

WELCOME TO THE FUTURES

INTRODUCING THE PREFERRED FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES TOWARDS 2112

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In this section, we will present you with two preferred futures for sustainable societies in the long term. The aim is to create alternative, coherent visions of future societies based on a sustainable relationship between mankind and nature which can be discussed, shared and acted upon. We have also established a baseline scenario of how the future could unfold if we do not act now.

WE NEED MORE FUTURE

The world is changing, and people are changing too. Our values, perceptions of nature, belief systems, consciousness as well as the whole range of our capacities as human beings are not the same today as they were back in 1912. And they will not be the same in 2112 either. Regardless of whether you see it as an evolvement of the rational human mind, a new enlightenment or a growing spiritual movement, it is happening. We are moving into a new era, and we need to envision positive images for the future that we want to unfold and create.

Over the course of the seminars of the “In 100 years - starting now” project, many of the above issues and challenges were raised and addressed. Amongst them, a recurring theme that was both explicitly articulated and also underlay much of the discussions was the need for three things; positive visions, holistic thinking and a mind shift.

The need for positive visions is not just generally desirable, but is also specifically necessary in the debate on sustainability and growth, a debate which is often dominated by threats to be avoided rather than opportunities to be pursued. Holistic thinking is the deep and broad understanding that our actions have consequences that we need to take into account and take responsibility for. And the call for a mind shift is rooted in the idea that a genuine transformation of humanity’s relationship with nature requires not only solid scientific knowledge, but also requires us to act continually on this knowledge.

Working with scenarios in the form of preferred futures is a method perfectly suited to addressing these

themes. Preferred futures are alternative, potentially desirable, and comprehensive stories about future states of the world. And working with more than one possible preferred future enables us to examine a wider range of positive opportunities.

HISTORIES OF THE FUTURE

Up until 1970, futures studies and planning were primarily based on traditional extrapolative methods. Significant societal changes during the sixties, like the moon landing, oil crises, youth culture, new societal values and the growing speed of change, challenged that assumption and the methods for doing futures studies changed too. The future was no longer just an extrapolation of the past. The future was considered uncertain. With this new focus, there was a serious need for developing new techniques. Scenario methods became one of these techniques.

Scenarios can be defined as “internal, coherent descriptions of alternative images of the future”. Futurist Joe Coates has defined scenarios as “holistic, integrated images of how the future may evolve” and futurist Hirschorn formulated the shortest version, which seems to sum it all up quite well. He described scenarios as “histories of the future”.

Despite the variety of specific scenario methods used in futures studies, there is consensus that scenarios are not predictions of the future. The aim of scenario processes is not to foresee the future, but rather to show how different interpretations of driving forces can lead to different futures. Scenarios are not plans, but tools to promote constructive ideas about the future. They can serve as a framework for our common debates about the long-term future and they can be applied by individual institutions and social agents as reference points for their own visions and plans.

By formulating alternative futures, your comprehension of your own conception of the future and the present is expanded, and new possibilities and risks appear. We are given the opportunity to work with interpretations, weightings, priorities, strategies and most importantly of all, we are given a choice.

PREFERRED FUTURES – NORMATIVE SCENARIOS

There are many different methods of constructing scenarios: normative, explorative, descriptive, and quantitative, amongst others. Following our aim of developing preferred futures, the scenario method used in the project 'In100Years' can best be described as normative scenarios.

To understand the concept of "normative" scenarios, it is helpful to note that applied futures studies generally deals with three types of alternative futures:

- *Plausible* (a possible future in which relevant causal factors can be specified even though it may stretch the imagination to do so);
- *Probable* (a plausible future that is considered to have a reasonably high likelihood of coming to pass); and
- *Preferable* (what we would prefer and will try to achieve).

The word, "Normative," then, is a type of futures studies that deals with preferable futures, and the question we ask at the outset of the scenarios is 'preferred by whom?' A preferred future is always - consciously or unconsciously - somebody's future.

To explicitly specify our basis for understanding preferable and sustainable futures, we have chosen to draw on the definition of sustainability formulated by the Brundtland commission back in 1987, which stated: 'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

There is, however, a challenge with this definition when looking 100 years into the future. Who are we to define the needs of the future generation? Or in other words; how can we best do that? The basic question we put to ourselves to begin with, knowing that we were going to make long term future scenarios for sustainable societies, was: 'What are the preferred sustainable futures for mankind which are worth envisioning, discussing and working towards?'

LONG TERM SCENARIOS

In recent years, public authorities, researchers and organizations have developed numerous scenarios for sustainability. Many of these scenarios are defined by a 10 to 20 year perspective.

Contrary to these scenarios, we want to develop scenarios with a long time span - up to 100 years - because the long time span gives us the possibility of including a broad () and deep () set of perspectives and changes that correspond to the transformations we can expect on the road to a sustainable society of the future.

However, sketching out scenarios for sustainable societies for the next 100 years is virtually a fool's errand. It is almost impossible to make any plausible direct extrapolations from historic trends a hundred years into the future. To see this, you need only look back 100 years and try to find the historic trends that would extrapolate in any direct fashion from 1912 to the present day. And if that seems difficult even with the benefit of hindsight, try imagining people in 1912 attempting to predict a century of as much change and turmoil as the one we have had.

Depending on your perspective today, the world of 1912 may look stagnant and boring, or poor, cruel and dangerous - or perhaps pure, harmonious and innocent. It is definitely very alien to the world we live in now - yet it undeniably contained the seeds of the present.

In much the same way, the present contains the seeds of the future, but it is very unlikely to unfold in any straightforward manner. That is why we need scenarios to get a better idea of the enormous transformations that will happen in the next 100 years, including how we might try to shape the future and create the ones we prefer.

MIND SET DRIVEN SCENARIOS

The long time horizon also places particular demands on the key drivers that shape the scenarios. Normally you would work with, e.g political, technological or economical developments, as drivers, but with a 100-year perspective, political agendas, economic cycles or technological innovations become less crucial. It is rather a question of what power is, what economic value is and what we mean by technology?

As a key driving force in both scenarios, we have chosen the understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. By doing so, the scenarios are driven by different perceptions of nature/mind sets, and it is through the various mind sets that we see and develop the holistic stories of the future sustainable societies in the scenarios.

Our basic understanding of ourselves and the nature we are a part of is less volatile and in many ways more important than technological and economic development when we talk about sustainability in a 100-year perspective. Our human consciousness has a deep memory that stretches far back and far forward in time.

With the long time span, the scenarios are focused on how we think and feel about the future today. The two scenarios presented in this section are, we believe, what will be the two basic and archetypical approaches to sustainable development.

QUALITATIVE SCENARIOS

“In 100 Years – starting now” is a project with a broad aim. Mind set, growth, development and sustainability are themes that require an open approach, an approach that allows for working with technological and economic growth as well as development in human goals and values. This is ensured by using a broad qualitative approach that can inspire constructive consideration of decisions and paths of development. However, it assumes that they are qualified and well grounded. The scenario process is a fitting way to include knowledge and ideas from many different sources and engage them in clear and constructive way.

It is necessary to rethink our relationship with Planet Earth, and in this process to develop new mindsets. We are talking large-scale paradigm shifts comparable to the age of the Enlightenment or to pioneering breakthroughs like those of Copernicus or Darwin – breakthroughs that changed our understanding of ourselves and nature.

The scenarios which follow describe two possible transformative future mindsets that could drive sustainability forward. We call them the “Power of Nature” and “Man-Made World”. They are two very different kinds of mindsets which point to two different futures and lead to different paths to the future. And the key to these differences lies in different expressions of our perception of nature.

Both scenarios draw on the same baseline scenario called “I=PAT”, which is a future directly extrapolated from the past and present. Turn the page and we will welcome you to the futures of human existence in the long term.

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SCENARIOS

Scenarios are alternative images of the future which can inform decisions in the present. It is an approach that is used by decision makers in the public and private sectors, on many levels and in many contexts. There are many types of scenarios, and the choice of scenario depends on the purpose. One can work with many or few, qualitative or quantitative, broad or specific, and long or short term scenarios.

Some of the more highly profiled scenarios were developed for the UN and in global corporations. Within the UN, the range of scenario types can be gleaned from different approaches such as the UN's population projections and IPCC's scenarios for the emission of greenhouse gases.

The UN's population projections run to 2100 and consider a medium, a high growth and a low growth scenario. These alternative scenarios represent calculations made in a model with relatively few variables (primarily fertility and mortality) and the best bet based on tendencies in the development so far. They are quantitative and have a limited focus on a single variable: population growth.

The IPCC's scenarios for the emission of greenhouse gases also run to 2100, but consider 6 so-called families of scenarios for the emission of greenhouse gases. These scenarios build on a model with a larger number of variables such as population growth, economic growth, the input intensity of production, the composition of energy use by sources etc. Added to this are the more qualitative variables such as the degree of regionalization or globalization of the world economy.

Tellus, a Boston-based not-for profit organization, has developed a set of global sustainability scenarios in a classic futurist style. Some of their scenarios are quantified in great detail projecting numbers for key variables like energy, carbon emissions, water use, forest area, GDP, population, international equity and hunger. Tellus works for a "sustainable, just, and livable global civilization" which requires "new values, a planetary consciousness and a sense of global citizenship".

EEA, the European Environmental Agency, conducts an ongoing effort of gathering information on scenarios for European environment. They run an information portal listing and organizing scenario work on many issues – everything from water and energy to forests, biodiversity and climate – and from many sources. They also initiate expert meetings, most recently a Workshop on global megatrends in Copenhagen 2010.

Even more qualitative approaches are to be found in the private sector, where scenarios are a common tool in the strategic toolbox. One example is the Global Business Network, whose scenarios for technology and international development are based on relatively few qualitative variables brought together in four broad, but distinct scenarios. One of the big private players working systematically with scenarios is Shell, which also works with a few qualitative scenarios – although they build on mathematics and focus on the global energy markets. They are used to broaden the perspectives of decision makers to include possible developments, and to qualify strategic decisions.

HOW WE DID IT DIFFERENTLY

The scenario process of 'In100Years' differs from more traditional scenario processes in several respects:

- The scope was ambitious, with sustainability and development for future generations as the focus
- The 100 year perspective is rarely used and even more unusual for qualitative scenarios
- With mind set and perceptions of nature as the main drivers, we expanded the long list of scenarios driven by systems and external conditions
- The combination of performance arts and methods as well as future studies made it possible to sense the scenarios and to open up to the development of new mind sets.
- The scenarios are formulated in a dynamic process, with inspiration and engagement from 150 visionary people from a variety of fields of study and experiences gathered at the "In 100 years" seminars of 2011 and 2012.