

This leads to a sense of disengagement and marginalization, and a simple understanding that their concerns are not being heard. In contexts such as these the real understandings and perspectives held by young people can be driven underground.

The WYRED project aims to replace disempowering scrutiny with the empowerment of self-scrutiny and self-organization through the process of social dialogue and research activities that it aims to facilitate.

Other important issue is heterogeneity. Despite the fact that the media and society frequently portray young people as a homogenous mass, the perception of WYRED consortium is that young people do not perceive themselves in this way. They are as heterogeneous and diverse as any other social group. Though when addressing issues relating to discrimination, it may be necessary to speak of young people as a single group it is largely unhelpful since it constitutes an obstacle to understanding the variety of different perceptions and understandings that young people may have. This implies that single theories and explications of the nature of young people, the perceptions of young people, the motivations of young people are likely to miss the target. What is needed is an approach that respects and celebrates the diversity of young people and gives space for all their voices. The WYRED platform (WP3) aims to do this by integrating attention to inclusion and diversity throughout the project thanks to the inclusion of a specific work package (WP2) for this purpose. In addition to this, by attracting a wide diversity of young people into the activity (in WP4 networking), by engaging in social dialogue (in WP5) that respects and reflects the diversity of perspectives, and then by facilitating a wide range of different research activities for different issues and different groups, each organized as the young participants involved see fit. In this way the diversity of youth perspectives can emerge and be explored.

A key challenge however that arises out of this heterogeneity is that it complicates the generation of outcomes for policy. The domain of the study of changes in society, especially in relation to digital aspects, is contested: many discourses including philosophy, sociology, social cybernetics, biology, psychology and economics provide differing, and sometimes overlapping accounts of the changes currently taking place in the ways we live, behave and work. This contested theoretical setting is coupled with the heterogeneity of young people and of human communities, and personal identities whose agency is increasingly oriented around similar technological practices, but whose identities, values, histories, and tendencies as we have commented, remain distinct and irreducible. The situation is more complex than earlier in the 20th century when grand theories (for example those of Keynes [22] or Hayek [19]) could be used to ground reliable interventions by policy makers. Now policy makers have to absorb knowledge from a vast range of theoretical contexts, and gain insight into the diverse communities with which they seek to intervene, many of which may have conflicting demands and ideas. At the same time, practicable policies have to be produced, bearing in mind the need for political pragmatism and the development of policy which resonates with popular (rather than academic) understandings.

The WYRED consortium position is that the transformations we are currently undergoing in European society are of such plasticity that formalized models and academic grand theory will increasingly be compromised in their ability to explain and predict events, not only in everyday life, but also within their own academic terms. In order to address this problem WYRED focuses on implementing a process of continual dialogue and exploration, generating insights (rather than grand theories) that are grounded in the everyday perceptions and understandings of young people and their lived experience in the digital society. The data and other outputs of the process are subject to interpretation by the young people themselves, by the partners in the consortium and importantly by other stakeholders and indeed the wider society, since the data and outputs will be open access. In the processes of evaluation and recommendation that take place in WP7, the insights and outputs of the WYRED process will be discussed and interpreted, and explanations and recommendations generated for use in the valorization work package (WP8). WYRED aims to have an impact on policy-makers by helping them to engage with what is an interpretive and adaptive process, rather than produce a closed product. Only in this way can the heterogeneity be respected. In this sense, the key aim of WYRED is to suggest a rich range of possible paths for transition to future models, as opposed to a fixed roadmap.

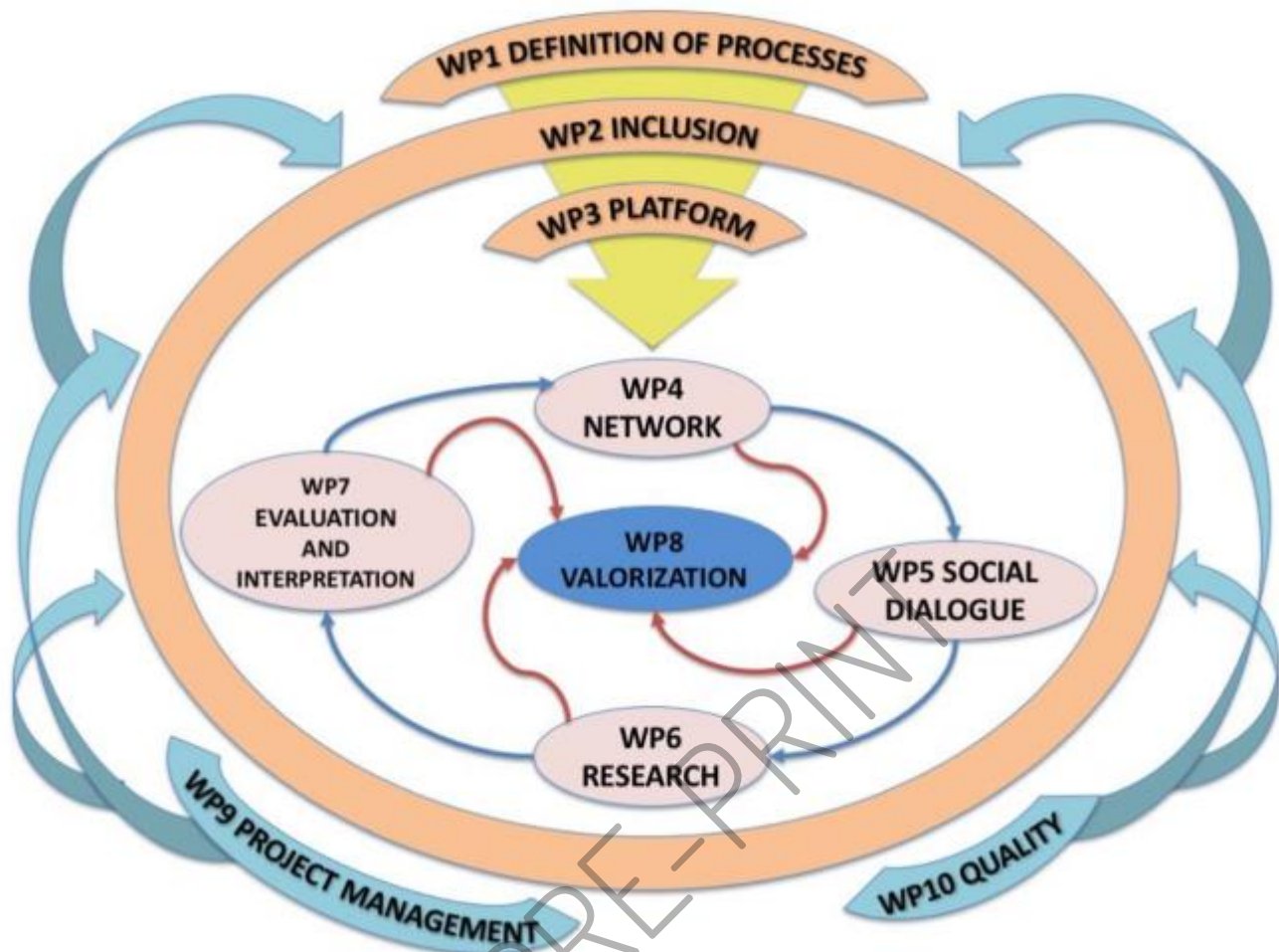


Figure 1. Work Packages diagram of the WYRED project

Another important aspect of the WYRED approach is the notion of generative research. This idea derives especially from the contexts of design and user research which are appropriate for the kind of research that is needed to surface the attitudes, experiences, understandings etc. of the participants. Generative research is creative [30]. In generative research the creativity of the participants is given space and structured around shared experience, such as the research activities proposed in WP6. The focus in the project is on what can emerge from the research process and particularly on what the young people who participate may create or generate through their exploration. The consortium is multidisciplinary, with a range of different forms of expertise including software engineering, computer science, gender studies, future studies, educational research, cybernetics, evaluation, business, market research, sustainability and environmental issues, creativity, youth activity, and peace-building. It is envisaged that the research activities will focus on arriving a wide range of different social and cultural issues related to different aspects of the digital society, which as is perhaps self-evident in increasingly intertwined with the analogue indeed it might be argued that in many walks of life to distinguish between them is no longer useful. These issues will be defined and selected through the social dialogue process in WP5 and to provide an agenda a priori would be to betray the focus on the need for young people to set the agenda. However, given its extensive experience in the context of work with young people the consortium anticipates that issues such as online safety and vulnerability, trust, identity, the boundaries of public and private and other aspects of appropriate online behavior, relationships and communication are especially likely to be explored. Other wider issues that are affected by the digital in diverse ways are also likely to appear, such as sustainable lifestyles, consumption patterns, ethical business and economic behaviors, climate change and resource scarcity. Others such as civic organization and behaviors, domestic organization and behaviors, aging populations and health care will also be floated as possible areas to explore.

However, it is also important to note that the generative process involved in the WYRED cycle also includes the dialogue and interaction processes involved, particularly in WP5 but also in parts of WP3. A diverse range of asynchronous and synchronous dialogue approaches will be used in the project, including for example Structured Dialogue, World Café, Open Space Technology and others, and these will be designed to generate insights around thematic areas and important issues and questions to be explored. These will emerge as much from the interaction between different perspectives and viewpoints as from the expression of singular positions. In this sense, the dialogue process generates insight and understanding, and gives a chance for diverse voices to be heard.

The WYRED project is focused on sustainability and community-building. Because of this, the initial finance for the project may be seen as seeding continual processes of exploration, experimentation and engagement as has been seen in other areas of Citizen Science. The ideas explored in WYRED are ideas which are important to everyone, since everyone is touched by digital society and the social change it involves. To understand and address the deep problems presented to us by far-reaching change in our society, large-scale, self-sustaining participation in open research by young people is necessary and we believe that this is an appropriate path to adopt in achieving this: the WYRED platform provides a means whereby young people can explore and surface their understandings, perspectives, perceptions and concerns, and the insights emerging from the process can be made available to society and more specifically to policy. Every engagement with the WYRED cycle, whether it is a group of young people presenting results of an open research activity involving a GPS based video study on city transport networks, or someone participating in a dialogue around gender issues in social media, or someone listening to a rap about club culture, or exploring visual data about the interactions in a Twitter exchange on climate change will permit deeper and wider understanding of the perceptions of young people and the roles they can play in digital society now and in the future. WYRED presents a way of surfacing these, and capturing what Popper alluded to in 1945 when he said “Even a man who opens a new shop, or who reserves a ticket for the theatre, is carrying out a kind of social experiment on a small scale; and all our knowledge of social experience is gained by making experiments of this kind” [23].

The nature of this project, which is not focused on technology, means that to speak of Technology Readiness levels is not especially relevant. However, the project is developing a new approach to research with young people which will be validated and demonstrated in relevant environments with young people, furthermore the aim is for the approach to be actually self-sufficient and autonomous by the end of the funding period, so that it is possible to speak of a TRL 9 equivalent.

Figure 1 presents the Work Packages diagram of the project.

4. PROJECT TECHNOLOGICAL BASE

WYRED will need a well-established technological ecosystem [3; 7-9; 12] that supports the interaction platform. This ecosystem must guarantee three main features in the project lifecycle:

1. **Interaction facilitator.** Most of the discussions will be done inside the platform. Given the importance of mobile online spaces [1; 26-29], especially among children and young people, it is considered vital that the platform exist as a web-based platform and a mobile app with extensive integration with the social media in which the target groups are active. It will contain profiling functionalities, interaction spaces that facilitate and promote exchange of messages, videos and other artefacts in different formats, a repository for the artefacts generated in the research process, and a range of analytics instruments for the processing of the dialogue that takes place between WYRED participants.
2. **Data analysis platform.** The social dialogue and participatory research activities in the project will generate heterogeneous data including transcripts, analysis, hypotheses, artefacts, workflows, narratives, quantitative and qualitative data related to perceptions and understandings around social change. The storage of this data will be based upon recent developments in Open Source grid-based Citizen Science platforms [2; 6] like MyExperiment (<http://myexperiment.org>) and open data formats including the Research Object standard (<http://www.researchobject.org>) and Linked Data (<http://linkeddata.org>). WYRED will exploit these and other standards and tools to provide flexibility in the ways the data can be managed, organized and made available in different formats and contexts. WYRED will actively engage a wide range of stakeholders by making the project platform a space where all can access the data and artefacts generated, explore and interpret them. The process of interpretation which will be managed by the consortium but open to all is expected to generate elements for potential new models and strategies for transitioning towards these models. These will permit automatic processing and analysis of the raw data from conversations and its visualization so that the user can interact with the visualizations in order to extract new knowledge or select data to be qualitatively analyzed [10; 13; 17; 18] (as in the Keim cycle [20; 21] or VeLA model [15]). These visualizations will include word-cloud-based visualizations and social graph based visualizations [16].
3. **Security and privacy supporter.** The WYRED platform represents a safe space in which children and experts will be able to express their views and reflections on the influence of technology in their lives. As technology affects transversally all social areas and involves people of different nationalities and beliefs, the platform must make a double effort to preserve the space in which they will express personal opinions and monitor that will not be any type of abusive situation / cyber bullying among participants.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The INEQUAL 10 call states that the work should “bring together stakeholders from research and policy makers, together with children and young people around Europe” and focus on “the use and interactions with the digital world of children and young people”. This is an extensive remit which potentially touches almost all aspects of the life of a young person, as an individual, and in his/her interactions within communities and the wider society. In a research context such as this, we are all stakeholders, and it is hard to dissociate the production of outputs from their impacts and define simple cause-and-effect relationships. Society and individuals are both subject and object of the research action. For this reason, in the WYRED project, impact is understood as part and parcel of the research activity, so that throughout the work involves the engagement of a variety of stakeholders beyond the consortium itself, so that, in addition to the specific impact-focused activity taking place in the valorization work package, there is an impact element integrated into all of the principal work packages.

The WYRED platform is framed as an activity open to any member of society, and it reaches well beyond the timeframe of the funding period.

The project expects impacts that include child and youth-directed research. In this project the approach is based on the paradigm of citizen science, understood as the active engagement of citizens in the scientific process. In addition to this, the project is informed by a child

rights approach acknowledging that young people of all ages have the right to participation and engagement and that it is our social responsibility to support the methodology for engagement. In WYRED this participatory paradigm is extended to the young. The children and young people participating design their own research activities with the support of the research teams.

WYRED aims to address this by supporting the voice of children and young people, and we see an urgent need to ensure that the outputs generated have impact not only on policy and future thinking, but also on individuals and communities within society. For this reason, the impact-focused activity within the project is divided into two streams, one of which we term the “influence” stream and the second the “social” stream. While these overlap they can be spoken of separately:

- The “influence” stream is made up of individuals who due to their specific professional role may have a direct influence on policy. These include policymakers themselves, decision-makers, and experts and future thinkers in different fields whose advice feeds into policy.
- The “social” stream, of which the members of the influence stream and the consortium themselves form part, refers to the wider society which in a more diffuse way influences policy and is itself the object of policy. For the WYRED project to be fully successful, impacts in each of these streams need to be taken into account.

The project will generate a range of concrete impacts. Among other outputs WYRED will provide:

New insights into the perspectives and understandings of children and young people, compared and contrasted with those of other generations, in relation to the digital society and the changes it brings in different social areas.

- Recommendations to policy derived from the outputs of the social dialogue and the research activities in a wide range of contexts relating to children and young people and the digital society.
- Artefacts, and stories emerging from the research cycle that reflect and express children and young people’s vision of the digital society and their role in it, future potentials and motivations for participating in and engaging with society.
- Raw data for further more detailed analysis and experimentation.
- A knowledge base collecting and curating all of the above.
- A continuously evolving space in which children and young people are able to generate and explore their perceptions in relation to the digital society, with the support of professional researchers. The WYRED platform constitutes a new, more grounded, and respectful approach to social research into youth issues, in which the young engage not only with each other but also with stakeholders from a wide range of relevant constituencies, such as policy, industry, civil society and research.
- The knowledge generated will also lead to social impacts such as the generation of new opportunities for innovative companies, public services and other social groups which, on the basis of the insights derived from the work, can create products and services which are more closely aligned with the lived experience and concerns of children and young people.

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