

In 100 years

Sketching out a baseline scenario for sustainability and growth for the next 100 years is virtually a fool's errand. It is scarcely possible to make any plausible straight extrapolations from historic trends a hundred years into the future. To see this, one needs only look back 100 years and try to find the historic trends that would extrapolate in any direct fashion from 1911 to now. And if that seems difficult even with the benefit of hindsight, try imagining people in 1911 attempting to predict a century of so much change and turmoil as the one we got.

Depending on your perspective today, the world of 1911 looks stagnant and boring, or poor, cruel and dangerous – or maybe pure, harmonious and innocent. It is definitely very foreign to the world we live in now – yet it undeniably contained the seeds of the present. In the same way the present contains the seeds of the future, but it's very unlikely to unfold in any straightforward way. That is why we need scenarios to get a better feeling of the enormous range of possible futures in the next 100 years, including how we might try to shape the future and create the ones we prefer.

Read more about how House of Futures work with sustainable societies in the long run at www.in100y.dk

Sketching out preferred future scenarios of sustainable societies 2112

In the project "In100years" we focus on preferred futures for sustainable societies in the long run. We know transformation is needed, but in what way do we know it? That is to say, is the knowledge something that induces a mindshift inducing us to actually start a different course? That is the first question. The second question is, which kind of mindset would we prefer to see?

We at House of Futures take sustainability as a given element of a preferred future, but there may be many ways of attaining this. Here we will put forward two very different types of mindsets that lead to different paths to the future. And the key to these differences lies in different expressions of human consciousness. One scenario is called "Man-made World", the other we call "The Power of Nature". Get a first impression of the two futures for sustainable societies on the next pages.

Man-made World

“There is nothing wrong with the world that cannot be cured by what is right with the world”.

Geologists, biologists and climate scientists are telling us that Earth’s metabolism is changing significantly, and that human activities are the main driving force behind this. They have even named a new geological era after us – the Anthropocene. This denotes an era where human-induced change in the composition of the atmosphere, land use, forest clearing, construction, fishing etc. is giving rise to qualitatively different conditions for life on Earth.

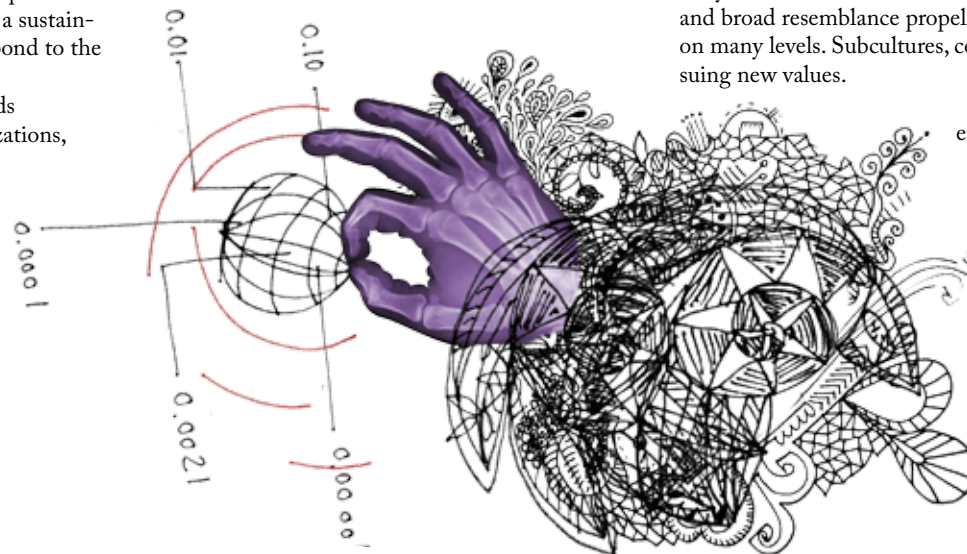
The steadily accumulating sum of knowledge and data irrefutably points to serious consequences in the form of climate change, increasing weather instability, rising ocean levels, degrading of farm land in many parts of the world, degrading eco-systems and loss of biodiversity. We need to cope with this, rationally, in order to mitigate the change as much as reasonably possible, and in order to adapt to the changes in store. This is only common sense. We need to change our course, slowly, but steadily, like a supertanker.

And we do this by applying the enormous capacity that is at our disposal: Political capacity and business/corporate capacity, science, technology, knowledge and economic resources.

People at large take the message of the scientific community to heart and demand that their leaders act on this knowledge. Politically, we negotiate binding targets for changing our ways and invest heavily in research and development of clean and green technologies. We develop the necessary institutions to negotiate, implement and enforce these policies on national and super-national levels. We put in place programs for effective disaster relief, including refugees, and effective means of conflict mediation.

Economically, we make conscious efforts to transform the way our system works in order to have stability, fairness and sustainability. Consumers accept that patterns of consumption will have to take a sustainable turn, and businesses innovatively respond to the transformed market conditions.

We realize that when we put our minds to it, we can develop technologies, organizations, political institutions and business models that allow us to prosper in ways that do not jeopardize the planet. Collectively, we are approaching a state of global stewardship in which we manage our planet rationally, like any sensible landowner would his property.



The power of nature

“We are part of the world, and to save it we need to start with ourselves”

Change comes in many different ways, shapes and forms. People have different cultures, languages, and traditions, but we share a common biology, and we share this planet. And people everywhere know that we are rooted in nature. Some stress our common DNA, the laws of nature, evolution and our dependence on the earth’s ecosystems. Some draw on religious imagery of an almighty Creator. And some rely on traditional wisdom and myths, emphasizing commonality and civility among humans.

On a deeper level, these are sources of meaning that we all tap into, regardless of nationality or culture. In many countries and cultures, there is an increasing realization that we depend on each other and on a shared, limited planet. This is a realization that comes with globalization and with border-crossing environmental challenges like global climate change. And it gives rise to a multiplicity of movements, large and small, of people who seek fulfillment in human relations, arts, spiritual education, nature, family, friendship, community and/or religion, pursuit of knowledge and aesthetics for their own sake, and so on.

It’s a continuation of megatrends like individualization, immaterialisation of consumption, and the reflexive society – trends that are based on people at large having attained a material standard of living where physical needs are met. It is perhaps also a reflection of the fact that people live longer and that the global population is becoming progressively older. Possibly even the rise of countries with ancient culture like China and India creating a much more multipolar world. Of course, these developments and movements are constantly evolving and changing their orientations and specific focus. Since they are highly decentralized and rooted in local circumstances, they are marked by unevenness and are often not in synch. They even clash from time to time. But in a larger perspective they do display a simultaneity and broad resemblance propelled by the constant communication, exchange and inspiration on many levels. Subcultures, communities, companies and businesses are developing and pursuing new values.

GDP and material wealth are being supplemented and de-emphasised as measures of progress and success. Concepts like happiness and quality of life are becoming more important, and as a matter of course include consideration for the Earth’s resources, eco-systems and biodiversity. Humankind is maturing and tends to become an integrated organic part of the world’s ecosystem rather than seeking to dominate and exploit it.