Inspiration Magazine

Making Visions for a Sustainable Future

CASI citizen panel meetings

CASI

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Making Visions for a Sustainable Future

INTRODUCTION

We all wonder about the future. We wonder at a personal level about how our life will turn out. And we also wonder about the world. What will the future look like for all of us? How will life be in the next century? We can search for the answers in our weekly horoscope or we can go to a fortune teller at the carnival - but actually nobody can really predict the future.

However, fortunately there is one thing that everybody can do and that is to think about the future and to formulate his or her visions on what we would like this future to be. This formulating of ideas and opinions is extremely important. It is exactly by discussing people's hopes and fears that policymakers can set out a path to realize them.
In CASI we are curious about your visions for a **sustainable future.** We are especially curious about your visions with regards to the future state of the environment with the themes of 'climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials'. But we are curious about other dimensions of sustainability; like the economy and social wellbeing of people. This magazine would like to give you a glimpse of how to think about the future and sustainability, and inspire you to formulate your own dreams, wishes and desires for a sustainable future.

We wish you much reading and dreaming pleasure and look forward to see you soon and hear all about your visions about a sustainable future!

Read more about the CASI project on the last page of the magazine.

The CASI project team

Photos: ZSI partner archive and René Petersson

Front page: © Bradcalkins| Dreamstime.com, © Kav777 | Dreamstime.com

What are your thoughts on the future?

Citizens from different parts of the world tell us about their own thoughts on the future.

Finland - Helsinki
PIRJO - student
I think about how cities will be, how people will move around in them, who they will meet on the street and how neighbourhoods will look like, what their functions will be and how they will connect places and people.

Photo: René Petersson

Germany - Kriftel
PAUL - entrepreneur
The bicycle will survive and reach the future. It is always the simple solutions that make it.

Portugal - Porto
Marta - consultant
When thinking about the future, I can see that science, technology, research and development have made notorious progress in several sectors: in medicine, by finding the cure for AIDS and Cancer, in transports, by creating affordable non-pollutant vehicles (from airplanes to cars) and even in communications, bringing all people closer together.

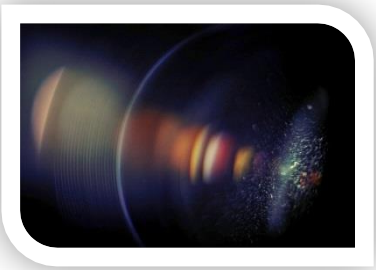

Photo: CASI archive

Slovenia - Koper
Katja Cergol - lawyer
When I imagine the future I think that due to digital technology, everyone will have the access to information and will have the same opportunities. It will make our lives easier and ease the burden of some of our everyday work. On the other side I hope that we will not become slaves of digital technology and a society with introverted people.

Sweden - Gothenburg
Lynx - teacher
It seems fairly evident that we are exhausting the earth's resources faster than stocks can be replenished. Soon there will be a time when we will not have the resources we have today. So maybe we should look back at a time when humans were very successful as a species, like when we were hunter-gatherers. There might be some wisdom to be learned from those savages.

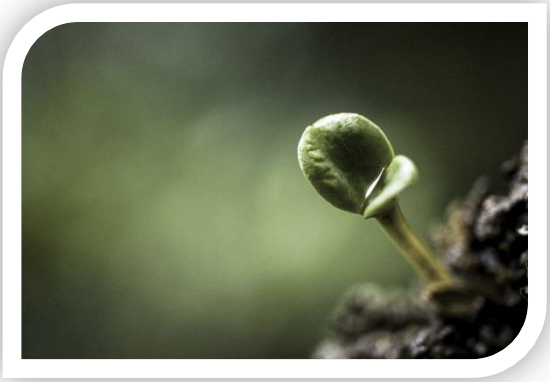

Photo: CASI archive

What is a vision?

In the CASI project a vision **is a picture or an imagination of a desirable future**. Your vision can be based upon hopes and dreams - but also upon concerns and fears in relation to problems or threats, which you do not want to become future reality. In the CASI project, we will formulate visions of a sustainable future 30 to 40 years from now.

Thoughts on visions…

Being a visionary is processes through which a number of images or visions of the future are created that are real and compelling enough to motivate and guide people to aim at a specific target.

World Future Society

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is like a nightmare.

Japanese proverb

A vision is like a lighthouse which illuminates rather than limits, gives direction rather than destination.

James J. Mapes, Foresight First

What is sustainability?

You will all make visions for a sustainable future based on your hopes, dreams and fears
– but what is sustainability?

Sustainability means something different to people around the world, and it has been defined in many ways. The most frequently quoted definition is from **Our Common Future**, also known as the Brundtland Report from 1987:
Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The term 'sustainability' can be said to consist of th e presence of and balance between three dimensions: The environment, the economy and social wellbeing of people.

Environmental sustainability can be defined as meeting the needs for resource and services of current and future generations without compromising the health of the ecosystems that provide them.
Economic sustainability can be defined as using the assorted assets and resources of an organisation, region or nation efficiently to allow it to function cost-effectively over time.
Social sustainability is the least defined dimension, but it encompasses topics such as: Social equity, liveability, health, community development, social support, human rights, labour rights, social responsibility, social justice, and community resilience.

Some also suggest 'culture' and 'fairness' as other dimensions of sustainability.

What does 'sustainability' mean to you?

A vision of a sustainable future

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Circular economy promises growth and jobs without adverse environmental impacts and may very well be on its way to large scale adoption. When an economic concept is embraced by businesses and policy, it bears the potential of great impacts. Economic growth without its adverse effects is a vision worth pursuing.

Circular economy relies on renewable energy, minimises the use of toxics, and eliminates waste. The concept of 'circular' economy challenges the conventional 'linear' economy that first exploits natural resources, then produces goods, and finally creates waste. Instead, circular economy is used for achieving economic growth by clever industrial design. Waste, for instance, is to be seen as a resource and a product- something that can be redesigned so that materials can be recycled and re-used. Experiences from China, where circular economy has gained ground, makes it possible to summarize the concept in three practical tenets: ***Reduce, reuse and recycle.***

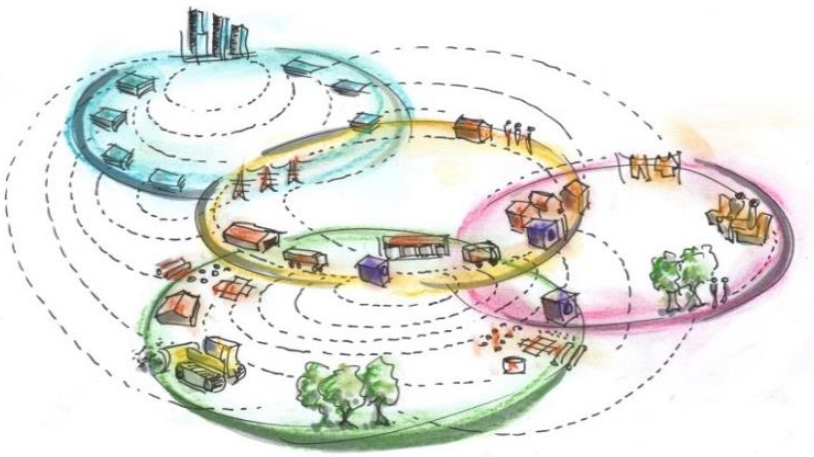

Illustration: Joe Ravetz

In a prominent business application of the concept, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (a registered charity organization focused on circular economy) has launched the Circular Economy 100 programme bringing together 100 businesses to accelerate the transition to circular economy. Among the participants you will find for instance IKEA, Renault, IBM, Philips and The Coca Cola Company. This Circular Economy 100 programme aims to provide innovation, collaboration, capacity and opportunities in the realm of circular economy. Best practices, benchmarks, case studies, framework and tools are sought for in the short run. McKinsey consultants, on their part, estimate global savings in materials to top 1 trillion $ annually if the concept of circular economy is adopted.

In the European Union, the concept of circular economy has been applied by the European Commission in an effort to create jobs and economic growth, boost recycling, demonstrate solutions for approaching zero-waste, and reduce greenhouse emissions as well as environmental impacts. The Commission targets 180.000 new jobs and a number of environmental indicators such as increasing recycling and re-use of municipal waste to reach 70% by 2030, increasing packaging waste recycling and re-use to reach 90% of ferrous metal, aluminium and glass by 2030, and reducing food waste generation by 30% by 2025.

The sustainable future is in your head

An interview with **Professor Ian Miles**, Professor of Technological Innovation and Social Change at the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research (MIoIR) of The University of Manchester. His job often involves thinking about the future. We asked him to help us understand what 'the future' actually is and how to look at 'sustainable futures'. And hang on, because he says we have many futures and alternative futures. While what we talk about is all in our heads, what we want for it is in our hearts, and what it will become is in our hands.

What is 'the future'?

"When we talk about or plan for the future, it os obvious that we are talking and thinking about an 'imaginative construct' (meaning something that we simply imagine). The future is not here now in any tangible sense, though we may detect what people sometimes call seeds or symptoms of the future – which means these are things that may grow, or that tell us about some bigger phenomenon that may become important.

And there are seeds today of futures that will not come into being; they may not flourish, or they may be actively suppressed. Some efforts to create social change that we see today are reminiscent of approaches that have been tried often before – they may run into the inertia of large organised systems that are resistant to change. Some things may remain forever on the margins, while others may come to the fore. People often talk as if there is just one future – the future – and as if this is more than just an "imaginative construct". But, even then, when we imagine our responses to and experience of that particular envisioned future, there is a range of possible futures being considered. When we imagine our responses to and experience of that particular envisioned future, we are positing alternative ways we might cope with or act upon that world. Often we will be thinking of just one aspect of the future, too, and suspending our thinking about other aspects.

Often a vision is only partly realised, and very often we find that the things that have been the focus look very different when they have been brought into being.

Different people have different 'imaginative constructs' of possible futures. This reflects their knowledge – and all of us have only partial knowledge. People also have different viewpoints because of different interests and values. The futures that concern us most if we are focusing on (for example) healthy living or space exploration are likely to be quite different."

Illustration: © Remster | Dreamstime.com

And how can we look at 'sustainable futures'?

"Sustainability is most often used in the context of environmental sustainability, where we are in a situation of unprecedented strain on ecosystems through climate change, through habitat destruction, through pollution and resource use of various kinds. We may well be facing major challenges to the survivability of our civilization, if we cannot

confront and cope with these quite immediate problems.

The good news is that innovations oriented toward greater sustainability – renewable energy and energy conservation, waste minimisation, and many more – are typically innovations that can help us create more employment, more local economic linkages, and greater resilience against the vulnerabilities of large centralised systems. Thus 'imaginative constructions' of sustainable futures can involve a great deal more use and widespread implementation of tools and practices that are already available. They can also involve technological breakthroughs that might yield more efficiency in renewable energy or water purification (for example applications of nanotechnology, batteries, and water filtration).

Often the new high-tech responses to the grand challenges of sustainability attract a great deal more attention than the responses that are already available. This has a great deal to do with what I previously and rather lazily termed 'inertia'. The problem is that we live and work within highly complex systems, where changing one part of the system may yield little benefit unless we can change other parts in alignment with this. There may need to be protracted learning processes as we understand the interdependence of different parts of the system, ando we need to learn from experiences elsewhere.

Despite the damage we have been inflicting on ecosystems over the last few centuries, in particular, there is still plenty of scope for the human race to live and prosper on this finite – but so rich and diverse – planet. Sustainable futures require 'imaginative construction' of the frameworks for new systems that can allow us to do so. We need powerful appraisals of such future possibilities that can convince people that there is indeed reason for hope – and need for action."

Thoughts about the future...

The future belongs to those, who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt - Diplomat, USA

Of course I'll take care of the future. I plan to spend the rest of my life in it.

Mark Twain - Author, USA

One should not seek to predict the future, but to make it happen.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery - Author, France

Questions for the future

What would be the best thing that could happen in your country in the next 40 years?

Photo: UP partner archive

Imagine yourself in the future 30-40 years ahead: How do you think your daily life will be?

What hopes do you have for your loved ones in the future?

What environmental challenges do you think people will face in daily life 30-40 years from now?

What do you think will be the major challenge facing society?

Photo: UP partner archive

What are your hopes and wishes for a sustainable future?

In 30 to 40 years, how do you think the environment has impacted the city where you live today?

How will future generations look at nature?

How do you think climate change might affect the people in your country 30 – 40 years from now?

How will the community where you live change in the future?

What would be the best thing that could happen in your life in the future?

What would be the worst thing that could happen in your country within the next 10 years?

How will people get to work in the future?

In 30 to 40 years what will people in your country do for fun and recreation?

What resources from the Earth will society need in the future?

Photo: © Xmasbaby | Dreamstime.com

Inspiration from the real world – examples from CASIPEDIA

In the CASI project we are creating a unique bank with over 500 sustainable innovation initiatives and ideas called CASIPEDIA, where activists, experts and supporters of sustainability agendas can find various initiatives combining the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability. We invite you to explore CASIPEDIA to find out that innovative ideas can be many things, both novel products and services, new business and marketing strategies, interesting social and system developments, as well as emerging policies and regulations.

Below we share with you some examples of innovative ideas held in CASIPEDIA, which may potentially inspire the development of your own visions. Have you for instance heard of:

Solar taxi's operating at affordable rates in a small and least developed region of Austria where local people can get anywhere in the region for the price of 2 EUR?		Are you aware of the **vertical wind turbines** that can meet up to 75% of the UK Network Rail's electricity needs? In other words, 3/4 of the yearly 1.3 billion journeys by rail could be 'simply' powered by the wind!
Do you know that Slovakia and Portugal promote **participatory budgeting** through more democratic citizens engagement at various stages of decision-making regarding the spending of municipal budgets?	Every weekend four large Polish cities feed the stomachs and souls of their citizens by promoting local food products coupled with enjoyable workshops on sustainable topics in a friendly picnic atmosphere at the so-called outdoor **breakfast market**.	The concept of 'gift economy' is thriving across the globe – free items can be obtained or exchanged through **'Freecycle'** networks across Belgium and the UK instead of being disposed to landfill areas.
Would you like to visit the **Junk Food Café** in the Czech Republic or Slovakia where unsold food items are turned into delicious dishes so supermarket food waste is reduced to a minimum?	And if we think bigger, there are entire towns like the **Village of Hollerich** (Luxembourg) where an old derelict industrial area have been transformed into an eco-friendly village promoting various aspects of sustainability.	To find out more visit us at: **www.casi2020.eu** and register to access **CASIPEDIA.** (Note: The page is in English).

On the path towards a sustainable future

Two experts within sustainability tell us about their visions for a sustainable future

***Hans Bruyninckx**, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency, Former Professor of International Relations and Global Environmental Governance, Institute for International and European Policy; and Director, Research Institute for Work and Society, at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven).*

***Connie Hedegaard,** former European Commissioner for Climate Action (2010 – 2014) and currently chairwoman of KR foundations. She was Minister for The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (2009), Danish Minister of Climate and Energy (2007-2009), and Danish Minister for Environment (2004-2007).*

What kind of a society would you like to see evolving in the future?

Hans Bruyninckx: Most important would be to form a society worth living in. This means that sustainability needs to be reached simultaneously in all its dimensions: ecological, economic and societal. It is absolutely necessary to reorganise social systems - accepting the boundaries of natural systems as well as the limits of the planet and adjust all systems accordingly. The physical boundaries pose enormous challenges to the societal systems such as food supply, mobility or energy production.

Connie Hedegaard: I would like to see a society, where the true cost of the environment is taken into account and where each individual citizen has a co-responsibility for sustainability. The citizens must set the frame, but they should be given opportunities to make sustainable choices easily. For example, pricing should be correct and there should be clear labelling to enable better comparison of products.

What are your concerns in terms of sustainability?

Hans: The current path that we are taking is based on the old way of unsustainable production and consumption. We need to shift from fundamentally unsustainable systems into true sustainability within a couple of decades. The need to transform the fundamentals of the complete system in which we are living is a huge challenge. We must think, what it truly means to make our societies sustainable. We need to change the values and norms of people, the functioning logic of markets, design new technologies, create new roles of governments and companies, and change the practices of everyday life. This means a thorough change in all connected systems simultaneously and within decades, so actually a very short period of time.

> *"The real challenge is to rethink what it means to have a decent life with fully accepting the limits of the planet." - Hans*

Connie: We need to put more attention to where we are going. I am puzzled why citizens, CEO's and politicians still remain at the wrong path although we know what would be the right direction. There are alternatives, such as green growth, yet, we are not doing what we should be doing. Why don't we? We seem to have lost the more ethical point of view. A major problem is that we do not have limitless time. There are pressing environmental problems such as biodiversity loss or global climate warming that would require action to take place rather sooner than later.

Who are the actors that should be the primary actors in the transition towards a sustainable future?

Hans: The transition is not possible without a clear commitment of state governments, companies at the top of core systems, such as energy, mobility or food production, but also of civil society and engaged citizens, who understand their role in societal change. Although governments and companies are important, the bottom-up approach cannot be ignored. However, there is a clear danger that the responsibility will be shifted to individual consumers, which is highly problematic: What is the potential of the citizens to change complete systems? Can we expect individuals to make the food system more sustainable, when adding sugar, fat and salt to nearly all processed foods is the norm? Where is then the real responsibility? I do not think, however, that out-of-the-box thinkers, young, creative minds, those who come with unexpected new ideas and solutions, will play a significant role.

> *"I am concerned that we are not good enough to be inspired by each other or to take the right path, and we are running out of time."*
>
> *-Connie*

Connie: I think all of us must take responsibility. The voters for example need to accept that we need to think further than to here and now. Currently, the long-term perspective is missing. Politicians certainly also have a role but we do not want to make a totalitarian system where politicians would think for us. Also business has a huge responsibility in taking the right path. Politicians could help by getting the price right, to give incentives for e.g. recycling or encourage the development of circular economy. For example, economic structures need to make it possible that, if you waste, it should have a price.

Is there something else that you would like to bring up?

Hans: The most important would be investments in sustainable technologies and in research and development. This would be extremely important in core areas of sustainability, such as energy and mobility. It would be absolutely essential that the money presently invested, would be focused to much more sustainable innovations. Public funding for innovation has a huge importance. There is an enormous potential in people, who can create new solutions and, therefore, it would be absolutely necessary to create space for these people.

Connie: We cannot insist that short term thinking can solve long term challenges and therefore longer time frame for decisions is necessary. We also need to get away from the 'siloes' where administration, politicians and business currently all are. We would need cross-cutting solutions and new ways of cooperation.

Illustration: © Kav777 | Dreamstime.com

See you at the first citizen panel meeting!

[*Insert the dates and venue here if you wish*]

CASI FACTS

CASI is an EU-funded research project, which aims at developing a methodological framework for assessing and managing sustainable innovation within the scope of 'Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials' (one of the grand societal challenges defined by EU). The project also focuses on creating and enhancing public engagement in European research and innovation, and inclusion of different social stakeholders, including industry, policy-makers, research organisations and academia, civil society organisations and citizens.

CASI stands for "Public Participation in Developing a Common Framework for Assessment and Management of Sustainable Innovation".

CASI has 19 partners in 12 European countries: Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Slovenia, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and the Czech Republic.

COLOFON

Responsible editors : Thea Friis Askegaard and Bjørn Bedsted **(**Danish Board of Technology Foundation)

Board of editors: Danish Board of Technology Foundation, ARC Fund, University of Helsinki

Contributions by: Petteri Repo (University of Helsinki), Kaisa Matschoss (University of Helsinki), Rafael Popper (University of Manchester), Monika Popper (Futures Diamond), Thea Friis Askegaard , **a**nd the CASI project partners

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