



ENGLISH TEXT

We apologize for being late in the development of english pages therefore we offer this pdf version of the complete text of the website

Headline:

Building the nonviolent society is possible

Homepage

Neotopia is a Think-Tank whose research and planning work is aimed at the establishment of a nonviolent society in Italy and the World at large.

Neotopia formally is a non-profit organisation and has been established in 2009; its roots lie in the experience of Associazione Ariel of Gazzola (Piacenza, Italy). The reason behind the creation of a new subject is to be found in the Neotopia Project, launched in February 2008 with the publishing of the italian version of the “Democratic values” of Vinoba Bhave, the closest disciple of *Mahatma* Gandhi.

The work of Neotopia is developing along different paths: research teams are at work on **Human Nature, Nonviolence in Education, Nonviolence in Medicine, Nonviolence in Legal professions**; on the social side Neotopia offers the **Nonviolent revolution in everyday life** project to small communities and municipalities.

Every team works at producing innovative studies aimed at challenging what the norwegian sociologist and philosopher Johan Galtung has deemed the “structural violence” of our society.

The methodology is based on multidisciplinary, as we are convinced that the nonviolent, prosperous and happy society that is our mission to help build will come only from the integration of different fields of knowledge and a profound reform of the praxis.

Neotopia also offers advice and consultancy to people willing to practice nonviolence in conflict resolution or in general life through meditation and/or self help groups, formation, solidarity and international cooperation initiatives.

Manual labour is also suggested and practiced as an evolutionary tool, in line with the thought of Gandhiji.

Goals

Neotopia aims to favor the accomplishment of a revolution which is nonviolent, legal, rooted in daily life, and will overcome the cultural and structural violence plaguing our society by the strength of nonviolence and Truth.

The ideals of Neotopia are explicated in the Manifesto, proposed during the January 2008 congress remembering the 60th anniversary of death of Mahatma Gandhi where Neotopi Project was launched; the Manifesto can be downloaded in the appropriate section of the site ([LINK](#))

Who are we

Neotopia has been established in 2009 by some members of Associazione Ariel, inside which the Neotopia Project was started in 2007. Ariel was founded in 2000 by a group of spiritual researchers with the aim of an holistic view of life, inspired by the universal values of solidarity, peace and brotherhood between human beings and with all the living beings sharing the environment with them.

It is thus clear that Neotopia's roots are founded in the spiritual dimension, but with the support of solid scientific evidence confirming the vision which found in Gandhi a strong reference point. His pragmatism, in conjunction with his belief in the absolute compatibility of spirituality and reason, we share and therefore we have easily found in Vinoba Bhave the guiding light of the Neotopia project.

Neotopia is a neologism proposed by professor Piero Giorgi of the University of Queensland (www.pierogiorgi.org) in 2001, to identify the nonviolent society where the culture of nonviolence will be implemented by people willing to work on themselves and practice the principles of nonviolence in daily private and social life.

Events

Neotopia accomplishes its mission also through open events, seminars, moments of study and confrontation among scholars. It's also our intention to keep historic record of our work for nonviolence and, when possible, outline other's ideas and initiatives as well as hints for reflection about current times and events.

Next initiatives

It's almost ten years since the term "Neotopia" was introduced by professor Piero P. Giorgi in his fundamental book "The origins of violence by cultural evolution" (second edition) Brisbane, Minerva E&S, 2001.

To mark this anniversary Neotopia organizes a workshop about "The nonviolent society, theory and praxis", to be held in 2010. The event will take place in European Center of studies in Gargnano (Brescia - Italy).

The workshop will be coordinated by professor Piero P. Giorgi and Federico Fioretto while the organizative committee is in course of definition. Workshop output will be offered to a national publisher for publication. Participation intentions, volunteers for the organization and suggestion of specific themes to be worked out are welcome.

An event where to present the workshop's output to the general public is been prepared and will be held in Piacenza.

In October we will host Johan Galtung, universally considered the father of modern peace science; in his presence we will stage a "process to violence in modern medicine" as a demonstration of our attitude to nonviolent reform in all professions, which is one of the specific goals of Neotopia.

Nonviolence practice

Building something always requires specific knowledge and skill. All Masters of nonviolence have moved from a deep spiritual (not religious) experience - for a comprehensive distinction between spirituality and religion see P. P. Giorgi 2001; their teaching and their praxis have been characterized by that. Therefore to build the nonviolent society it's necessary to acquire a spiritual competence.

Spiritual competence can't be only theoretical knowledge; how could otherwise be justified that despite the existence of marvellous texts such as the Vedas, the Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita, The Zend Avesta, the Gospel, the Holy Quran and others humanity still has not been transformed?

Beyond knowledge, thus, patience and steadfastness are necessary, because the transformation of themselves is as difficult as the creation of a jeweller's masterpiece and yet more gratifying.

To supply instruments for self transformation and change in the vision of the world, Neotopia offers moments of improvement of individual spiritual competence joint with an education to everyday tending of own's reform path; all in the lay vision of equal respect, dignity and consideration for every Truth searching Path.

Formation

Neotopia offers formation opportunities to give cultural and operational instruments to develop a nonviolent conscience to which more effective relations follow bringing happiness and prosperity as a byproduct.

Our activities can be organized in our seat in Gazzola or wherever necessary. Depending on multiple factors formation can be subject to participation fees.

MAYA The great game of life (LINK a www.federicofioretto.eu/MAYA)

Words of Peace, self help groups

These are very important moments in the life of our association; they are open to all and are kept whenever there's a group feeling the need by our seat in Gazzola. They are subject to a small participation fee.

In the group the practice is reinforced, by sharing prayer, without borders between religions or beliefs, meditation and reflexion about the great spiritual questions.

Every time, starting from a quote of one of the great Masters who accompanied humanity's spiritual evolution, we try to take the essence of it and to apply it to daily life.

Personal taste of the conductor makes often start from Gandhi quotes, but we have picked from many other sources in time: Jesus Christ, Buddha, Meister Eckart, Satya Sai Baba, Mohammed, Mother Theresa, Rudolf Steiner, Vinoba Bhave and many more.

During the meetings it's possible to ask questions and to submit personal subjects so the meeting works also as a self help group.

Before the end we take some time to share spiritual chants and silent meditation.

Reading groups

Reading sacred books, spiritual Master's texts as well as tough essays is often better together; confrontation enriches comprehension and the sense of immediate profitability from the teachings.

Groups of members spontaneously organize into reading groups and periodically meet more prepared witnesses to deepen their comprehension.

It's reserved to members.

Manual labour

Manual labour is an essential practice in gandhian's view of nonviolent life; it's even given a high relevance by a specific vow among the eleven of the *Satyagraha Ashram* of the Mahatma.

For Gandhi every human being should provide for his/her own basic needs through manual labour irrespective of his/her profession; human beings should, in Gandhi's view, commit some time to grow their food, weaving their clothes and so on.

Manual labour as a practice of meditation is also an ancient european tradition, codified by St. Benedict in the motto "*ora et labora*" (pray and work).

Humbly Neotopia wants to honour these intuitions by organizing occasions in which we can care about our seat, cook food for the group, raise vegetables and fruits in a natural way.

At the moment the activity is in an experimental phase and reserved to members; we have great hopes for the future.

Sharing with the last

Following in the footsteps of Gandhi, who wished to share all his life with the last, Neotopia supports the St. Catherine of Siena School and Orphanage in Mumbai (Bombay), India. St. Catherine is a Gandhi inspired institution founded by dominican monk Father Anthony Elenjimittam in 1958; the institution is mostly devoted to help street children of Bombay, giving them high level schooling and, most important, a dignified future.

St. Catherine doesn't offer single adoption of its children, a policy which we at Neotopia totally approve, but accepts sponsorships for different expenses.

Sponsoring St. Catherine is very simple.

Of what we raise we do a transfer directly to the charity Welfare society for destitute children, the financial "mother institution" of St. Catherine, which is regularly registered by indian competent authorities.

When we get periodical news from Mumbai we forward them to our mailing list.

If some sponsor wishes to visit (and is ready to adapt to share the very simple accommodation of our children) visitors are always welcome in Mumbai.

Video documents and presentations are available to introduce the initiative to new groups of potential supporters.

The Happy Homes Project

In 2007 the Welfare Society for destitute children launched the Happy Homes project to expand its support to the families of the children it helps.

It is very important that all the work done with the children doesn't go wasted when, at the end of the school, they rejoin their families.

Thus now the parents of the children shall adhere to three conditions: they will have to get a stable job, settle down in the slum areas and set aside a sum between 100 and 200 Rs a month (a little over 1,5 or 3,0 euros according to the number of children taken in by the institution).

After a 12 years period these savings will help relocalize these families in groups of 30 in villages or rural areas where they will have self built homes and a school for theirs and the village's children.

Some craftwork will also be started together with the construction work.

Skip a meal give a home

At the end of 2006 in Piacenza four Nobel Peace laureates, Betty Williams, Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi and Rigoberta Menchu Tum, launched the project "Mothers of the Earth for peace in the world".

During the meeting a girl from the audience asked what "normal" people could do for peace; then Mrs. Betty Williams answered "you can skip a meal a week, put what you save in a money box and at the end of the year use it to finance some deserving campaign".

This is a good idea; it's both a participated act and a chance to feel, slightly but for real, the disease of an empty stomach which millions of our sisters and brothers feel painfully throughout their lives.

We have liked, of Mrs Williams' idea, the sharing not of the superfluous but of what is necessary to all human beings.

Many of us have decided to adopt this instrument to give to less fortunate brothers and sisters and to develop their inner strenght.

Neotopia believes that Vinoba was right when he said that "the way to strength lies in the fields which offer natural opportunities for renunciation and sacrifice".

Joining in this initiative is obviously open to all; we also suggest inner growth practice to all wishing to give the savings to other charitable initiatives, fully respecting individual choices.

Meeting with testimonials

At times the paths walked by searchers of the Truth cross each other; in these precious circumstances the exchange of ideas, opinions, knowledge and information enrich our lives; we at Neotopia do our best to catch every opportunity of exchange.

When possible, thus, we organize meetings with testimonials of nonviolence or anyone whose personal path can spur our quest of Truth.

Support Neotopia

Neotopia is a social promotion association recognized according to Italian law; those who share our ideals and wish to partake in the struggle to reach our ambitious goals can support Neotopia either becoming members, thus gaining the right to participate in association's life, or liberally donating funds.

In case of donation through bank transfer we pray to also alert Neotopia via e-mail; we don't check bank account daily!

We can guarantee the fiscal bonus on donations for Italian residents but not abroad.

Membership for one year is: Ordinary 30,00 €; Supporter 50,00 €; Meritorious 200,00 €; Young (under 18) 10,00. Liberalities beyond 1.000,00 € will be honoured by a "Lifetime Member" qualification.

Project Neotopia

Neotopia is a path towards the implementation in our society of a nonviolent model of life, centered on the human being and its everyday life praxis.

We are convinced that the structurally violent society is based on a violent cultural model; thus we believe that we need to propose a serious revolutionary cultural project to reach our goals.

To this work a daily practice must be joined in the footsteps of the Masters of nonviolence, from Gandhi to Lanza del Vasto, from Capitini to Dolci, from Vinoba to father Zeno Saltini. Therefore the Neotopia Project is articulated in many streams.

Research Area

To do a serious cultural work means first of all researching and verifying data and information, so that proposals can be credible and effective.

In order to reach its goals Neotopia has started research groups on some specific issues, formed by competent researchers passionately keen on nonviolence.

Researchers and scholars who should be interested in these issues may wish to submit ideas, suggestions and their candidacy to join in by sending an e-mail to the coordinator of the project.

Education to Nonviolence

It's time to consider which areas of study and intervention are critical to the education to Nonviolence and peace for the citizens of the future nonviolent society.

It must be remembered that any society's structure - or social model - is created mainly through education and a profound reform of the educational system is of paramount importance to make a social reform effective and lasting.

We can also remember that Vinoba Bhave (see in Democratic values) provocatively - but very seriously - said that when India became independent the main thing to do should

have been to change the education system radically, even at the cost of remaining one or two years without it in the transition, because the imperial schools were designed to produce slaves of the Empire and couldn't be useful to the education of the free citizens of a free nation.

Unfortunately he wasn't listened to and most unfortunately he was tremendously right. Our educational system is structurally violent because it is designed to produce generation after generation of impotent citizens of a structurally violent society.

It need be changed radically.

The idea is to form a group of scholars and professionals who will first define violence in terms of education, then pinpoint the most critical aspects of violence in the educational system and suggest ways to introduce change, in both a short and a long term perspective as it is needed when working on a radical cultural and social reform.

Nonviolence in medicine

According to its goal of the integration of all knowledge and praxis with the principles of Nonviolence, Neotopia thinks that it is necessary to challenge the structurally violent paradigm that is presently dominant in medicine and care practice in general.

Care of the suffering and of the fragile should constitute a privileged field for the application of Nonviolence, in the form of compassion and service; instead a complex of knowledge, practices and operative techniques has developed in these precise fields which has dehumanized the work of care.

This situation originates from the evolution of the western thought culminated in Descartes' propositions and consolidated by the Enlightenment, from the technology/drug centered evolution of medical practice, from its institutionalization and from other factors which we intend to explore thoroughly.

But it's not only patients who suffer from this situation: for instance the suicide rate among physicians is fourfold that of the general population. This is a classical consequence of the structural violence of our society, as defined by Johann Galtung.

The Nonviolence in Medicine project sees a selected group of professionals (physicians, nurses, psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists and others) and friends of Nonviolence addressing the various problematic aspects of the current attitude to care.

The first step will be a publication which will on one side stimulate a critical reflexion on the problem of violence in medicine and on the other a series of suggestions designed to constitute the base of a serious debate about feasible ways to educate present and future professionals to a nonviolent practice of medicine and care work.

Then The proposals of Neotopia will be presented in every appropriate context and the evaluation of how and where to best promote it could constitute a further field of discussion for the project team and between the team and external bodies (professional associations, institutions, universities).

As well as in the parallel "Nonviolent revolution in everyday life" solutions will be sought for both short and long term, meaning first the best immediate improvement of medical practice with a holistic and nonviolent perspective and second the general implementation of prevention oriented culture and life styles and of a reform of care systems and institutions in a nonviolent direction.

Human nature

Time has come to think seriously about the definition of human nature in order to make some steps forward in fields regarding human dignity, quality of life, health and peace. It's possible that we are walking in circles around paramount questions without making any practical progress right because we lack the courage to look to ourselves straight and ask who we are or better who we should be. It's no mere philosophical question neither an

intellectual amusement; it has to do with very practical questions as the current level of happiness (rapidly decreasing), physical health (steadily worsening), spirituality (leveled) material wealth (diminishing).

New and radical social proposals need a thorough understanding of human nature because social structures and institutions must serve humans and not vice-versa. We suggest to form a group of five to ten persons who will prepare the ground for a future larger consultation at a European level.

Its working methodology will be multidisciplinary, without prejudice and aimed at future practical implementation.

Nonviolence in legal profession

On the same lines of the other research groups of our Project one about nonviolence in legal profession has recently been started.

We have presented it to the general public at the 2nd festival del Diritto in Piacenza, September 2009.

The scope of the research is at the moment narrow, focusing of the possibilities of a different professional approach to separation and divorce involving children; the approach we are proposing is multidisciplinary and nonviolence based.

The initial proposition is that if the professional takes its own responsibility as a citizen and behaves accordingly, all the process of separation and divorce will privilege the interests of, first, the weaker parties, the children, then, in the end, benefit the whole society; work of the tribunals and the social services will be minimized by lowering the level of conflict and every subject involved will have less suffering from the event.

The research group is still small, but already multidisciplinary, and has rosy prospects!

Nonviolent revolution in everyday life

Neotopia is a spiritually inspired political proposal, according to the fundamental teaching of Mahatma Gandhi. He said that it was right his deeply rooted spirituality to push him into politics, which was working in the interest of his fellow citizens, particularly of the poorest, than of mankind.

But true politics, as taught by Vinoba disciple of Gandhi in his "Democratic values", is not that of power but instead that of service, daily responsibility, concrete solidarity that of the consciousness of everybody's capacity to create his/her own prosperity and that of others. Therefore Neotopia proposes to the general public a draft project for the nonviolent revolution in daily life applicable in small communities where individuals, families or collective subjects willing to engage are most likely to have a profound impact on society's fabric.

The proposed document has been drafted by prof. Giorgi and it's divided in two: the first part being the theoretical analysis of the problem, the second contains some practical issues to deal with in order to accomplish the nonviolent, legal, slow, profound and necessary revolution.

To us it's the only possible way for the contemporary society to avoid the ever closer moment of selfdestruction.

The first document is an abstract of Piero Giorgi's "The origins of violence by cultural evolution" (second edition) Brisbane, Minerva E&S, 2001" (download from www.pierogiorgi.org) which has the purpose to correct the wrong idea that humans are violent by nature. Only with this theoretical basis we can engage in the nonviolent transformation project which is outlined in the second document which, otherwise, would be just naive and impossible.

We hope that many groups of friends of nonviolence will engage in this revolution from bottom up.

Currently (autumn 2009) two groups are working on this platform for a daily life nonviolent revolution: one emerged from some members of the Joint Peace Committee of S. Giovanni in Persiceto, Sant'Agata Bolognese and Crevalcore municipalities and the other was formed by the Thursday Group of the quartiere Avesa in Verona and has now been joined by people from other places of town.

Neotopia is now contacting other Peace committees or associations to check their willingness to join the project; current phase is due to end soon in 2010 to start the studying and planning phase.