UTOPIAS IN ACTION

Fundacja
Mlodzi
dla Europy

GYIÖT

LogoPsyCom.

MISTERY TOUR

YuzuPulse

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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook was provided in the framework of the EUtopia project, which aims to develop an innovative approach to active citizenship education for young people through the concepts of utopia and dystopia. The project will present tools and activities to promote young people's active citizenship and participation.

The Handbook aims to provide a better understanding of the concepts of utopia and dystopia and why this approach has a place in youth work and in the citizenship education of young people. This Handbook also serves as a pedagogical, editorial, and graphic design framework for the EUtopia project.

In the following chapters, we will go deeper into the details of the EUtopia project, its target groups, structure, pedagogical objectives, as well as the concepts of utopia and dystopia themselves and their possible pedagogical uses to the citizenship education of young people. According to the EUtopia project, we could have the opportunity to interview 20 youth workers from 5 countries. It was a great experience to hear the different aspects and opinions, here we would like to thank all of the contributions of those experts, who helped us and the project to get a deeper insight into the local youth work and young people's vision in terms of utopia.

The Handbook was created by the project partners of EUtopia:

- Fundacja Mlodzi dla Europy, Poland
- GYIÖT, Hungary
- SCS LogoPsyCom, Belgium
- Work in Progress,, Italy
- YuzuPulse, France

EUtopia project is funded by the European Union, under the Erasmus+ Programme.

SPECIFICITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF EACH TARGET

Young people aged 16-25

The primary target group of the project are young people aged 16-25 who have acquired a basic knowledge of the world around them through their education. They can see the context, form an opinion on topics that concern them, think critically, formulate constructive criticism, and defend their views when necessary. They are open to the opinions and views of others.

In defining the age group, we have considered the current legislation in force in the EU Member States regarding the age at which citizens can vote in elections. The age limit is 18 in most Member States, with some exceptions, such as 17 in Greece and 16 in Malta and Austria.

We aim to reach out to as many young people as possible to encourage them to express their views and play an active role in shaping their future. But the real challenge is to ensure that the optimism of young people does not dissipate. We will reach these young people through training. We will focus on developing their key competencies, such as multilingual competence, personal, social and learning-to-learn competence, citizenship, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression, digital, literacy and critical thinking. In addition, the project intends to work on the self-efficacy of young people, understood as greater perception and confidence in their abilities and the possibility of implementing actions capable of stimulating change and improving collective social well-being.

Local youth workers

Local youth workers can also be considered a target group, as the results generated by the project will impact and develop their work. Therefore, the project will offer them a new approach and an innovative collection of tools to facilitate their work with young people across Europe.

Youth workers can be people working in municipalities, in schools, in associations, or even in companies, but related to youngsters' education and development. They are in contact with youngsters through the use of methods of non-formal education (experience-based learning) and the emphasis on voluntary participation (Council of Europe, 2023). According to the Council of Europe, the main challenge for youth workers is "making young people feel at home, belonging to a group and at the same time building bridges between different groups".

According to our interviews with youth workers, they don't use the concepts of utopia and dystopia to teach youngsters about civic education or citizenship. At least, they use ideas and examples that can be related to these concepts but don't study these concepts in detail. Youth workers prefer to focus on youngsters' own examples or experiences to create debates and share opinions. However, these concepts could be useful tools to help youngsters develop their ideas and increase their civic participation. EUtopia project provides a new approach to help youth workers to create innovative tools and methods, learn about the usage of digital tools, and disseminate them among professionals working in the European youth sector. The objective is to facilitate their day-to-day work and provide practical tools to engage and empower young people to reach an inclusive and sustainable society.

We will develop a collection of methods to support local youth work practice and promote young people's social and cultural engagement through a collaborative platform to share good practices and experiences, work together locally or even internationally, and inspire new projects.

Local decision-makers

Through the results of the project, we want to influence the lives of local decision-makers and existing

or emerging local practices as we channel young people into the life of their communities. Local decision-makers are the people that have the power in the decision-making process on a local scale. It can be a youth council, the mayor of a town, or an influential association that is counselling politics. The challenge is that the connection and relationship between the young people and the local decision-makers can be blurry or even absent. Sometimes because the youngster doesn't know how to communicate their ideas and propositions, and sometimes when local decision-makers don't know what to do with their ideas or don't take them seriously.

Belgium

In Belgium, as elsewhere in Europe, several organisations with different focus are working in the youth field. Reflecting on the country's mixed society, many organisations operate to support migrant families and youngsters and promote social inclusion and Human Rights Education.

Besides the classic youth work, there are scout units and other interesting national groups, like "La Fédération des Jeunes Agriculteurs" (Federation of Young Farmers) or organisations working for a popular university event called the baptism, which is an initiation ceremony of the Universities in Belgium in the freshman's year. Unsurprisingly, the biggest challenge for Belgian youth workers is involving, engaging and, more likely, motivating youngsters to be more active, dedicated and committed to particular topics and social problems.

France

One of the main challenges to reaching young people reported is that many youngsters perceive youth workers' activity as moralistic or patronising, and as they generally already have an idea about these topics, they do not see what else they could learn from joining local activities.

According to the organisations we interviewed in France, the 3 main challenges reported are to reach young people that are not aware or involved in these topics, to make young people understand that their voice matters in politics and to encourage them to vote, and financing medium to long-term activities, to support their projects and actions and their follow-up.

Local decision-makers and representatives have various degrees of interest and motivation to involve youngsters in democratic life, in the sense that their main youth policy priorities vary. For some, the most pressing challenge is supporting social integration, and for others employability. They can see these as paths to involving youth in the community.

Hungary

As we can see in the present Hungarian decisions of the government, which concern youth as well, young people have big challenges in their learning opportunities, especially in public education. But they are flexible, have willpower and creativity and can collaborate well with each other. Therefore, any new concept, method, tool or training opportunity can raise their interest, which can connect to the project.

Local youth workers usually face everyday environmental problems, because they aren't always estimated both in a financial and in a moral meaning. But they are still committed to working with the youngsters. The best way to keep the quality of youth work at a local level is to involve young people in the relevant topics, programmes and activities. Because of many reasons, for example, the low support from the government side or the lack of visibility of youth, work professionals try their best to develop the youth profession, themselves and through these young people's

opportunities as well. According to our interviews and everyday experiences, local youth workers can use the project's results and intellectual outputs for the development of their everyday work.

From our network system, we can reach some local decision-maker members, who can use the project's results in their planning processes. We can encourage them (as we always do) to collaborate with local youth workers and young people, youth municipalities, to build a better and more sustainable settlement. For this, the project's outcomes could be a good tool. They can try to think out of their routines, ask new questions, and get new answers.

Italy

According to youth workers interviewed in Italy, young people belonging to this group have little inclination to plan their future and "dream big." They are very today-oriented; the extreme dynamism and speed of the context in which they live and their tools are not conducive to reflection. This results in a detached and disillusioned look at society and its problems, thus in a rather individualistic attitude. Young people do not position themselves as protagonists of tomorrow, nor do they feel they are potential agents of change. As an Italian partner, we will involve high school and university students, valuing contacts with the schools and teachers with whom we collaborate.

This picture is certainly the result of the labor market situation in Italy: all the labor market indicators demonstrate that our country offers fewer opportunities to young people compared to other European countries.

In 2020, the unemployment rate in the 15-29 age group is among the highest in Europe: 22.1% compared to 13.3% of the EU27 average; NEETs (young people who do not study or work aged 15-29) are more in Italy than in any other European country: almost one in four young people fall into this category (23.3%), a percentage ten points higher than the European average (13.7%). Eurostat data confirm the difficulty of getting out of this situation: only 3% of young people aged 15-24 manage to move from inactivity to employment, against a four times greater probability in several European countries.

And even the condition of young Italian workers is not much better: less stable contracts are generally reserved for young people and 45% of employed people aged 15-29 work with a fixed-term contract.

As an Italian partner, we will strive to reach out to realities that deal with young people to promote the contents and results of the project from a transversal and multidisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, the project's themes lend themselves well to being applied in the theatrical field, where we have contacts and opportunities for collaboration with associations and other nonprofit realities that work with young people.

In the testing, implementation, and exploitation phases, we will try to involve local representatives to share with them the need to make young people more aware of their strategic role in a more democratic society. This also means making policymakers and decision-makers understand that young people need to be able to understand problems and strategies to develop their critical thinking, formulate their opinions, and imagine alternative solutions to share and evaluate together.

PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Participation and active citizenship

When we hear the words 'active citizenship' and 'participation', our first thought can often be history, for instance the emergence of democracy, or the extent of the right to vote. It can also be even purely political, such as elections and party politics that surround us every day. But these concepts are much more than that, as is the civic education of young people.

When we talk about civic education and encouraging young people to participate in civic life, to make their own contribution, to be active citizens, capable of taking responsibility for themselves and for their communities, at different levels (locally, nationally and internationally), the concepts that come up most often are awareness, critical thinking, authentic information, as well as involvement, and empowerment.

Perhaps the most important aspect of education is empowering young people. It can entail empowering them to make conscious decisions after being properly informed, empowering them to speak up, to express their opinions, and supporting them to understand that they can make a difference, that they can be the change. This is something much broader than political participation. It can all have an impact, whether it translates into consciously managing their own lives, being active in their communities and promoting young people, consciously protecting and caring for others and the environment around them.

How can the approach to the concepts of utopia and dystopia be relevant in civic education of young people?

If we understand the concepts of utopia and dystopia, we can see what an ideal world or ideal society means, or how our world can become non-ideal. Understanding these can also help a young person to look differently at their future and how to shape it.

We often find that young people have a sceptical view of their future, that they see as independent of themselves, and mostly determined by external factors. Indeed, external factors cannot be neglected, as everyone, including young people, are affected by social and economic factors and their evolution. However, it is also important for youngsters to perceive their own capacity and agency in changing their life and the environment they live in for change.

Through the concepts of utopia and dystopia, youngsters can be confronted with visions of the future that can either as goals to be achieved or make them realise why it is important to avoid them. Our aim with these concepts is also to create a more positive approach towards citizenship in our youth, so that they see they have an opportunity to become agents of their life and society, and not as passive receivers of external circumstances.

One of the main objectives of the project is to gather tools and activities that can be used in informal and non-formal approaches to bring young people closer to active engagement and participation through the concepts of utopia and dystopia. We think it is important that this is done in an informal or non-formal learning context, as it provides an opportunity to learn through experience and embed knowledge in a more conscious way.

INCLUSION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The importance of inclusion

According to the European Charter on Local Youth Work, one of the core principals of youth work is to be actively inclusive and offer equal opportunities to all young people. This sentence seems very simple at first sight, but if we take some time to think about it, we can realise that it raises several interesting and essential questions, such as what it means to offer equal opportunities, how youth work can be actively inclusive, and why inclusion is important in youth work.

In order to answer to these questions, we need to define the importance and the "areas of inclusion".

The importance of inclusion might be obvious. According to the European Union "youth" means everybody between age 13-35, so it is a very diverse group in terms of age, culture, race, nationality, religion, economic and social background, education, abilities etc . One of the main goals of youth work is to unify this group, understand their needs and reach their goals. Support them in forming their surroundings and building up a youth friendly and sustainable community. It is essential to make them involved, engaged and aware of their role in community, which is only possible if they feel welcomed and comfortable. Another vital goal is to build up a more inclusive society. Therefore the best a youth worker can do is to provide an inclusive space as a good example of a healthy society and promote the value of acceptance and inclusion as the base of unity, connection and social safety.

As a youth worker, when you want to create an inclusive atmosphere based on acceptance and equal opportunities, you have to pay attention to several different aspects which can appear during your work. It can be the different personality and identity of the youngsters, their socio-economical background, their level of education, their mental or physical disorders, their religion and culture, and possibly a myriad of other aspects. It means that depend on the diversity of your community, you have to reflect on different aspects during your work.

Therefore, inclusive actions and strategies can be diverse, but the main goal is always to provide equal opportunity for everyone to join and be a part of the actions fully despite their ability or their disadvantage.

What makes a content inclusive

The diversity of the ways you can provide inclusiveness as a youth worker often requires unique and creative solutions, but in general, we suggest paying attention to the following aspects when you are creating or using a tool or an activity:

Accessibility

When we talk about this topic, most of the time, we talk about the accessibility of the venue for people with physical disorders. It is essential to pay attention too, but accessibility is way more than that. It refers to the social and economic background of the participants and also to their abilities. In order to engage youngsters with diverse backgrounds and offer equal opportunities, we suggest organizing free events and activities, thematizing the event and paying attention to the required knowledge level and the atmosphere.

Methodology

Regarding methodology, the key can be informal and non-formal education. Both are based on the multi-sensory approach, which can greatly benefit youngsters with SLDs or mental disorders. In the case of non-formal education, youngsters can try out different roles, strategies and solutions to find their way; meanwhile, they are following the learning-by-doing approach.

Step-by-step approach

Creating an inclusive space is also a learning process for youngsters and youth workers. Therefore providing a space to get to know each other better and learn more about the needs of the individuals and the group is key. In order to create a safe space, the rules have to be clear, we appreciate each other, and we are not tolerating discrimination, bullying, or hate speech.

Atmosphere

Creating an inclusive atmosphere is vital. The youngsters have to feel accepted, loved, and appreciated because of who they are; they can be open, ask questions, be curious, fail, and feel that their opinion and needs are important. Youth workers must remember that they are role models for the youth, so how they act and react to things will influence the atmosphere and how the youngsters relate to each other.

Individual support

In a more extensive group, having someone who needs more individual support is unavoidable to have equal access and opportunities. To provide extra help with the best if more youth workers are working on the project event, or/ activity, etc. The involvement of older or more experienced youngsters can be an option if they are willing to help and get professional support.

Besides the basics, remember that every situation is unique, and even a youth worker can fail sometimes; just be sure you learned the lesson, and ask for feedback to improve next time!

How will we ensure inclusion

It is an essential aspect of the project Eutopia to promote inclusion and equality. All partners are committed to the youth field, and we have diverse experience to provide accessible and inclusive tools and activities in order to make youngsters aware of their possibilities to act, involved and engaged and provide them equal opportunity for active participation. Therefore, during the project, we will organize a training with the participation of the youth to empower them to be more involved at local, regional, national and even international levels, and with the features of the website, we will provide opportunities for additional support, sharing good practices and networking on the European youth field. In addition, the framework of utopias and dystopias will be a great asset to thinking out of the box and inventing creative solutions to create a more inclusive world.

LIST OF EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

Summarizing what has been described in the previous paragraphs, the EUtopia project has an ambitious goal: to awaken in young people the desire to imagine and design a better world, and to be increasingly advocates of change.

But how is it possible to take action? First and foremost, for this to happen, young people must have the certainty that a better world can exist and that they can help bring it about. They should therefore know the concept of utopia and dystopia not only as a philosophical concept related to thinkers of the past. They should begin to understand that utopias and dystopias are current concepts, especially when related to active citizenship and pursuing a more inclusive and democratic society.

Hence, the results have four learning goals:

- learning to observe and read with a critical thinking approach, the characteristics, weaknesses and opportunities of an area or community;
- contribute to developing a sense of belonging to communities, to educating young people about active citizenship, social participation, and stimulating them to create connections, considering the group and network both as an opportunity for interpersonal relationships and integrate, expand and improve the skills, and as a context where collaborate to pursue common goals;
- stimulate young people to speak, express and discuss their opinions, ideas and changes; learning to be proactive, imagining and projecting into the future;
- learning to do, plan, organize, illustrate a project idea, using useful tools.

Following these goals, the project partners planned to structure the following outcomes, each with well-defined objectives and expected results.

Result 1. Handbook

Main Objective:	Expected results:
Provide a theoretical basis of the project to allow a pedagogical use of the concept of utopias and dystopias in citizen education.	Booklet illustrating the connection between the theory of utopia and dystopia and today's reality and the pedagogical use of them

Presentation of the result:

The Handbook is intended to youth workers, and aims to support them on how they can engage youth and make them understand their important role in society. It includes the previous theories around utopias and dystopias and formulates the pedagogical use of utopias and dystopias and to identify how and why utopias should be used to educate young people for active citizenship.

Result 2. Collection of Activities, Tools and Action Plan

Main Objective:	Expected results:
Collect engaging and supporting tools that will facilitate an easy-to-approach discussion on the SDG's and raise awareness of the main societal challenges and support active participation.	Material easily adaptable to local youth workers facilitating the participation of young people with creative and innovative ideas. Methodology for making these ideas known to policy makers.

Presentation of the result:

The result is designed as a collection of information and considerations intended to help build the skills needed to participate effectively and constructively in public life and, in general, in

the decision-making processes in one's area. It moves within a theoretical-methodological framework that focuses on young people, young workers and professionals as bearers of ideas,

knowledge, resources and rights, which can be transformed into a force to change things.

Result 3. Platform for utopian actions

Main Objective:	Expected results:
Exchange knowledge between young people and professionals and trigger an exchange of ideas and opinions among the young people and professionals.	A collaborative Platform to spread best practices throughout Europe; guarantee the free use of all the developed contents; highlight utopias conceived by young people.

Presentation of the result:

Young people find it difficult to make their voices heard and are convinced they have no opportunity to change things. Moreover, an objective tendency of our society to have only projects with short-term expectation has made them somewhat incapable of "dreaming big," making them more likely to live today in a rather individualistic way, "trying to get by". There is no shortage of examples of what young dreamers can accomplish: think, for example, of what Greta Thunberg's resolute thought and action were able to create. However, the extreme pragmatism that characterizes the majority of young people can cause them to lose sight not only of the need for change but also of the opportunities. In such a dynamic world, where technological progress is capable of accomplishing unthinkable things and people can network with great ease, communicating with the rest of the world can be extremely easy, and sharing ideas, projects, skills, and tools can become an engaging and exciting process. By showcasing inspiring examples in Europe and offering the opportunity to contact those who carry out such positive initiatives, the platform will support youngsters in turning their ideals into reality and it will provide tools for youth workers and local representatives to support youngsters' active participation. To make the platform easier to use it will be accompanied by a user manual to facilitate interactivity and networking.

Result 4. User guide and Models

Main Objective:

Present the experiences that the partners have put into practice in their territories based on what has been elaborated through the previous results and activities; allow to draw inspiration for solving problems in one's own territory through the adaptation of already proven models.

Expected results:

A collection of stories of people, communities and territories who made a wish confronted it with reality, and then successfully implemented, as well as the projects of young utopians, worked on during the training activities foreseen by the project.

Presentation of the result:

The result includes a collection of concrete cases, excellent experiences, and useful methodological practices to give young people and youth workers who contribute to their growth and formation tools and times to trigger utopias in young people, motivate them to participate in public life, simplify the construction and development of projects, and learn about good practices to inspire them to start taking concrete action. What the result intends to convey is that all change remains impossible only if no one bothers to trigger it. In fact, it is up to each of us to ensure that every utopia can become a definite goal.

The guide includes also a series of concrete workshops on active citizenship scenarios, with an explanation for practitioners on how to use the activity and tools in the toolbox, and how to implement them. The main aim of the workshops is to encourage youth workers and professionals to incorporate new perspectives, to be creative and to implement new projects, tools and activities. The scenarios can in fact be easily recombined or rethought, to be used on a specific theme.

The project also includes the creation of a Training concept for the creation of utopias by young

people, where young people are invited to put their ideas into practice, sharing them and building synergies. It is designed as an immersive learning experience, motivated by a desire to bet on young people's abilities to dream a better world for their future. The training, designed in a residential form, will involve an expected number of 15-20 young "utopists", who will be able to deepen their skills, enrich each other and discuss their project.

UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

Definitions of Utopias

Utopia from the Greek ou-topos means "no place" or "nowhere". But there is also an almost identical Greek word eu-topos, which means "a good place". The first is a neutral word and also suggests that a utopian world doesn't exist and never will, the second one is more positive and forward-looking.

In today's use, we mostly say that utopia is a concept that refers to an ideal or perfect society, often depicted as a place or state of existence where everything is harmonious, just, and ideal. It is a vision of a society that is free from social, political, and economic problems, where everyone lives in peace and prosperity. However, it is important to note that utopia is often considered an unattainable ideal, as it is difficult to achieve complete perfection in any society.

The most well-known and one of the first basic works on the utopia topic is Thomas More's Utopia was published in 1516. This novel was quite unique work on this topic because in those mediaeval times thinking and writing out of the box meant and effected in a more powerful way.

But much before Thomas More, in Ancient Greece in about BC 375 Platon created Politeia. In this work, he attempts to create a model of the ideal state. Despite the fact that in the work he also raises problems of concrete Greek history, he does not describe real conditions, but his ideas of the best possible state. Plato's theory of the state is a utopia. Other ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle and Cicero, also explored similar ideas of an ideal society.

Utopian visions of a desired better world do not at all require to be valid for society as a whole. After all, Thomas More did not have a complete view of the world, and in the Middle Ages news gathering was not as fast and accurate as it is today, so subjective experience or what we experienced in our immediate environment often had a greater influence on our opinions of

society, but at the same time, because of ignorance, unawareness and inexperience, the utopian worldview was more daring and far more detached from the reality of the time.

It is important to note that while utopian visions have inspired many, they have also been subject to criticism. Some argue that the pursuit of utopia can lead to authoritarianism or the suppression of individual freedoms. Nonetheless, the concept of utopia remains a fascinating and enduring topic of exploration in literature, philosophy, and social theory.

History and real-life aspirations

Throughout history, various thinkers and writers have contributed to the development of utopian thought. In the 17th and 18th centuries, during the Enlightenment period, utopian ideas gained prominence. Thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed different visions of an ideal society, often influenced by their political and philosophical beliefs.

The industrial revolutionary changes, wars, civilisations and the transformation of social systems in the 20th century did not always bring the desired changes, in many cases the dystopian scenario was realised. But it has also captured the imagination of countless philosophers, writers, poets and film-makers.

But it was not only in art, philosophy and the theoretical plane that the ideal life promised by utopia was strengthened. In the 19th and 20th centuries, utopian thought continued to evolve. Socialists, such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, envisioned a utopian society based on the principles of equality and communal ownership.

Other influential utopian works include Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward" and Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World." In the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century, concrete communities emerged whose principles and social arrangements created something better and more ideal than the social reality around them, because their critical or religious perceptions and principles led them to do so.

Thus, for example, the hippie movement, feminism, intentional communities, alternative

governments, Christian anarchists, kibbutzim (the latter long before) all came into being on the basis of the principle and the idea of grassroots organisation, motivated by a common ideal or goal, initially as a community of a small number of people. Today, there are many alternative lifestyles that reflect on the climate crisis and the disadvantages of consumer society, which also affect young people, and that, in addition to formulating criticisms, take constructive steps towards a better, more liveable world through their lifestyles and philosophies.

The emergence between the 19th and 21st centuries of many new systems of ideas that critique existing social systems and values shows both that we have not yet achieved the ideal, the nowhere, and that the desire and will for change is increasingly present in everyday life. Of course, this is also reflected in the basic functioning of man, who, as long as he has lived on Earth, has constantly sought to improve his circumstances, in different dimensions from age to age. At the same time, even if we cannot say that we live in ideal or near-ideal conditions in our time, since the existence of human life, there have been enormous advances and solutions to improve the world in all ages and in different societies. Medical science and technology now have methods and tools that go beyond even the utopian imaginings of the past. Education, information flows and mobility opportunities have also changed and evolved dramatically, as disciplines continue to develop. And although the capitalist world order is far from perfect, it is still the most appropriate for the current level of development of society, and is still far more forward-looking and humane than the social arrangements that prevailed in the past.

At the same time, young people today have a much harder time creating a utopian, ideal world. Young people are thinking in terms of big changes because with the advent of the internet, we have a better view of almost the whole world when we can already make a big impact and even serve as a model by taking action in our own communities and environments. So many young people live their lives in a way that an older generation is no longer able to do, or only to a lesser extent, for a more ideal world, and so young people often aspire to a more ideal life in their lifestyles, yet they are easily discouraged from pursuing a utopian vision because they see the older generation as destroying their dreams. But as the world has evolved, crisis situations, larger scale problems and reflection on them have brought the creative and constructive will to dare to dream big, to fabricate utopias and to act on them.

Utopian examples in partner countries

Belgium

It is not well known, but the concept of Utopia originated in Belgium. Even though the idea's inventor was the British humanist Sir Thomas More, his most famous book, Utopia, was written in 1516 while he was in Antwerp on a royal trade mission. Also, the book's first scene begins after mass at Antwerp's Notre Dame cathedral, where a sunburned traveller with a long beard describes a distant and seemingly perfect island called Utopia.

The Belgian youth workers we interviewed during the project never used the concept of utopias as a framework for citizenship education or other topics. For those who would like to try this interesting and innovative angle, we suggest using the famous Belgian comic series "Les Cités obscures" (1982) (The Obscure cities) by François Schuiten and Benoît Peeters.
The comics refer to our world, mainly on an architectural level, and they show some universe parallel to ours, which creates fictional worlds between utopias and dystopias.

France

One of the most famous dystopias in France is the "Abbaye de Thélème" (Abbey of Thélème) from "Gargantua" novel written by François Rabelais, in 1534. In the book, the abbey is depicted as a utopia where everybody acts as they want, assuming that all educated and honest people are virtuous. Another very famous utopia is Voltaire's "Candide ou l'Optimisme" (Candide: Optimism), published in 1759. In this book, the main character describes a specific place named "Eldorado" as a utopia. The utopia style of description is used a lot in this book. However, the main goal is to mock this optimistic vision of the world. In another register, the movie "La Belle Verte" directed by Coline Serreau is a French movie that describes a planet as a utopia where inhabitants are living in harmony with nature.

Hungary

In Hungarian literature the concept of utopia had appeared first in the 19th century, there are several classic writers who used the meaning of the concept in their novels. The two most famous in Hungary

is Madách Imre - Az ember tragédiája (Imre Madách: The Tragedy of Man) and Jókai Mór's Az aranyember (Mór Jókai The Man with the Golden Touch). From the end of the 19th century until now there were and are more and more sci-fi type novels as well, also a very popular one is Szathmáry Sándor Kazohinia.

Italy

The author who perhaps most represents the concept of Utopia in Italy is the writer Italo Calvino.

His book Invisible Cities is presented as a series of travel reports that Marco Polo makes to Kublai Kan emperor of the Tartars. These cities are indeed invisible since they were born out of the writer's imagination, but they are symbols, and each of them can raise questions and unveil new points of view about the meaning of urban agglomerations, the different ways of perceiving them and the transformations they can undergo over time.

For Calvin, utopia is neither systemic nor teleological, it does not consist of a complete and ideal model to be pursued in an "absolute" elsewhere, but rather discontinuous and "pulviscular", made of the very stuff of reality. For Calvino, true utopia consists in the possibility of writing to exhaust the real in its complexity and totality. Literature is both screen and mirror of the real; it has to be, therefore, ironic and illusory.

Poland

The first Utopian novel in Polish literature is "Mikolaja Doswiadczynskiego przypadki" ("The Adventures of Nicolas Doswiaczynski") written by Ignacy Krasicki and published in 1776. It is describing the story of a Polish nobleman through his journey in Warwas, Paris and the fictional island of Nipu. The nobleman acquires experience during his journey which teaches him to be a good citizen. A utopia is also described in the book by Stanisław Lem, "Obłok Magellan" (Magellan Cloud) from 1955. The book is about an interstellar journey to the constellation of the Magellanic Cloud. It is a pretext for a sensitive analysis of the society of the time. It is also a visionary novel about future developments in techniques and technologies, many of which have become reality today.

Definitions of Dystopias

Dystopia is a fictional narrative with an imaginary society opposed to utopia. The etymology of the word, linked to the one of utopia, is from ancient Greek prefix δυσ- (dus), which marks an idea of evil, difficulty, misfortune, and the noun τόπος (tópos), which means "place, location, country". Dystopia is then an "evil place".

The history of dystopia

It is common to say that the notion of dystopia first appeared in the 19th century, in England, and then developed and became known through famous novels "The Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley (1931), "1984" by Georges Orwell (1949), or even "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury (1951). Actually, the first novel that presented a dystopia is "We" ("Мы" in Russian) by Russian writer Evgueni Zamiatine in 1920. The story takes place in the future. D-503, a spacecraft engineer, lives in the One State. One State is a city made of glass where all humans live. In the novel, people walk in step with each other and wear uniforms. Each person is named by numbers. The One State is a totalitarian state claiming to govern all human activities and make people happy. During the story, D-503 realises that he is attracted to the "old world", which is characterised by freedom, unpredictability and precariousness of happiness.

According to Laurent Bazin, lecturer of literature, dystopia was born at the same time as utopia, during the Renaissance period, when humans started building societies directed by their choices and not by God and religion anymore (Radio France, 2023). Whereas some thought that humans could manage their own destiny (utopia), others believed that humans were not capable of doing so and were headed towards their fall (dystopia).

Dystopias and counter-utopias

However, dystopia is more than just an "counter-utopia". A counter utopia is when the reader or spectator knows, from the beginning of a story, that the fictional society is everything we should avoid (Radio France, 2023). Dystopias are more ambiguous in the sense that at the beginning of a story, the reader or spectator cannot identify clearly whether the imaginary society is completely dysfunctional or is based on some good principles. A dystopia can often emerge from the realisation of a utopia within a society, that ends up taking a different path and where malfunctions arise. In that sense, a dystopia would be the outcome of a specific utopia in practice, showing its shortcomings and social and political risks. In other words, a dystopia is an exploration of what could happen if a society implemented utopian ideals in an extreme way. However, the message at the end of every dystopian fiction is to fight against these types of deviations and extremes, to awaken to such situations' absurdity and unfairness. We follow the characters during the story and their change of perspective about the situation. They either fight and revolt against what is in place, or at least try to survive and escape this world.

The role of dystopia

Dystopias are created to denounce and speak against utopias' political, environmental, psychological, and technological downward slides. They are a way to get some perspectives on things we might take for granted. The main message is to warn the reader or spectator to be very careful about utopias because in utopias, humans are often considered as a uniform group to which a one-size-fits-all way of life is offered. In doing so, they overlook individualities and therefore, threaten equality in society (Radio France, 2023). That is why dystopias are not exactly our realities, but they are familiar enough to be uncomfortable. They have to appear possible and related to our reality to function so that we

compare with our reality and get warned of bad things that could happen in our societies if we don't pay attention.

Dystopias allow us to think about all negative possibilities of decisions and situations. Dystopias are fictive places where we can experiment with what would happen in these situations, and remind people that they have to react before reaching such extreme stages. Dystopias are set in the future to show possible social degradations, dehumanisation and the loss of individual freedom. They do not necessarily depict cruel and evil situations, but situations that are bad enough to remind us that we do not have to accept everything from authorities.

Dystopias are quite common in today's culture. On streaming platforms, television, the Internet and cinemas, we can see various dystopian films, series, video games and songs. Books and comics on dystopian societies are quite successful as well. Why? Probably because dystopia can have a cathartic effect and help us think about our own society, its flaws and qualities, and what could be improved to make them better.

The mechanics of dystopias

In dystopias, the authorities have all the power, which they often justify as being the means to guarantee people's safety and happiness. That is why society is not depicted as feared and evil at the beginning of the story, or at least why it is accepted by most. Actually, at the beginning of dystopian fiction, society can even give the illusion of being a perfect utopia. The main character(s)'s adventures we follow during the narrative will reveal the negative aspects and downward slides of the fictive society. The main characteristic of a dystopia, according to Miami Dade College, is that authorities dominating people use propaganda to control the citizens. Information, individual thought, and freedom are restricted, or even censored. Authorities are represented by a figurehead and are worshipped by the citizens. The price of disobedience is so violent that most are resigned to follow the law. Citizens are afraid of the outside world and live in a dehumanised state.

The different types of dystopias

At the time of the emergence of the concept of utopias during the Renaissance era , dystopias were focused on the philosophic aspect of society, such as how to act as a group, or how to avoid any

inequalities. But progressively, and since the 20th century, dystopias have become more and more focused on the political aspect. However, in the 21st century, the religious aspect has been integrated into dystopias.

In other words, dystopias stem from different types of control and power, the nature of which has changed over time. The Miami Dade College classifies dystopias according to their types of control:

- philosophical or religious control, where the fictional society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology.

- dystopias based on bureaucratic control come with a lot of absurd administrative formalities, regulations, and incompetent civil servants.

- in dystopias based on corporate control, society is controlled by one or more corporations via products, advertising and media

- dystopias based technological control depicts where societies controlled via computers, robots or scientific means.

While these are the main types of dystopias, several types often intermingle. For instance, a corporate dystopia could base its power on technological or even philosophical control.

Dystopian examples form partner countries

Belgium

During the interviews with Belgian youth workers, we surprisingly experienced that even though they are familiar with the concept of utopias, they barely know about the idea of dystopias.

The Belgian movies about dystopias are probably not as well known as The Hunger Games (2012), The Truman Show (1998) or even the Children of men (2006), but you can find some fascinating ones, such as Vivarium (2019) urban horror dystopia directed by Lorcan Finnegan, or Mr. Nobody (2009) which is a utopian sci-fi story of the last mortal man on Earth.

In literature, you can also find some interesting representatives of this topic, such as "La sortie est au fond de l'espace" (1956) (The Exit is Deep into Space) by Jacques Sternberg.

France

During the interviews with French youth workers and youth organisations, some of them were quoted. The series of films "Mad Max" is one of the most quoted in France. Some youth workers gave us some cultural references used by youngsters when they talk about dystopias. These are, among others, the movie "Dune", the anime "One Piece", and the series "Altered Carbon".

In France, there is the Franco-Italian movie "Alphaville, une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution" by Jean-Luc Godard (1965). It describes a dystopian and totalitarian society where feelings and emotions are not allowed and a computer with logic and reasoning controls everything. There are books such as "Le dernier Monde" by Céline Minard (2007), and "La Zone du dehors" by Alain Damasio (1999). In French literature, cinema or art, dystopia is mostly mixed with other styles, such as science fiction or anticipation.

Hungary

The term dystopia is less known among Hungarian youth workers. And although the term is not necessarily familiar, understanding its meaning, they know that they have encountered the concept itself many times. They think the same of the young people they are in contact with. After all, dystopia appears in a lot of films and series, a fundamental element of fantasy and science fiction, which are also very popular among young people. The concept of dystopia is most often presented as a "worst-case scenario" in youth work or, when planning for the future, as an image that one would like to avoid by taking the right steps. Hungarian history and therefore the culture makes society think of itself as victims. Older generations suffered a lot from the different political and war situations, and today's younger generation is affected by some traumas that they try to solve in a rather positive, constructive attitude.

Italy

Two examples of dystopian novels in Italy are "2119 – The Undoing of the Sapiens" by Sabrina Guzzanti and "Elianto" by Stefano Benni. Both use irony and humour to talk about dystopian futures.

In the first, the director, screenwriter and actress transports to 2119, to a world ruined by environmental disasters. The novel addresses issues of current affairs such as climate change, concentration of wealth, and dependence on technology. Humans are divided between a minority of powerful billionaires and a majority of ecological migrants with no rights. Robots deal with schools, justice and information. The only exception is Holly, the only newspaper written by humans, that plays a crucial role....

In the second novel, a series of fantastic worlds populated by irresistible characters is proposed. The flaws and problems of our world are easily traced; Benni takes his cues from politicians and TV faces, displaying dramatic comedy and mixing fantasy, satire, philosophy and science fiction. "What kind of country is this, where the only ones who still have any hope are called desperate?"

Poland

With the emergence of the idea of the perfect nation during the nineteenth century and the development of technical civilisation and its influence on culture, Zygmunt Krasinski published "Nie-Boska Komedia" (Non-Divine Comedy) in 1835. It is the first anti-utopia in Polish literature. This book is about the failure of the popular revolution led under the banner of freedom, equality and the renewal of humankind. There are cultural references in the Polish cinema too. The Polish film "Seksmisja" (Sexmission) directed by Juliusz Machulski (1984) is about a dystopian all-women society where all men have disappeared. Women reproduce by parthenogenesis, living in an oppressive feminist society where apparatchiks teach that women have suffered under the domination of males until males are removed from the world.

POLITICS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

We can generally define utopias as "temporal architectures," which reflect people's expectations based on their awareness of the society in which they live and the major challenges of the contemporary. Having reached this level of insight into utopias and dystopias, it is legitimate to ask: toward which utopias should we, as contemporaries and particularly young people, the protagonists of tomorrow's society, strive? What areas of our society lend themselves most to utopia and dystopia? What characteristics should a new, better, and ideal world have, starting from today's situation?

To find the theoretical basis for the pedagogical use of utopias and dystopias and their application in the sphere of politics and civic participation, a figure to draw inspiration from is undoubtedly the philosopher and writer Ernst Bloch, assimilating young utopians as the realization of his idea of "militant optimists" (Bloch, 2019).

Bloch, in fact, considered "utopia" in a new sense compared to his predecessors: for him, it does not define an illusory and chimerical reality. Still, it represents "what today is not yet, but what tomorrow may be". This approach puts one particular thing at the center: the hope. It is a revolutionary hope that can guide collective action to transform the future, along with the search for happiness inherent in man and the commitment to believe in the possibility of utopia.

Therefore, following Bloch, a pedagogical approach using the concept of utopia aims to "teach how to hope": the goal is not to pursue a fantasy world, but to identify what kind of utopia to pursue and cultivate it. From this perspective, he distinguishes between "Abstract Utopia" and "Concrete Utopia" (Bloch, 2019); the first is a pure desire, not accompanied by any will; on the other hand, Concrete Utopia is directed toward real or necessitated futures, and the goal is to transform the present and is anchored in the public sphere.

"Collectivity thus becomes the subject's space of transcendence: finiteness, which terrifies him, can be overturned by the collective project of building the world to come" (Levitas, 1990).

Utopias for "Militant Optimists"

The paradigm of Concrete Utopia is relevant from a pedagogical point of view, in fact those who embrace utopian thought can be considered "militant optimists" (Bloch, 2019), to underline that practicing hope does not represent a mental exercise of imagination, but a real active work towards the world to come, hand in hand with a critical attitude towards the dystopian conditions of the contemporary world.

An interesting example for understanding how to apply the concept of Concrete utopia from a pedagogical point of view is given by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which constitute the core of the Agenda 2030.

Abstractly, what one could read behind the 17 goals is the desire to create a greener, cleaner and fairer world; a more sustainable and less consumerist world, more supportive and less selfish, more local and less global, safer and less unfair. But the same goals can be transformed into concrete objectives with the contribution of "militant optimists" or, in the context of EUtopia, with the contribution of the young utopians.

Obviously, it is difficult for a young person to have a critical thought on each of the dimensions of the SDGs and therefore to be able to develop an active role across the different goals; rather he will have to focus on a specific direction of civic participation, depending on his inclinations, desires and personal abilities.

Specifically, based on the Agenda 2030 approach, the most relevant dimensions that can be identified for sustainable development utopias are: economic, social and ecological.

The economic and ecological dimension of Utopia or "Ecotopia"

About the ecological dimension of possible current concrete utopias, it is interesting to use the term Ecotopia, borrowing it from the utopian novel written by Ernest Callenbach. The society described in the book is utopian and ecological but simultaneously "possible". In fact, the technological wonders described by Callenbach are based on real scientific research and discoveries published in journals such as Scientific American.

Ecotopia arises from the purpose of repairing the damage done to the planet. But this purpose should not be generated from the dystopia of anxiety of climate catastrophe but from the realization of the hope that humans can save the earth to make it better for everyone, including future generations. From this sentiment flows the effort to change oneself and the world.

Some practical applications relating to this dimension of utopia will be described more specifically in the paragraph dedicated to environmental and climate change.

The social dimension of Utopia or "Cosmopolitan Utopia"

Breaking down the "borders" of nation-states is a concept that belongs to the world of utopias. However, it is a perspective of a desirable future based on the awareness of belonging to a world that is increasingly interdependent in its human values (peace, justice, brotherhood...) and sustainability (finance, economics, resource exploitation, respect for the environment...). In this desirable future world, every citizen is entitled to rights as a "cosmopolitan person". Realizing this utopia requires developing legal instruments and norms of values and behavior to be passed on to the citizen. A. Papisca lists in this regard some principles to which educational systems should refer to form the "cosmopolitan citizen":

- Cosmopolitan inclusion, closely related to the concept of democracy, in which everyone participates in decision-making processes affecting the common good;
- Cosmopolitan responsibility, linked to the need for political action to be directed and implemented in the interest of "everyone."

On the pedagogical level, founding a new "culture of citizenship" requires experimenting and adopting models, tools, and methodologies, which enable the formation of a responsible citizen endowed with a high critical consciousness, a solid culture of legality and respect for rules, and, in particular, a "cosmopolitan spirit." It is useful to recall in this regard M. Santerini's model of citizenship education, which, aiming at this goal, presupposes:

- the assumption of responsibility, individually and collectively;
- the acceptance and defense of cultural differences;
- the development of critical thinking;

- the aptitude for finding nonviolent solutions to conflicts;
- the readiness to change lifestyle in favor of environmental protection;
- sensitivity to the protection of human rights;
- political participation at the local, national, and supranational levels.

These pedagogical models should progressively involve the different actors in a community, from those most sensitive and responsible (teachers, various figures of educators...) to those most distant (by ideology, party-political view, insensitivity...).

The personal dimension of utopia, or "Enjoy your time"

In this roundup of Concrete Utopias for the Contemporary World and reflections on a pedagogical approach, it is necessary to take advantage of an in-depth look at the personal dimension of utopia. According to interviews conducted by some Eutopia project partners, young people are almost insensitive to the concept of utopia. Overwhelmed by the speed of our days in all aspects of our lives, they seem to be "carried away by the facts," "passive spectators with little motivation to act," "critical of the society in which they live but skeptical of possible changes." As a result, there is no time to reflect on themselves, their dreams, desires and ideas, not even to ask questions about what works and what doesn't in their society, what should be changed and why. They think of the present as the main space to plan their time and are very concrete in setting goals, rather individualistic.

In this regard, it is interesting to recall S. Agosti's novel "Letters from Kirghisia": the author imagines a utopian country where man can truly be a man and enjoy life in its highest sense. In Kirghisia people have the greatest wealth: enjoying time. The time Agosti talks about is time to reflect, time to learn, time to be among others, time to compare and not have to rush to do something else.

Kirghisia is a city organized on common sense, where you work because you need to contribute to society and lend a hand to others; you learn out of a desire to know, which is a form of pleasure.

This perhaps represents the most difficult utopia to achieve but, quoting Bloch again, "There has never been a man who has lived without these dreams, but the important thing is to know them better and better and then to keep them in the right direction, without them deceiving us but in such a way that on the contrary they help us. [...]"

Conclusions

The pedagogical approach to the theme of utopia should not start from a dystopian perception of contemporaneity but from a hopeful reaction to climate change, the need for greater sustainability, inequality and social injustice. What is most capable of forming "militant optimists" is not the projection of dystopian futures but the formation of hope. This training should begin with the ability to devote time to:

- observation and critical reflection;
- formulation of a thought on the criticalities encountered;
- sharing one's thoughts with the community (be it the class, the association, the neighbourhood, ...).

What can change the future is certainly not individual desire but the revolutionary hope of realizing together "what today is not yet, but tomorrow can be". It should be a world where the rights of nature are the rights of all and where through complete inclusion can build a true democracy.

On closer inspection, these "utopias" are already widely shared goals for which shared political strategies and action plans have been planned. What needs to be done is to make citizens, and especially young people, aware that it is not only international strategies that change the world but the revolutionary hope of individuals and their communities.

With the technological, communicative, and relational tools and skills available to us today, the future ahead could be all good.

FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

European overview

Young people are facing various kinds of discrimination in the European Union. Besides the most usual topics like religion and belief, nationality and ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background and ability, youngsters also face age or experience-based discrimination.

According to the survey of the European Youth Forum about multiple discrimination, which was launched with the participation of almost 500 youngsters (between the ages 18-35) all over Europe, young people are not familiar with the concept of multiple discrimination, even though they have to face it every day. Therefore, it is needed to raise awareness regarding this problem in order to decrease discrimination in general.
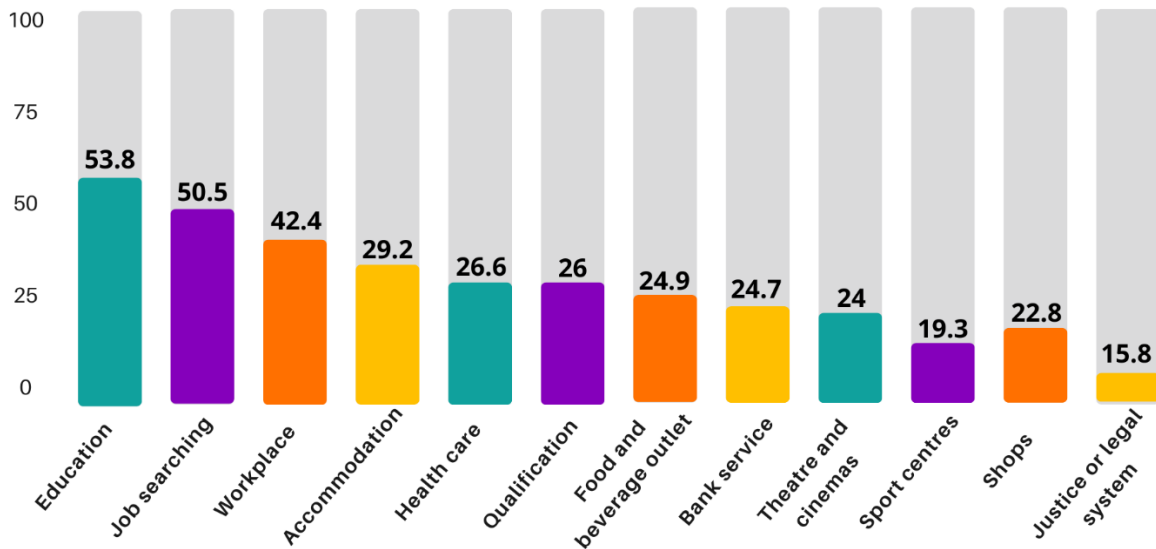
Although the survey was online and available in English (which means they couldn't reach young people suffering from ICT and language illiteracy, which put them even more at risk), the result speaks for itself:

Multiple discrimination in different theories
Youth between age 18-35

(Resource: European Youth Forum. (2014). Discrimination. Retrieved June 29, 2023, from https://tools.youthforum.org/policy-library/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Multiple-discrimination-and-young-people-in-Europe.pdf)

53.8% of respondents experienced discrimination in the field of education; 50.5% in searching for a remunerated job; 42.4% at the workplace; 29.2% when looking for accommodation; 26.6% in healthcare; 26.0% in having their qualifications recognized; 24.9% in restaurants, cafés or pubs; 24.7% when trying to get bank services; 24% at the cinema, theatre or clubs; 19.3% in sports centers; 22.8% in shops, supermarkets or shopping centers; 15.8% in accessing justice or the legal system.

According to the data, young people start their adult life with massive disadvantages; therefore, raising awareness about antidiscrimination laws and policy is vital, and youth work has to have a marginal role in this process.

Sustainable development goals

Sustainable development goals aim to reach universal freedom, prosperity, equality and the development of the three dimensions of sustainability: the economic, social and environmental, by 2030. The agenda was declared by the United Nations in 2015.

Most of the seventeen main goals are undividably connected to inclusion, decreasing discrimination and supporting active participation, but we consider it essential to highlight the last one from the list.

Goal 17 says: "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development."

It is possible to fulfil this ambitious mission if all the relevant sectors and stakeholders work together to reach the goals. Otherwise, they can be easily considered as utopian ideas. Therefore, educating and empowering the European youth sector (as a relevant player in this game) is essential to implement the SDGs into their strategies.

The role of youth work

Youth work is value-based, and among the core principles, there is, of course, a place for the protection of Human Rights among youngsters and providing them equal opportunities for active participation and the support to fulfil their potential in life through the fight against discrimination, therefore the role of youth work regarding antidiscrimination is undisputed.

Besides the several aspects of the importance of talking about Human Rights, discrimination and even multiple discrimination with youngsters from our perspective, we will highlight two principles.

The first one is to make youngsters aware of their rights to recognize discriminative situations and equip them to fight against inequity. The first step toward equality is to acknowledge the problem and find the best solutions to prevent discriminative situations in the future.

Secondly, young people are the key to building a more inclusive society. Therefore, it is vital to make them understand the essence of the problem and educate them to be more open to other opinions, cultures, and religions, etc. Besides the family and the educational system, youth work takes an important role in encouraging youngsters to be open-minded and curious when they meet something new because knowledge, experience and openness are the base of acceptance and inclusion.

As the saying goes, change starts with you. In the case of youth work this is something to highlight and teach for youngsters. They have to be aware that they can be the engine of the changes and that the change begins in their micro-community. In order to provide a safe space for changes, it is also needed to create an inclusive atmosphere for youngsters which can fulfil one of their main desires, the sense of belonging.

Sense of belonging is the base of active participation, even when talking about belonging to people or places. Youth workers have to support young people in developing both cases, and luckily, the key is always (and again) inclusion.

Utopias and dystopias for inclusion

Inclusion encompasses equality, freedom, equal access to education and health care for everybody, regardless of religion, skin colour, sexual orientation or ethnic origin and global peace. Quite an impressive list, right? These are the main values of utopias. We can probably all agree that building a perfect utopia could be the world's ultimate goal despite going toward dystopias based on control, poverty, inequity and the ban on independent thoughts. As we said before if we work together to fulfil this mission we can reach the Sustainable Development Goals which have a quite similar ideas than utopias.

Inclusion is vital for the partnership of the project EUtopia, and we consider the concept of utopias and dystopias a perfect base on understanding and building up the idea of inclusion. Since utopias are based on perfectly established inclusion and equality, and dystopias are for destroying even the seeds of inclusion, this contrast can support us well in understanding the difference between these entire

counterparts ideas and make the next generations aware of them to prevent future problems and move towards a more inclusive society. We decided to use the frameworks of utopias and dystopias as an innovative concept because we believe it is essential to empower youngsters to think out of the box and let their dreams grow bigger and bigger to make them believe and aware they can cause fundamental changes in society.

The main idea is to imagine an ideal world and think about the steps that lead us towards this idea, so basically, from the best-case scenario or main goal, they can think backwards in order to define the first steps and the task to reach a better or even at the end perfect society. Of course, it doesn't mean that youth workers have to encourage and equip youngsters to identify an impossible and unreachable goal of redeeming or saving the world alone and immediately. It is also vital to understand that this is a long-term process and requires a lot of effort and people, but even small things they can do in their everyday life can get us closer and closer, and the final goal is worth fighting for.

During the project, we will organize a competition Europe-wide among youngsters to encourage them to think about possible and desirable utopias, and we will provide an opportunity for some of them to participate in our training, where we will teach them how to implement their ideas into action. Later on, these small projects will be available on the project's website as inspirations and good examples for those who want to work on their ideas locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. The project's website will allow networking and sharing other good examples to support and empower young utopists to take the first steps towards a better future.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental utopias and dystopias

What are environmental utopias and dystopias?

Aspects of environmental topics and climate change can appear in virtually any utopian or dystopian story, as by definition the environment is all around us, therefore any story takes place in some form of environment. Utopias and dystopias related to the environment and climate change often criticise humans' impact on nature (diminishing biodiversity, spreading of illness, difficulty to grow food, etc.), on depleting the environment's ability to sustain (human) life, and on competing for resources. They aim to alert against environmental threats to prompt the reader or viewer to consider the environmental impact of their (or imagined) way of life. Considering that utopias are never perfect situations either, environmental utopias allow for nuance of any discourse that advocates for a simple return to allegedly more natural ways of living, which can cast doubt on medicine and technology, and on the social injustices or competing for resources.

In the end, both environmental utopias and dystopias shed light on the fact that environmental matters are fully related to society, politics and economics.

Founding works

Dystopias about the ecological crisis were not really famous until the 1970s. Soylent Green, a movie from 1973 adapted from the novel "Make Room! Make Room!" written by Harry Harrison, and directed by Richard Fleischer, is one of the first and most famous ecological dystopias. The novel is focused on the negative consequences of overpopulation on the environment, with a political and psychological orientation.

The term "Ecotopia" is used to talk about dystopias that are related to ecological topics. It comes from a famous book named the same term "Ecotopia" written by Ernest Callenbach and published in 1975.

In this book, 3 states on the west coast of the United States have decided to secede and to create a radical ecological society in total isolation. The book also questions the balance between individuality and community and the quest for happiness and fulfilment. Ecotopia arises from the purpose of repairing the damage done to the planet. But this purpose should not be generated from the dystopia of anxiety of climate catastrophe but from the realization of the hope that humans can save the earth to make it better for everyone, including future generations. From this sentiment flows the effort to change oneself and the world. There is plenty of more or less concrete applications of this dimension of Utopia. One of these is "Solarpunk," which, besides being a literary genre and an aesthetic, is also a movement born in the 1910s of this century. Andrew Dana Hudson, a writer and member of the Center for Science and the Imagination at the University of Arizona, calls it "a collaborative effort to imagine and design a world of prosperity, peace, sustainability, and beauty, attainable with what we have and from where we are now".

Solarpunk thus imagines a better future and builds operational strategies to make it possible, advancing sentiments and demands for collective, organic, equitable, ecological, and inclusive progress. It prefers hope to optimism, understanding it as hope for a better future and the concrete possibility of building it. Solarpunk envisions other de-urbanized societies in which nature is no longer ousted within perimeters but becomes the root of future cities. The movement wants to offer not warnings but solutions, for example, to live comfortably even without fossil fuels, to manage the scarcity of natural resources equitably, and to be more responsible to our fellow human beings and the planet we inhabit. "Aesthetically, Solarpunk brings nature back to the center and looks at it in a thoughtful way that is different from what has been done lately. (...) Biomimicry, the inspiration and use of nature-inspired materials, patterns, and models, involves incorporating or fusing such elements into urban infrastructure, public and private buildings, and clothing fabrics. Instead of representing nature with artificial tools, its natural processes are imitated.

Youngsters are concerned about the environment but feel powerless

As youngsters may be less present or visible in the political arena, they are often perceived as disinterested and disengaged in taking part in society as citizens. However, more often than not they actually feel concerned about societal issues, and it can be argued that they engage in different ways than traditional institutional means, for instance on social media or through their consumer choices. One of the areas where youngsters may engage differently and that is actually of concern to them is the environment and climate change.

Since the summer of 2018, youngsters' concern about the environment and climate change issues has been brought even more into light than before with the Fridays for Future school strikes and subsequent movements.

The #ClimateOfChange survey (Dunne & Bijwaard, 2021), conducted by IPSOS and funded by the European Commission, surveyed over 22.000 EU youths from 23 countries in 2020, and revealed that almost half of them (46%) of them consider climate change to be among the most serious problems the world faces, the second being environmental degradation (44%), even if the survey was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, according to the PISA 2018 Global competence assessment, 79% of the 15-year-olds in OECD countries are aware of climate change and the need for action to address it (79%). However, if they are aware of it, on average only 57% feel that they could do something about these issues.

Educating youngsters and fostering their sense of agency could be the key

Therefore, the report notes that youngsters need "a sense of empowerment and agency to make a real difference" (Schleicher, 2021). This need is further supported by the European Commission, which has identified a positive approach to teaching about the environment and climate change as key to giving a sense of agency to students (European Commission, 2022).

Giving a sense of agency to students and guiding them towards a more positive approach can be the key against eco-anxiety, as framing environmental and climate change topics only in a negative discourse can make students anxious and make them feel powerless to act (INSERM, 2022).

A public survey was conducted to inform the European Council's Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability which points to the essential role of education and training in helping people understand and take action on environmental sustainability, as education and training was ranked as the most important sector by 71% of respondents, ahead of public bodies and governments (56%), and media (34%) (European Commission, 2022).

The EC Recommendations also consider youth involvement and outdoor activities as environment education means, which reveal the potential impact of creating resources to teach, learn and think about the environment and climate change to impact all fields.

In this context, where do youth work, environmental education, agency and utopia and dystopia meet?

How utopias and dystopias can empower youngsters to act for the environment and climate change

Using utopias and dystopias as tools to educate youngsters about the environment and climate change might seem counter-intuitive at first. After all, aren't utopias too perfect to transfer into the real world, and dystopias too negative to inspire positive action? Don't utopia and dystopia come with a risk of oversimplifying things, be It environmental or political knowledge? Aren't these concepts too Manichean anyway?

Fiction can serve as a more neutral ground for discussion

First, let us remember the definitions of utopias and dystopias introduced previously. Both are fictions that aim to support us in exploring what good or bad things could be, how good ideas could turn bad, or how bad situations can inspire action. We propose that because utopias and dystopias are fiction, they can actually provide a more neutral ground for debate and discussion.

Youngsters may live in an era of constant information, but it is also an era of challenges as to how to deal with information. Fake news is omnipresent, political discourse tends to become more polarised, and trust in sciences is seemingly becoming based on ideology. In this context, not only are youngsters' critical skills constantly put to the test, but all their choices or political opinions can lead them to be labelled by others, be it their friends, family, school and teachers, or employers. It is therefore difficult to ask questions about polarising issues, such as those related to the environment and climate change, or to stand for or against anything for fear of backlash.

If introduced correctly, fiction can provide a more neutral basis to explore topics related to the environment and climate change. First, in fiction, no one knows more than the others: if a group watches a movie or reads a book, they are presented with a finite world which may be easier to grasp than our reality. This is even true for extended universes with long storylines as it is possible to explain a situation in the confines of a book, episode or movie.

Second, stemming from this first point, simplifying representations is ok, at least to allow for a first reading or understanding of a story. This allows those who might not feel comfortable or equipped to tackle a given topic to take the risk to explore it without constantly wondering whether they are right or wrong in their assumptions and feeling that they might be judged for them.

Second, while the characters and situations depicted can be similar to reality, using fictional examples allows us to explore less personal situations, which can favour calmer dialogue between youngsters who have different opinions.

Fiction can lower the barrier to scientific knowledge

What may make education on the environment and climate change stand out from other citizenship areas is that they require a basic knowledge of culture in the sciences. In "sciences", plural', as topics related to the environment and climate change require knowledge in all areas of sciences and engineering: biology, earth sciences, energy, waste management, chemistry, etc. Consequently, we would add that environmental education is an inclusion issue as well: the PISA 2018 results revealed that the 15-year-olds who scored the highest on questions on environmental science were the most familiar with complex environmental issues. This contrasts with students with lower achievement in science, who 'often reported an almost naive optimism that the environmental challenges will go away in the future' (Schleicher, 2021).

Therefore, using fiction once again allows us to simplify the topics tackled. For instance, if a story stems from the fact that an evil corporation's pollution makes people in specific areas sick, the reader doesn't need to eliminate other underlying issues that might contribute to justify that people are sick for other reasons, at least within the limits of this story. Therefore, a group with diverse literacy in sciences can work together in a fictitious context.
In turn, exploring science topics can empower youngsters to explore such knowledge in reality as well.

Warning against the risks of simplification and heroification

One limit that educators and youngsters themselves must bear in mind, however, is that youngsters should not only tackle real-life issues through the prism of oversimplification (good versus evil) or frame all stories under the lens of heroification.

Trainers and youngsters themselves should build from utopian and dystopian inspirations to critically analyse what they can pick from both sides and what is desirable and achievable in real life. They can act as mirrors through which we can explore possible futures, and work towards them or avoid them.

The collateral risk of simplification is heroification. Loewen defines heroification as the storytelling process through which people are turned into heroes who make history, and depicting these people as "perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest." (Loewen, 1995). This approach can easily be emphasized by social media, which thrive on outstanding stories. While the merits of those who might be perceived as "heroes" should not be diminished, they should not be positioned as unattainable ideal goals either. For instance, in the area of environmental activism, Greta Thunberg's figure is often heroified, or on the contrary, vilified. At the end of the day, youngsters should bear in mind that she, and all other activists in any area, are but human and that they have both qualities and flaws.

Another risk of heroification is that youngsters may compare their action or their project to others, and feel discouraged if they do not achieve what they consider to be great things as fast as what others have seemingly done, according to the story told about them on social media. To tackle this risk, it is best to avoid only looking at great personalities, but rather to focus on their (or others') project. This can help those who might not be confident to still get involved in projects, even if they do not feel that their contribution to any initiative will make a worldwide impact that will make the headlines.

Although these risks should not be ignored, they are not complete barriers to using utopias and dystopias in training and in youth work, but trainers and youngsters should bear these risks in mind to remain critical and to work in a constructive way adapted to their project's scope.

CONCLUSION

In this handbook we have examined the origins and evolution of the concepts of utopia and dystopia, their cultural references in the contexts of the project partner countries, and their use in the pedagogical field.

Furthermore, with this perspective, we have also seen how these concepts can be usefully declined in some specific areas: politics and civic partition, the fight against discrimination and environmental and climate change and how utopia must contemplate areas of inclusion.

One of the main objectives of "EUtopia" is to gather tools and activities to bring young people closer to active engagement and participation through the concepts of utopia and dystopia.
In fact, contemporary educational paths still leave too little space for utopias.
Yet, in education, there is nothing more serious than utopia.

For young people, working with utopias means having the opportunity to take part in activities which, starting from the observation of the world and the awareness of the condition and problems of the world, lead to action, to the creation of projects that can change the world, changing the rules considered most unfair by young people themselves, also experiencing the complexity of decision-making processes.

Instead, it is necessary for young people to see utopias in action, which allows young people to feel like agents of change.
The pedagogy of "doing here" embraces the pedagogy of "action", digging deeper into the degrees of awareness of young people.

With utopian actions you don't just imagine, you act.
The training dimension is closely linked to the degree of active involvement of young people.

It is a bond that cannot be separated, they are two complementary practices; a conjunction that contains all the pedagogical meaning of utopias.

And it's for this reason that it is necessary for young people to be supported and guided by appropriately trained operators, young professionals with the precise task of encouraging the involvement of other young people even in single details.

This project is essentially aimed at young people. Yet, in utopias, a purely generational logic cannot apply.

This project should also be global, for everyone. And precisely because it belongs to everyone, young people have equal dignity, no minority but full right to be there, now, today, ready to change. It is the challenge of local communities, of individual countries, of the whole of Europe, but also of the global community.

Utopias work because they are not yet another game, another "dedicated space", but because they are a serious assumption of collective responsibility, which starts from the younger generations but which embraces everyone, without exception.

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**Co-funded by
the European Union**