

Group Project

Back from the Future We Want

– Part I: Visions –

*As ecological, economic, and social crises deepen,
we desperately need new visions of a sustainable and desirable world.
- Robert Coszanza and Ida Kubiszewski*

What is *The Future We Want*?

The aim and structure of the assignment is based on the belief that a radical change in our imagination is required in order to achieve the changes in the world needed for a sustainable present and future. We are used to talking about a future we *don't* want. The discussion of “where we want to go” as a society (i.e. future visions) is often missing. Yet, this is a key element in sustainability, as well as in true democracy.

That is why we need to start talking about the future we want. What would a *sustainable future* look like? Can you see it so clearly that you can almost touch it? Is it an attractive vision that others would be persuaded to work towards?

Depending on what we do today, there is a different tomorrow.

Creating a sustainable and desirable vision is the first step to get to a different world, so...

... What is The Future You Want?

The basic idea of this project

This group project has two parts. Due to the purpose of this assignment, information about the second part would be kept as a surprise until you have submitted the first part.

For the first part of this project, each group will envision and describe a “sustainable and desirable future” in the year 2100 in a chosen specific region.

The challenge for you is to fully exercise your imagination and creativity, and *describe specifically* what kind of future would be a world worth living. *Try to articulate a future vision* that you think would be convincing for many people. *Write in language that is engaging*, as if you have had a “sneak peek” to that future using a time machine.

Another challenge is for you to agree on a future vision in your group. This is a process of democracy, to find common ground and create a coherent societal vision tying your ideas together.

- **Related readings and Resources:**
 - *The Common Cause Handbook*. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1R6VSqx>
 - Costanza, R. & Kubiszewski, I. Why We Need Visions of a Sustainable and Desirable World (In Course Reader for 20th October)
 - Clausen, Hansen & Tind. Democracy and Sustainability (In Course Reader for 27th October)

Regions

Each group will focus on a specific region in the world. Every region will be a part of one of the continents/subcontinent listed below:

- 1) Africa
- 2) Asia
- 3) Europe
- 4) Latin America
- 5) Middle East
- 6) North America
- 7) Oceania and Pacific

During Seminar I, each group will pick a continent from the list, and choose a specific *local region* within this continent. The chosen region for your project should be a specific locality, but it could be either an urban or a rural area (e.g. city, municipality, county, town, village, etc.).

Structure

Introduction and general picture of the future region (500-800 words)

- Use the *Guidelines* on the next page to brainstorm and write the Introduction collectively as a group. Create and include the basic values and general descriptions of the future region. This will be your guiding “red thread” that runs through the whole essay and specific topics. Convince the reader *why* these values are desirable.

In addition, we ask you to give specific descriptions of each of the topics below. Each topic should have a section of around 600-800 words.

- Food production and consumption
- Energy supply
- Transportation, Infrastructures and Technology
- Water, Ecosystems, and Climate
- Economy, Work, Lifestyles, and Culture
- Democracy and Participation

Make sure that each topic fits into the overall picture of the society, and together constitutes a holistic view of the region in the year 2100.

Guidelines to design a sustainable and desirable future for the region in year 2100

Try not to get caught up by how the region is *in the present*, or where it's heading. This assignment is an exercise to think about how *you want* the future to look like and discuss based on your values, and not to discuss what it would most likely be like based on information such as forecasting methods.

It is of course useful to know about the current society, but don't let that restrict your ideas and ideals on how the society could be in the future. Imagine that you are living in that region in year 2100, and ask yourself what kind of world you would like to live in.

- Start by thinking what you would really like to see in this future society. Try to establish the basic goals and values. Look at the *Common Cause Handbook* for a guide to values. During this period of design, let your wishes run free. Don't worry about "reality" or constraints -- that will come later. This is the time to be totally imaginative and optimistic, so avoid being critical. Take your time, and think about it a lot. Bounce ideas off of group members. In your discussions, don't let anyone say, "How are you going to do that? That's impossible."
- Once you have a general idea of what kind of world you want, then you can start to move from being general to more specific. Operationally, or practically, define your values. For example, if you decide you want a society where everyone is equal, what do you mean by "equal?" Equal in what? In height? In weight? In income (which must be defined)?
- Then you can get even more specific. How are you going to make sure that the values you want for your society are achieved, and the negatives are avoided? What certain systems, technologies, social rules and institutions are used to achieve it? (e.g. laws, religion, education, research, medicine, media, police, military, industry, civil society, etc.) Perhaps not directly related to this assignment topic, but the list below illustrates examples of different ways of achieving an equal society, where equality is defined as equal in people's height:
 - "Everyone over – or under – a certain height (or height range) could be killed."
 - "Groups of people who "normally" deviate from the required height – for example, Japanese and Watusis – could be required to intermarry."
 - "The natural and/or artificial environment could be controlled so that people would be conditioned to "grow right" without freedom and dignity, according to a schedule of reinforcements which would reward activity conducive to achieving and maintaining a proper height, and punish deviance."
 - "Medical service could be encouraged to discover the "height genes" and manipulate them accordingly. People could undergo lengthening or shortening operations."
 - "Education institutions could develop growth-oriented curricula, and grade people according to their limits to growth."
 - "Religious organizations would exhort people to "grow right!" and threaten hellfire to those who disobeyed."
- Once you have taken these steps, take a step back and look at the society you have designed. It is quite unlikely that you will desire to design a society around a single value, but rather seek to achieve many values. For example, if we want a society where everyone is "free and equal," and we invent institutions to assure "freedom" (as defined) and institutions to assure "equality." Are the two sets of institutions compatible? Have you really designed a society where everyone can be both free and equal? Similarly, in your group, try to see how your values and the ways to achieve them are fitting and matching each other. (Again, The map of values in the *Common Cause Handbook*, p. 13-19, may be useful here).
- After you have a general idea on the values and the general picture, include elements of convincing the readers *why* this is a desirable future. Remember to use *engaging language!*

**Inspirations, examples and quotations from Jim Dator, 2005*



Formal Requirements

- Have a front page including title of this assignment (“Back from the Future We Want”), a subtitle including your region, name of course, date and names of group members.
- The structure and order of the essay is up to each group to communicate your visions in an effective and creative way. Include an introduction and the specific 6 topics listed above. Any added subheadings to the sections are welcome.
- The use of pictures, images, illustrations, etc. that may help communicate your future society to the readers is highly recommended. Remember to clearly state your source if you use someone else’s image.
- Name the file in the following way: region.continent1 (example: uppsala.europe1.doc)
- Upload one file as a group on the Hand-In area titled *Group Project Part 1* on Studentportalen. Only one person in your group needs to upload it.
- **Deadline: November 3, at 17:00h.**

References

- Use at least **8 different references** of your choice in total throughout the whole paper. You may of course reference the same book or article several times, but this will only count as one reference. Course readers and course books could be used for inspirations and references, but you are free to use other sources as well.
- To ensure the flow of the creative and engaging character of the essay, we ask you to use **Endnotes and Bibliography: Chicago citation style**. All notes should be compiled at the end of the essay, followed by a bibliography. The bibliography is a full list of sources cited in the text, sources consulted in preparing a paper and other sources thought to be of interest to the reader. It is ordered alphabetically according to the family name of the first-listed author.

For detailed structure of the citations style, please see:

http://politics.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/chicago_style_guide.pdf