Visioning a Post-Transition Future

Activity

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Part of the work of the Transition movement is creating a collective positive vision of what your community could be. Doing this work is creative and energising, and puts you in touch with how important it is to have a safe, healthy, peaceful future, for yourself and for future generations.

Advanced industrialised countries offer, usually via films and books, very confusing information about what kinds of futures are possible. Most common are future visions of endless technological development, population growth, and resource use; or collapse - and sometimes all of those at once. An alternative future to these is one where humanity peacefully shifts away from consumption, productivity, and economic growth toward a sustainable, equitable, and fulfilling way of life. To transition toward such a vision of a more regenerative future, you might benefit from exploring in more depth and detail what this future could look like for the community where you live.

Visioning Exercises

There are several ways to discuss and define a shared vision. Visioning exercises are a useful tool to help make this happen; they can help to align all the members of your group around a shared purpose, and thus ensure everyone is working towards a common goal. When all group members help to define a shared vision, it can strengthen group cohesion, fostering a sense of ownership, motivation, clarity, while easing decision-making (see Working Together Well, see Effective Groups, see Decision Making). Additionally, visioning exercises can help encourage creativity and long-term thinking by allowing your group to adapt to challenges while staying true to your vision. This can then help you attract new members and partners who resonate with your goals, helping to create a sense of momentum (see How to Get and Keep People Involved, see How to Create Partnerships).

Below are two activities you can do with your Initiating group to start exploring what your individual and shared vision of a future looks like. Don't worry if people have different ideas - no one can know what the future brings. Try to avoid getting caught up in judging each other's vision. Ideally, this can be more like a process of dreaming together, which may spark all kinds of things that haven't taken shape yet.

In the beginning, the people in your Initiating group will be mainly holding the vision. Ultimately, the vision will become accepted, shared, and owned by as many people as possible. The more people who hold a positive vision the better (see Moving to a Core Group, see From Founders to the Future).

After you have a better understanding of your shared vision, you can proceed to add a timeline to it (see Producing a Timeline).

Activity – Exploring a Post-Transition World	
Duration:	60 minutes
Participants:	Everyone in your group, in small groups of 3-4
Purpose:	If people are not as comfortable with guided visualisation, this activity invites discussion about what a post-Transition future might look like and what's not working in your current system.
Materials needed:	- A quiet space with enough room for everyone to sit comfortably. - Thick pens or crayons, and a flipchart, whiteboard, or big pieces of paper so you can put all your ideas in one place.
Flow: 4 minutes 15 minutes 5 minutes 7 minutes 15 minutes	**Part 1 - What needs to change** 1. Split into smaller groups of at least 3 people and give each group one or more of the following topics - or any others you want to add: • Energy and resources. • Environment - including climate change and other pollution issues. • Equality and inclusion, social and personal well-being. • Economics - including growth, financial institutions, and structures. 2. Small groups generate ideas about things that aren't working and need to change in relation to their topic. Write down ideas on large paper so everyone is able to see. Don't get into arguments - if you disagree, for now just include all the points of view. 3. In the whole group, each small group briefly shares back. **Part 2 - Imagine a Post-Transition Future** 1. Each individual imagines themselves taking a tour around their community in a future time where things have gone well; the challenges you have identified have been addressed in a positive way (it doesn't have to be "realistic" unless you want it to be). You can choose one area of life to explore (food production, raising children, housing, livelihoods or anything else), or just imagine taking a walk and noticing what's there. 2. In pairs or threes, share some of the things you imagined.

5-10 minutes 10 minutes 5 minutes	**Part 3 - Sharing the Vision** 1. In silence write and draw on your shared piece of paper - words or images that show what you think the future might include. Make it fun and as detailed or visionary as you like! 2. Together look at what you've created, going round and giving everyone a chance to say something about the following questions: • What's on the paper - what does your shared vision include? • How was it to imagine this future - what surprised you, what did you like or not? 3. Together reflect on what is in your shared vision. What are the common themes? Does it address the challenges you talked about? Write it down.

Remember: A vision for the future is never finished - it will always be evolving. Don't spend time arguing about details - instead notice where you have agreement, or where there are issues that are particularly charged for one or more people. Celebrate where you agree, and notice what the uncertainty of these times feels like.

You may want to keep your shared vision somewhere, to look at again and update as new people join, or to re-vision later.

Adaptations

Depending on your group you can adapt the previous activity by changing Part 1.

Vision Board

For example, if you are working with a group that is very visual, you can ask them to draw and cut out different pictures and words from magazines and put them together, creating a collage or vision board. Make sure to guide this process so people also focus on the given topics (environment, energy, inclusion, and so on). You can ask them how things differ from present time and then proceed with Part 2.

Future Headlines

If you are working with a group that might not know who to approach the visioning process, you can ask people to think of future headlines from the local paper that describe events in the community. These can be as creative or as realistic as people want. For example: "New Bike Infrastructure Boosts Community's Health;" or "Community famous for delicious tomatoes and urban structures that invite people to interact and socialise." After people write down 3-5 headlines, ask them how things differ from the present time and then proceed with part 2 of the activity.

Activity - Guided Visualisation

Another way to create a vision is to lead a guided visualisation. One person guides the group through a process of imagining a positive future in your community. Below are notes for someone facilitating and a script for this process - feel free to adapt or change it. This process has been used for many Transition workshops, and many people find it a relaxing and unusual way to step forward in time and imagine what the future might hold.

Duration:	30 minutes
Participants:	Everyone in your group, in small groups of 2-3
Purpose:	To imagine what a post-Transition future might look like.
Materials needed:	A quiet space with enough room for everyone to sit comfortably. Cushions, pillows, mats, or blankets for extra comfort.
Flow: 2 minutes	1. **Introduction -** Remind the group: • The technique of guided visualisation works for some more than for others. If you feel uncomfortable, it's fine not to do it – or you could just experiment with dipping in and out, whatever works for you. • If you don't easily get images just let something else happen – it might be words, sounds, or feelings. • For most people it's easiest to relax and close your eyes, but it's also fine to keep your eyes open and simply use your imagination. **Facilitator's notes**: While guiding the process, check what's happening in the group. Occasionally people may have strong or disturbing experiences during this kind of exercise. If this happens, gently stop and bring the group back to a normal place. How to read out the visualisation: • Speak out the following text (see below). • At the end of each paragraph allow for a pause. • Give a longer pause where you are inviting people to imagine things. • Use your voice to create a sense of calm and peace.
10minutes	2. Ask everyone to sit comfortably and listen. **Read the text** (see below).
12 minutes	3. **Discussion**. Once the visualisation has finished, get together in small groups of no more than 3 and discuss your experience of the visualisation.
5 minutes	4. Come back together as a full group and share what you experienced. You may want to take notes to feed into a Timeline activity. Was there anything you liked about the future world you visited? Anything you didn't like? Anything that surprised you?

Visualisation text to read out:

Go ahead and get comfortable. You may want to have your spine straight and your feet flat on the floor. You may find it easier to visualise if your eyes are closed; and it's fine if you prefer to keep them open.

Let your attention come into this present moment, being aware of the sounds in the room, following the rhythm of your breath, coming and going.

We are going to go on a journey to one possible future for your community. To explore what the world might be like. You will be guided by this process and by your own imagination.

At this moment in time, no one knows what the future holds. Our actions now will shape what happens. In this journey we choose to visit a positive future, where communities have successfully made a transition to a viable, thriving, sustainable way of life.

As you relax, invite the intuitive part of your mind to come forward. Let go of the rational, logical, left brain, and invite your imagination, your creative self, your intuition – the part that can be surprised, that loves sensations like touch, smell, colour, beauty.

Imagine that you go to sleep tonight in your bed, wherever that is…

And while you are sleeping a miracle happens. As you sleep you are transported forwards in time to a day when the transition has more or less happened.

All the changes that are needed for a sustainable and regenerative human presence on the planet have taken place. Without you having to do any more, to go to any more meetings. As you move forward in time you don't age – you are just visiting this future world at the age you are now. Just imagine yourself drifting forward through the months… the years…

Keeping your eyes closed, or staying with this imagining, let yourself wake up in this future world. What is the first thing you notice that tells you that this is a different world you are waking up in? Is it a sound? Something about the light? Perhaps the scent of the air? Or the feel of the bedding on your skin?

Letting images arise, notice how you get ready for the day in this different world. Getting up… Getting dressed…
You find something to eat. Perhaps you are alone having breakfast. Perhaps there are other people there. What is the place like, where you are eating? Notice the taste and texture of the food. How would you know that this is a future meal and not one from before…

Letting your imagination guide you, without trying to think too much, letting sensations, smells, sounds, sights, arise in your awareness, and imagine these experiences as fully as you can.

Now you have a day to explore this world, as a visitor or a tourist. You walk out to explore. Where do you want to go, what do you want to see?

Find your way to some part of the community's activities – perhaps something you do for your job in the old life, or something you're curious about. Take transport to get there, or walk. What do you notice on the way?

When you arrive, use all your senses to notice as much as possible. What technology is being used? What kind of materials? What are the sounds, smells, the shapes of this activity?

Who is doing it – what ages? What genders? People from different cultures? How do the people seem as they work? What does the pace feel like? How do they seem in their bodies?

Someone comes over to answer your questions, to be your guide. If there's anything you'd like to know, take this opportunity to ask them. Rather than making up the answer yourself, just let the scene play out – as if you are watching a film. Perhaps they have an answer that is completely unexpected.

What is it like to talk with them? How is it to look into their eyes? Is there anything that tells you that this is a future conversation and not from before?

When you have seen all you need to, find a way to say thank you, and take your leave.

Time is passing in this future world. You are coming to evening now. You have been invited to join people in the community for some kind of gathering. Perhaps it's a meeting with things to decide. Perhaps a celebration – a birthday, a harvest, a commemoration. Let yourself find your way to a place where people are starting to gather.

As you arrive, again notice with all your senses. What are the colours of the place? How is it decorated? Is it indoors or outside? What are the sounds – is there music? Voices? Sounds from nature? How does the air smell as evening is falling?

Notice who is here – older people? Children? How is the event organised? Just let it unfold, as if you are watching a film – but with all your senses engaged. You meet more people, you take part - or you observe and listen.

So let time move forward again, this day is coming to an end. Take your leave from the gathering. At some point on your journey home you stop and notice nature around you – the darkness, the scents and sounds of the night. How is it to notice the sky, the living environment?

And your day in this future place is ending, you make your way back to your bed and fall asleep again. And in your sleep you drift back in time, back to this present time, knowing that you can visit this future place again any time that you wish.

So allow yourself to come back to this year, and this time and place, your group meeting, returning fully into your body. Taking your time, reconnecting with your breath, with your weight on the chair, hearing the sounds in the room.

When you are ready, open your eyes, and bring yourself fully back. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and stretch a few parts of your body.

Related Resources

How to Get and Keep People Involved
How to Create Partnerships
Working Together Well
Effective Groups
Decision Making

Moving to a Core Group
From Founders to the Future
Producing a Timeline

Visioning exercise - Active Neighbourhoods Canada
Visioning in the Futures Toolkit - UK Government

For more resources like this one, go to https://resources.transitionnetwork.org/
or to the Transition Network international website www.transitionnetwork.org

Transition Network international