



Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces

Davina Cooper

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Everyday utopias enact conventional activities in unusual ways. Instead of dreaming about a better world, participants seek to create it. As such, their activities provide vibrant and stimulating contexts for considering the terms of social life, of how we live together and are governed. Weaving conceptual theorizing together with social analysis, Davina Cooper examines utopian projects as seemingly diverse as a feminist bathhouse, state equality initiatives, community trading networks, and a democratic school where students and staff collaborate in governing. She draws from firsthand observations and interviews with participants to argue that utopian projects have the potential to revitalize progressive politics through the ways their innovative practices incite us to rethink mainstream concepts including property, markets, care, touch, and equality. This is no straightforward story of success, however, but instead a tale of the challenges concepts face as they move between being imagined, actualized, hoped for, and struggled over. As dreaming drives new practices and practices drive new dreams, everyday utopias reveal how hard work, feeling, ethical dilemmas, and sometimes, failure, bring concepts to life.

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