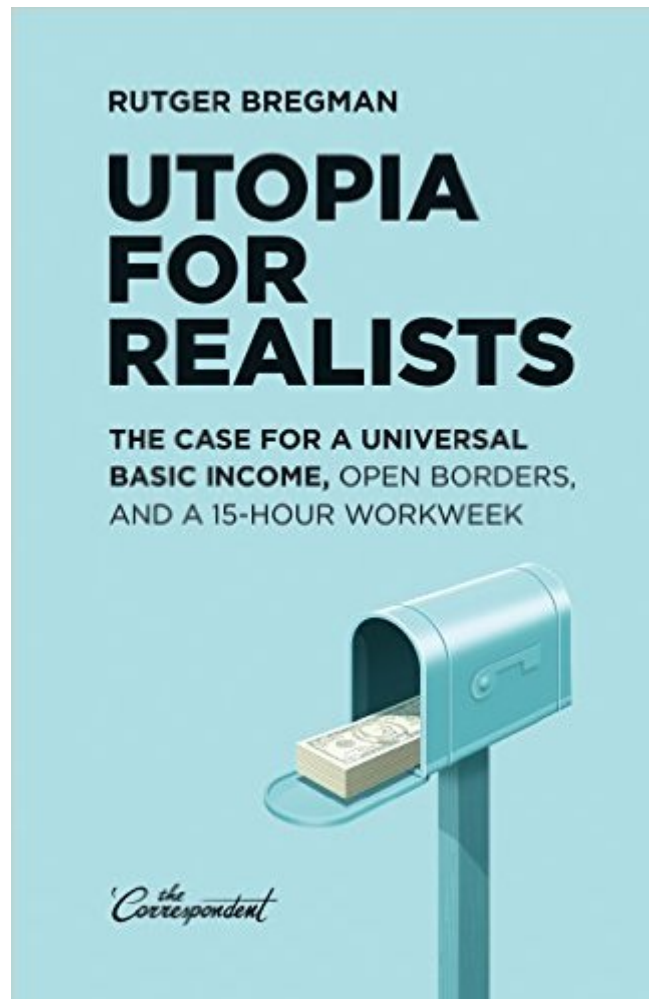


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Utopia For Realists: The Case For A Universal Basic Income, Open Borders, And A 15-hour Workweek



Synopsis

From a universal basic income to a 15-hour workweek, from a world without borders to a world without poverty – it's time to return to utopian thinking. Rutger Bregman takes us on a journey through history, beyond the traditional left-right divides, as he introduces ideas whose time has come. *Utopia for Realists* is one of those rare books that takes you by surprise and challenges what you think you know. In the words of leading social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, it is "brilliant, truly enlightening, and eminently readable." • This original Dutch bestseller sparked a national movement for basic income experiments that soon made international headlines.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

We are obviously in a trap. Many in the rich world are clearly dissatisfied with their lives, and they have no idea what to do about it. Yet by the measure of all previous generations we should be in paradise. As Bregman demonstrates, we are wealthier by a great margin than anyone has been in history. Bregman's answer to this dilemma is that we need use this wealth to buy ourselves more time and more security, not more stuff. What he is proposing is that we establish a universal basic income. This idea has a surprising and long history. Did you know that Richard Nixon almost succeeded in enacting it in the United States? And the results have been very positive wherever it has been tried. It has been shown to be a much more cost effective solution to homelessness than the current mishmash of programs provided by the middle class homelessness industry, for example. With the rapid progress of automation, we may not have any other choice but to do this. We are fast approaching an era when a large part of the population have nothing to sell that anyone wants to buy.

This is journalism as it should be: smoothly written, constructive, curious and, most importantly, scientifically grounded. Compliments to the author, especially for his case for a universal basic income: a crucial instrument in dealing with our vastly unequal world. This is an encouraging read for those, who, like me, want the destructive race to the bottom to end. Having felt the Bern, it's high time to read Bregman.

In stream of elections that never seem to end -- I just voted in an Australian election today -- I never cease to be disappointed by the true lack of choices on offer. Like most countries we have two major parties. One vows to disassemble the social compact quickly and one will take a slightly slower course. What I see is a lack of imagination of how the world might be better and how the world align to where we are headed. Rutger Berman makes a number of proposals. You might say these proposals are unrealistic, but Bergman provides a well thought out analysis and makes a strong case. Among the things argued for are: a national social income, a reduced work week, and a reduction in the retirement age. I think it time that we start to engage with these ideas.

I read the book because I'm concerned about things like growing wealth inequality, the consequences of job automation, and the ideal of free movement. And I want to believe that we are coming up with viable solutions for these problems while maintaining humane ideals. The intro to the book was inspiring in that regard as it advocated that the goal should be to move as close as possible to a utopia where we are solving these issues. However, the rest of the book was poorly reasoned and left me feeling like the people arguing for these type of solutions haven't fully thought through the problems. The author did nothing to justify the title "Utopia for REALISTS". If you were to put the arguments in a hypothesis pyramid (i.e. adhering to the pyramid principle), you would see that these are poor reasons to believe in the solutions, even if the solutions may be realistic. In other words, I'm not saying the solutions the author advocates are bad. I'm saying his arguments are bad. For instance, after reading the chapter on basic income, I thought: "Ok, he has provided a good argument for why basic income should not be considered discredited. However, all he has proven is that it needs more study." And in my view, that was his best chapter. The open borders chapter was probably his worst. He did nothing to alleviate my concerns regarding the contradictions of basic income with strong social services and the idea of open borders, wherein the former requires a country to have strong economic control that may not be possible with total free movement. That's why I can't recommend this book.

This was a great overview of how the idea of a basic income is both more possible and indeed has been more successful in the past than most people realize. Unfortunately, the biggest obstacle - changing people's perception - is only touched on. In some ways this feels like a really good professor telling you "And finally, as an exercise for the class...go change their minds."

A great book but does need to be read, discussed, and agreed by many for it to make an impact we all desire - something I'm not too optimistic about.

"Today, the old medieval dream of the utopia is running on empty," and we're all paying for it literally and figuratively. Smart, provocative and above all actionable manifesto for where we find ourselves in the world and why/how we must embrace change, from the ground up. Energizing read from start to finish. Memorable gift for a better future to give to family, friends, colleagues and anyone else in your life looking to make sense of today vs. what could/should lie ahead for all of us, at home, in the workplace and community at large.

Rutger Bregman lays out a well-researched case for the efficiency and benefits of implementing a minimum income in place of today's complex and often counter-productive welfare system; and that such a system would boost our economy.

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