

EDITORIAL

BIG PICTURE THINKING. BROADENING THE AGENDA OF SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

Our dream at House of Futures is that we, the people of this planet, are able to promise each other more than survival during the next 100 years. We need an open and inclusive approach to be able to do this – since we know so little about what will during the next 100 years.

Sustainability and growth/development are the ultimate issues for futurists and, indeed, for anyone interested in the future of mankind: how can we sustain, develop and enrich human existence given the limited and priceless resources available? This fundamental question has decisive implications for governments, businesses and organisations – for us, today's people and future generations.

SUSTAINABILITY IN A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Sustainable development touches on the very foundations of human existence, and we are entering a new paradigm. In just the past 100 years, the population of the Earth has quadrupled; biomass consumption has more than tripled; raw material extraction has increased eight fold; fossil fuel consumption has increased twelve fold, economic output has increased twenty-two fold. More than three-quarters of the economic output of the past 2000 years has been produced since 1900 – a quarter since 2000 alone.

The 'limits to growth' debate, which in the 1970's was about the scarcity of fossil fuels and other raw materials, has been supplemented with the challenge of global warming. In addition, a host of other problems have arisen: the acidification of the oceans, consumption of fresh water, the phosphorus and nitrogen balance and the loss of biodiversity, among others. Some say we have already pushed nature's balances so far that we will be compelled under any circumstances to adapt to new conditions with regard to patterns of climate and disease. It will be a warmer future

no matter what we do today. We face enormous challenges we cannot meet without profound changes to our present, unsustainable, course of development.

In the light of the prognoses for population development and economic growth, we must realize we cannot simply be a little more sensible and a little more careful. We must fundamentally change our interaction with nature. Therefore we need long-term thinking and holistic thinking – and we need mind-shifting operations and new local and global practices here and now.

IN 100 YEARS - STARTING NOW

This edition of ISSUES gives you much more than a sneak peek into the project In 100 Years – starting now. Reworking sustainability and growth, a one-year conversation about long-term preferred futures. We present the most important findings from this interdisciplinary process, not least the two qualitative scenarios for sustainable societies 2112, and several articles concerned about sustainable development.

In 100 Years is a unique project and a necessary one – and it has been different for a reason. At House of Futures, we want to make more than yet another contribution to the debate on sustainability and growth. We want to expand the agenda - to set a broader and deeper agenda - by including different approaches and insights that can form the basis of new synthesis and ideas. We want to go beyond 'alarmists' and 'deniers' and instead emphasize the transformative perspective of the long view.

The thesis underlying the project is that we can neither go on nor go back. We must redefine our lives in the future – maybe even ourselves – if we are to make sustainable futures possible. We must think differently, and that is what



Steen Svendsen, Futurist and Partner House of Futures, and Gitte Larsen, Futurist and Director House of Futures, sharing the project management of the project "In100Years – starting now." From the third In100Y-seminar at "Skovskolen" in Nødebo, University of Copenhagen. Get an overview of the project on p. 30-31.

this project is about. What we must all fear, if fear should be part of our common future, is the day when there is only one true way of thinking about the future of our planet – then we would really be in trouble. To create the future we want for humanity, we must be able to imagine what the future could be like. The future is always different from the past, and it always has been.

WE DID IT!

In recent decades, there has been a considerable and increasing awareness of sustainability and growth, and increasing work on these issues on many fronts. In practice, crucial connections exist between sustainability, identity and culture, lifestyle and the economy, politics and nature – and between sustainability today and in the long run. Thus, there is a great need to combine and conjoin knowledge from an interdisciplinary field and from scientists as well as visionaries and practitioners. This is not to save the world, as we know it today, but to create the world of tomorrow.

In the scenario section you will find two mind-set scenarios, two preferred futures, looking back from the year 2112. 'Man-made World' is about moving on, about adapting and about ambitious political leadership. The 'Power of Nature' scenario is more about revival and going with the flow of the inner mind and the wild unknown. Both scenarios are all about discovering new common ground. They are political, social, artificial and spiritual movements towards a more just, fair and joyful society.

We hope the scenarios will create awareness of the long and holistic views on our sustainable futures. And we hope they will inspire you to further development with regard to your own doings.

THANKS

We want to thank each of the almost 170 participants who joined us for one or more of the In100Y seminars and who travelled with House of Futures. One participant told us that he liked the project because 'the perspective is so long that you cannot figure it out.' He also told newcomers that 'nobody was there to perform the solutions, but to become inspired, experiment and learn.' We hope we succeeded in creating a open-minded meeting place worth remembering and building on.

Finally, we want to thank the VELUX FOUNDATION for supporting the project In 100 Years – starting now. It has been a pleasure being able to work with sustainability and growth/development in the long perspective – to explore and broaden the concepts and to take part in framing the preferred futures.

Let's break new common ground – not as a compromise, but as a promise. Let's change and add some "P's" to the ones we already have: People, Planet, Prosperity, Participation and the Promise to create a Preferred future. Enjoy ISSUES!

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