
Deaftopia: Utopian Representations and Community Dreams by the Deaf

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Résumé

Deaftopia is a concept that includes both utopian and dystopian representations, throughout time and space, happening both in the past and future, flourishing in the Deaf imaginary and experience worldwide. *Deaftopia* emerged from the analysis of several Deaf-led cultural productions with Culture Studies methodologies that were selected according to the objects in hand. This research combines the analysis of Deaf narratives, from literary to non-literary texts, works as films and written and/or signed literature. It also includes the analysis of projections from shared signing communities, and Deaf-led political activist movements discourses for the legitimate rights as the recognition of signed languages and the right to be Deaf.

The innovative neologism *Deaftopia* was coined in 2020 after an intense four-year doctoral research program at the Faculty of Human Sciences, of the Portuguese Catholic University in Lisbon, that also benefitted from a visiting scholar period at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. This interdisciplinary research, drawing from the field of Culture Studies, Deaf Studies, and Utopian Studies, allowed for a fusion of pathways and frameworks that fosters a Deaf Culture Studies perspective in understanding Deaf people as an ethnic minority.

The aspirations for the creation of a *Deaf Commonwealth* and *Deaf Nation*, mythologies such the *People of the Eye*, *Destination Eyeth*, among other Deaf cultural constructs are recurrent *Deaftopian* manifestations deriving from Sign Language Peoples. The longing for a place where sign language is widespread and Deaf people are granted full accessibility and opportunities guides narratives emerging from Deaf communities. However, other Deaf cultural productions display a dystopian perspective, serving as a warning against eugenic and newgenic practices, against linguicism and denouncing several threats of extinction that Deaf communities face in our times.

From the onset, *Deaftopia* has been raising further awareness of Deaf idiosyncrasies, Deaf Culture, and epistemologies, causing a positive impact in both hearing and Deaf audiences, after several presentations within both academic and social circles, such as at Gallaudet University (2018), the XVIII World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in the Palais des Congrès, in Paris (2019), or the masterclass for the European *Beyond Signs Project* hosted by *Voarte* at the *Inshadow Festival* in Lisbon (2021).

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*Intervenant

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