



Delft University of Technology

## Carrier Bag

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**Further readings**

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Le Guin, U. K. (1986). The carrier bag theory of fiction. In *Dancing at the edge of the world* (pp. 149 - 154). Grove Press.

# Carrier bag

Stories give us the ability to focalise underlying emotions, and to imagine real and possible situations. The philosopher and fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin (1986) uses the metaphor of the *carrier bag* to refer to the way stories are composed and collected: this bag, from which you take things and into which you also put things, is a recipient – like its beholder. Le Guin explains that being a recipient can be a tool to start new imaginings and relationships.

According to Le Guin, the conventional perspective of heroic, triumphant, technological and male-dominated literature can be radically reversed if we consider the carrier bag as humanity's first tool: a tool for gathering food and carrying the basic necessities of life. This perspective is a more communal, caregiving one which leads to another type of literature. From the carrier bag perspective, Le Guin describes fiction as:

*A way of trying to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually do and feel, how people relate to everything else in this vast sack, this belly of the universe, this womb of things to be and tomb of things that were, this unending story.* (Le Guin, 1986, p. 154)

The consequences of this perspective for architecture might take us away from the master-architect narrative or the idea that a work of architecture can be conceived of as having a single author. Instead, if each work of architecture is understood as a collection of different stories and perspectives, this less 'heroic' stance might enable other imaginaries of architecture by dealing with the question of the 'ordinary', and acknowledging the multitude of things – namely, stories and thoughts – it accommodates.