From Global EdTech Utopias to Local Alternative Digital Futures of Education

MELposium, TAMK
19 August 2022

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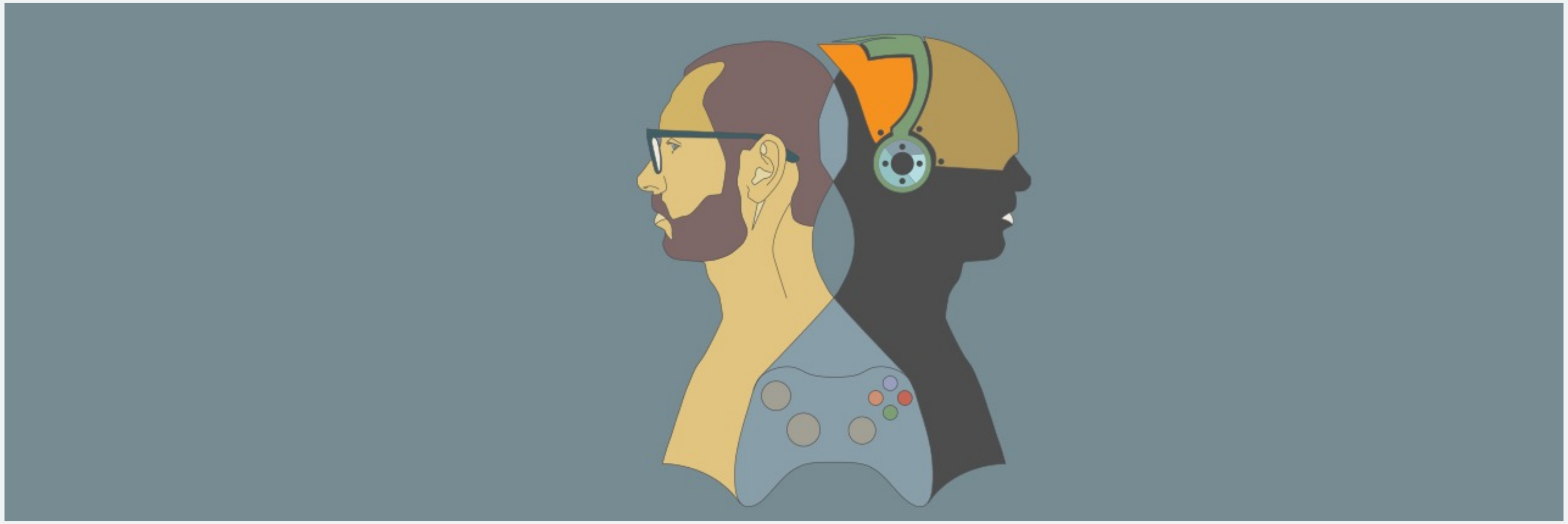
CARDE
CRITICAL APPLIED RESEARCH OF DIGITALIZATION IN EDUCATION

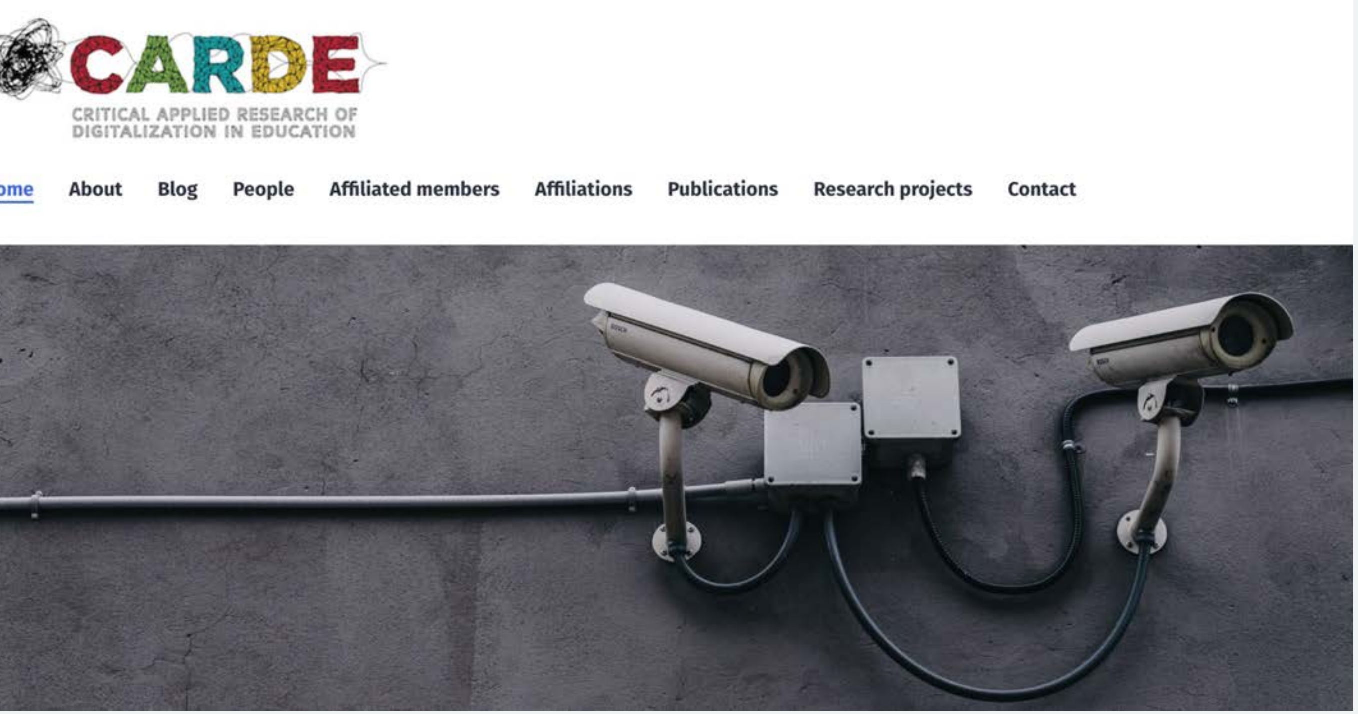


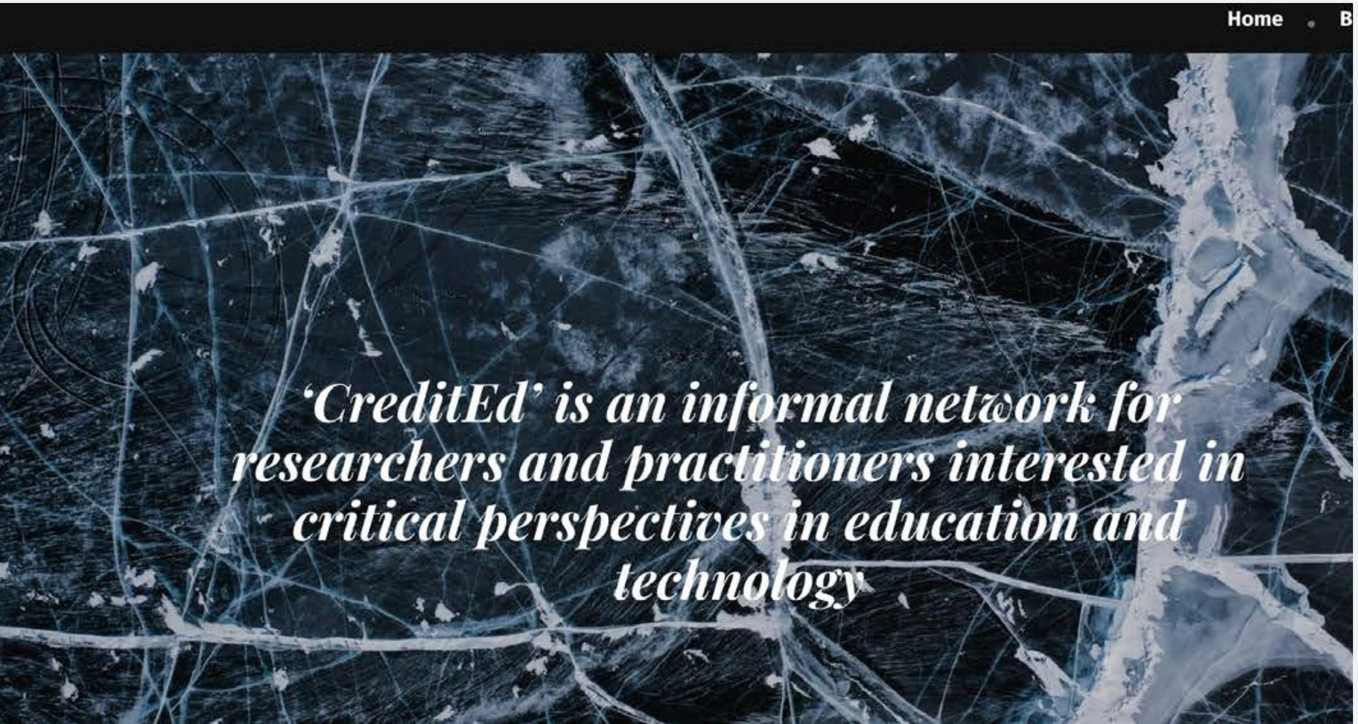
Background

Developer, educator, researcher in human-computer interaction, online learning, virtual environments, learning analytics, digitalization and datafication the past 15 years

My background with "digitalisation"

- Teacher training in e-learning and online learning (Tanzania, UAE).
- Learning platform transition project (University of Wollongong, Australia)
- Using virtual environments and VR in hazardous environments training in gas and chemical sector (Curtin University)
- APOA project: Learning analytics in Universities of Applied Sciences (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture funded national project)
- BUKA project: Advancing Equity and Access to Higher Education Through Open and Distance Learning in Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines through the use of inclusive instructional design (ID) and learning analytics (LA).





CARDE (Critical Applied Research of Digitalization in Education) research group. Co-founder.
https://carde.group

CreditEd network. An informal network for researchers and practitioners interested in critical perspectives in education and technology. Co-founder.
https://creditednetwork.wordpress.com

Current research project

- "Speculative social science fiction of digitalization in higher education: Towards a humanized digital future"
- Funded by the Academy of Finland
- More at https://carde.group


Hi I'm
Behemoth

Presentation structure

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT UTOPIAS

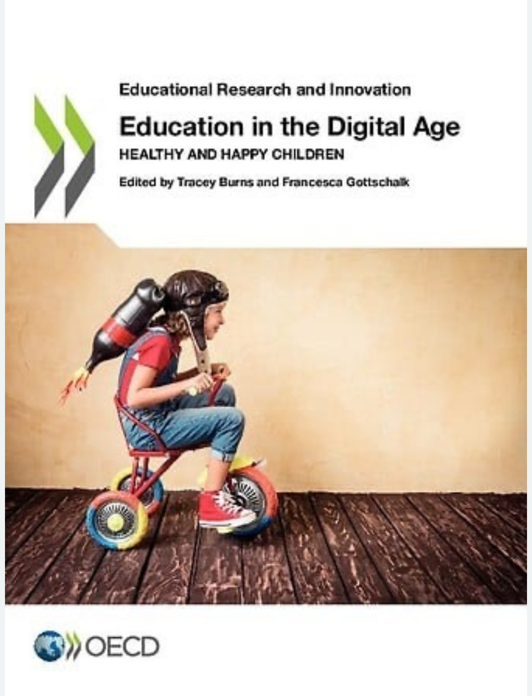
DIGIVISIO 2030 NATIONAL INITIATIVE

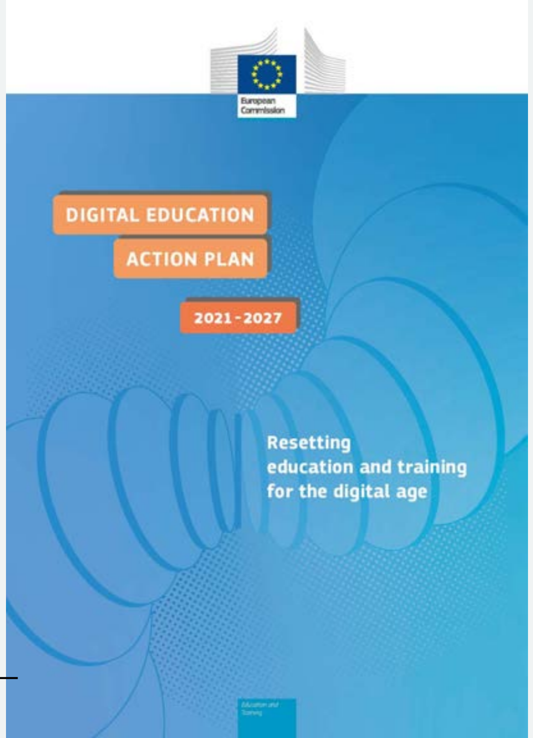
GENERAL PROBLEMATIZATIONS

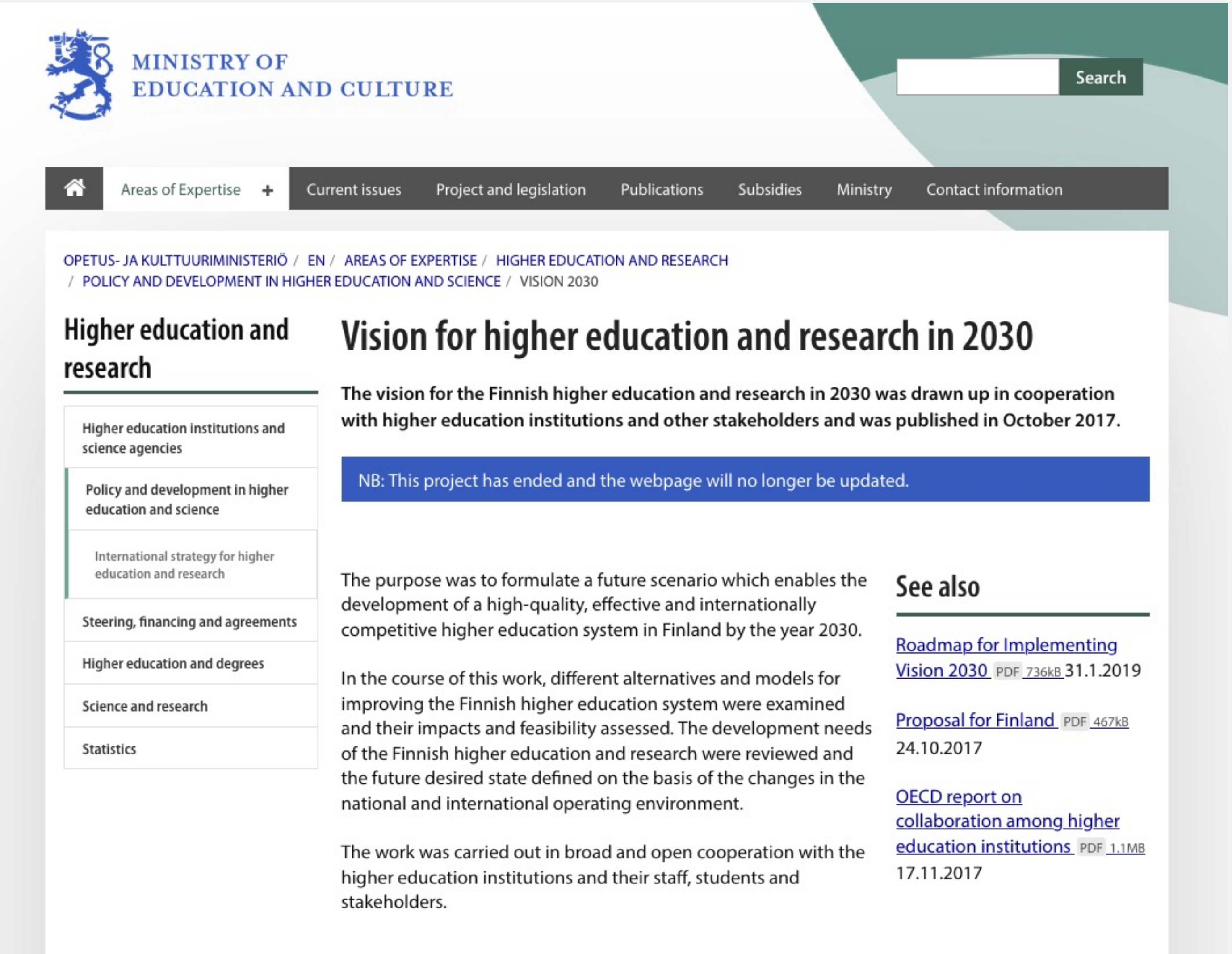
CALL FOR IMAGINATION

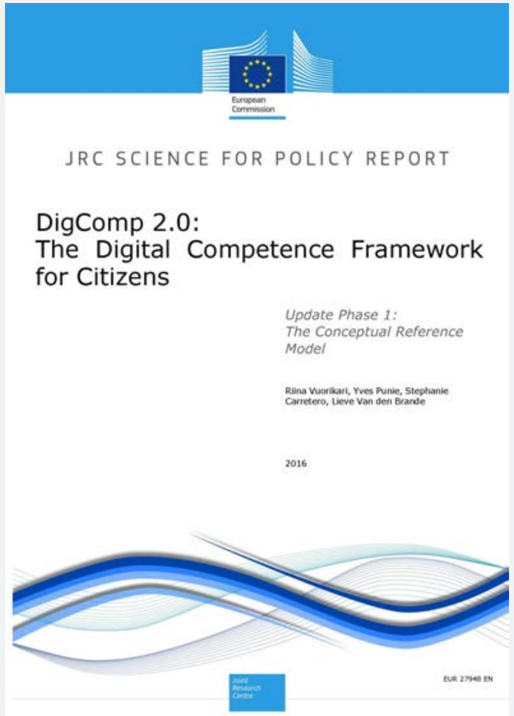
Our journey so far with the research of digitalization

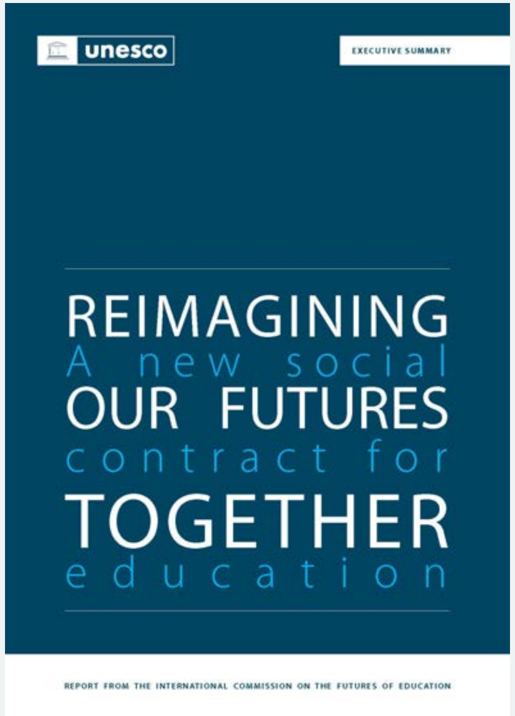
Future visions







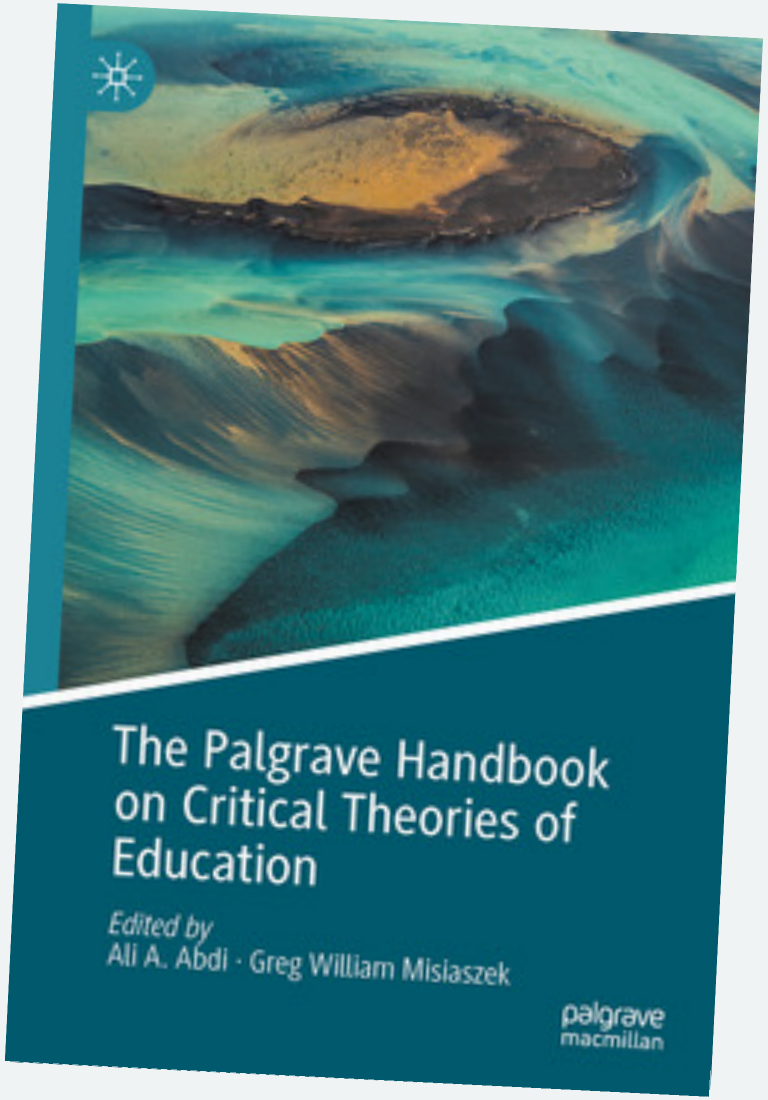




Future visions and policies

Document Discourse Analysis

- Discourse analysis of intergovernmental and governmental, international and national documents
- Reports and working papers from the OECD, World Economic Forum, UNESCO, EU, International Labour Organization, Finnish Ministry of Education, Finnish National Agency for Education, Finnish Government, Microsoft (with McKinsey & Co, educational influencers), Google (e.g. with The Economist)
- Digivision 2030 initiative documents: “Finland as a model country for flexible learning, and a global pioneer in higher education” (https://digivisio2030.fi)



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Key discursive statements

1. “The future is more uncertain than ever”
2. “Digitalization is disrupting/transforming education and work” (digitalization as challenge)
3. “There is huge potential in digitalization to transform education and work” (digitalization as potential)
4. “Education is outdated/not yet fulfilling its potential”
5. “Digitalization of education can ensure a better future”

A sidenote on the authority and power of these documents

An example from a Finnish National Agency for Education report

23 international sources on digitalization:

+ 5 company websites/blogs
+ 1 Market research website
+ 2 Company and analyst websites/blogs (HolonIQ, Microsoft)
+ 3 Newspapers and other publication websites/blogs
+ 6 Intergovernmental organization and actor reports
+ 3 Associations and non-profit organizations
+ 1 Conference paper
+ 1 Academic publisher website
+ 1 journal editorial
+ 0 Peer reviewed research articles

Utopian elements in the documents

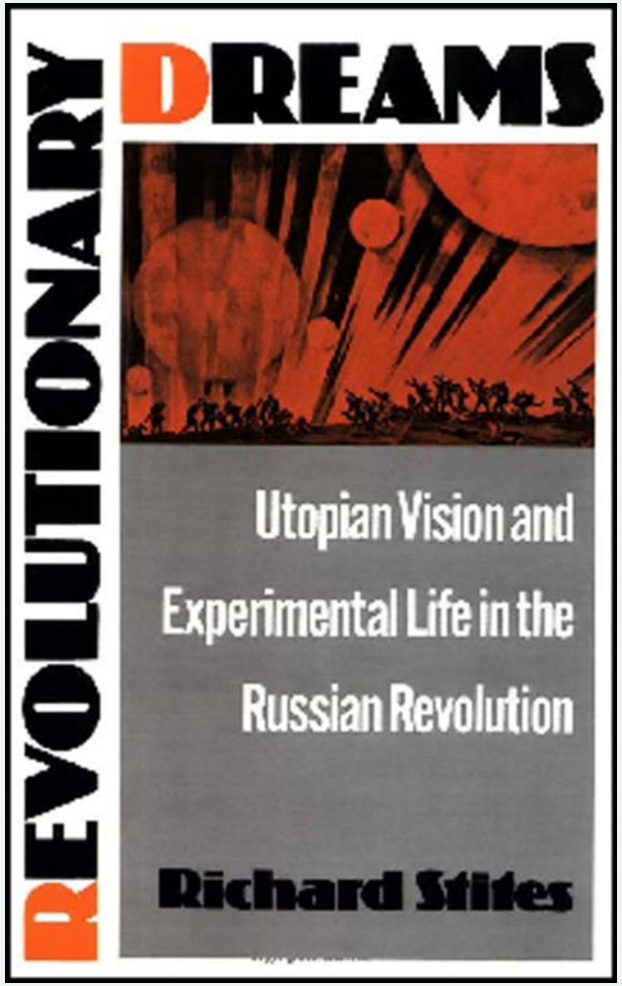
“Utopia”:
Thomas More coined the word as the title and locus of his 1516 Utopia in a pun which conflates *outopos* or no place and *eutopos* or good place. Consequently utopia is widely understood as an imagined perfect society or wishfully constructed place which does not and cannot exist.

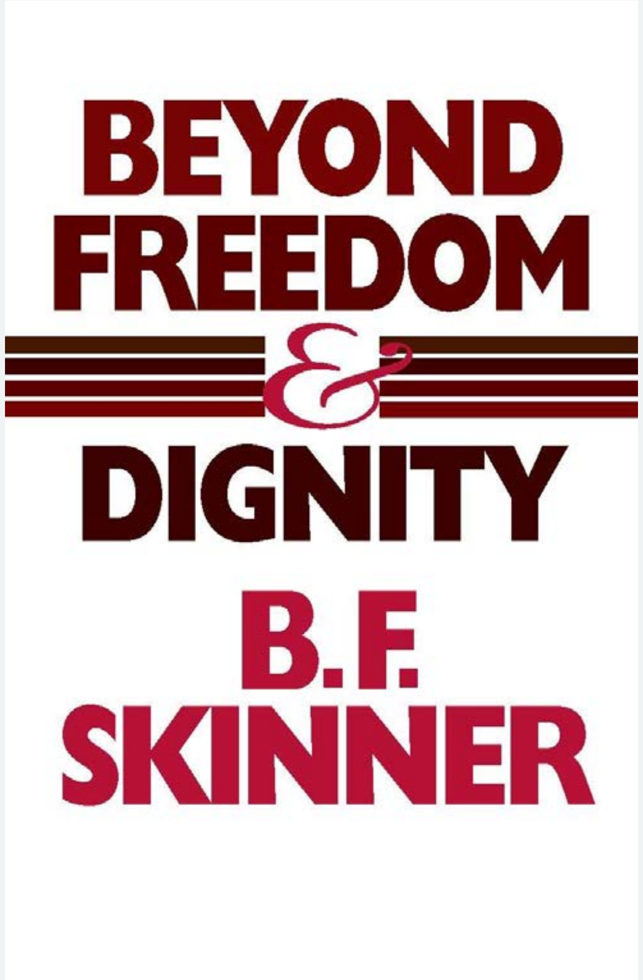
(Ruth Levitas, Utopia as Method, 2013, p. 3)

1. There is something wrong with the current state of things (also posing a sense of ‘crisis’)
2. (Technological) solutions or blueprints on how the world could be changed “better”
3. Implicitly defining what is desirable or “better”

“Official Document Utopias”

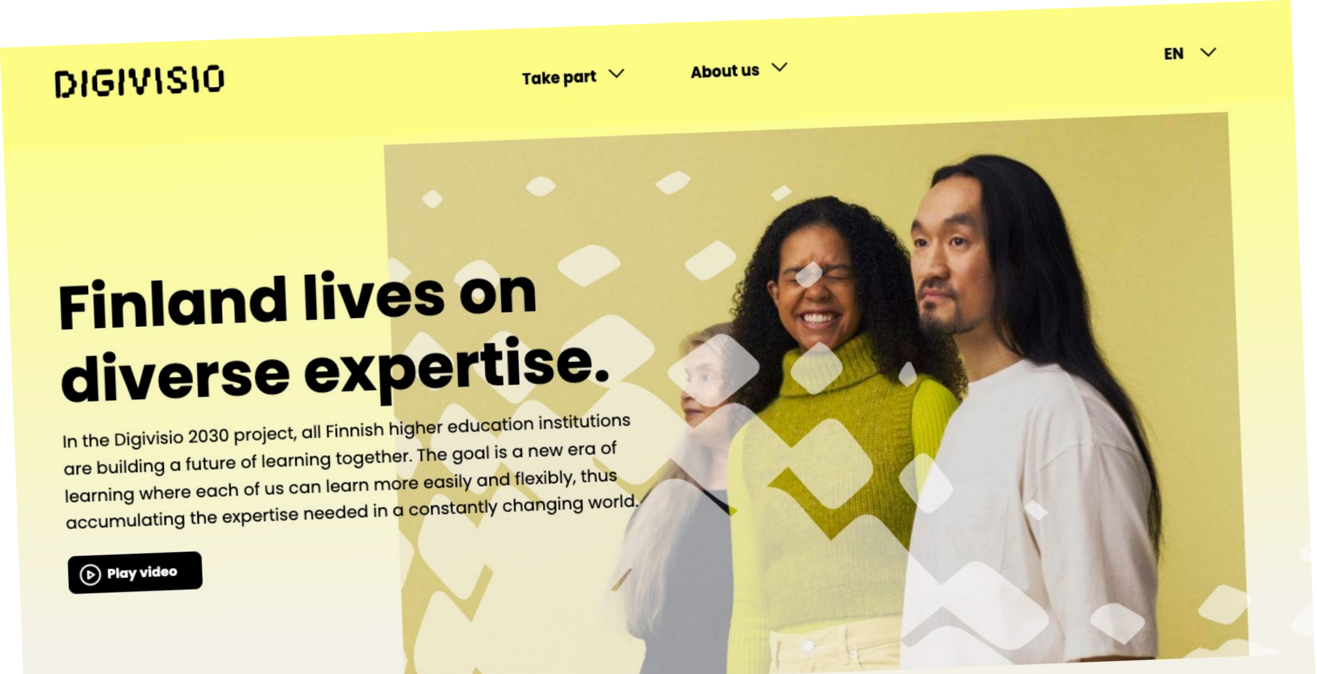
- These documents are devices that factualize the future which can be ensured with digitalization/datafication
- They build a future they only claim to predict
- Possible futures become *a* future





Technological and science utopias

Digivisio 2030: Operationalizing a technological utopia?



https://digivisio2030.fi/en/frontpage/

- Funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture
- Involving all Finnish higher education institutions, Digivisio 2030 is a joint project whose aim is to create a future for learning that benefits higher education institutions, learners and our society as a whole.
- All 38 Finnish higher education institutions have signed the project’s participation agreement, and the project office was established at the end of 2020. (https://digivisio2030.fi/en/basic-information-on-the-digivisio-2030-project)

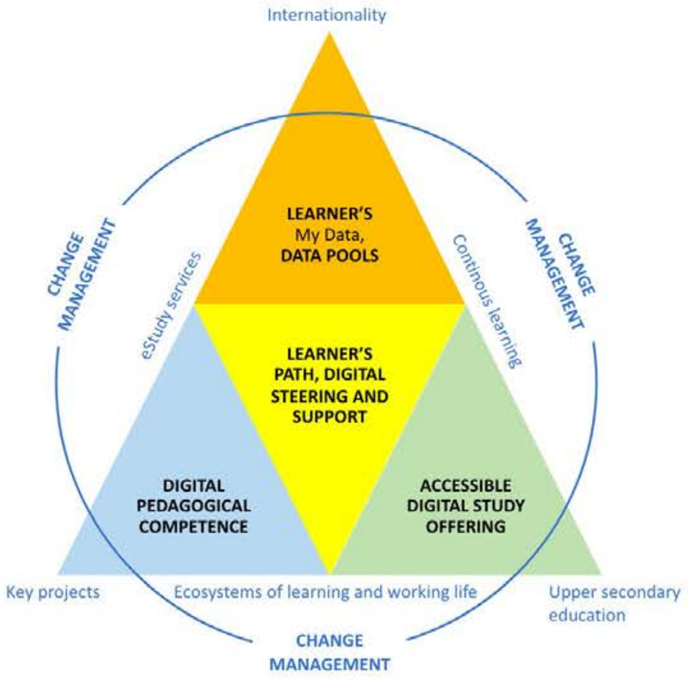
A national digital service platform

The objective of the program is to create, as mutual and stakeholder cooperation, by 2030

1. **A National digital service platform that**
   a) enables the compatibility of digital services between higher education institutions,
   b) provides the learner's "my data" service and integrates the accumulation of the learner's competence before and after the higher education institution to the learning and career path and
   c) improves the compatibility of the actors' IT services and lowers the threshold for utilising national solutions.

2. **Guidance based on digital pedagogics, the learner's path and shared data, which**
   a) supports studies and student well-being regardless of time and place and in an accessible manner,
   b) Brings AI solutions as an aid in guidance, and
   c) places the learner's benefit at the centre of development.

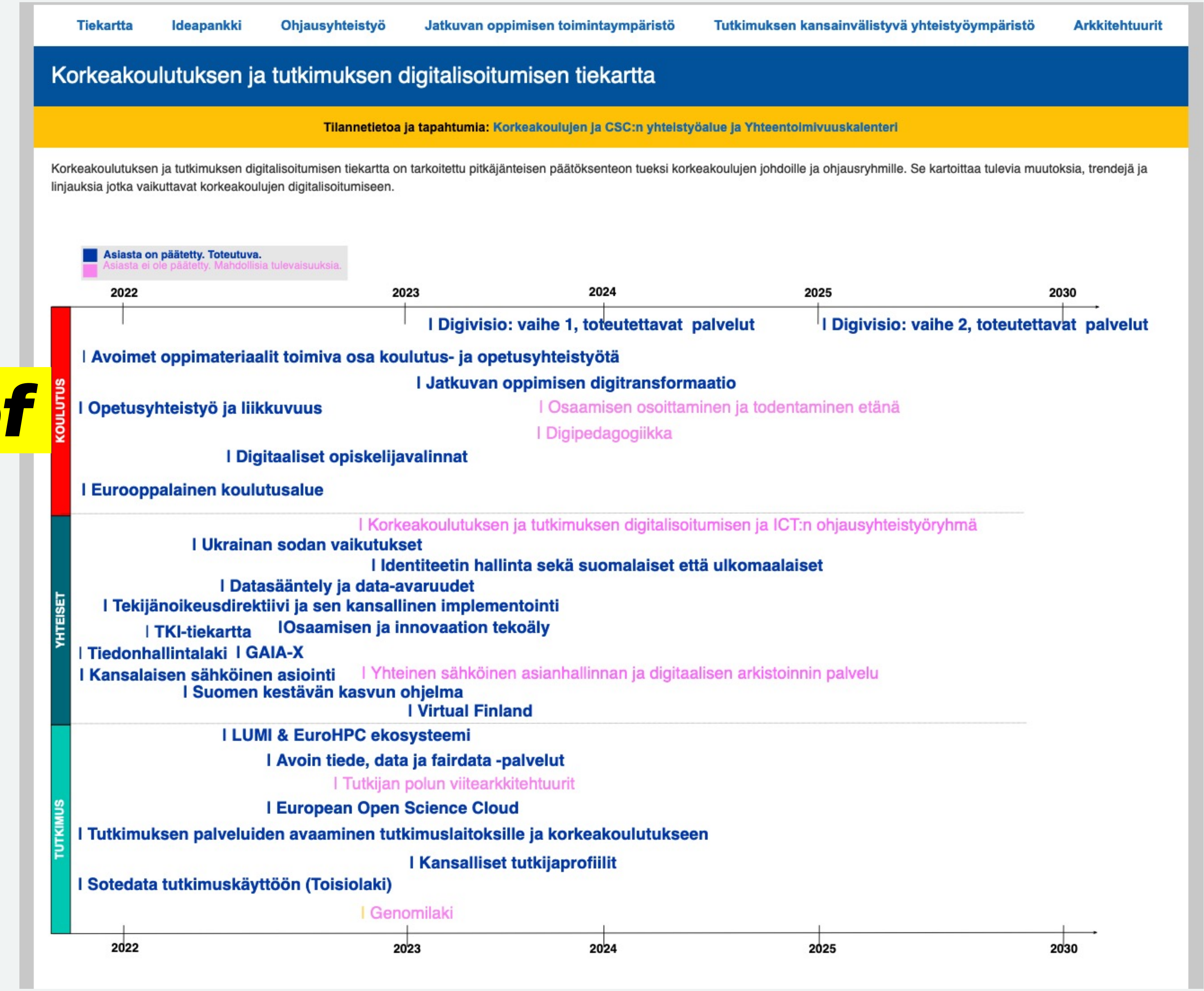
3. **Support for change management for higher education institutions, so that we can**
   a) introduce the national digital service platform
   b) digitize student administration processes and admission to higher education institutions,
   c) support the development of higher education institutions into open communities managed by information, and
   d) make data available for individuals and society.



https://digivisio2030.fi/en/publications/preliminary-study-completed-changes-to-legislation/

A preliminary study completed – the implementation of Digivisio 2030 by higher education institutions reguires changes to legislation

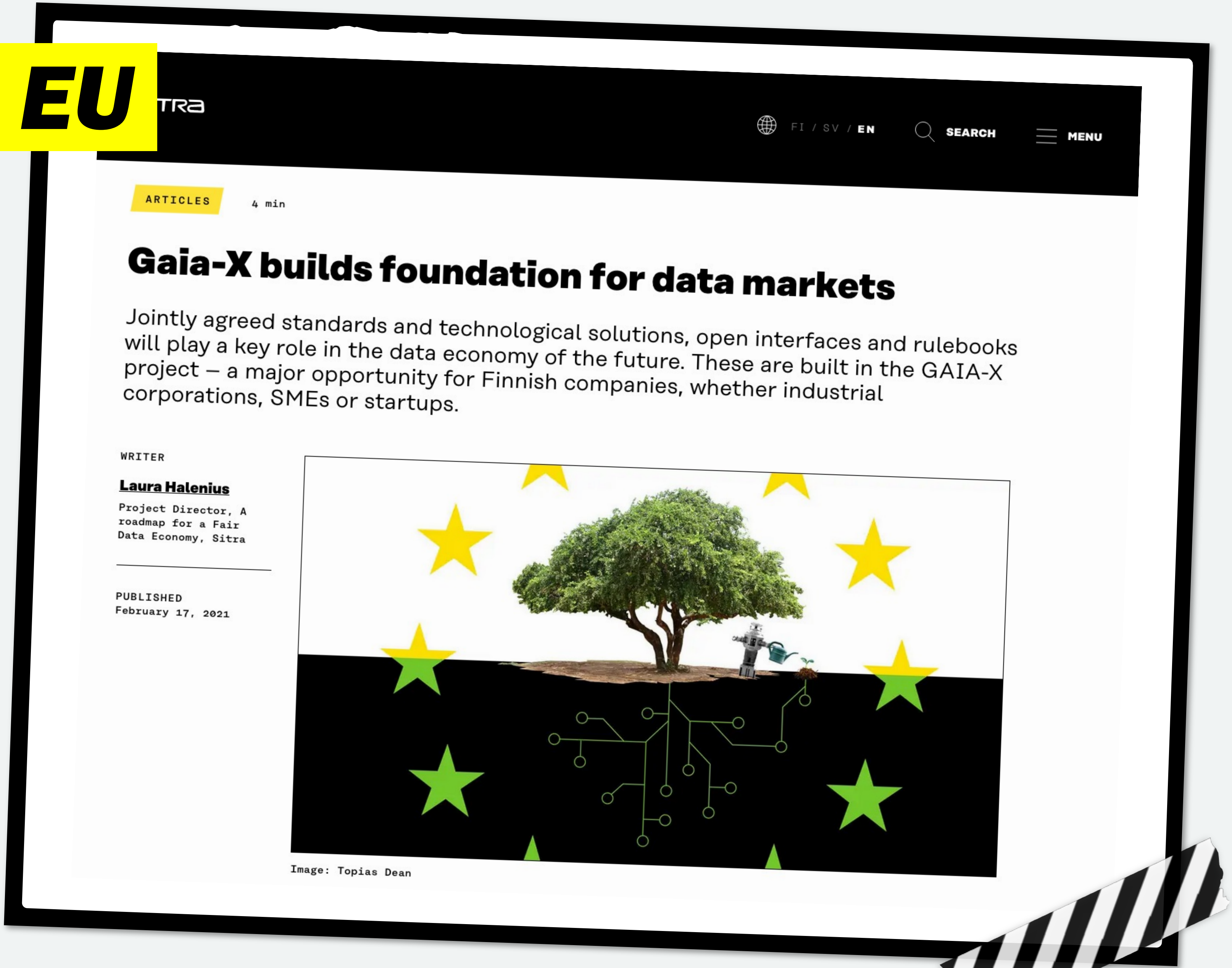
Roadmap for digitalization of Finnish higher education and research



Connection to EU data markets

"GAIA-X is a major European initiative for trusted data sharing. It has already strong support from German and French governments and close links to European Commission. More than 300 organizations from various countries are already involved in GAIA-X. Still, the project is open to new European interested parties to join us in its development."
https://wiki.eduuni.fi/display/CSCTICTOR/GAIA-X

CSC – IT Center for Science is a Finnish center of expertise in information technology owned by the Finnish state and higher education institutions.
https://www.csc.fi/en/about-us



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Gaia-X builds foundation for data markets

Jointly agreed standards and technological solutions, open interfaces and rulebooks will play a key role in the data economy of the future. These are built in the GAIA-X project – a major opportunity for Finnish companies, whether industrial corporations, SMEs or startups.

WRITER

Laura Halenius

Project Director, A roadmap for a Fair Data Economy, Sitra

PUBLISHED

February 17, 2021

Image: Topias Dean

Some problematizations and call for imagination

A note from history

Pandora's Box, E1: The Engineers' Plot (36:41)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3gwyHNo7MI

Pandora's Box, subtitled A Fable From the Age of Science, is a six part 1992 BBC documentary television series written and produced by Adam Curtis.

Some general problematizations

+ Abstract technological promises (e.g. “use analytics to support the student learning”) & developments that go gainst good pedagogical practices (e.g. “individual student paths” when a sense of community is important in online learning) (e.g. Thomas, Herbert, & Teräs, 2014).
+ Technology is multistable, it always changes human behavior and contexts in unpredictable ways (Ihde, 1998): To “work”, data, analytics and algorithms need humans to define data points and thus, abstraction of life. What happens e.g. to student experience and “learning” in such a process?
+ National data about learners as an economic “success factor” for national and international actors. A view from sociology of knowledge: There is no neutral knowledge. Anyone who says so, is not seeing it or is hiding their ideology.

Speculative fiction and utopian thinking as ways to imagine alternative futures

Commentaries | Open Access | Published: 25 October 2021

Speculative Social Science Fiction of Digitalization in Higher Education: From What Is to What Could Be

Juha Suoranta, Marko Teräs, Hanna Teräs, Petar Jandrić, Susan Ledger, Felicitas Macgilchrist & Paul Prinsloo

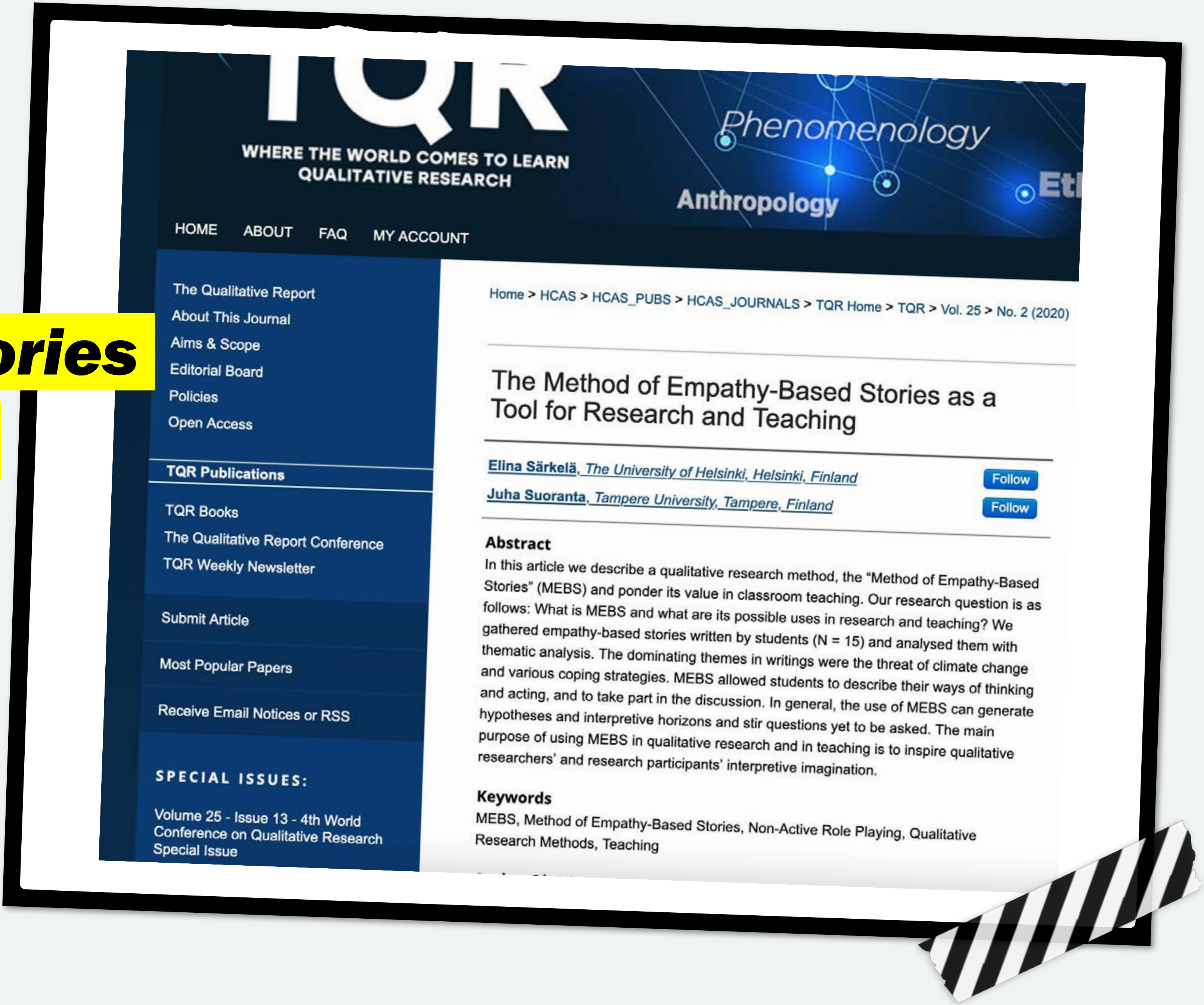
Postdigital Science and Education **4**, 224–236 (2022) | Cite this article

Introduction: Unleashing Teachers' Imagination (Juha Suoranta, Marko Teräs, Hanna Teräs)

Digitalization and datafication are reshaping roles and practices in higher education. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this process through the massive increase in the use of educational technology (EdTech) (Teräs et al. 2020). As a part of this development, higher education is becoming increasingly data driven. Simultaneously, attempts to predict and prepare for future scenarios in education are driven by intergovernmental organization reports from OECD and UNESCO, in addition to national initiatives in digital education (Suoranta et al. 2022). In these future scenarios, datafication, big data, learning analytics, and artificial intelligence promise more efficient and predictable higher education.

Collaboration and research data collection with Empathy-Based Stories and other methods

- “It is 2050 and digitalization of education has developed further. The developments have been positive/negative for the teacher. Why? Imagine a situation and write a short story about it.”



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The Method of Empathy-Based Stories as a Tool for Research and Teaching

Elina Särkelä, The University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland Follow
Juha Suoranta, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland Follow

Abstract

In this article we describe a qualitative research method, the “Method of Empathy-Based Stories” (MEBS) and ponder its value in classroom teaching. Our research question is as follows: What is MEBS and what are its possible uses in research and teaching? We gathered empathy-based stories written by students (N = 15) and analysed them with thematic analysis. The dominating themes in writings were the threat of climate change and various coping strategies. MEBS allowed students to describe their ways of thinking and acting, and to take part in the discussion. In general, the use of MEBS can generate hypotheses and interpretive horizons and stir questions yet to be asked. The main purpose of using MEBS in qualitative research and in teaching is to inspire qualitative researchers' and research participants' interpretive imagination.

Keywords

MEBS, Method of Empathy-Based Stories, Non-Active Role Playing, Qualitative Research Methods, Teaching

Selected Publications

- Teräs, M., Suoranta, J., & Teräs, H. (2023). From Official Document Utopias to Collective Utopian Imagination [Manuscript submitted]. In F. Macgilchrist & A. Weich (Eds.), *Postdigital Participation in Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Teräs, H., Teräs, M., & Suoranta, J. (2022). The life and times of university teachers in the era of digitalization: A tragedy. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2048393
- Suoranta, J., Teräs, M., Teräs, H., Jandrić, P., Ledger, S., Macgilchrist, F., & Prinsloo, P. (2021). Speculative Social Science Fiction of Digitalization in Higher Education: From What Is to What Could Be. *Postdigital Science and Education*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00260-6
- Teräs, M., Suoranta, J., Teräs, H., & Curcher, M. (2020). Post-Covid-19 Education and Education Technology 'Solutionism': A Seller's Market. *Postdigital Science and Education*, *2*(3), 863–878. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00164-x

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