



A UNION OF SHARED VALUES

The role of education and civil society

Jean Monnet Conference 2015



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UTOPIA EUROPA DYSTOPIA

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A CONCEPT OF AN ARTISTIC INSTALLATION

The artistic installation we developed for the Jean Monnet Conference (2015) was based on the tension between Europa as a utopia (a humanistic, social, empathic, wealthy, democratic and free society) and Europa as a dystopia (an egocentric, power-based, dysfunctional and undemocratic feudal fortress).

The very recent European dilemmas around the Ukrainian issue, the Greek crisis and the migration problematic made Europe's fundamentals shiver and shake. Certainties about European (imaginary?) common values faded away under the pressure of national interests, macroeconomic logics and geo-political strategies. Or did Europe's mask finally fall off to show its real face?

Through a provocative installation in the form of a labyrinth (a zone of tension between aspirations and reality, systems and humans, excess and conscience, identity and sharing, values and quotes, dreams and nightmares, utopia and dystopia), we wanted to confront the audience (most of them visitors of the conference) with the extreme challenges Europe is facing.

The staged and dramatised tension between the European dreams versus the European nightmare became tangible in this suggestive multidisciplinary experience combining video and photos, poignant artifacts, triggering soundscapes and confronting quotes.

But most of all it aimed to raise fundamental questions to each of us, from policy makers to academics, from activist to citizen. Is the end of Europe near? Is this the Europa we want? What kind of Europeans are we? Can we, European citizens, change the course, if we would like to do so?



UTOPIA...

A utopia is a community or society possessing highly desirable or near perfect qualities. The word was coined by Sir Thomas More in Greek for his 1516 book Utopia (in Latin), describing a fictional island society in the Atlantic Ocean, a blueprint for an ideal society with no crime or poverty. The term has been used to describe both intentional communities that attempt to create an ideal society, and imagined societies portrayed in fiction.. It has spawned other concepts, most prominently dystopia.(*)

...VERSUS DYSTOPIA

A dystopia is a community or society that is undesirable or frightening. It is translated as "not-good place", an antonym of utopia. Dystopia is a nightmare world which, in many cases, has resulted from attempts to create an ideal society. Dystopias are often characterized by dehumanization, totalitarian governments, environmental disaster, or other characteristics associated with a cataclysmic decline in society. Dystopian societies appear in many subgenres of fiction and are often used to draw attention to real-world issues regarding society, environment, politics, economics, religion, psychology, ethics, science, and/or technology, which if unaddressed could potentially lead to such a dystopia-like condition.(*)

(*) source wikipedia

B SOME SHARED THOUGHTS...

During the debates of the Conference we were invited to share some of our points of view, concepts and working process in the working group 'Arts and the new (social) media'. We would like to take the opportunity of this publication to reformulate some statements we developed during the debate:



As a collective of artists from various disciplines and backgrounds, even nationalities, working together on one installation, we had to find a common ground without losing our own style and sensibility. Therefore we wanted first of all created one space with a strong identity and emotional power in which each of us could create smaller artworks that would communicate or interact with each other and with the visitor.

Since the installation was commissioned by an academic conference on sociopolitical issues, a working field that is obviously not directly ours, we had to be aware of our specificity as artists. We are no professors, politicians or journalists. We don't give answers or solutions. We don't have to.

An artist works from his personal sensitivity, reacting on the world surrounding him, creating images, recreating reality to provoke a different way to look at things, to reveal new questions and emotions, sometimes, if needed, by shocking!

In this sense, and history proved it, we are convinced that the artist has a significant role to play in a political context and debate, in a society in transition. This is one of the reasons why we were very honored to be invited to create this installation for the Jean Monnet Conference of 2015.

When we started the creation of this collective artwork about common values in Europe entitled UTOPIA EUROPA DYSTOPIA we gave ourselves only one rule: to start our reflections from recent European issues that deeply marked and moved us personally. Is it a coincidence that we all focused on the suffering of those who are not heard, on the terrible collateral damages of dysfunctional institutes and financial power games?

Although we had the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in mind, we were often confronted with the opposite. As if values had fainted away. Utopia on its knees. As if a cynical ghost blew all humanism and empathy away. Dystopia reigns.

The deeper we dug in the material, the clearer it became how established and entrenched certain grim thoughts are. In practically all topics that we recorded, whether it was about refugees, climate, poverty, human trafficking, discrimination or freedom of expression, it became clear that the human value is replaced with the economic one, where justice and solidarity is often absent.

In this creation process we often felt more human than artist. Looking for material to reshape in the context of an art creation we often were caught by terrible pessimistic emotions and serious doubts about the future.

We have to ask ourselves: which values do we want our children to learn, to practice, to share? We still are in a better place than others. Are we really?

For our research we obviously used social media, not only to gather information. We approach social media as a tool, an endless database, a source like any other we use to create new work. It is a way to gather first of all material and emotions. How you filter the material depends on the result you want to reach.

At first, we were looking for images and texts connected with the basic rights and values of Europe. After that, we pulled them out of context, zooming, cutting, pasting, recreating a new context, reinventing a distorted reality.

Besides that, social media create a space where more people are getting involved in how society should function. Speaking out loud is not only a privilege for the unions, politicians or newspapers anymore. Through social media people nowadays create connections that would never have occurred in the past, often starting from personal experiences. A more and more diverse group takes the lead in demonstrations, solidarity actions and local and international citizen movements. People are becoming more aware that there must be another more meaningful way to shape our society. Alternatives on the mantra 'there is no alternative'!

The fact that social media give a chance to open up the debate, to give a voice to those who wouldn't be heard is a positive evolution. It is a fragile evolution as well, because bad intentions are never far away...

Can we challenge/question the existing systems? Or does it swallow us? Can we teach our children to be more than just a product? Does anybody care?

All these questions are the reason we used for the installation recordings of children reading the articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Their voice is the true human voice, open and full of hope, the ultimate right thing. But it is in danger.



Last but not least we would like to thank again the Jean Monnet Conference 2015 to have asked artists to propose a contribution in their international programme. For us, the artists active in a contemporary society, it is very important to get the chance to position ourselves when we talk about shared values, and more specifically concerning the role of education and civil society. Artists are bridge builders, between reality and imagination, between theory and emotion, between certainties and doubts, opening minds, connecting people, sharpening the dialogue.

European Commission

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Jean Monnet Conference 2015

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Reports from Working Groups



Working Group 1: Civil society and social inclusion

Report from WG1

by Agata de Laforcade
Jean Monnet professor,
ISIT, Paris



Three speakers set the scene for a discussion centred on the importance of social inclusion in order to safeguard our fundamental values:

Dora Kostakopoulou, Professor of European Law at the University of Warwick, argued that a *humanist axiology* can help us overcome a number of existing contradictions and to recognise the fact that political governance has no other purpose than to promote human flourishing. And it can only do so by creating liveable realities, as opposed to constricted, strenuous, and uncongenial ones. Taking the economic crisis as an example, she pointed out that overtly economic accounts of institutional dynamics need to be reviewed and set against democratic politics and the advancement of social relations and human needs. In short, she underlined the necessity for a reorientation of values.

This set the scene for **Dana Pantea**, Lecturer at the Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Science and

Communication Sciences at University of Oradea, Romania. She is currently project manager of the Jean Monnet Project “*The Image of the Other in the European Intercultural Dialogue*”. Taking up the example of the Roma people in Romania, she focused on the importance of a major role of education in civil society, where it concerns taking up the challenge of social inclusion for minorities.

Peter Cunningham, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies at London Metropolitan University, then showed the importance and relevance of citizenship education at first degree education. As coordinator of a Jean Monnet Network which is a successor of the Erasmus Academic Network CiCe (Children’s Identity and Citizenship in Europe), he argued that citizenship education cannot start early enough, and should involve all actors involved in a child’s upbringing (schools, parents, sport clubs etc.). With Jean Monnet support, he is now developing a best practice guide on this topic.

In the discussion that ensued, the working group came up with a number of clear messages:

- The way ahead for education is to embrace social inclusion. Whilst we should continue to link education with the labour market, the discourse should be double-axed: the full priority must be on no one feeling left out or dropping out.
- In fact, social inclusion at school is a necessity in order to build an inclusive society, and is directly related to the question of our own identity, and the way we view ourselves. In this way, social inclusion contributes to positive contributions of citizens to society.
- As academics, we should review our role vis-à-vis teaching fundamental values. Some argued that in our teaching methods AND content, we should imbue students with these values, and promote them actively. Others took a more neutral stance, arguing that the teaching content should not be biased in any direction,

but that in our teaching methods, we may embrace more engaging ways, in order to involve students more in the content matter: open debate, simulation games and the creation of a climate of freedom of expression.

- Meanwhile, taking a position as a teacher should not be confused with overt activism or political propaganda.
- The working group agreed that whilst the topic of fundamental values needs indeed to be discussed in Academia, it is high time to come to concrete results in the near future, and to launch projects for teachers and students which target the education of universal values through appropriate teaching methods.

Last but not least, the Working group also formulated a recommendation for the European Commission: to do its utmost to **convince the EU Member States to actively implement the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**, which is more relevant than ever.



Contributions to the Call for Papers

Panellist WG1 Dora Kostakopoulou: Towards a Humanistic Philosophy of the European Union

**Dora Kostakopoulou, Jean Monnet
professor, University of Warwick, UK**

The economic crisis in the Eurozone has unsettled the European project and has provided a fertile environment for the reassertion of national particularism and for polarisation among the EU Member States and their citizens. Imperfections in the design of the European Monetary Union and the search for formulae for macroeconomic stability and for better fiscal regulation have been accompanied by the rise in Euroscepticism and the dissemination of populist neo-nationalist discourses from both the Right and the Left. Political elites in certain Member States see clear advantages in 'turning inwards', that is, seeking to judge, and justify, everything against the background of 'adjectival interests'- and not on the basis of common, or broader,

interests. It seems that the present institutional reality in the EU is characterised by two contradictory dynamics; namely, the institutional one attracting actors searching for macroeconomic solutions and seeking to make undisciplined public expenditures more controllable and sustainable and even contemplating a fiscal Union¹ and the centrifugal

1 R. Godino and F. Verdier, 'Heading towards a European Federation. Europe's Last Chance' (2014) Policy Paper 105, Notre Europe, February, <http://www.eng.notre-europe.eu/011-17715-Heading-towards-a-European-Federation.html>; Herman Van Rompuy, *Towards a Genuine Economic and Monetary Union* (Brussels: European Council, 2012).

one, calling for a 'palingenesis', that is, for renegotiated, and more intergovernmental, arrangements. While the debates continue and the pendulum is swinging towards an increased fiscal coordination and reform, Europe's citizens and residents, particularly those who are deeply hit by the austerity measures, are in a state of generalised anxiety. The new forms of economic policy coordination and delivery (e.g., the European Semester, the so-called Six Pack, the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance and the Two Pack, the Single Supervisory Mechanism and so on) have not only made European governance more complex, but they have also contributed to creating feelings of insecurity and apprehension about the alleged replacement of democratic politics with technocratic politics,² the preoccupation with macroeconomic scoreboards and a policy bias towards austerity.

Although such an environment sustains an impression that there exist more problems than solutions and makes us perceive the disjunction between 'the centripetal' and 'the centrifugal' as setting a definitive limit to what can be achieved, the latter can be used as a point of departure for sketching a democratic humanistic philosophy for the European Union. This orientation might well form the new narrative needed for European integration. Two premises lend support to my argument. First, policy formulation and implementation cannot, and should not, be disentangled from broader considerations about the ultimate goals of policy convergence or of integration of, and through, law. And any reference to the purposes of certain institutional outputs, arrangements or policies has to be informed by an assessment of their value-addedness. The test for appraising the latter is nothing else than the extent to which they advance the socioeconomic activities they seek to regulate and facilitate the betterment of the living conditions of human beings.

Secondly, if I were asked to depict the impact of EU law and policy making in various policy domains in ink or chalk, I would probably draw sets of intersecting circles, each representing national or European regulatory interventions and each shadowing partially, or more fully, the other. And all the circles would be connected around an empty space in the middle. This empty space in the middle around which all circles intersect in a complex Venn diagram has traditionally been an empty space in pivotal struggles for power and the colliding intergovernmentalist/supranationalist dynamics. This is because priority has been given to macro- and meso-political structures and processes, be they national or supranational or mixed in location or nature. But this space can no longer remain empty. Ordinary human beings in their social settings have to reclaim it. The premise that institutions and policies must serve individuals in their life worlds and to ensure their flourishing is thus the point where all circles of governance intersect. This is a simple, but

enduring, humanist guideline; all institutional arrangements must promote and facilitate not only 'zen', that is, living, but 'eu zen', that is, living well.³

I would not like to give the impression here that humanism is a clearly articulated and coherently defined perspective. It is not. Nor is it a unified perspective. Instead, it is a fusion of many ideas and normative orientations. It is true that there exist many versions of humanism and historians would be quick to pinpoint the differences among, for example, the ancient Greek humanism, the Roman one and the Christian version of it. Similarly, one could trace similarities and differences among all the above and the intellectual movement which characterised the Renaissance and the protest against the ecclesiastical dogma of the Middle Ages. In all those versions, however, one discerns: i) the significance given to the latin term *humanus* (human) which is, in turn, derived from the noun 'homo' which means human being, ii) the belief that the social realities and institutional structures that house and bind human beings must be fit for human living and iii) that there is an explicit, or implicit, expectation that some form of 'anthropoplassy' is both possible and desirable. The latter refers to the belief that the development or growth of human beings takes place through their exposure to humanistic principles, such as respect for persons, kindness, compassion, sympathy and care for their needs and solidarity as well as to democratic life.⁴

Humanism, as defined above, can be the springboard for a different orientation which would allow us to evaluate both macropolitical policy priorities in the EU and goals that are formed at the meso-level of political decision making. This is because it shifts our thinking away from what appears to be obvious and given or from technologies of governance and the binary of intergovernmentalism/supranationalism to a more inclusive way of appraising where we are and are heading. And this inclusive way of seeing things cannot be divorced from a humanist axiology; structures and policies must contribute to creating, and bettering, the conditions for a more fulfilled and dignified living.

3 Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2.1252b29. Aristotle grounded human beings' 'flourishing' on the principle of eudaimonia. The pragmatist school in the US and process philosophy, in general, provided extended accounts of the human 'potentiality'; see, for instance, A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press paperback edition, Macmillan, 1968). For contemporary work on human flourishing with a distinctive attention to capabilities, see A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009) and M. C. Nussbaum, *Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge: Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009). Compare also F. Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature, Varieties and Plausibility of Hedonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); *What is This Thing Called Happiness?* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010). For the notion of 'humanity law' based on the recognition of individual responsibility for action in the international sphere and the interests of actors in preservation and security, see R. G. Teitel, *Humanity's Law* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

4 Compare, here, *inter alia* J. Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Holt, 1922); E. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

2 H. Brunkhorst, *Das doppelte Gesicht Europas – Zwischen Kapitalismus und Demokratie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014). See also Schiek's and Singh's contributions above.

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