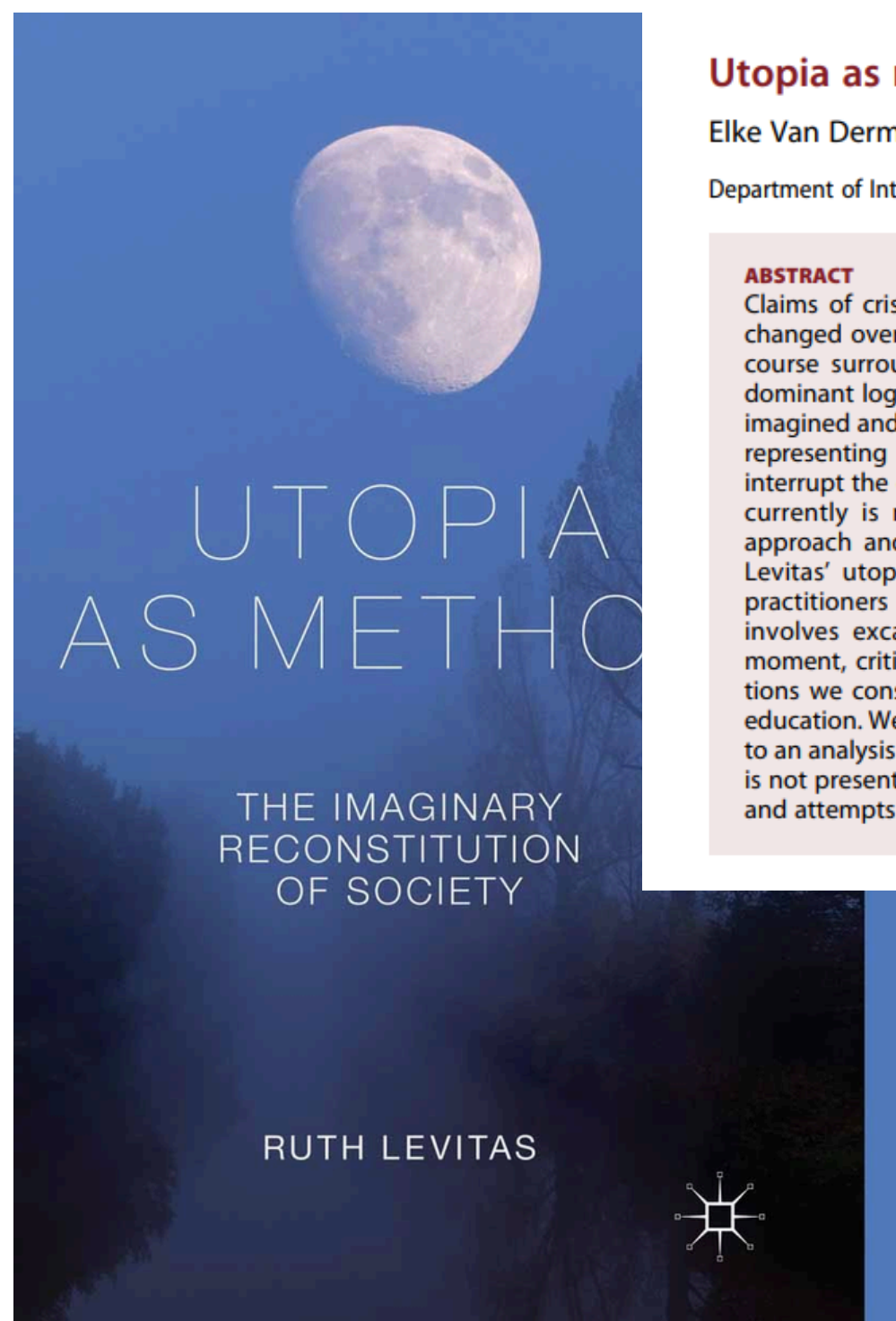
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Utopia as method: a response to education in crisis?

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ABSTRACT
Claims of crisis in education are not new though their orientation has changed over time. This paper is concerned with the contemporary discourse surrounding an apparent global learning crisis, examining the dominant logics through which education and its concomitant crises are imagined and operationalized. In this conceptual essay, we take "crisis" as representing both challenges faced by society and as an opportunity to interrupt the current order. We suggest that a key crisis facing education currently is not a learning crisis, but the dominant evidence-based approach and "what works" logic. In response, we argue for utilizing Levitas' utopia as method as a way for educational researchers and practitioners to engage in imagining alternative futures. The method involves excavation of conditions that hav[e] moment, critical questioning of being for bot[h] tions we construct, and imagining alternative[s] education. We illustrate briefly how the metho[d] to an analysis of the OECD's Global Competenc[e] is not presented as a solution, but as a crisis re[...] and attempts to create possibilities and space[s]

ISSN: 0305-4985 (Print) 1465-3915 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/core20

UTOPIA AS METHO[D]

THE IMAGINARY RECONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

RUTH LEVITAS

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Beyond hope and despair: The radical imagination as a collective practice for uprising

Elke Van dermijnsbrugge

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Abstract

This paper investigates the concepts of hope, despair and the radical imagination, driven by the following questions: Can we exist beyond the binaries of hope and despair, two key concepts that drive educational practices? What is the radical imagination and what are the conditions for it to be put to work in educational spaces? First, education is explored as a hyperobject that is owned, imagined and practiced collectively. The semiotic square is introduced as a heuristic tool to illustrate the limitations of the binary opposition between hope and despair, and allows for an exploration of what is possible when these binaries are being set aside. The radical imagination then, is described as a collective practice that is radical

Where's the vision? The concept of utopia in contemporary educational theory

Darren Webb

Imagine, speculate & transgress
Create possibilities
Think and (refuse to) act
Self-organise
For the common good
Be provisional & iterative

Utopia as Method

Guides the practices of (education) researchers and practitioners in going beyond critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and direct action.
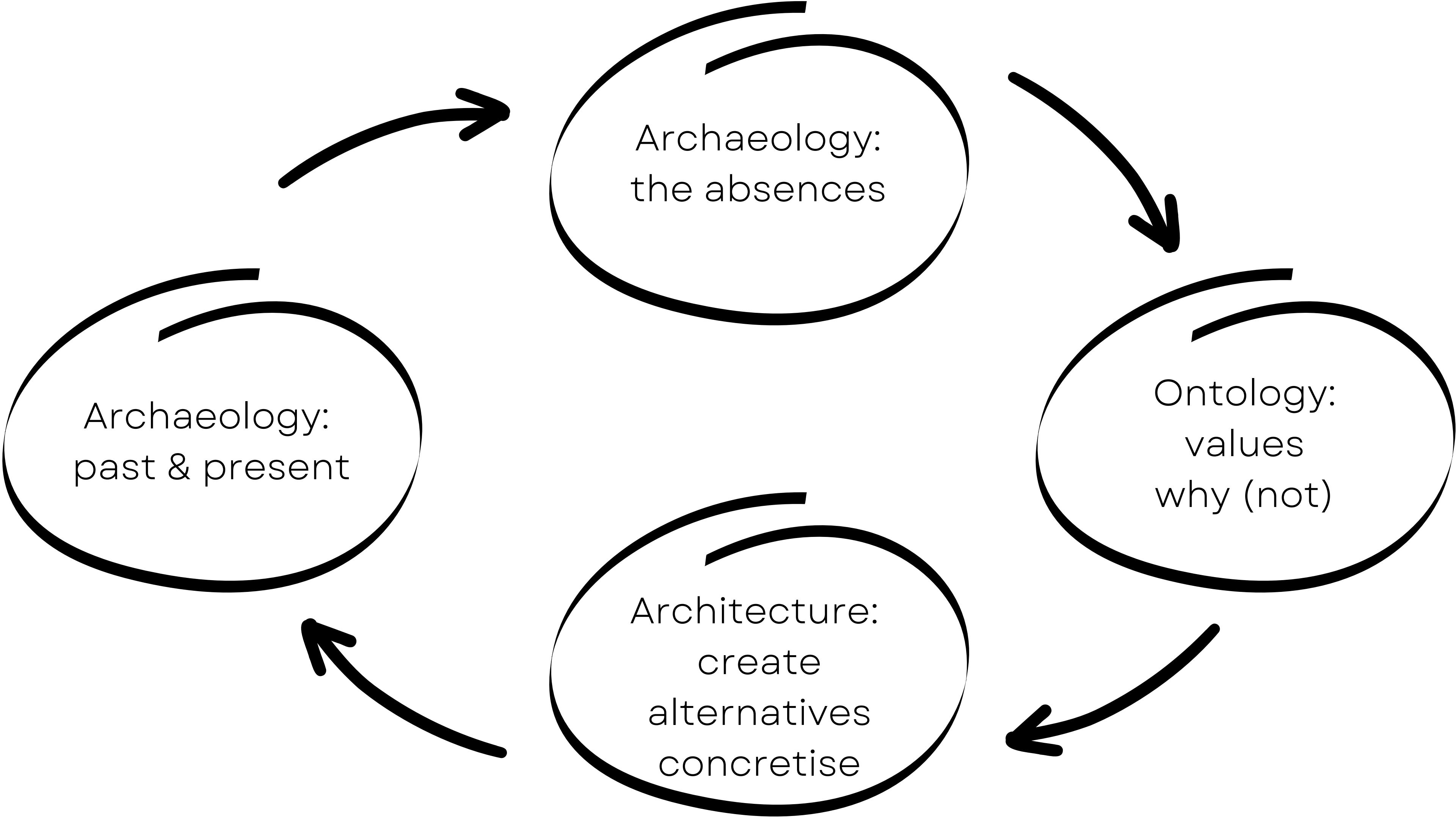
3 guiding modes: archaelogy, ontology, architecture

They never succeeded, of course,
in making the best of all the worlds;
but by dint of boldly trying
they made the best of many more worlds
than any merely prudent or sensible person
would have dreamed of being able to reconcile and combine.

(Huxley, 2005, p. 129)

Archaeology:
the absences

Ontology:
values
why (not)

Architecture:
create
alternatives
concretise

Archaeology:
past & present

What is the history of X?
Which utopias are embedded in it?
What is its purpose?
Who does it serve?
Who is involved?
How do we put X into practice?

Ontology

What does our approach to X say about us/our organisation?
What are our underlying principles and values?
What does human flourishing mean?
Who are we serving and why?

Archaeology

What are some of the unfavourable side-effects?
What/who is absent and why?
Which voices, ideas, ... are not addressed?
What is X not achieving (enough)?

What might an alternative look like?
How might our current approach to X be re-thought?
Who/what would be involved?
How does our new X address the absences?

Architecture

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