

Visioning Tool Review

Futures Tools

TABLES Project 2012: Mini reviews	
Task 1: Basic information	
Name of the tool	Visioning
Type of tool (list all that apply)	Futures.
Group members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alister Scott 2. Mark Everard 3. Mark Reed 4. Gary Kass
Please provide a brief synopsis of the tool	<p>Visioning may be defined as a technique or series of techniques involving groups of people coming together to develop ideas about what they would like the future to be like. This can be unconstrained and entirely aspirational, or else framed by addressing a set of desirable principles which, if not limited by current impediments, can provide a basis for backcasting to address strategic challenges and overcome short-term constraints (Everard, 2009). After the vision is agreed, the group will then work on looking at what needs to be done to bring about that vision and put this together in an action plan (Kallis et al., 2007; Shipley 2002). These have been given significant momentum with the localism agenda with neighbourhood planning and newly shaped local plans requiring locally-led visions of the place and spaces.</p> <p>The process of visioning therefore is extremely fluid and flexible and encompasses a diversity of approaches and styles (Scott et al., 2009; Tress and Tress, 2003; Kallis et al, 2009) from ‘quick and dirty’ approaches such as preselected half-day visits (Scott et al in press) to key locations across an area to 2-3 day exercises involving significant deliberation (Shipley, 2002). This shift towards more deliberative approaches has been recognised with a growth in literature and also most notably agencies ‘selling’ their particular approach (Kallis et al., 2009). Here terms like ‘future search’ and ‘community visioning’ often feature, as indeed does the U-process. Within public policy, the CHOICES method has been most widely used (O Brien and Meadows, 2001). The work of Tress and Tress (2003) is particularly interesting here in that they derived visions based on stakeholder responses to a series of extreme scenarios which were used as visual prompts to promote discussion about what people would really like. Scott et (in press) have also used an interactive learning game format, Rufopoly, to allow respondents to identify their own visions in response to a journey across a hypothetical fringe space answering questions as they go. These prompts are seen as really important in helping to get people to move outside their own soapbox issues and bring fresh perspectives to the exercise (Scott and Liddon 2012).</p> <p>Whilst visioning has become a universally popular approach in policy and practice for managing the built and natural environment, visioning methods have also sometimes been used uncritically with scant attention paid to theoretical underpinnings. As Van Der Helm</p>

(2008:96) notes, “A vision is something that appears, but which often lacks any substantial underpinning, i.e. there is more often than not neither a theory explaining the appropriateness of the vision, nor a clear methodology that has led to the vision. In some way, we could say that having a vision and developing a vision are seen as trivial, though necessary, qualities or exercises”. This emphasises the value of framing the vision around a set of aspirational principles, as applied within The Natural Step framework (Robèrt, 2002).

Task 2: Use of the tool

Position / Use	Stage	Currently used	Could be used
	Ideas	Y*	
	Survey	Y	
	Assess	Y*	
	Policy / decision		
	Implement	Indirectly	
	Evaluate	Y*	

The stages with an asterisk [*] reflect those stages where the tool is at its most useful. It also critically depends on using effective engagement strategies to ensure different publics are fully involved in the process.

Task 3: Existing literature about the tool

Are you aware of any KEY policy and / or academic literature evaluating your tool?

There is a significant amount of literature on visioning set within the wider futures literature. The following represent a snapshot.

Everard, M. (2009). *PVC: Reaching for Sustainability*. IOM3/The Natural Step.

Kallis, G., Hatzilacou, D., Mexa, A., Coccossis, H. and Svoronou, E (2009). Beyond the manual: Practicing deliberative visioning in a Greek island, *Ecological Economics*, 68, 979-989.

O'Brien, F. and Meadows, M. (2001) How To Develop Visions: A Literature Review, and a Revised CHOICES Approach for an Uncertain World, *Systematic Practice and Action Research* 14 (4) 495-515.

Scott AJ and Liddon A (2012) Playing Around in the rural urban fringe, *Government Gazette* October 2012 56

Robèrt K-H. (2002). *The Natural Step story: seeding a quiet revolution*. New Society Publishers, Graniola Island, Canada..

Scott AJ, Shorten J, Owen, R. and Owen IG (2009) What kind of countryside do we want: perspectives from Wales UK *Geojournal* DOI 10.1007/s10708-009-9256-y online

Scott A.J. and Shorten J. (2004) *What Kind of Countryside do we Want*, Report to the Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff [HYPERLINK http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/countryside/sum-e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/countryside/sum-e.htm)

Tress, B. and G. Tress (2003). Scenario visualisation for participatory landscape planning--a study from Denmark. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 64(3): 161-178.

Van Der Helm, R. (2008) The vision phenomenon: Towards a theoretical underpinning of visions of the future and the process of envisioning. *Futures* 41 96-104

Task 4: Your experience of working on the tool

Have you done any research/consultan

Scott has produced reports and papers involving several visioning exercises for different

<p>cy work on this tool in terms of its development, testing and/or evaluation?</p>	<p>clients and as part of research processes on managing environmental change. A distinctive aspect here has been the use of visits to the area under question in order to embed field reality into the visioning process. This challenges more traditional approaches which are largely room or map based exercises. The approach has also been used to develop industry-wide consensus about and engagement with strategic sustainability challenges amongst manufacturers, suppliers and processors in the UK PVC industry (Everard, 2009 – see above) and now its extension to the EU-27 PVC industry (www.vinylplus.eu).</p> <p>Specifically</p> <p>Scott, A.J., Carter, C.E., Larkham, P., Reed, M., Morton, N., Waters, R., Adams, D., Collier, D., Crean, C., Curzon, R., Forster, R., Gibbs, P., Grayson, N., Hardman, M., Hearle, A., Jarvis, D., Kennet, M. Leach, K., Middleton, M., Schiessel, N., Stonyer, B., Coles, R. (2013) Disintegrated Development at the Rural Urban Fringe: Re-connecting spatial planning theory and practice, <i>Progress in Planning</i> 83: 1 – 52.</p> <p>Scott AJ, Shorten J, Owen, R. and Owen IG (2009) What kind of countryside do we want: perspectives from Wales UK <i>Geojournal</i> DOI 10.1007/s10708-009-9256-y online</p> <p>Carter, C. and Scott AJ et al (2012) Adapting for the long-term in the rural urban fringe, Managing Change at the Rural Urban Fringe, Relu project, Video Policy Brief, RELU grant award for ‘Managing Environmental Change at the Fringe’ – ES/H037217/1</p> <p>Scott A.J. and Shorten J. (2004) <i>What Kind of Countryside do we Want</i>, Report to the Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff HYPERLINK</p> <p>http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/countryside/sum-e.htm</p>
<p>Task 5: Incorporating the ecosystem approach (EA) and ecosystem services (ES)</p>	
<p>Using examples (from practice, research or consultancy), explain how EA and/or ES are currently incorporated in/by the tool</p>	<p>The NEA (2011) made extensive use of scenarios in its ecosystem assessment framework. These provided extreme scenarios which allowed the impact on various ES to be identified and assessed. By extrapolating scenarios, and stretching perception of the ‘possibility space’ of the future, this allowed development of a range of ‘response options’ better to safeguard and promote a range of ecosystem services essential for future wellbeing.</p>
<p>How could the ecosystem approach and/or ecosystem services be (further) incorporated within the existing tool?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES/EA is an integrating concept which instead of dealing with discrete environmental or soapbox issues considers bundles of services that flow from the environment. As such it is may allow better consideration of cumulative impacts and hidden assets. Consequences for ecosystem services can be used reactively to appraise the outcomes of visions or scenarios, whereas the ecosystem service framework can be used proactively to frame a vision that best protects the fundamental natural resources underpinning future human wellbeing. • With ES/EA, the description of the environment moves from the absolute (and largely meaningless) value of ‘things’ in isolation, recognising instead the many benefits that the natural environment and its processes provide. This is a more

- persuasive way to frame visioning exercises.
- Stakeholders and the public are well placed to engage with this alternative description as they are potentially the ‘users’ of the environment (i.e. ecosystem services describe the ways people connect with and use the services of the natural world) in particular places and areas.
 - Visioning informed by the ecosystem approach is therefore a powerful tool to help cut across both built and natural environment settings, as it is currently widely used and understood.
 - Incorporating ES/EA into established tools such as SEA, EIA and appraisal of development planning proposals helps practitioners and decision-makers to reflect on the impact of the environment on their vision rather than just vice versa.

The ecosystem service framing makes explicit the value of the environment for participants.

Task 6: Situating the tool within priority questions/criteria arising from the scoping interviews

Explain how the tool can be situated within the priority questions/criteria that arose in the scoping interviews	Priority question/criteria	Does your tool address/implement this question/criteria? <i>If yes, please explain how.</i>
	Language and communication	
	1. Contribution to aiding the development of shared vocabulary within which principles of EA and ES can be shared with multiple stakeholders across built and/or natural environment	Somewhat – Visioning provides a platform to explore desired futures and incorporating ecosystem services could help people understand its relevance in future policy.
	2. Capacity of the tool to develop shared understandings of the many identities and values of places from the perspectives of multiple visitors, residents and businesses	High – This is the purpose of a visioning event but equally depends on who you get involved. Here the need for inclusive processes are key. Of greatest importance is viewing these services as systems, which will help people better understand their many often unrecognised interdependencies.
	3. Capacity of the tool to improve or enable engagement across different publics so avoiding the usual suspect problem	Somewhat - Stakeholder engagement is a core requirement of visioning and as such there is the potential to engage with those groups that are felt to be most appropriate around the development of a shared vision. As noted above, viewing all beneficial services as part of an integrated system within visioning processes will help people better understand their many often unrecognised interdependencies.
Learning from experience/pedagogy		
	4. Capacity of the tool to help reveal and value ‘hidden’ assets that are not recognised by communities or publics that use them	Somewhat – This depends on the process of facilitation. Good visioning exercises should provoke or prompt what might be hidden or of potential in an area, also highlighting unintended negative consequences as well as scope for synergies.
	5. Extent to which tool is building on other tools or EA/ES progress	Yes – Visioning is part of a suite of futures tools. It sits within scenarios, backcasting and foresight. Visioning is a meta-tool in that a wide range of other tools can operate within, in a nested fashion. As such visioning responds to developments within each of these supporting tools.

6. Extent to which tool is locally derived or grounded or can be adjusted to closely reflect 'local' context. Is the tool suitable for an open source approach?	Yes – Visioning can be used at any scale and is adaptable. However, its flexibility means that it is sometimes used in an ad hoc way with poor process and outcomes. Stronger theoretical underpinning is recommended, which may include framing the vision within desirable principles.
7. Extent to which the tool is open to interpretation and application in a variety of forms (that reflect 'cultural' differences)	Yes – Visioning is used in many ways; it is just a process and there is huge potential to take the basic requirements of visioning and to reconfigure it in relation to the context.
Developing and selecting tools	
8. Is the tool dependent on a specific funding source? How onerous is the application procedure? What are the chances of success?	Somewhat – Visioning processes cost money, in particular with the support of experienced facilitators, so they are usually done as part of a consultancy-type approach at different levels for different clients. There is a temptation to use this approach in many deliberative exercises as it can be done relatively quickly. However, that is also its most serious weakness.
9. Does skills development (essential or optional?) and support exist for the tool or is there a body to ensure the optimal and correct use of it?	Somewhat – The quality of the visioning process does depend on those leading the exercise. There is huge variation.
10. Extent to which current statutory hooks can be exploited by the tool or will benefit the quality or application of the tool (e.g. NNPF's duty to cooperate, SUDS, ecol. networks)	Yes – There are no statutory hooks but it sits comfortably within particular statutory processes (settings) as a tool that helps think collectively about futures, such as development plans and neighbourhood plans.
Informing resultant policies effectively	
11. Extent to which the tool informs or improves policies/decisions. What does the tool cover? (full range of positive and negative economic, social and environment impacts / trade-offs?)	Yes – Visioning has the capacity to do this particularly if a more deliberative process is used that enables an action plan to be developed. Visioning is a process tool and therefore is dependent on the parameters within which it is set up and implemented. The conflict within any such exercises is an important aspect of the process. So too is its potential to secure the buy-in of multiple constituencies to a collective desirable vision, and the actions necessary to secure it.
12. How does the tool link into the planning system (applications and processes). At what cost / extra burden?	Somewhat - Visioning can be used in the early stages of development and neighbourhood plans. This helps develop a vision of an area upon which future plans and policies can be positioned. Consequently it is very useful in the ideas stage.
Delivering management objectives	
13. Suitability or capacity of the tool to assist with managing visitor needs and pressures within protected areas / the considered area? How?	Somewhat – Visioning can be applied to any context or situation. However, its success is dependent on participants fully understanding the implications of their ideas, and owning the actions necessary to deliver the collective vision.

Local ownership/new governance	
14. To what extent can the tool assist in developing statutory plans (local and management plans) and improve ownership and use by publics?	Yes – Visioning can be an effective plan support tool which allows for specific public engagement via consultation.
15. To what extent does/could the tool contribute to a new form of community governance in management of the environment?	Somewhat - As it is normally practiced, there is increasing scope for community-based visioning. Examples such as Neighbourhood Plans may provide an opportunity for alternative governance of the natural and built environment, which crucially depend on shared visions.
Improved tools: understanding flows, interconnections and spatial issues	
16. Capacity to improve spatial understandings of the flows and interactions of various ecosystem services between sectors and at different scales	Varies - it varies according to the approach taken. The flows and interactions can be explicit as for example in Scott et al (in press) in a series of linked visits across a transect of an area. This aspect is of direct relevance to spatial planning practice.
17. Capacity of the tool to reconcile assessments of options and benefits across different scales (and sectors)	Yes – Visions can incorporate a range of alternatives. As such, the opportunity to reconcile across different sectors and scale is limited to the nature of the process. It is, however, acknowledged that to date this is not always done well.
18. Extent to which the tool is capable or can be manipulated to work across sectoral and administrative boundaries	Yes - Good visioning should engage with relevant stakeholders, including trans-boundary. Relevant stakeholders are likely to be potentially affected organisations and this is not limited to sectoral or administrative boundaries.
19. Extent to which the tool can handle data shortages and gaps (or is effectiveness considerably compromised?)	Yes - The quality of vision process is not determined by the quality of the data, but rather by the nature of the process itself and its leadership and structure. Good quality data is important to provide an adequate baseline and understanding of the impacts, based on both qualitative and quantitative data sources. There are mechanisms such as stakeholder engagement, using indicators or proxies, etc., which allow practitioners to manage data gaps.
20. To what extent has/could the tool put landscape/nature conservation and designated species/sites on the radar (positively or resulting in resentment?)	Yes – Flexible.

Visioning is an inherently flexible tool as it consists of a few key stages. It is therefore potentially well able to deal with a wide range of issues. Its exact ability to deal with specific issues is largely dependent upon how it is used.

Task 7: A SWOT analysis of the tool

Referring back to the relevant policy and academic literature (listed in Task 3), plus your

Strengths (of the tool in delivering intended outcomes)

- Visioning practice is relatively well established and used widely in policy and practice
- Visioning provides a quick and easily understandable process to think about desirable futures.

own expertise (listed in Task 4) and the way in which the tool is situated within the priority questions/criteria (listed in Task 6), please complete a summary SWOT analysis ensuring that each point is well justified

- Visioning requires engagement with priority stakeholders, including the public.
- Visioning seeks to be transparent, evidence based and objective.

Weaknesses (*factors that detract from the tool's ability to deliver intended outcomes*)

- Visioning can be delivered uncritically without adequate attention played to context and local power relations. Becoming in effect an academic exercise.
- Visioning is a process and as such is only as good as those who design and implement it.
- Visioning lacks sufficient theoretical underpinning which makes it subject to abuse and misuse.
- There is an inherent danger that it becomes a tick box exercise rather than part of a wider deliberative process of a policy or plan process.

Opportunities (*consider opportunities for application of the ecosystem approach and services*)

- ES/EA is an integrating concept which instead of dealing with discrete environmental or soap box issues considers bundles of services that flow from the environment. As such it may allow better consideration of cumulative impacts and hidden assets. .
- With ES/EA the description of the environment moves from things to benefits and may be a more persuasive way of framing visioning exercises
- Stakeholders and the public are well placed to engage with this alternative description as they are potentially the 'users' of the environment in particular places and areas.
- Powerful tool to help cut across both built and natural environment settings as currently visioning is widely used and understood.
- Incorporating ES/EA into visions helps practitioners and decision-makers to reflect on the impact of the environment on their vision rather than just vice versa.
- The ecosystem service framing makes explicit the value of the environment for participants.

Threats (*factors which negatively affect the tool and its outcomes*)

Threat of going down ecosystem services route in SEA to validity of the concept	Seriousness (high, medium, low)	Probability of occurrence (high, medium, low)
The use of ecosystem services language may not resonate with stakeholders.	Medium	Medium
The complexity of ecosystem services may serve as a barrier to publics engaging with issue without supplementary briefings.	Medium	High
Ecosystem services may not be relevant to all visions and may be a distraction to the process .	Low	High
Valuation of ecosystem services does not necessarily fit with how visions are made which is more about the whole rather than the elements that make them up. This is much more about balancing a wide range of factors and how they may interact than a cost, benefit calculation.	Medium	Low

Further comments