
Creating alternatives – i.e. propositions or trajectories in conflict or that have departed from an initial proposition or trajectory, relative to a future-oriented hypothesis or a representation of a possible future – is an essential strategic act. But, unless one is a pathological non-conformist, temperamental or a systematically bad-tempered opponent, creating alternatives is useless unless we create a vision of a desirable future at the same time. A place where we want to go.

1. How do we create visions of the future in territorial foresight?

In terms of territorial foresight, which of course includes urban foresight, the creation of solid, shared visions of a future that is both distant and credible is rather unusual. For several reasons, I think.

First of all, because numerous political or administrative leaders continue to believe that they, and/or the small team supporting them, can see into the future like a truth revealed, and that it is not the done thing to share this vision with the “*muggles*” (Harry Potter’s *muggle* world) of the business and academic world or civil society. When the moment arrives to implement a strategy, those in the know will be the only ones to carry it through, which generally means it is bound to fail.

Furthermore, creating visions is not a frequent occurrence because the weight of national, European, and even global strategies appears so significant to the majority of decision-makers, that they will not reveal how much room there is for manoeuvre or how much they have been allowed and fall under the scope of pre-established dynamics, thought up elsewhere in a sometimes highly technocratic manner. This situation at least has the advantage of allowing them to hide behind policies recommended by Europe, the OECD or other institutions, and saves them the trouble of creating a common way of thinking with the players.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that, contrary to the United States, visioning is not very widespread in foresight and European strategy, where the scenario method often rules. And yet, while this method helps to explore possible environments, it does not

generally produce a vision of desirable futures, other than gradually transforming the possible into the desirable with a wave of a magic wand, which – in my opinion – is nothing more than manipulation.

During the seminar in October 2010, we were reminded that a vision is a shared image described in precise terms of a desirable future. While territorial foresight, especially in among the French, has made little use of visioning, corporate foresight has been used for a long time. It is by taking inspiration from corporate vision-building principles that we have created territorial visions over the past ten years, through four elements that are as applicable to a village or district as they are to the whole of Europe. We included this process in the *Blueprint Transvision*, elaborated in 2004 upon the initiative of the DG Research's K2 Unit⁽¹⁾ as well as in the *Mutual Learning Platform* ⁽²⁾ report on regional foresight.

This vision is composed of four elements:

1. aims, i.e. general goals perceived as possible to achieve, which the territory will endeavour to achieve through processes, and as you would an ideal;
2. major projects that plot the future. These are the expected outcomes of the determining actions and projects that we will have successfully carried out, the concrete and major results of the path that we are going to take;
3. a system of shared values, i.e. stating the values ⁽³⁾ that are necessary and that we are going to activate to achieve the vision. They are traditional, current values that we are going to cultivate to unite and manage our differences, as well as values, which are “qualities to be acquired”, as we say in the scouts, which we believe could help us to achieve the vision if they are supported collectively;
4. a collective desire to achieve the objectives, a desire without which nothing is possible, and which it must be possible to express symbolically in all foresight and strategic approaches.

In the foresight exercises we are conducting, we are collecting these ingredients one after the other, with the participants in the process, before some of us endeavour to write a text based on these elements and submit it for general interaction.

Beyond this rather traditional process, we can – or rather *should* – add to the approach of creating the vision, the principle I put forward in the October 2010 seminar, i.e. the principle of sustainable development as highlighted in the 1987 Brundtland report, *Our Common Future, aimed at encouraging a state of harmony between human beings and between man and nature*. This harmony can be defined as a happy combination between the elements of the territorial system, which means that these elements contribute to the same group effect, allowing it to achieve its aims. More poetically, or more pragmatically, it was said during the October 2010 seminar that this model of harmony was composed of hope and happiness.

The interest of passing via the Brundtland report is that, besides the concept of harmony, which makes us part of a systemic dynamic, seven key areas have been specified, that exceed the holy trinity of the economic, the social and the environmental. Thus, by successively evoking:

(1) Philippe DESTATTE & Pascale VAN DOREN, *The Transvision Blueprint, Bridging neighbouring regions belonging to different jurisdictions, i.e., historically and culturally close regions divided by national borders*, p. 21, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.

(2) Günter CLAR & Philippe DESTATTE, *Regional Foresight, Boosting Regional Potential, Mutual Learning Platform Regional Foresight Report*, Luxembourg, European Commission, Committee of the Regions and Innovative Regions in Europe Network, 2006.

(3) By value we mean a type of belief representing and leading to ideal modes of conduct.

- a political system that ensures the effective participation of citizens in decision-making,
- an economic system capable of revealing surpluses and creating technical competences on a sustained and autonomous basis,
- a social system capable of finding solutions to tensions resulting from unbalanced development,
- a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological basis with a view to development,
- a technological system that is always on the look-out for new solutions,
- an international system that favours sustainable solutions regarding exchanges and financing, and
- a flexible administrative system capable of self-correction;

the Brundtland report includes sustainable development and the vision that we can have of the future:

- in a demanding citizen-oriented governance;
- in an intentionally productive economic system;
- in a balanced or fair social system;
- in a development system that respects the ecosystem;
- in an innovative technological system;
- in an international system of balanced exchanges and financing;
- in an administrative system that practices assessment and draws conclusions from it.

This is already a strong and, I believe, non-conformist vision. Conceived almost 25 years ago, I do not think that it has been achieved or carried out by any of the known states or regional realities.

However, this vision makes the same mistake that we have already mentioned: conceived in a top-down manner, it is having trouble activating the players who, up until now, have been relatively indifferent towards it.

This last remark also relates back to the issue of legitimacy: who can legitimately conceive and support a common vision of the future on a territorial, urban or European level? This question is also linked to that of democracy in all its forms: representative democracy, participative democracy, deliberative democracy, but that's not all because like foresight, it falls under the scope of multi-player and multi-level governance, associating the parties involved.

2. What vision for the Europe of tomorrow and its towns?

Besides the exploratory scenarios that Orate/Espon has developed in its 3.2 project according to the main lines of competitiveness and cohesion, it is necessary to highlight the interest of the normative scenario which is based on a very interesting vision, even if it raises the question of legitimacy again.

The normative scenario is based on the “backcasting” (roll-back) method. The approach is based on the vision of experts that hinges on ten objectives:

- prosperous, competitive and diversified economies;
- an innovative knowledge society;
- sustainable transport;
- a balanced distribution of the population, wealth, towns, etc.;
- a society and a territory based on social inclusion;
- a sustainable urban system;
- a sustainable use of energy;
- a healthy environment and risk prevention;

- a cultural heritage and diverse identities;
- governance focusing on the territory ⁽⁴⁾.

Hence, the vision of the proactive scenario tries to exceed the contradictions between a policy of competitiveness and a policy of territorial cohesion. We believe that European companies will reach a sufficient level of productivity and competitiveness by 2030 in order to achieve real global leadership in the areas associated with innovation, know-how and leading-edge technologies. Even if other European regions benefit from these advantages, the Pentagon stresses its role as a major hub. The impacts of these successes allow cohesion policies to be conducted throughout a further enlarged Europe, whose population has been stabilised with a sufficient average fertility rate.

Relating to the European towns of tomorrow, what goals, major projects, value system, common desire have we formulated individually or collectively? To which balance, which harmony are we inclined to refer?

Our dynamics are certainly not really those of a collective intelligence involving the involved parties, the non-conformist creators, or the weakest inhabitants – as I recommended at the end of last October workshop – but, nevertheless, despite being among the “usual suspects”, what do we currently have to offer?

A look at the answers provided by the experts to the questions of the DG Regional Policy, allows us to gather a few elements of vision and to outline the towns of tomorrow.

2.1. Goals for the European towns of tomorrow

2.1.1. An exemplary democracy, inherited from the Enlightenment, based on values of philosophical liberalism, the European Convention of Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights: tolerant, practising freedom of speech, religion, privacy, sexual orientation, fostering cultural creation as well as economic initiative, concerned with equality with regard to differences.

2.1.2. European towns founded on the idea of intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth, based on the principles of subsidiarity applied to the services of general interest.

2.1.3. A multi-level governance, i.e. where the workload and governance are spread between local, regional, national and European levels.

2.1.4. A quality of life for all European citizens, i.e. the desire to win the fight against poverty and social exclusion, involving everyone's participation and effort.

2.1.5. Energy efficiency through the generalisation of the different methods of renewable energies.

2.2. Major projects for the European towns of tomorrow

2.2.1. The general principle of action should be the simplification of the structures as well as the rules, regulations and standards.

(4) ORATE 3.2 project, *Spatial scenarios and orientations relating to SDEC and the cohesion policy, Operational summary of the final report*, 3.2., p. 22-23.

2.2.2. Setting up a steering platform, a new policy model, that is behind the idea of the “negotiated town”, that sets up arbitration mechanisms allowing a balanced and harmonious development in the long term, co-ordinating its relationships with civil society and the corporate world, and ensuring the contradictions between competitiveness and cohesion are bypassed.

2.3. A system of values for the European towns of tomorrow

2.1.1. Diversity is one of Europe’s main values. The application of the principle of diversity means that it would be pointless to build a unique model that exceeds the cultural and geographical specificities.

2.1.2. A search for balance: A Europe that is both multiple and hinged on differences that are national, polycentric and interconnected, diverse and seeking cohesion, competitive and supportive, linking together individual freedom and collective responsibility.

2.1.3. Development of enterprise and creativity in all areas.

2.4. A common desire for the European towns of tomorrow

This desire should not manifest itself in a restrictive institutionalisation or in a unique model, but more in the form of flexible mechanisms founded on general principles and based on men and women of talent.

2.5. Balance, harmony, well-being and happiness

It was written that an agreement on a European system of values, goals and objectives constitutes a pre-condition to build European towns. This balance, this harmonic, probably resides in the idea of general interest or of European common good, an idea that can also perhaps be considered as a goal.

It should be noted that the stakes or challenges already identified can each lead to values and goals that could be systematically expressed. Indeed, it is on the basis of desired futures in response to the previously defined stakes that we methodologically define the goals that form the backbone of the vision.