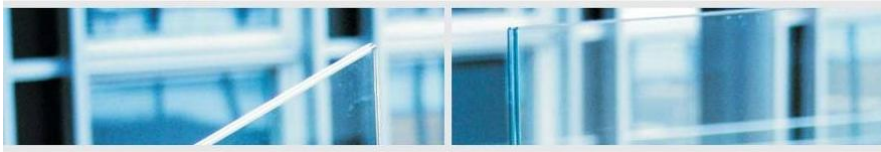


Alternative Visions For A Future World



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Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC), University of Turku
Lectures on Futures Studies

Sustainable Futures - Futures2a. Environment, Culture, Society, Economy



Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

Structure of Lecture

1. Future as Alternatives
2. Visioning Alternative Futures
3. Great Transitions

12.2.2010

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Aims of Lecture

- To underline the principles of futures studies and its approach to the future as alternatives
- To discuss various means for visioning the future world
- To analyse the results of a report by Global Scenario Group - *Great Transitions*

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1. Future as Alternatives

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Futures thinking

- The future is about Change and Emergence
- The future is about discontinuities and tipping points
- The future is about ideas and resources
- The future is about hope and fear
(dreams and nightmares)
- The future is about alternatives and choices
- The future is about action
 - the future is Real
 - the future is Now!

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*"The future is always present,
as a promise, a lure and a temptation."*

Karl Popper

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The three basic principles of futures studies

1. The future is not predictable.

We can only create images and ideas of what events we will be facing in the future -- therefore futurists use the phrase "many alternative futures". More or less enlightened anticipations.

2. The future is not preordained.

We can assess what will probably happen (i.e., what the grades of probability are), when we consider the different options. There is not just one future.

3. We can affect the future through our actions and choices.

Therefore it is important to know what is probable (plausible) and what is preferable. This requires the consideration of values.

(Roy Amara 1982)

The future can be...

Probable (plausible)

It is probable that the Sun will rise tomorrow.

Possible

It is possible that it will be raining tomorrow.

Conditional

If it is not raining, I will go for a picnic.

Desirable

I hope that it won't be raining tomorrow...

Threatening (avoidable)

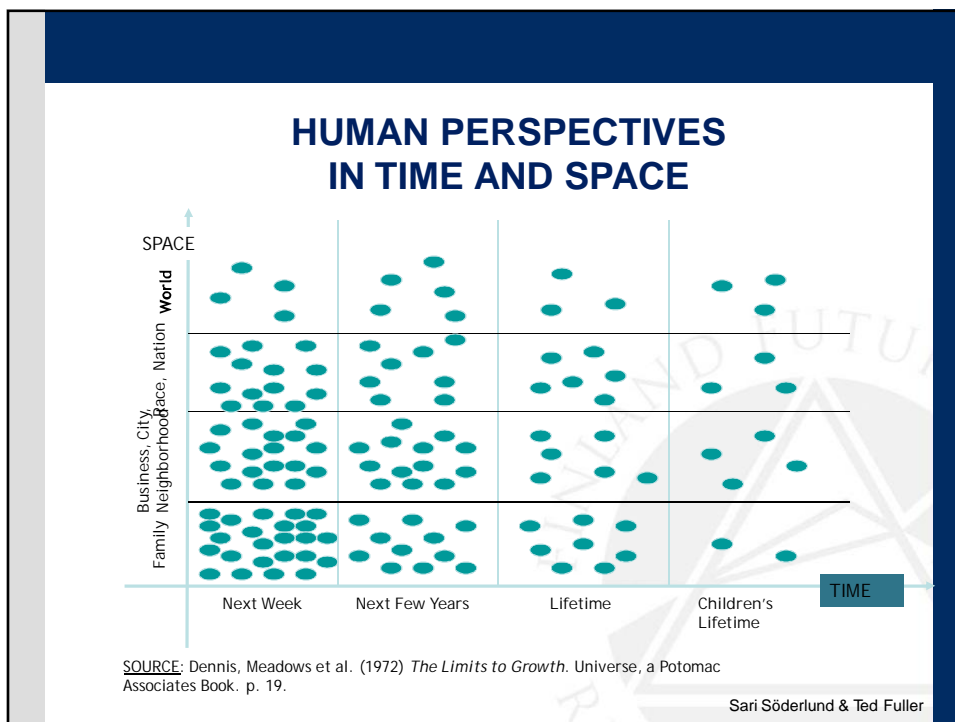
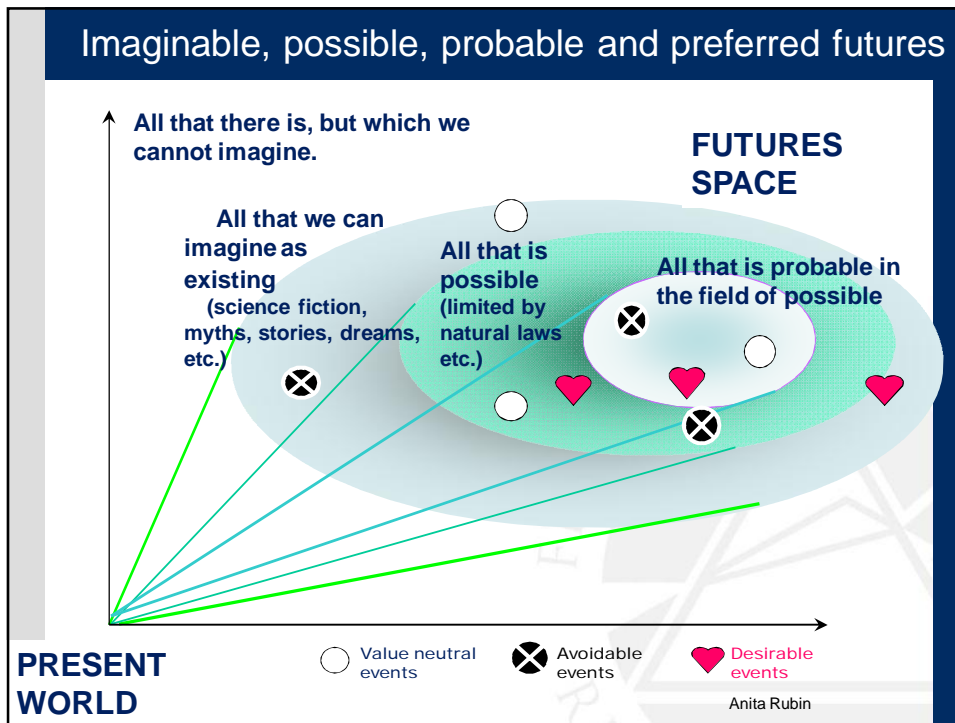
...but I'm afraid that it will be raining.

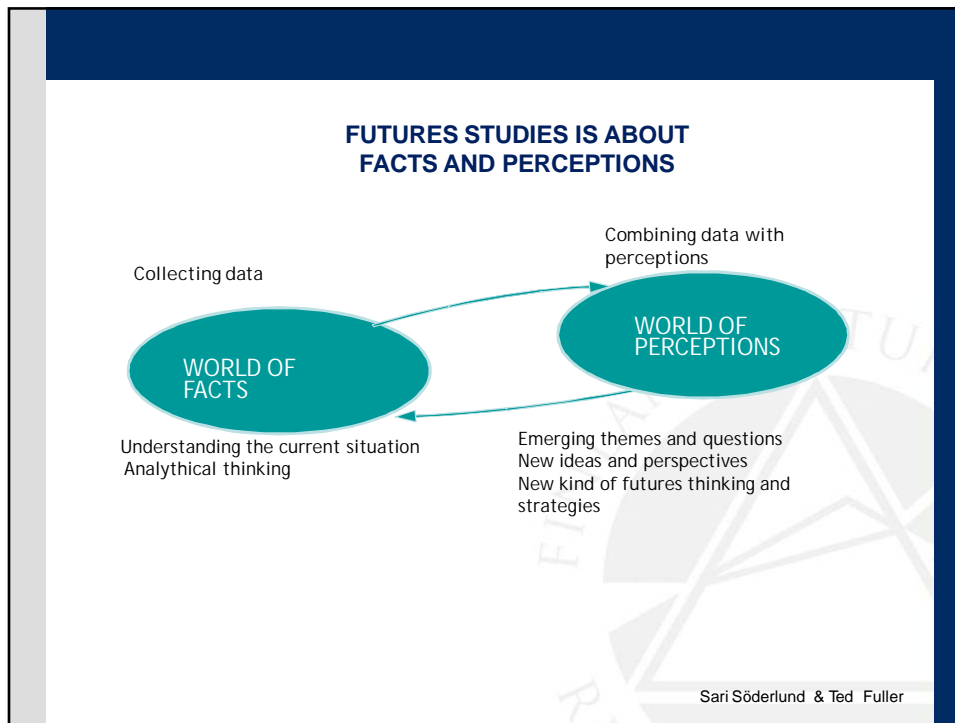
This is where a human being enters the picture:

If it rains, what will I do instead?

What is my alternative plan?

Personal futures strategies





In a Nutshell, Futures Studies...

- ...uses values as variables;
- ...questions self-evidence and ready-chewed beliefs;
- ...creates and uses images of the future as tools in the making of the future;
- ...instead of one, matter-of-fact future, concentrates on **alternatives** and therefore explores many possible futures;

critical approach....

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The Core of Futures Thinking is...

...a point of view about the future, the present and the past and the relationship between them;

yesterday – now – tomorrow

...an internalised form of thinking structure;

...and a special inclination to form an understanding on the meanings and consequences of our daily decisions.

-> Literacy of the future

Can you "read" the future?

Can you "write" the future?

Do you know futures literature?

Can you make futures scenarios?



Richard Slaughter Riel Miller

Pentti Malaska Anita Rubin

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TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

- does **not take a linear path** from theory to application to introduction of the technology into society;
- is **influenced by social choices** at every point.

Consequently, technologies bear the imprint of the social processes that have brought them forth.

➔ a spiral-shape effect: Social factors shape technology, and because technologies are socially shaped, their properties and effects can in large be seen as social properties and social effects.

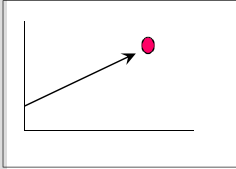
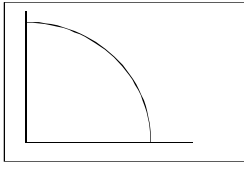
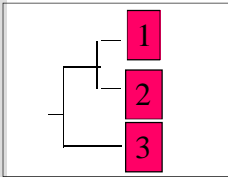
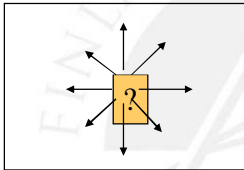
- This also means that when we talk about "information society", we cannot separate information from that society where information is being used and utilised. In the end they are the same.
- **Technology Foresight – Technology Assessment!**

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Futures studies approaches

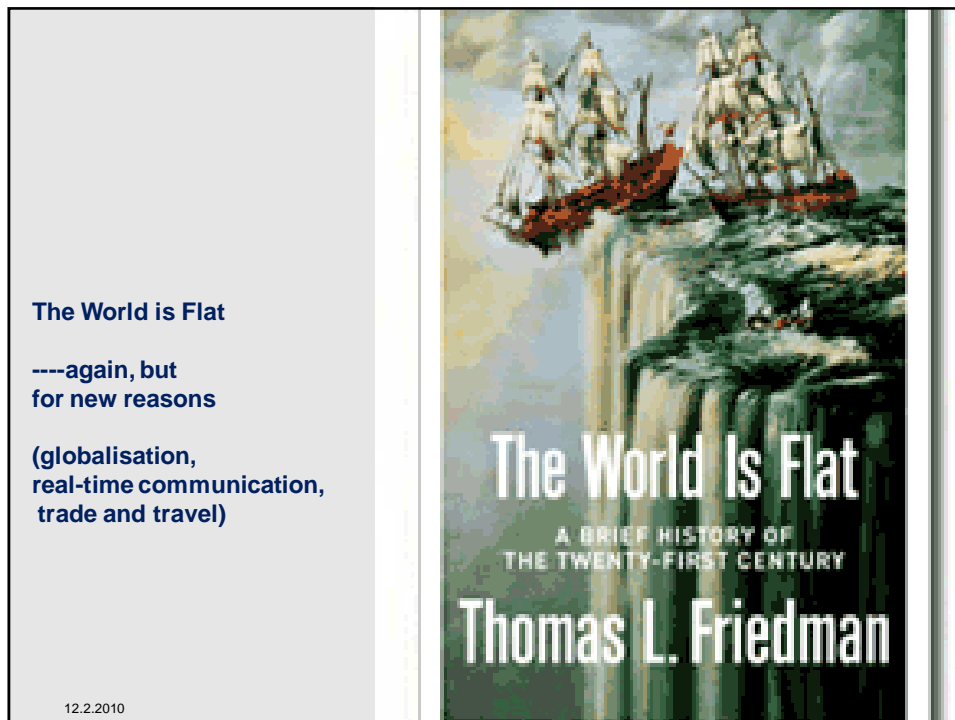
<p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Sufficiently certain future</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Possible to anticipate the probable future with sufficient accuracy</p> </div> </div> <p>Tools: traditional toolbox for strategy work</p>	<p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Range of futures</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Possible to foresee the range of possible outcomes</p> </div> </div> <p>Tools: Technology foresight, scenario techniques, forecasting demand</p>
<p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Alternative futures</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Possible to calculate a few possible outcome, which determine the future</p> </div> </div> <p>Tools: Analysis for decision-making, operation analyses, game theory, scenario techniques</p>	<p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Genuine uncertainty</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Impossible to forecast</p> </div> </div> <p>Tools: non-linear models, analogies</p>

Johnston Ron 2000 Anita Rubin

2. Visioning Alternative Futures

2. Visioning Alternative Futures

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The World is Flat

---again, but
for new reasons

(globalisation,
real-time communication,
trade and travel)

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Alternative Future as Utopias

Utopia is a name for an ideal community or society

UTOPIA a book written in 1516 by Sir Thomas More describing a fictional island in the Atlantic Ocean, with a seemingly perfect socio-politico-legal system

The term has been used to describe both intentional communities that attempted in real life to create an ideal society, and fictional societies portrayed in literature:

Plato's Republic (400BC) political utopia ruled by an elite of philosopher kings.

The City of God (written 413–426 AD) by Augustine describes an ideal city.

The New Atlantis (1627) by Francis Bacon.

It has generated other concepts, most prominently dystopia. The Greek: οὐ, "not", and τόπος, "place", indicating that More was utilizing the concept as allegory and did not consider such an ideal place to be realistically possible.

Modern use of the term "Utopia" assumes the meaning of a **place of perfection** rather than nonexistence.

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Utopias: political, economic, ecological

Dystopia is a *negative* utopia: a totalitarian and repressive world.

Popular examples include

Yevgeny Zamiatin's *We*,
Ayn Rand's *Anthem*,
Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*,
George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,
Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*,
Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*,
Lois Lowry's *The Giver*,
Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and
Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*.

Eutopia is a *positive* utopia, different in that it means "perfect" but not "fictional".

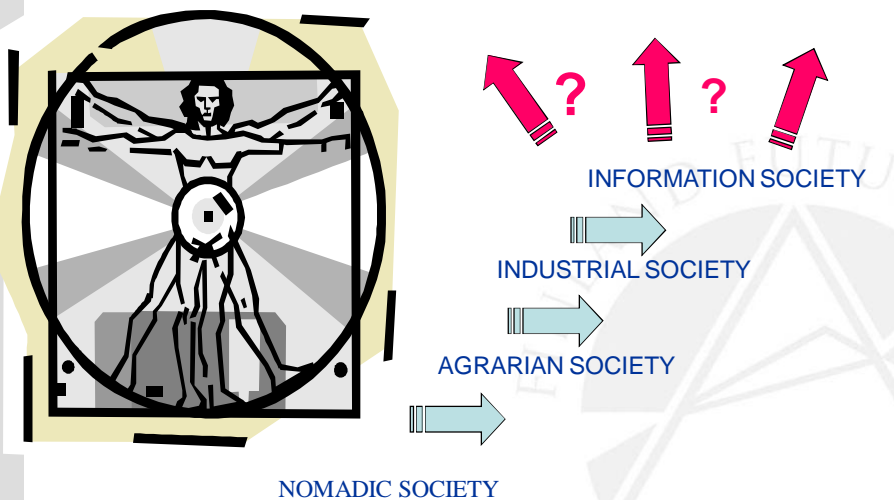
Heterotopia, the "other place", with its real and imagined possibilities (a mix of "utopian" escapism and turning virtual possibilities into reality) — example: cyberspace.

Samuel R. Delany's novel *Trouble on Triton* is subtitled *An Ambiguous Heterotopia* (not strictly utopian, though not dystopian). The novel offers several conflicting perspectives on the concept of utopia.

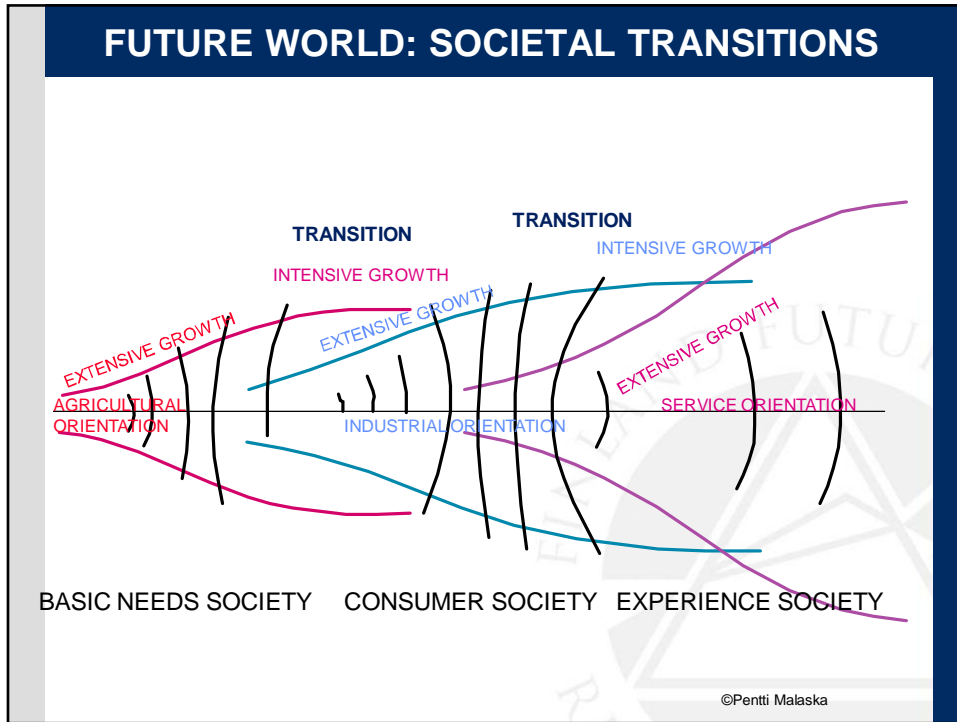
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FUTURE WORLD: SOCIETAL EVOLUTION

BIO-SOCIETY – EXPERIENCE SOCIETY – DIGI-SOCIETY



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15 Global Challenges

Millennium Project
Futures Research Methodology
V 3.0

- 1 How can sustainable development be achieved for all?
- 2 How can everyone have sufficient clean water without conflict?
- 3 How can population growth and resources be brought into balance?
- 4 How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?
- 5 How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long-term perspectives?
- 6 How can the global convergence of information and communications technologies work for everyone?
- 7 How can ethical market economies be encouraged to help reduce the gap between rich and poor?
- 8 How can the threat of new and reemerging diseases and immune microorganisms be reduced?
- 9 How can the capacity to decide be improved as the nature of work and institutions change?
- 10 How can shared values and new security strategies reduce ethnic conflicts, terrorism, and the use of weapons of mass destruction?
- 11 How can the changing status of women improve the human condition?
- 12 How can transnational organized crime networks be stopped from becoming more powerful and sophisticated global enterprises?
- 13 How can growing energy demands be met safely and efficiently?
- 14 How can scientific and technological breakthroughs be accelerated to improve the human condition?
- 15 How can ethical considerations become more routinely incorporated into global decisions?

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Scenarios - Alternative Visions of a Future World

**The number of alternative visions?
How alternative? How different from each other?**

- 1 A
- 2 A B
- 3 A B C
- 4-6
-

84.000 futures by Yrjö Seppälä

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Scenarios - Alternative Visions of a Future World

The structure of alternative visions?

**The scenarios should have
a comprehensive coverage of society,
a coherent and consistent plot and
a vivid narrative**

**Drama: platform, actors, drivers, developments,
context**

Scenarios - not just one technique!

- descriptive
- exploratory
- prescriptive/normative
-

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Scenarios - Alternative Visions of a Future World

PESTEC	A	B	C	D
Political				
Economic				
Social				
Technological				
Environmental				
Cultural/Customer /citizen				

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WHOSE FUTURES: Futures workshops

- **The content of visions/scenarios /strategies comes from participants**
(preferably heterogeneous mix)
- **The working structure comes from facilitators**
- **The strength of the method: possible to reach both individual and organisational views (all participants) for constructing a common future (or first a palette of alternative futures)**
- **Food for → strategies (decision-making)**

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3. Great Transitions

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Global Scenario Group

- The Global Scenario Group was first convened more than 15 years ago to engage an international group in an examination of the prospects for world development in the twenty-first century.
- The Global Scenario Group synthesized its findings in: **Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead (= reading material)**
- The report describes the historic roots, current dynamics, future perils, and alternative pathways for world development.
- It advances a *Great Transition* as the preferred route, identifying strategies, change agents, and values shifts for a new global agenda.

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Future as Transition

- The global transition has begun
...but its outcome is in question
– the future is different, but how?



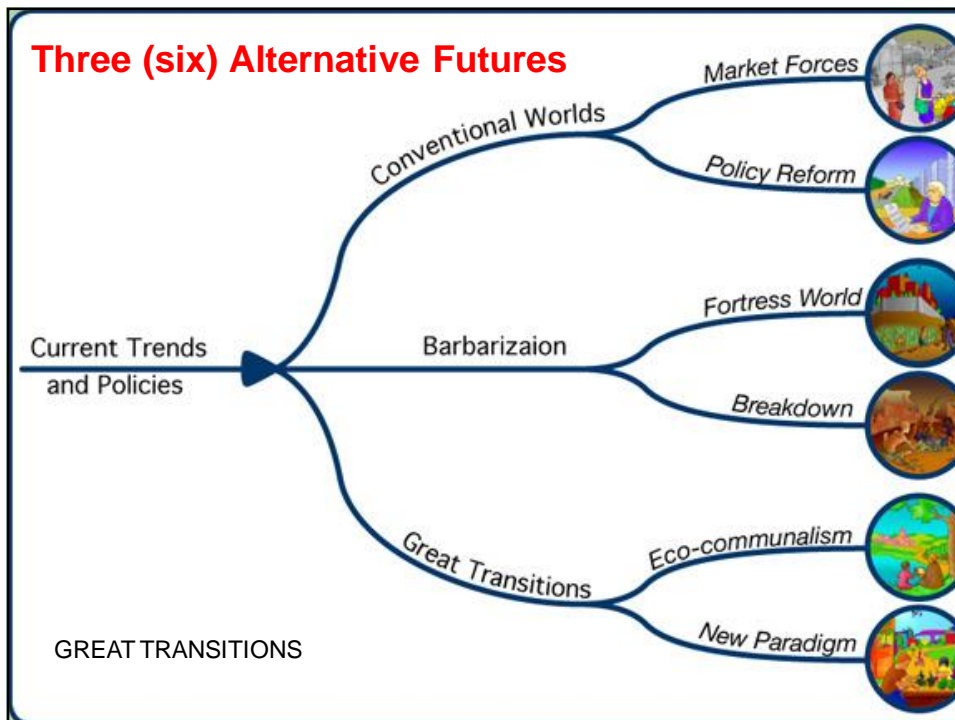
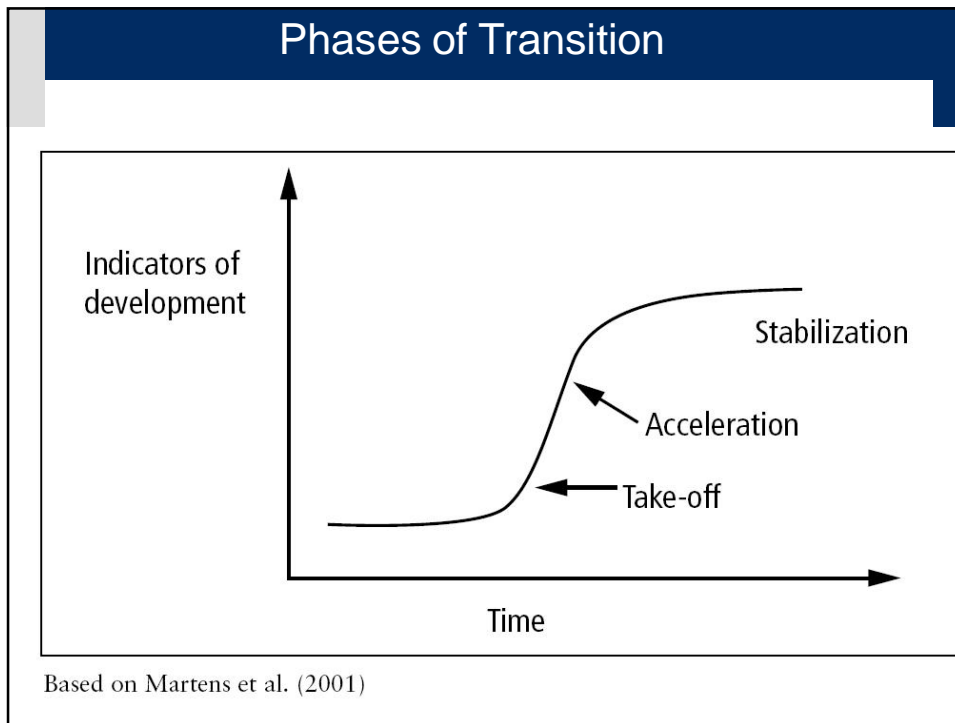
- Current trends set the direction of departure for the journey to the future, but not its destination.
- Depending on how environmental and social conflicts are resolved, global development can branch into dramatically different pathways

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Worse Futures are not Inevitable

- It is easy to envision a dystopic future world of impoverished people, cultures and nature.
- Even though probable, it is not inevitable.
- Humankind has the power
to foresee, to choose and to act.
- Even though it may seem improbable, a transition
to a future world of enriched lives, human solidarity and a healthy planet is possible.

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Scenario Descriptions

- The GSG scenarios are based on a two-tier hierarchy.
 - **Conventional Worlds, Barbarization and Great Transitions** represent fundamentally different social visions. Within each of these classes, a range of variants is considered.
- > The GSG's analysis has focused on six scenarios.

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Conventional Worlds

Conventional Worlds envision the global system of the twenty-first century evolving without major surprises, sharp discontinuities or fundamental transformations in the basis for human civilization. Dominant values and institutions shape the future, the world economy grows rapidly and developing countries gradually converge toward the norms set by highly industrial countries.

1. *Market Forces*
2. *Policy Reform*

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Market Forces



This variant incorporates mid-range population and development projections, and typical technological change assumptions. The problem of resolving the social and environmental stress arising from global population and economic growth is left to the **self-correcting logic of competitive markets**.

Policy Reform



Policy Reform adds strong, comprehensive and coordinated **government action**, as called for in many policy-oriented discussions of sustainability, to achieve greater social equity and environmental protection. The political will evolves for strengthening management systems and rapidly diffusing environmentally-friendly technology, in the context of proactive pursuit of sustainability as a strategic priority.

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Barbarization


These scenarios envision the grim possibility that the social, economic and moral underpinnings of civilization deteriorate, as emerging problems overwhelm the coping capacity of both markets and policy reforms.

3. Breakdown

4. Fortress World


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Breakdown



In this variant, crises combine and spin out of control, leading to unbridled **conflict, institutional disintegration and economic collapse**.

Fortress World



Fortress World features an **authoritarian response to the threat of breakdown**. Ensnared in protected enclaves, elites safeguard their privilege by controlling an impoverished majority and managing critical natural resources, while outside the fortress there is repression, environmental destruction and misery.

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Great Transitions

Great Transitions explore visionary solutions to the sustainability challenge, including **new socioeconomic arrangements and fundamental changes in values**. They depict a transition to a society that preserves natural systems, provides high levels of welfare through material sufficiency and equitable distribution, and enjoys a strong sense of **social solidarity**. Population levels are stabilized at moderate levels and material flows through the economy are radically reduced through **lower consumerism** and massive use of **green technologies**.

- 5. Eco-Communalism
- 6. New Sustainability Paradigm

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Eco-Communalism



The *Eco-Communalism* variant incorporates the green vision of bio-regionalism, localism, face-to-face democracy, small technology and economic autarky.







New Sustainability Paradigm



This variant shares some of the goals of the *Eco-Communalism* scenarios, but would seek to change the character of the urban, industrial situation rather than to replace it, to build a **more humane and equitable global civilization** rather than retreat into localism. The *New Sustainability Paradigm* is the focus of *Great Transition*.

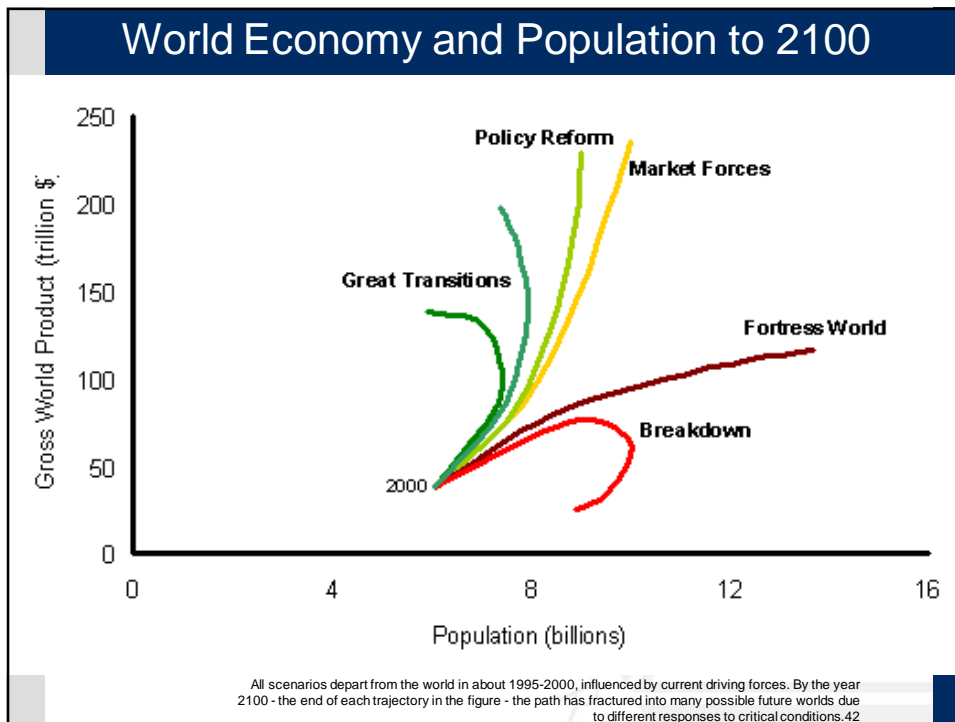
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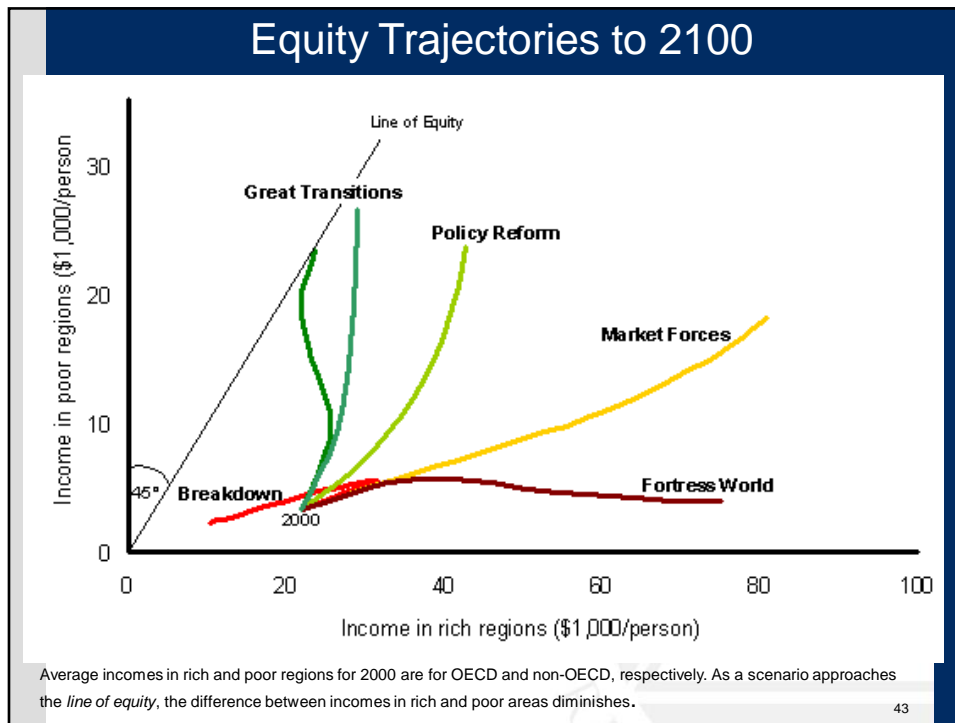
Scenario Structure with Illustrative Patterns

Scenario	 Population	 Economy	 Environment	 Equity	 Technology	 Conflict
Conventional Worlds						
<i>Market Forces</i>	↗	↗	↘	↘	→	→
<i>Policy Reform</i>	↗	↗	→	→	↗	↘
Barbarization						
<i>Breakdown</i>	↩	↩	↘	~	↘	↗
<i>Fortress World</i>	↗	↗	↩	↘	→	↗
Great Transitions						
<i>Eco-Communalism</i>	↩	↩	↗	~	↩	~
<i>New Sustainability Paradigm</i>	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↘

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Archetypal Worldviews			
Worldview	Antecedents	Philosophy	Motto
Conventional Worlds <i>Market</i>	Smith	Market optimism; hidden & enlightened hand	Don't worry, be happy
	<i>Policy Reform</i> Keynes Brundtland	Policy stewardship	Growth, environment, equity through better technology & management
Barbarization <i>Breakdown</i>	Malthus	Existential gloom; population/resource catastrophe	The end is coming
	<i>Fortress World</i> Hobbes	Social chaos; nasty nature of man	Order through strong leaders
Great Transitions <i>Eco-communalism</i>	Morris & social utopians Ghandhi	Pastoral romance; human goodness; evil of industrialism	Small is beautiful
	<i>New Sustainability Paradigm</i> Mill	Sustainability as progressive global social evolution	Human solidarity, new values, the art of living
Muddling Through	Your brother-in- law (probably)	No grand philosophies	Que será, será





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A New Sustainability Paradigm

would challenge both the viability and desirability of conventional values, economic structures and social arrangements.

It would offer a **positive vision of a civilized form of globalization for humanity.**

Four major agents of change, acting synergistically, could drive a new sustainability paradigm.

Three are global actors: 1) intergovernmental organisations, 2) transnational corporations and 3) civil society acting through non-governmental organisations and spiritual communities.

The fourth is less tangible, but critical:

4) wide public awareness for the need of change.

New ways of thinking, acting and being are urgently needed.

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Indeterminacy -- resolved through scenarios

Scenarios include images of the future – snapshots of major features of interest at various points in time – and an account of the flow of events leading to such future conditions.

Global scenarios draw on both

- 1) **science** – our understanding of historical patterns, current conditions and physical and social processes – and
- 2) the **imagination** to articulate alternative pathways of development and the environment.

While we cannot know what will be, we can tell plausible and interesting stories about what could be.

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Indeterminacy -- resolved through scenarios

The qualitative scenario narrative gives voice to important non-quantifiable aspects such as **values, behaviours and institutions.**

Where modelling offers
structure, discipline and rigor,
Narrative offers
texture, richness and insight.

The art is in the balance.



+



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Questions for Discussion

- Do the scenarios sound plausible?
- What are the key differences in the scenarios?
- Which one is the most probable to come true? Why?
- Is there any aspect of the Great Transition scenario you do not like?
- What aspects do you particularly like?
- How do we get to the Great Transition (or something in that direction)?

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Further Reading

Raskin, Paul, Banuri, Tariq, Gallopin, Gilberto, Gutman Paulo, Hammond, Al, Kates, Robert & Swart, Rob (2002). **Great Transitions**. A Report of the Global Scenario Group. Stockholm Environment Institute and Global Scenaric Group.

http://www.gtinitiative.org/documents/Great_Transitions.pdf

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<http://www.tulevaisuus.fi/fmc/>

VIDICO –hanke (Osaaminen näkyväksi digitaalisilla sisällöillä) EU/EaKrA31003

Luova TulevaisuusTila

<http://www.lib.hel.fi/fi-FI/kohtaamispaikka/luovatulevaisuustila/>

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