

WELCOME TO
ΕΠΟΠΕΙΑ



Miguel San Miguel

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The air feels lighter, already more breathable as I approach it. There could be the greener fields, full of trees of different species, something that I had not seen in the previous kilometers of my trip: dusty, randomly spotted by ugly houses, suburban areas and roads leading apparently to nowhere, a landscape now gone. A small neat village appears in the distance. It looks very inviting and somehow connected to my destination. I pass it by and keep heading for that place everybody is talking about now.

I mean, it feels like an outburst in the media, going viral in the networks, even politicians are being asked about their position on this supposedly revolutionary place. Or should I call it a project, commune, civilization? Hopefully not a sect, as your typical official skeptical smarty already decided and published. Anyway, I'm about to get my own impression in short time. I notice a weird gut feeling that cannot really explain, growing the closer I get to my destination. My destination? I sink into my thoughts...

They get interrupted by a sudden change in the view. The road is wider now and I can see a shape, a sculpture. Before I can recognize what it represents, I get greeted by another one. A field of art alongside the way. Someone on a bicycle I pass by, moving energetically. The sculptures are actually cute and colorful, but I forget them fast because a huge board, crossing the road, seems to mark something. Am I arriving? The board is full of geometric motives and big letters in that recognizable font that I have seen so many times in pictures before coming here. It greets me familiarly: "Welcome to Epopeia". My hormones give me a kick of joy and excitement in anticipation. I'm finally going to experience... that place.

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The first thing that strikes you in Epopeia is not its open and wide urbanism, where it, almost everywhere except for the very neuralgic spaces, feels like a village in the middle of a forest garden. It is also not its architecture, with natural buildings of different sizes, shapes and usages. Neither the integrated energy systems on roofs, cars, or some other waterstrings meandering all around. Nor the different transportation methods used. The first and most impressive reality is the whole atmosphere, especially materialized in its inhabitants: they are just... different. Natural, handsome from their inside, light, gentle, powerful. I speak to a few of them. I immediately feel trust and relaxation: my questions get answered in a way that feels as if they know what I really wanted without having asked. How come?

I head for the Guests Center, where you can easily tell who is an *Epopee* and who is a visitor. A stressed couple just arrived and they are kindly attended: the sudden tension that they brought disappears as fast as it came. A lot of information brochures about all the aspects of life in Epopeia are available in several languages. Epopees come from many different parts of the world, or their parents did, and so do as well the visitors. I am offered appointments to visit some places and *Roles*. These are people having some specific function here. For some I'll have to wait a couple of days, but I get accommodation in one of the lodges: different standards are available. That also applies to the "Getting to know us" offers. I choose a "Lighty Overview". It feels to me that I'll be able to get into depth in my next visit. Wait a moment! When did I decide that I want to come back? I just arrived!

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Epopoia is organized in families, clans and guilds. Families are those sharing a living space closely. They aren't necessarily defined by blood and have different sizes. Sometimes it follows a traditional parents-children model, others it's a polyamorous constellation, others are just dear friends or a fellowship of students. Whatever you can imagine, they have it in one or another family. Several families join in a clan, which can never be bigger than 140 members, otherwise it splits. This happens quite often, since in here move more and more people, becoming Epopees. Each clan has regular meetings of different kinds: emotional, governing, recreational... They have names like the *White Wolves*, *Archmonks*, *Eleeda*, *Sensatio Gavis*, *Tumbura*, and many others.

And then there are the guilds. Apparently they are *sociocratic* circles governing all aspects of this highly innovative settlement. There are no traditional elections in place, but everyone is encouraged to participate in as many guilds as they wish and they can responsibly fulfill. One of them is called *The Middle* and some of *The Founders* participate here together with other very talented managers. Others work as *The Visioneers* reviewing and improving on Vision, Mission and Aim of the whole Epopeia. All Epopees are committed to it. It's like "Constitution joins the Earth Charter", a very inspiring document found on their websites, on murals around the town and many other places. It is what probably drives more people to this place. At least me, it made very very curious.

One of the things that I haven't found out yet is how they make it to hide their ateliers, workshops and technological research centers. It is so harmoniously integrated with nature that they are hard to be noticed. Same goes for waste. Not only seems everything clean and healthy without being overly sterile: it is practically impossible to see litter. Their productive system follows the so-called *circular economy*. Everyone can start up new projects that create value. These are organized around *Commons'* principles from the very beginning, so that the needed initial resources have to be applied for from the available pool. Money is a thing on its own here. There is a measurement unit for performance reasons, but it doesn't really circulate

in Epopeia. All exports and imports go through a dedicated Office which deals with the banks and external companies on demand of any Epopee, so these people don't really deal with money as we know it. Only a few of them, particularly specialized ones, really have to handle with it. Epopees are very happy about this, since they find it very annoying as an issue. One could say that they have a shared economy, all Epopeia together, generally speaking. There's actually a bit more to it, since they subsidiarily distribute goods and responsibilities among clans, families, guilds and enterprises for clarity and fairness.

Epopeia has obviously many connections with the world. Leading experts on edge fields come here to exchange and apply knowledge and to experiment. Every day there are conferences, symposiums and festivals on the most varied topics. It's becoming the biggest world innovation hub. Also for that it's starting to become a key political influencer in the international sphere. Activists, politicians and also corporate come here to listen and learn from each other, especially from the so-called Peace Rounds, and some UN-institutions are starting to open offices here. Sustainability, social justice, indigenous wisdom, open knowledge, you name it!

Their new projects are the *Terra Honor Awards*, the *Vision of Humanity Process* and the *Collective Consciousness Council*.

Apparently their next goal is to integrate as many aspects of life in Epopeia as needed, so that it becomes in itself a complete society. Thus it could be so worldwide replicated, being able to fully replace other systems.

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Only time will tell how many people and resources it takes to achieve that completeness, whether there are hidden flaws in their proposal, and if the rest of the world really gets so impressed by their achievements in the spiritual and material realms that they get so massively copied. An improvement to the other current civilization patterns, in these times of definitive cultural and metahistorical paradigm change, it already might be, but: is there enough seed of diversity and innovation that “copying this everywhere” gives us long term resilience as a species, a healthy global environment, happiness as individuals? Does it acknowledge past developments enough, is it daring while remaining inclusive? Let us hope so. For the moment, other experiences worldwide, and especially physically close to Epopeia, are already implementing more and more Epopeia-inspired aspects. We'll see if it's only hype.

Personally, I am very excited by the chance to interview some Epopees and understand better how this all goes and how I really feel about it. Is it a shame? Or a trap? I guess there's no black and white answers and anyone will have to feel their own, but you will only know it when you experience it. Welcome to Epopeia.

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