BACK ᴛᴏ ᴛʜᴇ FUTURES WE WANT

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

– **Overview** –

What would a ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable society look like? This course is about trying to answer this question - or even better, trying to create *new* answers to this wicked question, collectively and creatively. Often, we talk about 'sustainable futures' as avoiding crises. We are used to talking about a future that we *don't* want. Yet we believe that criticizing the current pathway is not enough to change the direction. Society calls for a radical change in our imagination, for different visions of our society and our goals, and to discuss concretely how we can transform our societies towards these alternative directions. And this is what we will do in this project. What is the future we want?

Aims

● Explore your own desirable vision for the future society and try to articulate it
● Compare and discuss different visions of 'sustainable futures,' while recognizing that futures is plural (there is no single, best vision)
● Reflect on the relationship between 'sustainability' and 'desirability': What is sustainable or desirable for whom?
● Think about present action from a future perspective, and reflect on different processes of change to reach sustainable futureS

Related Learning Outcomes from the Syllabus

● account for different causes to and possible solutions to the sustainability challenge in a specific city or region, and be able to relate these to global challenges within the sustainability field;
● discuss and relate to different visions and ideas about what a sustainable future could entail.

Four Stages of the Project

1) <u>Seeds for Sustainable Futures</u>   **Deadline: 21st October**
   a) Describe your choice of region and why you chose it (your personal relationship to the place)
   b) Research region
   c) Identify 3 Seeds for Sustainable Futures in the region today
2) <u>Envision 4 Sustainable Futures</u>   **Deadline: 11th November**
   a) Envisioning exercise of four different futures (in class: Workshop 2, Oct 23)
   b) Describe these sustainable visions
   c) Peer review- Give & Receive feedback on Parts 1 & 2 (Workshop 3, Nov 13)
3) <u>Backcasting Your Critical Future Vision</u>   **Deadline: 2nd December**
      Graded Assignment
   a) Critical reflection on one vision.
   b) Redevelop this vision.
   c) Backcasting: How do we get there? (Workshop 3, Nov 13)
   d) Peer review of Part 3
4) <u>Presentations of final project</u>   **Workshop 4: 11th December**

-Welcome to Part I : Seeds for Sustainable Futures-

Choose a region of the world and identify 3 Seeds for Sustainability. Submit to Studentportalen by **23.59 21st October.**

Instructions:

   1) **Which region/city do you want to work with during this project? (Max. 150 words)**
   Choose a region/city in the world you are passionate about, very familiar with and feel connected to personally. To what city or region do you feel connected to? Where would be somewhere you are intrigued?
   Write briefly which region/city you chose, and why you decided to choose this region. Describe your personal interest or relationship to this place.

   2) **How does the current region look? (Max. 300 words)**
   Look into how the region/city you chose is doing right now. In addition to online and literature research, try interacting with someone from or living in the region: write an email, interview, or call someone. Different people in the region/city will likely have very different perceptions of what a sustainable future looks like, and could give you inputs on what are urgent challenges and they think the future for their city/region should look like.
   What are important challenges in this region, in relation to social, economical and environmental dimensions? Consider what is important for your region: what are the

priorities, perceptions, norms and practices of: local and national government (e.g. policy), civil society, religious groups, business, media, and other sections of society?

3) **Identify 3 Seeds for Sustainable Futures in the region today (approx. 250 words per seed)**
Inspired by Bennett et. al (2016), we are going to focus on identifying 'seeds' as a first step in developing our ideas and visions for sustainable and desirable futures. By 'seeds,' we mean 'initiatives (social, technological, economic, or social–ecological ways of thinking or doing) that exist, at least in prototype form, and that represent a diversity of worldviews, values, and regions, but are not currently dominant or prominent in the world' (ibid., p. 442).

This part of the task is to identify and describe **three** existing concrete initiatives that embody what you see as 'Seeds for Sustainable Futures' in your chosen regions. These seeds will be the basis of envisioning sustainable futures in your region. For each seed, present them briefly following the points below:

a) **What is the seed and its goals? Why do you see it as a seed for sustainable futures?** Describe the seed, focussing on its goals and actions. What is the current development of the seed? (i.e. established or just getting started) What do their visions for a sustainable future look like? What types of global/local sustainable development challenge does it address?
b) **Who are the key actors involved in this seed?** (E.g. religious groups, schools, local businesses, multinational corporations, UN, etc.) How are they organised?
c) **Through what pathways could this seed produce impact?** (E.g. how will a seed grow or spread to impact multiple people and places)
   - Could be reproduced in different places (scale out)
   - Could grow to involve more people and places (scale up)
   - Could change underlying values to inspire people to live in a different way (scale deep)

Submission Requirements
Submit your (no more than 1200 words in total) on Studentportalen by **23.59 21st October.** Include references to questions 2) and 3), and provide a list of references at the end of the document. Use the **Harvard Anglia Reference System** for your references.

Check the reading (under Course Reader for Oct 9) Bennett et. al (2016) 'Bright Spots: Seeds of a Good Anthropocene' and https://goodanthropocenes.net/ for more inspirations. If you are interested, you can also go ahead and contribute your seeds to https://goodanthropocenes.net/send-us-your-seed/

Welcome BACK to the Future!   Sachiko & Laila