

How to Design a Community Vision

'When people come together and they believe in the same goals, much more can happen as a result of it. It's called shared vision. Those efforts are now targeted, focused and interconnected. I see our community growing out of its separateness.'

James Catanzaro, Chair of ReVision 2000 in Chattanooga, Tennessee

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Introduction

How community visions fit with Local Agenda 21

Community visions in Britain have mostly been developed as part of Local Agenda 21. A Local Agenda 21 is a plan for becoming sustainable in the 21st century, developed by a local authority with its community. Local authorities are involved because the invitation to develop a Local Agenda 21 was issued to them in Agenda 21, the plan which emerged from the Earth Summit in Rio. Communities are involved because sustainability requires each of us to change our lifestyles. We are far more likely to make that change if we have taken part in developing the plan, if we feel it is ours, than if we have been given the plan by someone else and told to get on with it.

This need for participation and a sense of ownership by communities has profound implications. One is the need to start from where the community is, not from where the experts are. This might mean not even referring to Local Agenda 21 or sustainability.

'Here most people think that Local Agenda 21 is a trendy bar in Inverness'

Scottish community development worker

Topic	% who had heard of topic	% who could define it correctly
Sustainable development	24	12
Local Agenda 21	7	2

(Source: "Sustainable Development: what it means to the general public" Scottish Office, 1995)

Involving the community often involves helping people to identify and tackle their current concerns and problems. This is invaluable, but not enough.

If [problem-solving] is successful, you might eliminate the problem. Then what you have is the absence of the problem you are solving. But what you do not have is the presence of a result you want to create.

The Path of Least Resistance, Robert Fritz

A good community vision provides a shared picture of the result that a community wants to create. It also stimulates that community to take the action needed to bring it about.

How community visions fit with the millennium

We cannot wait for great visions from great people, for they are in short supply at the end of history. It is up to us to light our own small fires in the darkness.

The Empty Raincoat, Charles Handy

We are a society that tends to look backwards. Even our language shows this. We are 'post-industrial' and 'post-modern', but what are we 'pre-'? Yet, as Publius Syrus said in 40 BC: 'You cannot plan the future by the past.' The danger is that the past becomes a surrogate for the future even when change makes this completely inappropriate. As John O'Reilly complained in the 'Big Issue', 'John Major wants to return to Fifties England and Tony Blair's vision of the future is the present plus computers.' In similar vein, the non-partisan Mitchell Report on Northern Ireland: commented that 'If the focus remains on the past, the past will become the future and that is something that no one can desire'.

The millennium is a tremendous opportunity, for it draws us to peer into the future. Each New Year we experience as a threshold, a time both to look back to the old year and its highlights and to look forward to the new year and its opportunities. How much greater a threshold is the year 2000?

The danger is that we miss this because we are jaundiced by the razzmatazz. Patty Boyd-Harrison, an associate of ex-Beatle George Harrison, has reserved every hotel room on the tiny Pacific island of Vatulele on the international date-line, while Richard Branson hopes to run a round-the-world flight and champagne party on Concorde. For a new millennium, we deserve something better.

If we are to get something better, we are going, as the quote from Charles Handy suggests, to have to create it for ourselves. This briefing, plus the others that accompany it, provides the tools for doing so. Our belief is that, if preparation starts now by individuals, community groups and local authorities, every community in Britain would have the chance to create a vision of its own for the future by the year 2000. Then we *would* be ready for the millennium.

How this briefing is laid out

The next section expands on how community visions work. It is followed by questions designed to help you decide if this is for you. There is then an introduction to participation, to provide a framework for designing your own approach.

The heart of the briefing is the description of the five steps involved in developing and realising a community vision, and the techniques to do this. For each step, the key points are described, along with the choices and how to make them. There are cross-references to the techniques described more fully in other briefings by the Centre, and to the case studies that show the techniques in action.

Finally, there are short sections on structure and on resources.

'Imagination is the most powerful tool for social change'

Ed Mayo, New Economics Foundation

How vision brings about change

We have already looked at some reasons why a community benefits from developing a shared vision of the future. There are also general reasons why vision helps whomsoever has a vision, be they individuals or a group.

A good explanation of how vision works is set out in Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline*.

'Imagine a rubber band, stretched between your vision and current reality. When stretched, the rubber band creates tension, representing the tension between vision and current reality. What does tension seek? Resolution or release. There are only two possible ways for the tension to resolve itself: pull reality towards the vision or pull the vision towards reality. Which occurs will depend on whether we hold steady to the vision.'

Another way of explaining how vision works is to look at its role in overcoming the inevitable resistance to any change. Resistance can only be overcome by a combination of:

Dissatisfaction with where we are now
Visions of where we want to get to
First steps that take us from here to there

The underlined letters give a formula:

$D * V * F > R$ ('>' means 'greater than')

According to the formula, if any element is zero, the three elements multiplied together will be zero, so the resistance will not be overcome. At present, vision is the element most likely to be absent. Encouraging such vision is the purpose of this document.

Introducing participation

Designing a good community vision means understanding what participation you want at each step, then finding a method that delivers it. This section describes the different levels of participation and methods in general terms. The next section relates this to different steps of a vision process.

Levels of participation

Participation takes many forms. Arnstein's ladder, below, shows the different ways in which the organisation responsible for an activity - in this case usually the local authority - can involve participants - in this case usually their citizens.

The higher up the ladder, the greater the participation	Delegate and support
	Act together
	Decide together
	Consult
	Tell

So the very least that you can do to involve someone is to tell them what is going on. At the top of the ladder, the responsible organisation hands that responsibility over to the participants. In **Gloucestershire** (case study 2), for example, the local authority handed over responsibility for Local Agenda 21 to a local voluntary body, the Rendezvous Society. The Rendezvous Society in turn then had to decide how to involve the citizens of Gloucestershire.

Methods for informing, consulting and deciding

The table below shows the different methods appropriate for each of the bottom three steps on the ladder:

Step	Method
Decide together	Meetings
Consult	1. Questionnaires 2. Interviews 3. Meetings (e.g. focus groups or workshops)
Tell	1. Media: newspaper articles; pieces on local radio 2. Exhibitions and displays 3. Publications

It is worthwhile looking at the 'Consult' step in a little more detail. There is a trade-off between the three methods. In the table below, the ratings for 'Number of people covered' and 'Number of issues covered' are both for a given amount of time and effort.

Method	Number of people covered	Number of issues covered	Depth in which issues covered
Questionnaires	High	High	Low
Interviews	Medium	Medium	Medium
Meetings	Low	Low	High

Meetings are the only one of the three methods where people interact with each other. This and the greater time available is why issues can be covered in more depth.

One the reasons for including this section is the vast amount of confusion caused by terms like 'involvement', 'participation' and 'consultation'. This is partly because some of these words are so general that it is impossible to tell where you are on the ladder. It is also because these terms are misused. Many organisations are torn. On the one hand, they know that participation is a good thing - they may even be required to do it. This argues for being at the top of the ladder. On the other hand, genuine participation involves time, effort and giving up part of one's own agenda. This argues for staying at the bottom of the ladder. So there is a temptation to pretend to be higher up the ladder than is really the case.

Studying the methods in use is a good way to check out what is really happening. Questionnaires, for example, are not usually a good way to 'Decide together'.

If you are choosing the method, it should fit with the rung of the ladder you want to be on. The rung in turn should fit with whichever step in developing a community vision you have reached. The next section describes these steps.

Steps in designing a community vision

There are five steps:

- **P**repare
- **E**nvision
- **A**ct
- **C**elebrate
- **E**valuate

Their initial letters form the acronym 'PEACE', which might help you to remember them.

The last two steps are easily forgotten, but vital. Celebration is essential to motivation, since achievements are otherwise easily lost sight of. Evaluation is essential to improving the process next time around.

This list is simplified in two respects. First, the steps may overlap. Secondly, the process should be cyclical, so that evaluation, for example, leads on to preparation for the next round.

The table below combines Arnstein's ladder from the previous section with the five steps:

	<u>P</u> repare	<u>E</u> nvision	<u>A</u> ct	<u>C</u> elebrate	<u>E</u> valuate
Delegate					
Act together					
Decide together		*			
Consult	*				
Inform		*	*	*	*

The stars show which form of involvement is most likely to be appropriate in each step. Decide for yourself, though, what you need to do. Below is an example of not doing what is necessary.

The task force in Hamilton-Wentworth, near Toronto in Canada, failed to communicate what a vision statement is, before presenting their vision to the public. Many people in the community and the media criticised the eight-page document as not worthy of one and a half years work, as they were not aware that the task force was still devising actions to implement the plan.

Step 1. Prepare

Are the conditions for a successful initiative in place?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is in favour of such an initiative?
- Are any of them willing and able to champion the initiative? (In New Haven, Connecticut, USA, the exercise was started by the bishop and the head of the Chamber of Commerce.)
- Who is opposed to the initiative?
- Are any of the opponents capable of stopping it?
- Is there time and space to secure favourable conditions?

The following examples of circumstances that helped or hindered come from the Centre's Briefing 1 on **Future Search**. (A brief description of Future search is given on page 17 below).

Circumstances that helped:

- The topic for the future search was high on the public agenda;
- An influential person committed themselves to the success of the conference, for their own career advancement;
- The initiators were trusted by the local authority;
- A Local Agenda 21 Forum was able to provide access to groups and networks;
- Local authority officers were dissatisfied with traditional, technical planning methods and wanted to try something new;
- Local political parties were in favour of community governance and open to experiments in public participation.

Circumstances that hindered:

- Apathy in the community;
- Changes in officers or councillors led to discontinuity. In one case the council's Chief Executive, who was the champion of the future search, was head-hunted for another job;
- The local authority imposed a tight time frame;
- Local power brokers were afraid of change;
- A newly-assembled steering group had to get used to each other as well as to the idea of a future search conference.

It can take a long time to create the right conditions. In one case, it took 21 months between the Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator first suggesting a future search and the conference taking place.

(The rest of this briefing assumes that you have decided to go ahead.)

Geographical area

Visioning projects can cover any geographical area, from a street to the whole world. Factors that influence that scale are:

- Go for somewhere small enough that people can identify with it;
- Go for somewhere large enough that decision-makers will feel it is worth putting effort into;
- Go for somewhere that feels like a natural unit.

If you are part of a community group that wants to gain the support of the local authority, be aware that local authorities will usually want to cover the area for which they are responsible. This may not seem natural to the local community. For example, Rushmoor Borough Council covers both prosperous Farnborough and relatively deprived Aldershot. The steering group eventually decided that the future search would cover the whole borough. This was because: first, one purpose of the conference is to make links between the two towns; secondly, covering one but not the other would be politically difficult; and finally, they didn't feel up to organising a conference in each town.

Who to involve

Are you going to identify particular groups that you will then try to involve? This will depend on:

- your values (e.g. a wish to ensure that the disadvantaged have a full opportunity to participate);
- your resources (Involving such groups may take a lot of time and effort. Hamilton-Wentworth, a city near Toronto in Canada, managed to run only 18 group discussions out of the 50 planned to reach people who would not normally attend public meetings.);
- the method you choose to create the vision (discussed in the next section).

An example of not identifying groups:

For Vision 2000 in Chattanooga, there was no selection or recruitment for neighbourhood meetings. It was felt that an open invitation was enough to give the process legitimacy, even for those who did not attend.

An example of identifying groups immediately:

Leicester analysed its demographic profile to ensure that the households chosen for its neighbourhood appraisal were representative.

An example of identifying groups after a while:

Vision 21 in Gloucestershire had no particular targets initially. After a successful first two years, though, they have now identified three groups with which they want to work:

- the artistic community of Gloucestershire in order to evolve a more visual or creative picture of the future of the county;
- young people;
- those not naturally interested in sustainable issues.

If you do decide to that you want to identify certain groups, you will need to decide on criteria by which to choose. Future search, for example, uses three criteria:

- People who are affected by what is happening in the area;
- People who affect what happens in the area;
- People with good information about the area.

Rushmoor used these criteria twice. First, a small working group made up of council officers and two consultants applied the criteria to decide who to invite on to the steering group. (There is more on steering groups in the chapter below on 'Designing the Organisational Structure'). Later, the steering group used the criteria to decide who to invite to the future search conference. In each case there were two stages:

- Use the criteria to decide who the most important stakeholder groups were;
- Use the criteria to decide which individuals to invite within each stakeholder group.

Example of groups chosen, in Leicester:

- older people;
- disabled people;
- young people;
- businessmen and women;
- cultural and ethnic minority groups;
- women;
- people on low incomes;
- community and workplace groups, and other local organisations;
- specialist groups and associations.

How to involve them

First, think back to Arnstein's ladder and decide whether you are informing or consulting or both. For most future search conferences, the steering group decides who to invite and then informs them by sending out invitations. In one case, though, stakeholder groups and possible invitees were discussed at open meetings. Similarly, *Gloucestershire* held public conferences to consult people on what they should do.

Once you have decided what sort of involvement you want, here are some tips on proceeding:

- People respond better if an approach is made directly or at least endorsed by someone they trust. Seek out 'community champions';
- Show people how they will benefit if they take part;
- Involve decision-makers early on to show people that their views will be acted on;
- To choose a method of telling people what is going on, think about who you want to reach, then think about how they receive information (e.g. do they read newspapers?);
- Reaching a range of people needs a range of methods. There need to be different meetings at different times for e.g. those at work during the day and the elderly who don't like going out after dark. In Potters Bar, three visioning workshops were all held at different times and on different days of the week;
- Explain what is expected of people who get involved and what they in turn can expect from the organisers. This might include: the timetable; any commitment by the organisers to use the results; any compensation arrangements. As an American put it, 'Give them the road map in advance'. Gloucestershire set ground rules for how people should be treated, listened to, etc.

Do's and don'ts from Hitchin:

- Do get the local media on board at an early stage;
- Don't ignore the groups that do not immediately become involved;
- Don't ignore local authority staff. They are as important as the community and they need to be involved.

What to plan

Plan each of the remaining four steps, not just the next one. For example, your evaluation may need you to decide now what represents success and what information you need to record. Also, the process should be cyclical. If so, remember that evaluation is not the end of the process. Also plan the organisational structure to support each step.

Chattanooga recruited 250 volunteers and trained 150 of them as facilitators, as part of their preparation for the envisioning stage.

Look at the relations between steps as well as the individual steps themselves. One place had a vision event where one of the principles was 'all the information needed is in the heads of the participants'. The result was that little use was made of the results of their elaborate consultation exercise at the event.

Timing

Allow plenty of time to prepare. The main reason for this is that it is vital to allow local support to build up. This increases the sense of local ownership and people's willingness to be involved. Building local support takes a long time though. Two future searches that were planned in 2-3 months as opposed to the normal 5-8 found it difficult to recruit enough people.

A second reason is that if all the steps are planned, as suggested above, then momentum can be preserved once the project is launched. Each step should follow as soon as possible after the previous one. One place lost momentum by a delay in contacting action groups after the envisioning step. By contrast, ReVision 2000 in Chattanooga, which was highly ambitious, took twelve months to prepare and three to do.

Step 2. Envision

Key principles

There are seven key principles in designing a method to produce the vision itself:

- **Action focus**

The aim of a vision is to lead to action and so to change. It is therefore especially important to build the action step, step 3, into the earlier steps. A future search conference, for example, finishes with action planning, so that people commit themselves to act while fired up by the vision they have created.

- **Build on common ground**

The stronger the sense of common ground, of shared values and concerns, the stronger will be the shared vision that can then be built.

- **Clear and open method**

An open method increases participation because people can join in at whatever stage and in whatever way suits them. Clarity and openness both increase participation by reducing any fear that others will try to control or manipulate the process.

- **Diversity**

The greater the diversity, the wider the range of ideas, contacts and resources available, and the easier it is to act. Of course, the greater the diversity, the harder it is to create the sense of common ground.

- **Engage people**

Do whatever it takes to engage people. Examples include making meetings fun and holding them in places and at times that suit the people you want to engage, not the organisers. In Leicester, if you didn't want to attend a group discussion you could send in something individual like a song or a poem. Leicester provided written material in several languages and in a large print version. There was also a minicom version for the hard of hearing.

- **Future focus**

This makes creating common ground easier by helping people to escape from current conflicts that divide them. It also makes action easier by helping people to escape from a feeling of being trapped in their current reality. The further they look into the future, the easier it is to dream of a life better than now.

- **Global context**

If we think global before acting local, our actions are more likely to benefit people and the environment in general, rather than ourselves alone. Also, finding solutions that stick depends on taking all relevant factors into account.

Designing meetings: how many and how open?

There are two initial choices:

- A single meeting or several meetings?
- Are meetings by invitation or open?

The most likely combinations are single meetings by invitation and several meetings that are open.

An example of a single meeting by invitation is a *future search* conference, to which 64 carefully selected stakeholder representatives are invited.

If there are several open meetings, these are usually either specially organised on a neighbourhood basis or based on the existing meetings of local organisations. These are open to everyone who lives in the neighbourhood or belongs to the relevant organisation.

The main factor influencing the choice of approach is a trade-off between the key principle of diversity and the effort and resources that events take to organise:

- ***A single meeting with invited participants***

Diversity is guaranteed. First, the key stakeholder groups are identified, then the key people within each group are identified and invited. This takes a lot of effort. One person spent 150 hours recruiting people.

- ***Several meetings on a neighbourhood basis***

Although there are several meetings, this is likely to be less effort overall, because of the saving in time from not inviting people individually. However, there is less diversity than with invited participants because:

1. Many stakeholder groups would not attend an open meeting
2. Neighbourhoods are usually fairly homogenous.

- ***Several meetings based on existing organisations***

3. This is even less effort, since the meetings are put on by the organisation.
4. There is also likely to be even less diversity, as organisations are likely to be more homogenous than neighbourhoods.

Other factors that might influence your choice include:

- It may be easier to create a high profile for a single event
- A desire to involve more people straight away than can take part in a single event.

Designing meetings: formats

Two of the appendices may be helpful in designing meetings. Appendix 1 describes the art of graphic facilitation, while appendix 3 covers 'Good Meetings'.

1. *Single meetings*

Formats for 2-3 day meetings known to the Centre for Community Visions are:

1. ***Future search*** (Briefing 1);
2. Future workshops (contact the Centre for further details);
3. Enspirited envisioning workshops (" ");
4. Real time strategic change (").

A future search conference is a way for a community or organisation to create a shared vision for its future. It enrolls 64 people, selected because they have power or information on the topic at hand or are affected by the outcomes. They take part in a highly-structured 2 1/2-day process. Trained facilitators assist the group to form a common understanding of the past and present, develop a shared vision of a desirable future and commit to action.

The other two methods are not described here because they have not yet been tested by communities in Britain. However, all three methods are alike in having two phases:

- Developing shared vision (methods for doing this are covered in the next section but one);
- Identifying action groups and helping each group to plan the way forwards.

Formats for shorter meetings lasting a day or less include adaptations of these methods. Nonetheless, they are planned to last for 2-3 days for good reason and a meeting lasting for instance a day cannot expect to accomplish all the tasks or to achieve the same impact.

Other shorter meetings are mostly created to order around one of the methods of creating a vision below. One special format is a 'Rescue Mission Cabaret' developed by Peacechild International as a way for young people to involve other groups. Contact the Centre for further details of the Cabaret.

2. Several meetings

Chattanooga (Case Study 4) and Bristol (case study forthcoming) are examples of using neighbourhood meetings and the meetings of respective organisations respectively.

One of the ten principles of ReVision 2000 in Chattanooga was 'Recognise and preserve every idea'. Neighbourhood meetings produced 2559 ideas.

In Bristol, a supplement in the Bristol Evening Post invited organisations and groups to apply for a pack, as a basis for a discussion.

Appendix 4 is the sheet used in Barnes in south-west London to involve organisations and groups on a very low cost basis.

Both Chattanooga and Bristol have two further steps. First, groups interested in particular topics meet to boil all the ideas in that topic area down into possible goals. Secondly, all the possible goals are displayed at an open event called a vision fair. People are invited to vote on which goals they think are most important and which they want to work on themselves.

Gloucestershire (Case Study 2) has been less concerned to produce an overall shared vision, perhaps because it covers an entire county. It has not therefore sought to consolidate the visions or goals of particular groups or meetings, as the vision fair seeks to do.

Leicester (Case study 3) offered groups many ways to take part. Organisations could either request a facilitator or they could run their own meetings based on a Briefing Pack and Vision Pack. They could produce their vision in any form they liked: video; drawings; poems etc. Also, teams of students were invited to come up with designs for specific aspects of the city.

Whether to discuss the past or present

Approaches to visioning derived from strategic planning see it as logical to start with the past and present before going on to the future. However, there are strong arguments against this: for example, go back to the rubber band in the section above on 'How Vision Brings About Change'. If we pay too much heed to our current reality, we risk constraining our vision. Robert Fritz, in a book called 'The Path of Least Resistance', gives an example from the life of the American designer and architect, Buckminster Fuller:

When Buckminster Fuller was four, his class were given toothpicks and half-dried peas and asked to create a structure. His classmates all created a cube, the structure suggested by their experience. Fuller had no such pre-conception, being so far-sighted and cross-eyed that he was virtually blind. His structure was a complex of alternating octahedra and tetrahedra, the start of a lifetime's structural innovation.

Future search looks at current trends, but more to create common ground than to prepare the way for the vision. In New Haven, where the process was similar to that in *Chattanooga*, people were simply asked, 'What would make New Haven a better place?', without any look at past or present. The present then comes in at the action stage, when action groups work out what they need to do to achieve their goal.

Creating the vision

The conventional way of creating a vision is to brainstorm ideas, then consolidate them and/or choose between them. More creative ideas may emerge if approaches are used that tap the intuitive, spontaneous, right-hand side of our brains. Here is futurist Warren Ziegler describing what he calls 'Focused imaging':

Here begins the true engagement with the future in us, the pulling into conscious awareness of those images that lie deep within our multiple levels of consciousness, images from which we have hidden or have censored for all kinds of reasons. Here, the competencies involve successive steps of deep imaging as well as deep listening both to yourself and to your colleagues as you search for that image that compels and commits.

Envisioning the Future, Futures, June 1991, page 525

Such methods include:

- **Guided visualisation** (Briefing 3);
- **Participative theatre** (Briefing 4);
- Drawing (Appendix 3).

Visualisation is using your imagination to create a mental picture of something you want. Guided visualisation is a use of visualisation in groups. One person reads a script that guides the rest of the group through an imaginary journey.

Making the choice involves first deciding what your criteria are, then checking them against the different approaches. For example, resources might be one criterion. Both guided visualisation and participative theatre need trained facilitators. In the descriptions above of places that went for several meetings, Leicester had the resources to offer to supply facilitators, but Bristol did not.

This case study might help you decide your own criteria.

Vision 21 in Gloucestershire chose guided visualisation because they wanted an approach that could:

- be adapted and used with a variety of groups, organisations or stakeholders;
- be used with different sized groups;
- be easily recorded;
- fit within a limited time slot of an evening/half a day (3 - 3.5 hours);
- break through traditional oppositional arguments in order to develop a picture that reflected the diversity of a group;
- have feedback to Vision 21 built in;
- access people's deepest hopes and dreams.

They later found other advantages. Visualisation:

- enables individuals to create their own visions, which then become the building block for collective and community visions;
- can be used with large numbers;
- does not use many resources;
- is not too demanding of venues.

Two disadvantages are that:

- Some people find visualisation hard or impossible;
- Some people are put off because they think of visualisation as 'new age.'

Step 3. Action

The first result from Vision 2000 in Chattanooga was the building of a family violence shelter. The visioning brought together all the people who wanted to make that happen, but who hadn't known about the others who shared that vision.

The shift from vision to action lies in creating action groups, each consisting of people who all want to make one part of the

vision happen. Here are the first three of Hitchin's seven action groups:

1. "To reduce the impact of traffic and thereby reduce pollution, and to promote traffic management and encourage all alternative forms of transport to the private car."
2. "To support local businesses including agriculture, and encourage an increase in the range and extent of local employment."
3. "To maintain and enhance the community identity of Hitchin through a mix of employment, support for local activities and events etc."

Supporting the action groups means:

- Having a supportive structure - see 'Designing an organisational structure' below.
- Encouraging action groups to move away from the old approach of a chair telling the rest what to do, towards a position where the group self-manages itself. See Appendix 1 on 'Good Meetings' for more on self-management.
- Seeing that if their goal shifts, as often happens, that they remain within the overall vision. Gloucestershire achieve this by having an overall set of principles that all projects must follow.
- Providing appropriate support.

Here is an example from New Haven, Connecticut, USA:

Some citizen planning groups needed support, other did not. The Waterfront Committee, for example, went ahead by itself and sold bricks to finance a walkway between Long Wharf and the town centre. The support provided to other groups by the steering group varied. Access to local radio stations is one example.

- Giving them as much responsibility as possible. For example, in Hitchin, one group argued for fewer cars in the town centre, whereas another wanted more parking. The two groups were asked to work out a common approach, rather than e.g. the steering group deciding.
- Bringing the groups together for mutual support. Hitchin has regular review days.
- Keeping up a good flow of information. New Haven borrowed an idea from US Republican Newt Gingrich and asked their groups to produce 100 day reports.

- Showing that there is official backing. In Hamilton-Wentworth, the municipality adopted two documents on their Vision 2020 as a guide to decision-making.

In addition, there is a need to recruit new people. Hitchin's Review Days provided opportunities for potential new members of Hitchin Vision to become involved. One of Gloucestershire's key principles is: 'Cater for activists, reflectors and theorists'. Some activists may not have wished to create the vision but will want to join in the action.

People may also want to act as individuals or as households instead of in groups. Leicester realised this and developed an initiative called 'Turning the Tide' to show what specific actions citizens could take.

Here is a short case study. This summary of the some of the 100 day reports shows how various citizen action groups in New Haven approached their task:

Downtown

This group, in its 100 day report, listed fourteen other groups that it needed to collaborate with in order to achieve its goals.

Drugs

This group on illustrates the difference in size of tasks. At one extreme, an individual had visited a twelve-step programme (like that used by Alcoholics Anonymous) to see if it was suitable for young people. At the other, establishing a database of treatment services needed collaboration with 'Any government or community agency with enough resources to help in this effort.'

Family

The goal is 'A family and child-friendly city where parents know that resources and support services to keep their families together, healthy and productive are readily available.' The group decided to focus on one of the top five recommendations that came out of the vision process: 'To create family support centers in all neighbourhoods'. They began by investigating possible models, such as a 'Family Campus' initiative.

Youth

The report of the Youth group provides an invaluable lesson:

'A little at a time the collective mind of this committee was eventually opened to the fact that, no matter what we, as committee members, would like to see accomplished, if we really want to do something for the benefit of the greater New Haven youth, we should be asking them what they would like to see accomplished.' This led to a youth roller skating project.

Step 4. Celebration

Celebrate your smallest victory

David Oaks

Celebrating means more than parties. It means noting and marking your achievements. Without celebration, it is easy to become demoralised through feeling that little or nothing has been achieved.

Events are part of celebration. Hitchin's Review days have been their main occasions for celebration. Hamilton-Wentworth in Canada has an Annual Sustainable Community Day. But there are other ways of marking achievements. A newsletter is a good vehicle for this. The population of Hitchin is kept informed of the progress of the Action Groups through a monthly newsletter and press releases to the local press. The achievements are also celebrated in 'Bringing a Vision to Life', a glossy A3 sheet that includes a map of Hitchin and pictures of the changes that have been made.

Chattanooga had two task groups which organised regular celebrations. 'Brotherhood Brunch' organised an interracial lunch on Sundays. 'Miller Plaza' "encouraged ongoing programming of entertainment" in the plaza.

Step 5. Evaluation

Evaluation can take place at many levels:

- Participation, both quantity and quality - E.g. *Chattanooga* was able to report that 85% of the 2600 participants in ReVision 2000 had not taken part in 1984. *Gloucestershire* note that by July 1996 400-450 people had taken part in

the visioning process. In *Gloucestershire*, the value of the voluntary time committed is also measured.

- Outputs - E.g. how many projects have been started? An assessment survey in *Chattanooga* suggested that Vision 2000 had been responsible for 223 projects and programmes, with investment totalling \$793million!
- Outcomes - What is the effect on people's quality of life? Another outcome is the effect on local people in terms of their: understanding; attitudes; and behaviour. Also interesting is the effect on members and officers. How successful have they been in letting go of control?

Attitude changes in Hitchin

- For the first time, the ethnic communities have become involved in Single Regeneration Budget bids;
- There are fewer comments on the lines of "We don't need to talk to young people, we know what they want", heard several times in the early days from the voluntary sector;
- Councillors had begun by wanting the right of veto over the goals emerging from the vision conference, but eventually accepted that this would defeat the object of the exercise.

The measurement required for evaluation is often difficult. For example, the contribution of the visioning process is often hard to measure. In 1993 Chattanooga's Police Department credited a 20% fall in the crime rate partly to more active neighbourhood associations. This was due to the Neighbourhood Network formed in 1990 as a result of Vision 2000. But too many factors affect the crime rate to pin down the effect of a single factor.

Gloucestershire note that even outputs can be hard to attribute. Vision 21 does not usually know how these projects originated. It therefore knows of only a few projects that resulted directly from visioning.

Decide what to measure during the preparation step so that you can arrange to collect the data from the start. Don't be too rigid: it is important to pick up unintended outcomes.

Finally, learn from your evaluation. During the first public all day forum in Hamilton-Wentworth the community criticised the organisers for having too many speakers, which did not allow enough opportunity for them to participate. As a result the second all day forum was organised as small group discussions.

Case study

The example of Hamilton-Wentworth below shows how the steps described above might fit together. Hamilton is a fair-sized city with lots of resources, so few places could copy them. But what can be copied is the range of different activities and the generous amount of time they gave themselves.

October/November 1990 - 160 people took part in seven town hall meetings on key issues and values.

November 1990 - A cinema showed 'Koyaanisqatsi' and 'Powaqqatsi'.

Autumn 1990 - 35 people used an 'Ideas Telephone Line'.

Autumn 1990, Spring 1991, Winter 1992 - Three newsletters, with 150,000 copies of each printed and distributed.

Winter 1991 - 150 people participated in 17 focus groups.

April/May 1991 - Displays in major shopping malls.

May 1991 - Cable television programme: 'The Community Speaks'.

June 1991 - Community forum to review the draft reports of the vision working groups.

March 1992 - Community meeting to discuss the contents of the first draft of Vision 2020.

June 1992 - Publication of "Vision 2020: The Sustainable Region".

Spring/Summer 1992 - Implementation teams meet to develop strategies to realise Vision 2020.

September 1992 - Community workshop for presentation of implementation teams' reports.

January 1993 - Public presentation of "Implementing Vision 2020". Municipality adopts it together with Vision 2020 as a guide to decision-making.

June 1994 - First Annual Sustainable Community Day.

Designing an organisational structure

The function of the organisational structure is to support the method. The structure, assuming that the visioning is part of Local Agenda 21, has three essential elements:

Local authority



Steering group



Action groups

The steering group is crucial. In relation to the community, it helps to distance the event from the local authority. In relation to the local authority, members provide local knowledge. In **Sutton** (Case Study forthcoming), for example, it was invaluable in suggesting names to invite for the visioning event.

There may be sometimes be particular criteria for recruiting steering group members. Media coverage in one place was sceptical until the editor of the local newspaper was recruited onto the steering group. One future search took place in a town full of conflict. The chair of the steering group had to be seen to be neutral and unthreatening to any interest group.

The structure needs to evolve to suit whatever activity is taking place. *Chattanooga* felt that initially they could manage with a board of 50, made up of the good and the great. After the 'Envision' step of ReVision 2000 was complete, this group handed the goals over to a Vision Committee, which had members drawn from the public, corporate, civic and neighbourhood sectors. This much wider representation was reckoned to be needed if the goals were to be achieved.

Leicester widened its steering group in a different way. Members were originally drawn from Leicester City Council and two bodies, Environ and Leicester Promotions, closely associated with the Council. They have now set up the 'City Fathers' to bring in representatives from business, universities, the voluntary sector and the media.

Gloucestershire's structure has in particular evolved to become democratic, in line with its principles of participation and representation. Its steering group, the Working Council meets every monthly in open session. The Working Council and the Co-ordinators are accountable to a Board that consists of representatives from the County Council, the six District Councils, the Rendezvous Society and four representatives from Vision 21.

Costs and resources

New Economics Foundation has researched seven of the first *future searches* held in Britain. Budgets for future searches in the UK have ranged from £2,500 to £40,000. Most were in the £5,000-10,000 range. Future searches are relatively expensive, other methods are likely to cost less.

Funding for the future searches came from:

- Local authorities (4 cases);
- Business (3) (E.g. in Gloucestershire the House Builders Federation paid for the venue for a future search conference on housing.);
- Community organisations (2);
- Department of the Environment (1);
- Training and Enterprise Council (1).

Costs were reduced by:

- The consultants/facilitators cutting their rates or working for free;
- Using a research student to record the event.

What most reduces costs, of course, is volunteering. The potential scale of volunteering is illustrated by Gloucestershire, which now accounts for the value of volunteer time. Their budget for 1997/98 is for £100,000 in cash and for £250,000 in volunteer time!

Conclusion

If you become involved in trying to design the method and structure of a community vision, there is no menu to choose from, not even an a la carte menu. This briefing has tried to show what the ingredients are and how other chefs have combined them. But whatever you create will be your own unique dish, reflecting your own community. In that uniqueness lies both the difficulty and the excitement. Good luck!

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This briefing was written by Perry Walker. It has been improved by more people than there is room to name, including participants in workshops in Hitchin, Birmingham, Edinburgh (twice) and Exeter, and volunteers and staff at the New Economics Foundation. The briefing also draws on the other

briefings and case studies produced by the Centre, so benefits from everybody who contributed to them.

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

Albert Einstein

Appendix 1 Graphic facilitation

Introduction

Every picture tells a story, as the cliché has it. Pictures or images have been used for this purpose since earliest times: cave drawings date from as early as 25,000 BC. Images are used much less, however, to help us understand issues and solve problems. Yet pictorial metaphors connect with people at a deeper and more meaningful level than words alone can achieve.

This note introduces the use of different kinds of imagery, drawn to help a community articulate its vision.

Graphic Facilitation

All facilitation involves the use of different techniques to explore and record a group's discussion. The role of the *graphic* facilitator is to make the whole process explicit and visual on large wall charts in order to help groups to learn. No special drawing skills are needed. Graphic facilitation is not purely about drawing; just as important is to ask the right questions, to listen to what the people in the group are saying and to record accurately what is being said.

The process of graphic recording should help the work of the group, not distract from it. You may find it less disruptive to the work of a group to record notes in a sketch book and develop the wall chart during tea and lunch breaks.

Use of images have at least two benefits. Firstly, the "aha" experience, when people see new connections between previously unlinked words and images. Secondly, the visual group memory is verified and recorded for future reference.

The group must feel ownership over the emerging picture. Ownership comes from people seeing their actual words and images recorded on the emerging wall chart. Veracity can be checked by inviting people to put any corrections or comments that they think are important on "Post-its" and sticking them on the wall chart.

Help! How do I use a sheet of paper?

Graphic facilitators often use the following structure to organise their drawings. Along the horizontal plane, the past is to the left, the present is in the middle and the future is on the right. Along the vertical axis, ideas and concepts are put at the

top, feelings and activities come below this, lower still is information and data, and at the lowest level are solid objects and physical resources.

Below are seven types of images that form the “grammar” of graphic facilitation. Each type of drawing is relatively straightforward. The important skills to develop (and they can only really be developed through practice) are knowing which method is best at any particular time and how different methods can be combined.

Mind maps are a well known tool for individuals to use in organising their thoughts. They can also be used collectively in groups. In *Future search* (see Future search Briefing) up to 64 people use them to explore trends facing a community. The key issue is written up in the centre of the sheet of paper. Each main trend/factor etc. is represented by a line like a spoke coming out from the key issue, with the trend/factor written along the line. A different colour is used for each spoke. When a new point is proposed, the facilitator agrees with the proposer as to whether it deserves a new spoke or whether it relates to an existing spoke, in which case it is represented by a line branching off from that spoke.

When the map is complete, issues can be grouped and given a summary name. Related issues may by now be on different parts of the map. Participants can be given coloured dots with which to vote for trends that they think most important, (as is done in future search). If the participants come from different constituencies (e.g. public/private/voluntary sector), using different coloured dots for each constituency will give a visual sense of how the priorities of each compare.

Lists are the most common form of images to record meetings, usually on flip charts. They are most valuable in brainstorming, prioritising material or work and agreeing to do tasks. Emphasis can be added by colour coding, bullets and underlining.

Clusters are the next step from lists in brainstorming and generate insights through comparisons.

Diagrams link elements so that they show organisation and structure.

Grids show formal relationships. They help to organise ideas, and are good for planning.

Posters make a point and attract attention. They need to be used sparingly; too many can make the work space you are

using look like a nursery class. They are mainly used for ground rules, agendas, and to keep important points in front of people during the meeting.

Drawing brings things alive with metaphor. It invites participation by allowing people to find and use images that they find expressive.

Charts from the meeting can be treated as the first draft for a report. The original drawing can be reduced to a manageable size by a copy company using a planning copier. The accuracy of any re-drawn charts should ideally be checked with the work group. Remember to number each re-draft.

Equipment

One possibility is to use large sheets of newsprint and hence capture the images of the group in 16 foot long displays. Magazine printers will often give the ends of rolls away. A more expensive substitute is to use a line of flipcharts.

Only use water-based pens: others will bleed through the paper. Reduction can be done fairly cheaply at any print company that deals with architects blueprints. The alternative is to re-copy onto A3 and A4 paper.

Acknowledgements and Further Information

This appendix was written by Don Braisby and edited by Hetan Shah, then a volunteer at the New Economics Foundation. Don, who is a graphic facilitator by profession, can be contacted at 7 Chapel Street, Abergale, North Wales LL22 7AW. Tel: 01745 826 749. Fax: 01745 832 948. Email 100344.2314@compuserve.com.

Graphic facilitation was developed by David Sibbet. He can be contacted at The Grove Consultants International, 832 Folsom Street, Suite 810, San Francisco CA 94107 USA. The Grove web site is <http://www.grove.com>

Appendix 2 Drawing a vision

This is a simple exercise that can be done in an hour.

Equipment: scrap paper (at least A4, preferably larger) and something to draw with (oil pastels are best, but crayons or coloured pens are fine - there should be enough for 3-4 for each person)

Ask people to draw a heraldic shield representing their community under their ideal future. Explain that heraldic shields evolved so that soldiers in armour could see who they were fighting. The shields themselves evolved to become metaphors for the personality and life of the soldier. We all encase ourselves in armour in various ways, these days mostly psychological. We too can use a shield as a statement of who we are and what we want.

Draw a shield in the middle of the paper, with room on all sides. At the top, above the shield, comes the crest. This is a statement of what your community is: its name for example. It is often based on a pun - the city of Berne has a bear as its crest.

Divide the shield in two by a horizontal line. In the top half draw the elements of your vision for your community that you think would be shared by most of the rest of the community. In the bottom half draw the elements of your vision for your community that are personal to you.

To the left of the shield draw the external forces that hinder the achievement of the vision. To the right, draw the external forces that help the achievement of the vision.

Finally, at the bottom is the motto. This summarises the whole shield. It is often a pun. Stress that this is the only place on the shield where words may be used.

If you find a shield anachronistic, you could adapt the idea so that people were for example drawing the front page of a community newspaper.

Allow 20-30 minutes for drawing. Then ask people to spend another 20-30 minutes comparing their drawings in groups of 3 or 4. Ask them to consider three questions in particular:

- What surprised people about their own drawings?
- What are the similarities and differences between the drawings?
- What have they learned about their vision and how to get to it?

Appendix 3 Good meetings

Do's and don'ts for meetings

Do's

- Dress appropriately for the people attending;
- Identify the influencers in the group;
- Keep eye contact with everyone;
- Make people comfortable;
- Sit in a circle if possible;
- Everyone should take part on equal terms: try to avoid labelling anyone as an expert;
- Have clear objectives and review at the end of the meeting whether they were achieved;
- Start with open 'what' and 'how' questions;
- Then channel the discussion towards a consensus;
- Work out how to keep people on track if discussion wanders;
- Work out how to deal with personal issues like aggression (e.g. use humour) or dominance by one person (e.g. ask others if they agree with the points that person is making).

Don'ts

- Exceed two hours, or three if there is a good break (there are exceptions to this, such as future search);
- Use jargon.

Being a facilitator:

A facilitator makes life easier for the people she or he is facilitating. The three most important skills in doing this are:

- Listening;
- Sensitivity;
- Leading from behind.

Facilitating a meeting is very different from chairing it.

There are two particular points:

- Emphasise the positive. Don't let people get stuck on problems - encourage them to move on to solutions;
- Beware bees in bonnets. If someone persists in repeating themselves, check if the rest of the group agree. Once the point is noted, ask to move on.

How small groups can manage themselves

Future search encourages self-management by small groups during the search conference. Each group agrees who shall do the following roles. (One person can do more than one role. Roles can be reallocated from time to time.)

- Discussion leader - Assures that each person who wants to speak is heard within time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time;
- Timekeeper - Keeps group aware of time left;
- Recorder - Writes group's output on flip charts, using speaker's own words. Ask people to restate long ideas briefly;
- Reporter - Delivers report to large group in time allotted;
- Data manager - Sees that all flip charts are numbered and dated and posted on a wall. May help in transcribing them later.

(Adapted from 'Managing a Future Search - Sample Handout/4'.)

Appendix 4 Reaching local groups in Barnes

Below is a copy of a questionnaire used in Barnes.

