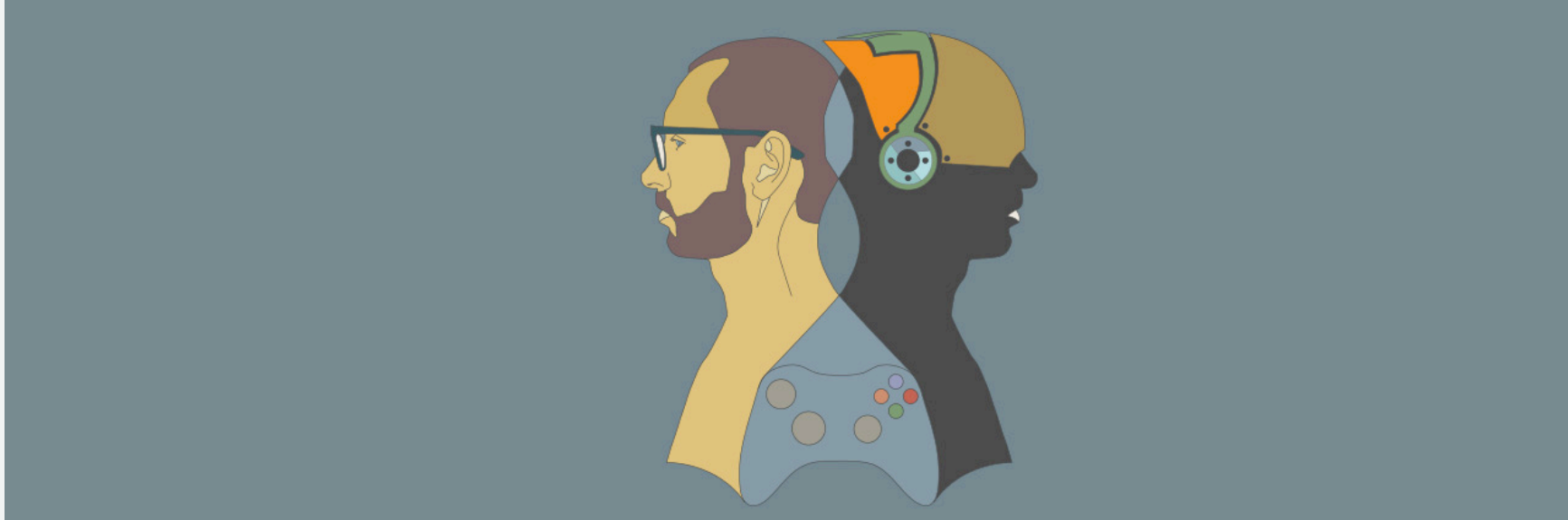


# ***Utopian and speculative methods in imagining and co-creating the future of postdigital higher education***

Imagining possible futures, Jyväskylä  
19 June, 2024

Dr Marko Teräs  
CARDE research group  
Social Sciences, Tampere University

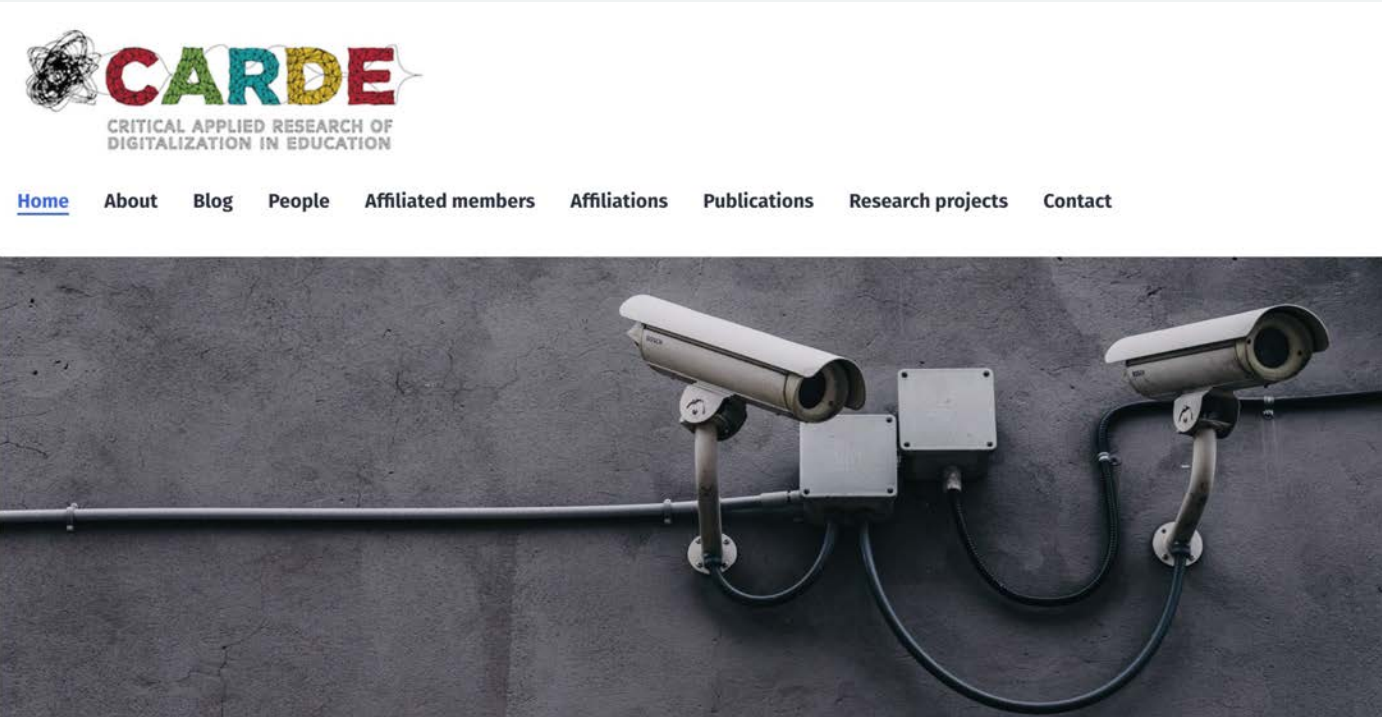




## ***Background***

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





Co-founder and lead of **CARDE** (Critical Applied Research of Digitalization in Education) research group.

Founded in 2020.

Website: <https://carde.group>







# ***Current research project***

“Speculative social science fiction of digitalization in higher education: Towards a humanized digital future”

Funded by the Research Council of Finland (2021-2025)

More at <https://carde.group>



**Speculative fiction  
and utopian thinking  
as ways to imagine  
alternative futures**

[Home](#) > [Postdigital Science and Education](#) > [Article](#)


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


[Commentaries](#) | [Open access](#) | [Published: 25 October 2021](#)

Volume 4, pages 224–236, (2022) [Cite this article](#)

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[Juha Suoranta](#), [Marko Teräs](#), [Hanna Teräs](#), [Petar Jandrić](#), [Susan Ledger](#), [Felicita Macgilchrist](#)  & [Paul Prinsloo](#)

 4806 Accesses  23 Citations  18 Altmetric  1 Mention [Explore all metrics](#) →





METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

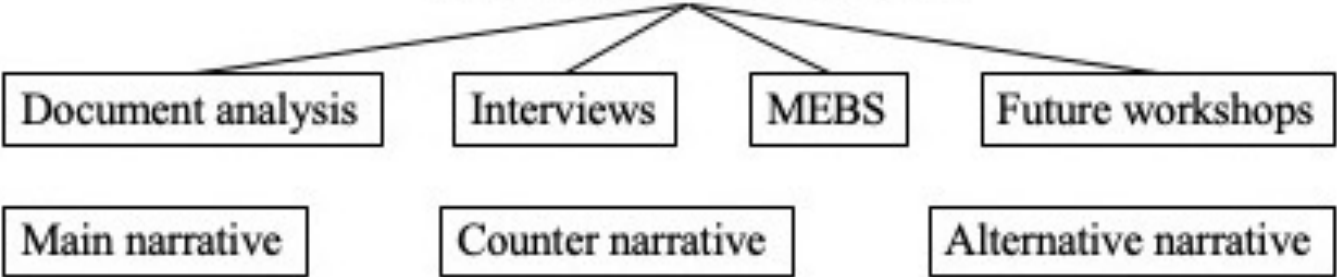
METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

REPORTING

Institutional Ethnography  
Social Science Fiction

Extending IE  
with SF



***Speculative social  
science fiction of  
digitalization in  
higher education***

Main narrative:  
How is digitalization  
discursively constructed  
in the contexts of HE?

Counter narrative:  
What is the lived  
experience of being a  
teaching academic?

Alternative narratives:  
How do academics envision  
desirable/undesirable  
futures?







Educational Research and Innovation  
**Education in the Digital Age**  
HEALTHY AND HAPPY CHILDREN  
Edited by Tracey Burns and Francesca Gottschalk



**OECD Skills Outlook 2019**  
THRIVING IN A DIGITAL WORLD



# ***Future visions***

WORLD  
ECONOMIC  
FORUM

COMMITTED TO  
IMPROVING THE STATE  
OF THE WORLD

Platform for Shaping the Future of the New Economy and Society

## **Schools of the Future** Defining New Models of Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

January 2020



DIGITAL EDUCATION

ACTION PLAN

2021 - 2027

Resetting  
education and training  
for the digital age



### **World Employment and Social Outlook**

The role of digital labour  
platforms in transforming  
the world of work

2021

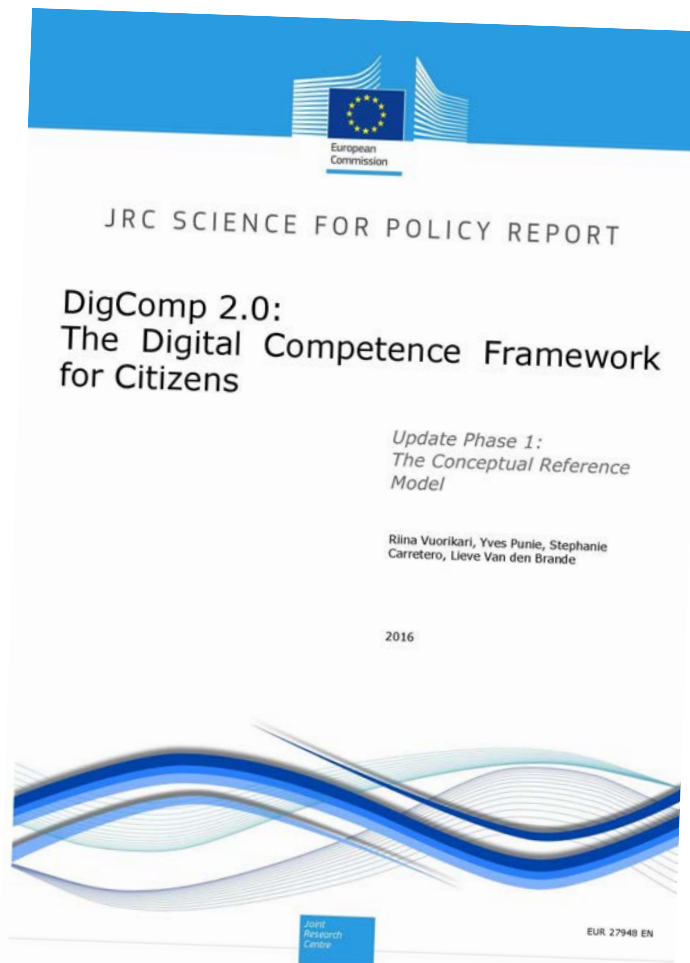


**Future  
visions**

**and policies**



REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURES OF EDUCATION





## Higher education and research

Higher education institutions and science agencies

Policy and development in higher education and science

International strategy for higher education and research

Steering, financing and agreements

Higher education and degrees

Science and research

Statistics

## Vision for higher education and research in 2030

The vision for the Finnish higher education and research in 2030 was drawn up in cooperation with higher education institutions and other stakeholders and was published in October 2017.

NB: This project has ended and the webpage will no longer be updated.

The purpose was to formulate a future scenario which enables the development of a high-quality, effective and internationally competitive higher education system in Finland by the year 2030.

In the course of this work, different alternatives and models for improving the Finnish higher education system were examined and their impacts and feasibility assessed. The development needs of the Finnish higher education and research were reviewed and the future desired state defined on the basis of the changes in the national and international operating environment.

The work was carried out in broad and open cooperation with the higher education institutions and their staff, students and stakeholders.

### See also

[Roadmap for Implementing Vision 2030](#) PDF 736kB 31.1.2019

[Proposal for Finland](#) PDF 467kB 24.10.2017

[OECD report on collaboration among higher education institutions](#) PDF 1.1MB 17.11.2017

**National  
future visions  
and policies**



# **Critical Document Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis of  
intergovernmental and governmental,  
international and national documents

OECD

UNESCO

World Economic Forum

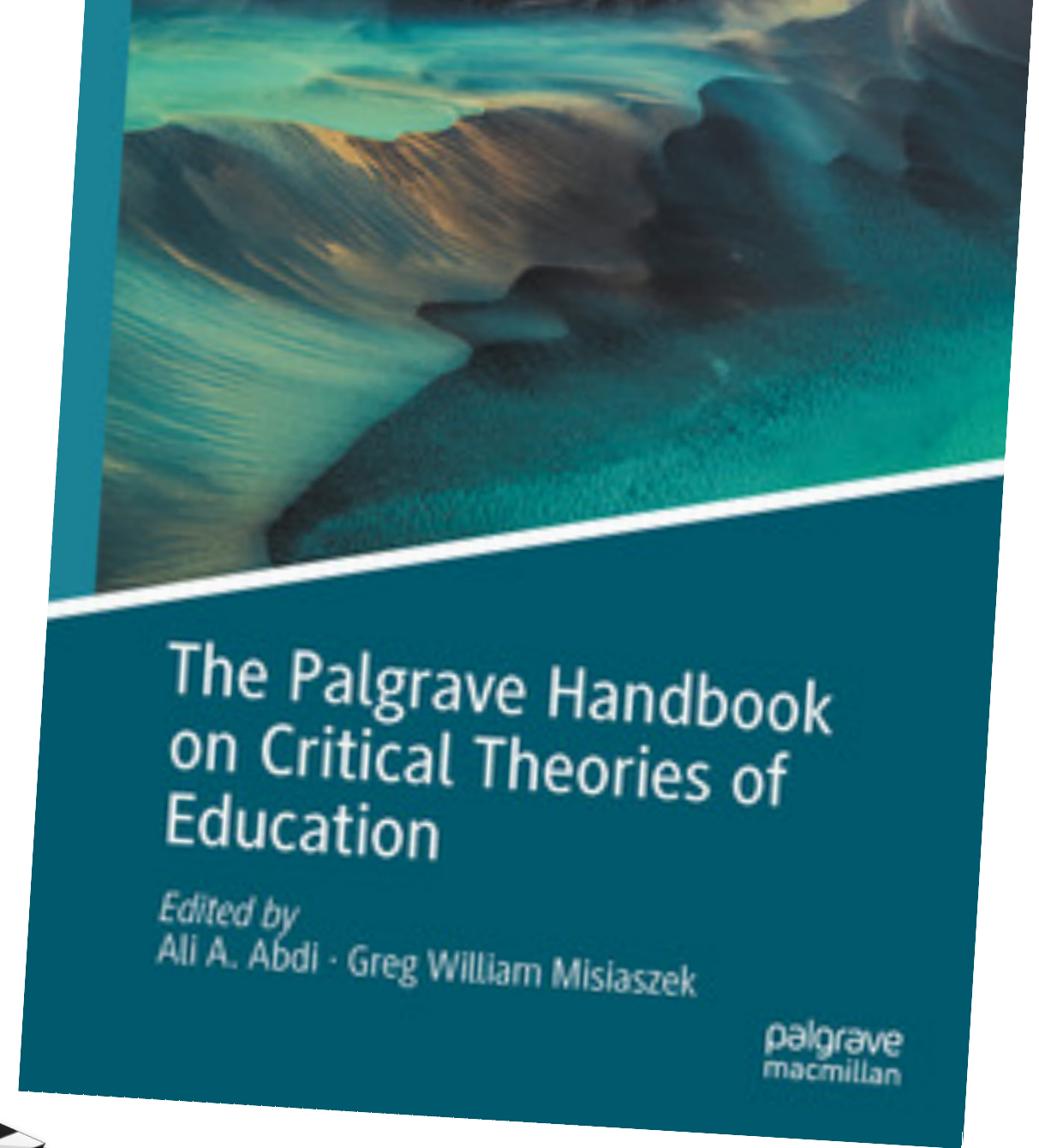
EU

Finnish Ministry of Education

Finnish National Agency for Education

Finnish Government

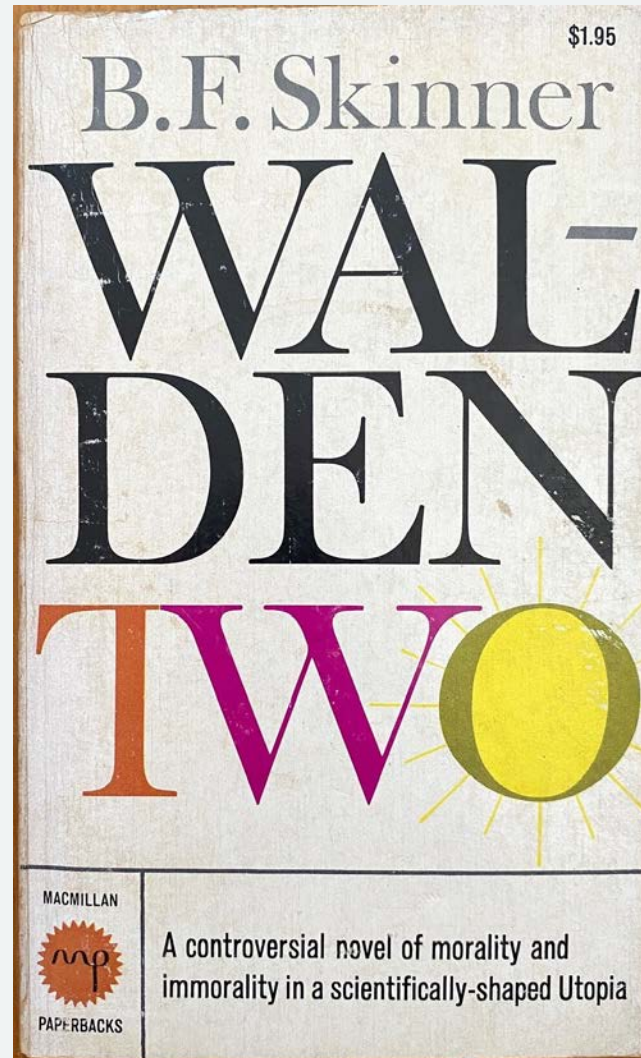
Digivision 2030 initiative



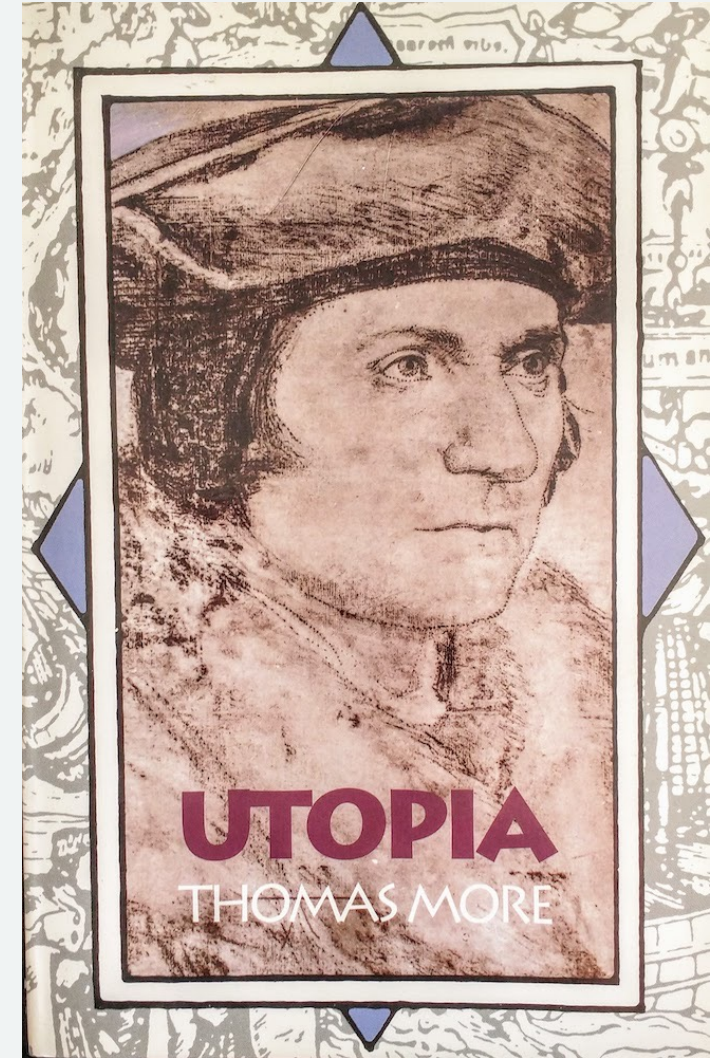


# **“Official Document Utopias”**

- These documents build a picture of a future which can be ensured with digitalization/datafication
- They also build the future they only claim to predict
- Possible futures become *a* future
- These utopias affect educational policies and decision-making and shape our educational systems



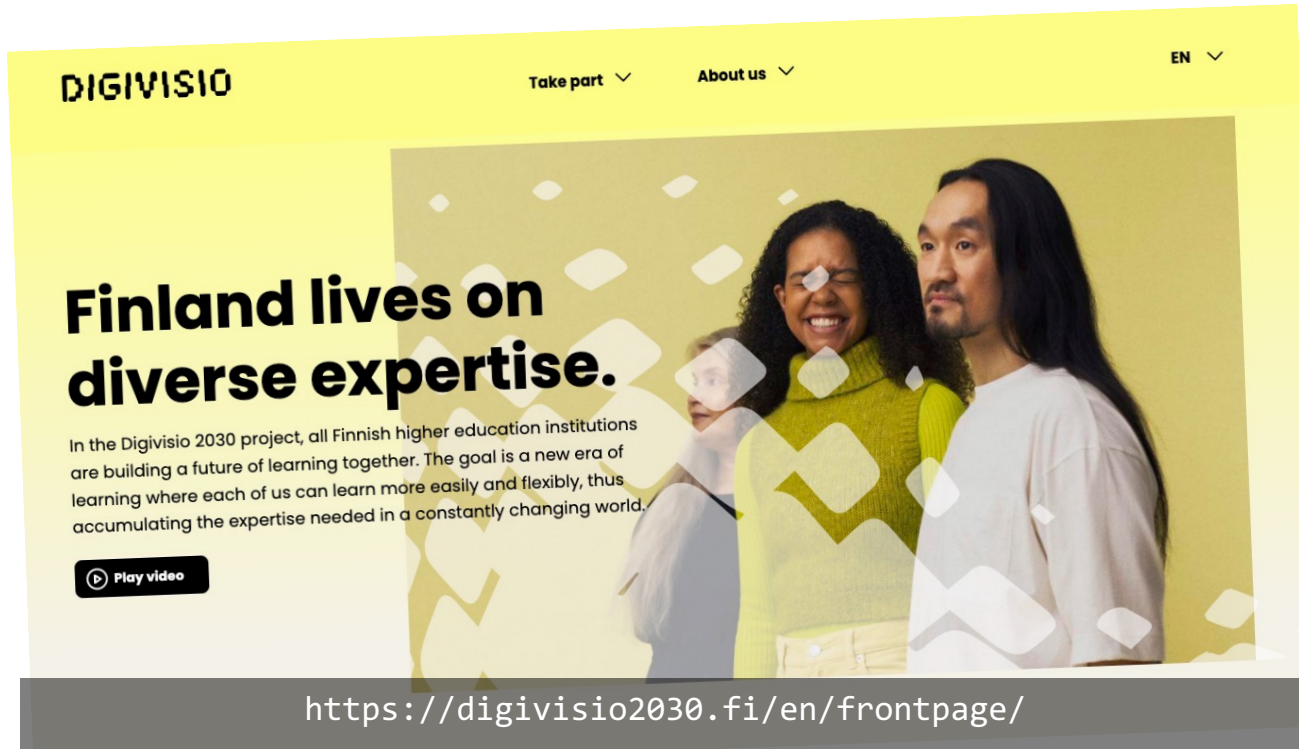
(1948)



(1516)



# **“Digivisio 2030”: Operationalizing a technological utopia?**



- A national initiative funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture
- 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>)

# Tiede & Edistys 1-2

## (2024)

English book chapter coming  
in 2024-2025.

## Koulutus digitalisaation vallassa? Kohti data- ja algoritmiohjattua korkeakoulutusta

JUHA SUORANTA, MARKO TERÄS & HANNA TERÄS

**ABSTRAKTI** Suomalaisen korkeakoulutuspolitiikan tehtäväljstalla ovat pitkään olleet taloudellisen kasvun ja tuottavuuden tavoitteet. Perinteisesti niitä on pyritty edistämään korkeakoulujen rakenteellisella kehittämisellä. Tämän "korkeakoulutuksen tehostamisdoktriinin" keinovalikoimaan on sittemmin sisällytetty myös korkeakoulutuksen digitalisaatio. Sen myötä tehokkuusdoktriinin painopiste on siirtynyt koulutuksen rakenteista opiskelijan henkisten kapasiteettien optimointiin. Suomessa korkeakoulutuksen digitalisaatiota on ryhdytty edistämään Digivisio 2030 -nimisellä korkeakoulujen yhteishankkeella. Artikkelimme problematisoi hankkeen "arvolupauksia" ja tarkastelee tätä kautta koulutuksen digitalisaatiota sosioteknisenä kuvitelmana eli esityksenä, jonka tarkoitus ohjata yhteiskuntien ja ihmisten toimintaa kohti teknologiapainotteista tulevaisuutta.

**AVAINSANAT** digitalisaatio, datafikaatio, data- ja algoritmiohjattu koulutus, korkeakoulutuspolitiikka, Digivisio 2030

Suomalaisen korkeakoulutuspolitiikan pitkäaikainen tavoite on ollut taloudellisen kasvun ja tuottavuuden edistäminen koulutuksen avulla. Koulutuksen digitalisaatio on siirtämässä tämän "tehostamisdoktriinin" uuteen vaiheeseen. Digitalisaatiolla pyritään tehostamaan massoituneen korkeakoulutuksen läpivirtausta ja tuottamaan opiskelijoille tietotaloudessa

tarvittavia kvalifikaatioita. Kansantalouden kasvuun liittyvä kvalifikaatiotehtävä on ollut keskeinen osa suomalaista koulutuspolitiikkaa 1960-luvulta lähtien. Uudistetun doktriinin ytimessä on siirtyminen koulutuksen rakenteista opiskelijan yksilöllisten valintojen optimointiin eli käytännössä opintojen nopeuttamiseen esimerkiksi tekoälypohjaisten sovellusten avulla





**From high level  
hopes to local  
level utopias**



**Postdigital Participation in Education** pp 177–198 | [Cite as](#)

[Home](#) > [Postdigital Participation in Education](#) > Chapter

## From Official Document Utopias to a Collective Utopian Imagination

[Marko Teräs](#) , [Hanna Teräs](#) & [Juha Suoranta](#)

Chapter | [Open Access](#) | [First Online: 29 September 2023](#)

505 Accesses

Part of the [Palgrave Studies in Educational Media](#) book series (PSEM)

### Abstract

In their chapter, Teräs, Teräs, and Suoranta critique the current dominant narrative of the digitalization of higher education. They argue that reports and vision papers by powerful international and national organizations such as the OECD not only predict but also build a certain kind of digital future. They call these reports “official document utopias,” and reflect on their discursive truth with past utopian literature. The authors argue that we should use collective utopian methods to imagine genuinely alternative “postdigital” futures, and to this end, they introduce the Method of Empathy-Based Stories. While discussing its history, they also reflect on its potential and limitations through a study with Finnish teacher students, imagining the digitalization of higher education in 2050.







***Speculative methods for  
alternative digital futures  
(on an organizational/people level):***





# Method of Empathy-Based Stories (MEBS)

## Scenario 1:

We are living in the year 2050. The practices of digitalization in education have progressed considerably. From the teacher's point of view the situation is good in every way. Why? Imagine a situation and write a short story about it.

## Scenario 2:

We are living in the year 2050. The practices of digitalization in education have progressed considerably. From the teacher's point of view the situation is bad in every way. Why? Imagine a situation and write a short story about it.

74 students in a professional teacher education program.

39 stories based on the positive frame story, and 35 based on the negative alternative.

## Nordic STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Articles | Peer-reviewed | Vol. 44, No. 2, 2024, pp. 122–141

### Holograms or Hemorrhoids? Student Teachers' Imaginings of the Digital Futures of Education

Hanna Teräs

Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Contact corresponding author: hanna.teras@tuni.fi

Marko Teräs

Tampere University, Finland

Juha Suoranta

Tampere University, Finland

#### ABSTRACT

This study reports preservice teachers' perceptions of desirable and undesirable digital futures for education. Empathy-based stories were collected from 74 student teachers in Finnish professional teacher education. The findings were arranged into three positive and three negative future scenarios. In the positive scenarios, digital tools support human interaction and are subject to the teacher's agency. Teaching and learning remain essentially human activities, whereas technology has a supportive role. In the negative scenarios, learning is reduced to the acquisition of mechanical competences managed by technology and teachers becoming machine operators. These results could guide the development of teacher education, decision-making, and education policy toward meaningful digital futures.

**Keywords:** digitalization, teacher education, method of empathy-based stories





Jungk, R., & Müllert, N. (1987). *Future Workshops: How to create desirable futures*. Inst. for Social Inventions.

# Future Workshops

“What kind of future do we hope for?”

Consists of three phases: 1) Critique, 2) Fantasy and 3) Implementation

Future workshops were held for the Tampere Universities staff on November 28 and December 5, 2023



A large, dense crowd of young people, likely students, are shown in a state of protest or demonstration. Many have their fists raised in the air, and several hold up handmade signs. One visible sign in the upper center reads "PUB/RSICS". Another sign on the left partially shows "CE" and "IES". The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, with many looking towards the camera or slightly off-camera with expressions of determination or shouting. The background is filled with more people, creating a sense of a large-scale event.

# 1) CRITIQUE

Aim: Collective critique of the phenomenon of “digitalization of higher education”





## 2) FANTASY

Aim: To draft solutions to the ideas from the Critique phase





### 3) IMPLEMENTATION

Aim: To evaluate the utopian propositions and plans based on the organizational and working context



# ***Future Workshops result: Tentative Digitalization Guidelines for Tampere Higher Education Community***

1. Start with the Human – Principle of Human-Centricity
2. Do It Sustainably – Principle of Sustainability
3. Develop Justly – Principle of Justice
4. Create Understanding – Principle of Understanding
5. Proceed Systematically – Principle of Systematic Approach

Created together with the participants. Posted on the Intranet. Shared with other actors at the university, for example the **Digital Office** and **Digital and Sustainability Transitions in Society: a Double-Edged Sword (DigiSus)** initiatives.



## ***Ethics and policies***

“We would underscore first and foremost that the **benefits of some types of AI use remain untested**, and in some cases blanket AI adoption mandates can contribute to both harm and waste. In its implementation of the Executive Order, OMB should foreground that the presumption that AI adoption will in all cases enhance operations or efficiency, or will inherently improve innovation, has historically proven to be flawed.”

(<https://ainowinstitute.org/>)

### POLICY

# AI Now Submission to the Office and Management and Budget on AI Guidelines

AI Now Institute

Dec 20, 2023

Founded in 2017, the AI Now Institute produces diagnosis and policy research on artificial intelligence. We develop policy strategy to redirect away from the current trajectory: unbridled commercial surveillance, consolidation of power in very few companies, and a lack of public accountability.





## **Call for Book Chapters:**

# **Postdigital Imaginations: Critiques, Methods, and Interventions**

The edited volume concentrates on three themes:

1. Postdigital imaginative research methodologies and innovations
2. The role of imagination in postdigital arts, activism, politics and pedagogy
3. Postdigital experiments and interventions in multiple areas of society, including emerging technological practices

### **Editors**

[Petar Jandrić](#), Zagreb University of Applied Sciences, Croatia, [Juha Suoranta](#), [Hanna Teräs](#), [Marko Teräs](#), Tampere University, Finland.

Please submit enquiries, abstracts, and chapters to Petar Jandrić: [pjandric@tvz.hr](mailto:pjandric@tvz.hr).



# ***Thank you!***

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<https://carde.group>

