



Report on the Youth Side Activity: bEUcitizen 2015 Mid-Term Conference

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Breaking Down Barriers: Future scenarios on youth and citizenship in 2030

Youth and access to education, labor and political decision making

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Citizenship is more than a status, more than a set of civic, political and social rights. It is about being able to participate in society, to develop ones capacities and to contribute to the organization of society. The chances and opportunities for youth to do so differ between countries and in time. Furthermore, economic crisis and national and EU policy responses to these crises, create potentially new inequalities and new barriers for youth. Several trends in our societies may hinder or stimulate the future participation of youth in society. Although the future can't be predicted, it is possible to prepare ourselves for different thinkable futures. And who are better positioned to think about the future than the next generations themselves?

Youth side event

On the 29th of June, a group of 20 students and young professionals from Croatia, Slovenia and the Netherlands discussed different future scenarios for youth-citizenship. They analyzed and discussed the present situation and determined what they regard as important for youth. In addition, they looked at what different ways the European societies, and especially Croatia, might develop and which consequences these would involve. *How could the world look in 2030?*

It took five steps to answer this question. First of all, the youth-participants determined six important values for youth citizenship after which they came up with four driving forces in society. Based on these forces, four future-world scenarios were imagined. These extreme, but possible situations

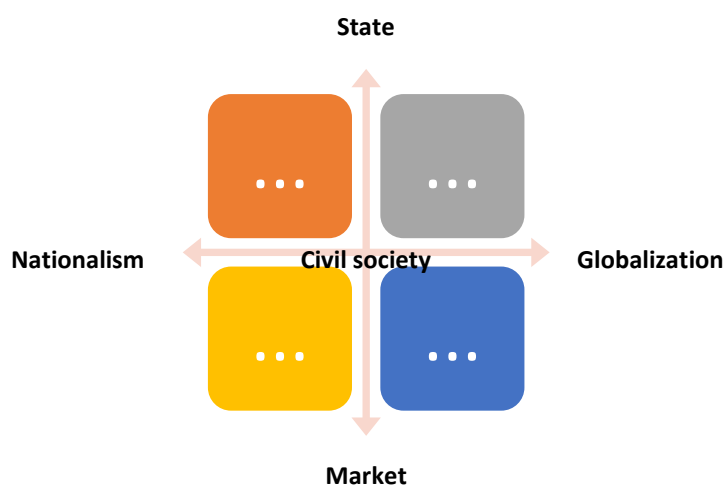
were given a name and were assessed based on the aforementioned values. Last but not least, the participants had to think of a possible repertoire of action to make sure that, even in these extreme worlds, the important values be achievable for youth. The following paragraphs will take you through these steps and will show you how the future is imagined by European youth.

Values

In groups of four the students and young professionals thought about the most important values and rights for youth citizenship. Although they came up with quite a range of different values, there were six major outcomes. Firstly, the participants thought of equal chances to exercise freedom of mobility as one of the most important rights. They talked about the Erasmus-scholarship and its undesirable unequal possibilities, saying that €410,- in Croatia is a lot compared to €410,- in the Netherlands. The second value that turned out to be important was access to and provision of high quality civic education due to the fact that this would give youth the knowledge needed to fully participate in society. Next, social rights and protection should be universal for all Europeans, because national differences create inequality in chances between the so called 'core and periphery'. The fourth value, while it requires tolerance and acceptance of different nationalities and cultures throughout Europe, is closely related to the one just mentioned. Another important value concerns the right to a healthy life in a sustainable future world. Finally, considering both the literally and figuratively World Wide Web, the sixth value was named the right to privacy protection.

Forces

In the second step of the scenario thinking process, four driving forces were identified. The students were asked to think about the visible and most important trends in society. On the one hand, nationalism turned out to be a force that every participant recognized as being strengthened due to the problems of our increasingly globalized world. An example of these problems is the fear for one's own culture and religion that strong immigration can cause. On the other hand, the just mentioned globalization was found to be a very important force in its own right; this dichotomy is illustrated by the horizontal shaft. The vertical shaft is formed by the state and privatization as driving forces, with civil society in between. This leads to the following figure:



Scenarios

Step three contained combining the forces shown above in various ways to create a set of different future scenarios. Each group of participants had to imagine one story about how the future *might* unfold. Therefore, the combination of two driving forces had to be taken into extremes, which resulted in the following four worlds:

1. *Allmightya*: state interventionism combined with nationalism

Allmightya is a world in which the forces of nationalism and state interventionism have come together to form an intrusive all encompassing big brother state. In this possible future world, the regime's view of "perfect order" is enforced by an intrusive government seeking to control the life of every citizen. This can only be accomplished by total isolation which is in turn achieved through an autarkic economic policy. Instead of the government using economic prosperity as a source of legitimacy it prefers to rely on propaganda and a strong police force to brutalize the population into submission. . The result is an isolated but sovereign autarchic totalitarian state. The price of this "sovereignty", which is only enjoyed by the political elite, is paid for by the citizens. They are forced to accept sub optimal living standards caused by the lack of trade with other countries as well as due to the extremely high military and police expenditures of the regime. Even though they must foot the bill for an enormous security apparatus they still enjoy very few if any of the rights and freedoms which were determined as fundamental values in the aforementioned text. The strong tendencies in many European societies towards isolation and a growing sense of nationalism, which both come as a backlash to increased European integration and immigration give us clear indications of the worrying fact that for at least part of Europe Allmightya might soon be a reality.

2. *Liberistan*: nationalism combined with market

A close cousin to Allmughtya in some respects, Liberistan is, unlike Allmightya, a profit driven, free-market oriented economy. Created by the combination of market forces and a fierce sense of nationalism Liberistan is ruled by elites which display a strong distaste for democracy, which they see as a tool by which the incompetent and the weak are able exploit the capable and the strong. In terms of ideology Social Darwinism comes closest to describing the government's view on what a perfect society should be. While the government does not shy away from cracking down on public dissent in a manner reminiscent of the all encompassing state apparatus of Allmightya, the main methods by which stability is maintained in this starkly unequal society is through the employment of nationalistic and religious based identity politics. In this regard a conservative media and a strict patriotic/religious education policy play the key role in the free market oriented, meritocratic Liberistan. While boasting a strong economy and an effective military on the one hand, but displaying a fundamental lack of regard for the social and political rights of its citizens on the other, Liberistan represents both the best and worst of what the free market and a strong sense of patriotism have to offer. With a rising sense of nationalism going roughly unopposed by political elites on the one hand

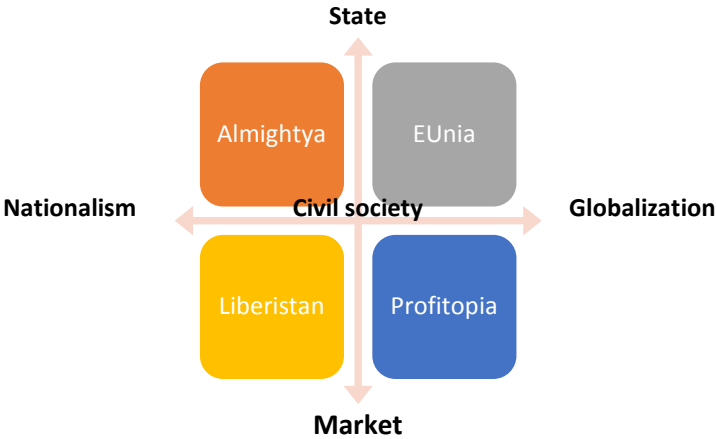
and free trade being strongly promoted by the same elites on the other it is unsettlingly easy to see how that there are many trends pulling us in the direction of a “Profitopian” future.

3. *Profitopia*: market combined with globalization

Profitopia represents a world in which the forces of nationalism have been banished in to the annals of history and have successfully been supplanted by an internationalist/globalist worldview. But where one might think this would result in the establishment of some kind of “world federal state” the state has instead died off together with the nations upon which it was based. The main way by which human society is now organized is in individual corporations who compete against each other in the originally “free market”. However as the state dies off the job of guaranteeing the openness of the market falls to individual corporations, this fact coupled together with the strengthening of larger corporations at the expense of the lesser ones, will eventually lead to the de facto abolishment of the free market and the establishment of industry specific monopolies controlled by corporate cartels. While this monopoly will not be able to take care of everything, there will, some day, be renewed pluralism with all kinds of delegated power.

4. *EUnia*: globalization combined with state

In this last possible future world, Europe is imagined as one big welfare state which has successfully obliterated the borders of the old nation states which divide it today. It consists of six administrative regions in which only English is recognized as the official language. This fact also reveals the dark side of this state run welfare paradise. Being a society based on the values of internationalism and heavy state involvement the state of EUnia heavily supports the promotion of EU-nationalism over all other forms of national, ethnic or religious identity. It is also, due to its strong statist tendencies, prone to shutting out outside influences which it sees as disturbances. In this sense this state, which represents the closest imaginable thing to utopia, shares eerie parallels with both Allmyghtya and Liberistan. With that being said the rights and freedoms of peoples which were defined as fundamental values are far better protected by the State of EUnia then they could ever be by the repressive apparatus of Allmyghtya, or the free market of Profitopia and Liberistan. The motto of this state is: “Don’t worry; the state will take care of it!”



Assessment

Once they created the possible future worlds, the participants had to imagine what the different scenarios would mean for the earlier mentioned values. They scored all the values on a 1-5 scale in which 1 means 'definitely not respecting value' and 5 means 'definitely respecting value'. As you can see in the figure below, EUnia seems the closest to utopia. However, in each and every possible future world there are (some) values that are vulnerable. That's why the students were asked to think about some kind of repertoire to ensure or stimulate the different kinds of values mentioned.

Values	Almightya	Liberistan	Profitopia	EUnia
Mobility	1	1	3	5
Civic education	2	3	1	5
Universal rights	1	1	1	3
Tolerance in Europe	1	1	5	3
Healthy life	3	3	3	4
Privacy	1	2	1	2
Total score	9	11	14	22

Repertoires for action

The question the students and young professionals had to ask themselves was: who can do what in the scenarios to realize the chosen important values? For Almightya it seemed that change could come from within as well as from the outside. Political dissidents would be able to achieve new perspectives on the future status quo. Also student groups could play an important role, with them being a new generation that comes with new innovating ideas. Finally, the totalitarian government of Almightya could be attacked from outside. This form of action will also come in handy for achieving and defending the aforementioned values in Liberistan. Moreover, the citizens of Liberistan could also effect change from within, but would have to wait for a window of opportunity in which they could capitalize on the internal strife within the regime and play off the various factions within the elites for the benefit of civil society. They will have to use this moment of weakness to make a bottom-up change. This bottom-up change might also be necessary in the case of Profitopia. In addition, the citizens of Profitopia, being customers of all kinds of corporations, will have the option of putting pressure on the market by, for example, organizing strikes or boycotting products of certain suppliers. Finally, even though the citizens of EUnia are free to organize themselves, there is only one kind of national identity that their state sanctions, namely that of EU-nationalism. In order to change this, the citizens must unite and create their own cultures from within.

Despite the fact that the imagined worlds are so varied and depend on different driving forces, the (youth) citizens seem to be the key to achieving change in all possible futures. Regardless of whether their country (or world) will be ruled by one enormous state, by all kinds of corporations, a

monopolist or by a totalitarian government, the citizens are able to organize themselves and make a change from within. Everything starts from the civic society and therefore that should be the most important driving force. Since youth represents the next critical and innovative generation, it is essential to provide it with high quality civic education. This will give students and young professionals the opportunity to be able to handle and control the most extreme of the possible futures, something every citizen can benefit from.

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