Module 3

Developing a shared vision for the SDGs through #SDGStories

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What's your SDG story?

As part of the integrated action planning process, developing a shared vision helps all stakeholders involved to work in the same direction. Visions are not made out of the blue – they show a desirable future in which present and upcoming challenges have been overcome or resolved.

The 2030 agenda already provides a global blueprint for transforming our world, but having a local vision is essential to focus on overcoming local challenges and is part of the SDG localisation process (step 2: Setting a shared SDGs agenda, as outlined in Module 0).

To develop future visions aligned with the 2030 Agenda, Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) partners co-created so-called "SDG Stories" describing what the city would be like in 2030, when the SDGs have been achieved.

The concept of SDG Stories borrows from the future vision of the GG4C Lighthouse city Espoo, whose future vision is called "the Espoo Story". It describes where the city is coming from, where it is currently at, and where they are going to become "the most sustainable city in Europe".

Different tools and methods were used to develop the SDG Stories:

- The Newspaper of Tomorrow (p. 10)
- A “market” of goals and targets (p. 18)

These methods are described in the examples included in this Module (see acknowledgements for credits regarding the methods presented).

Module 3: SDG Stories (Vision)

Photo credit: GG4C partner cities Schiedam (top) and Glasgow (bottom)

Backcasting – setting the "North star" vision

Backcasting is an approach to planning where rather than making a forecast about a predictable future, one starts from a vision to be achieved in the future and then work backwards to define the steps and actions needed to reach that vision, sometimes referred to as the "North Star".

Backcasting is a normative process concerned with *desirable future(s)* rather than *likely* future scenarios.

Coined by John B. Robinson from the University of Waterloo (Canada) in 1982, backcasting fits perfectly with the URBACT method and using the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as the "North star" for sustainable integrated urban development.

Illustration of the backcasting approach

Using the Backcasting logic, we start by defining where we want to be in 2030 – the "SDG Story" vision – then look at where we are now (the starting point) and set the ambitions needed along the way.

For more information about Backcasting using sustainable development principles see the Natural Step Canada's method.

Visioning method: the Newspaper of Tomorrow (I/II)

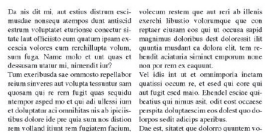
GG4C partners used a method adapted from the URBACT Toolbox and the VISIONS+21 toolbox to build their SDG Story visions (see acknowledgements and credits at the end of the module).

The aim of this exercise is to turn fictive newspaper headlines into a positive future vision for the city.

In preparation, the organising team develops fictive newspaper headlines based on realistic but "exaggerated" scenarios for the city's development, for example, house prices continue to increase (if this is the trend), car use grows, floods continue to occur, etc (see examples to the right). The newspaper headlines are used in a workshop with local stake-holders involved in developing the future vision, turning negative scenarios around and imagining what the city would look like when those challenges have been overcome.

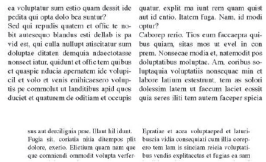
The URBACT version of the exercise

The Vision+21 toolbox (in French only)



Another record year for increasing housing prices: where will low income households go?

Real estate developers have secured 1000m2 site for its next high-end housing project. With planning regulations lifted last year, no social housing is foreseen.

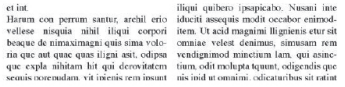


Housing: city continues to attract new families, but where will new residents settle?

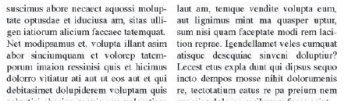
With increasing pressure on the local housing market, Greenville faces trade-offs between preserving its green areas and providing housing for new families moving to the city.

"Either we provide good options for our newcomers, or they will settle in surrounding municipalities, increasing traffic in and around the city and removing an important local tax base", says a local council member from the People First party.

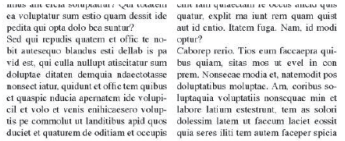
Individual car use grows for the tenth year in a row



Although a growing share of cars used are electric, traffic accidents and congestion remain.



"If before we had slightly more air pollution, switching to electric cars does not make our city safe!" says a representative from the local NGO Car-free City.



Fictive newspaper headlines based on some of the key challenges identified in the GG4C baseline assessment.

Full list of examples.

Visioning method: the Newspaper of Tomorrow (II/II)

Workshop

- Time needed: 2-3 hours
- Participants: 20-50 maximum, divided into groups of 4-5.

1. Getting familiar and selecting the challenges (ca 45 min)

Each group reads, discusses and selects the Newspaper headings that are most relevant/important to them. Participants add their own if something is missing.

2. Exhibit with all the selected challenges (ca 15 min)

Place all the challenges that the groups picked on a wall, to have a common look at the ones picked by each group. Comment on the most recurring ones, any new additions, etc.

Tip: to limit the selection, have all participants vote on the top ones (6-8) to focus on (e.g. distribute 10 stickers per participants and let them vote).

3. Building narratives (ca 60 min)

Again in the groups, participants take their picked challenges and imagine the city in the future, where these challenges have been overcome. The group then writes down a small narrative describing this future city.

Tip: instead of writing, you can also ask your participants to draw or record a short video with their future story.

4. Link to the SDGs (ca 15 min)

To link the narrative to the SDGs, add an additional step: by reading the SDGs and targets, ask participants to link the narrative to the most relevant goals. They can place the chosen SDG icons next to the narrative.

5. Recording and/or sharing between subgroups (depending on number of groups)

Allow the groups to present their results quickly to each other, possibly recoding in simple phone camera recording when they read out the future narrative.

You can also make videos in “news reports” from the future style, for example.

Use the inputs from the workshop to create the SDG Story in any desired format (e.g. video, newspaper article, infographic).

Reggio Emilia's SDG Story in nine chapters

The local team in Reggio Emilia (Italy) used the Newspaper of Tomorrow method to develop an SDG Story with nine chapters. The chapters describe how the city „won the challenge of sustainability" by 2031 in different ways.

- Chapter 1: The city of ten minutes.
- Chapter 2: Young Families Want to Experience Social Housing Here!
- Chapter 3: No longer just welcoming, but inclusion.
- Chapter 4: Excellence starts with schools.
- Chapter 5: Winning the challenge with digital.
- Chapter 6: Defeating poverty, in Reggio it is possible.
- Chapter 8: A green wave colours the city.
- Chapter 9: The primacy of our city for the quality of life is still undefeated.

The city of Reggio Emilia seriously took its role as a key player and protagonist of the sustainability challenge during the well-known "Decade of Action". Today, in 2031, we can proudly say that our city, together with our citizens, has won the challenge of sustainability!

Co-creating Reggio Emilia's SDG Story

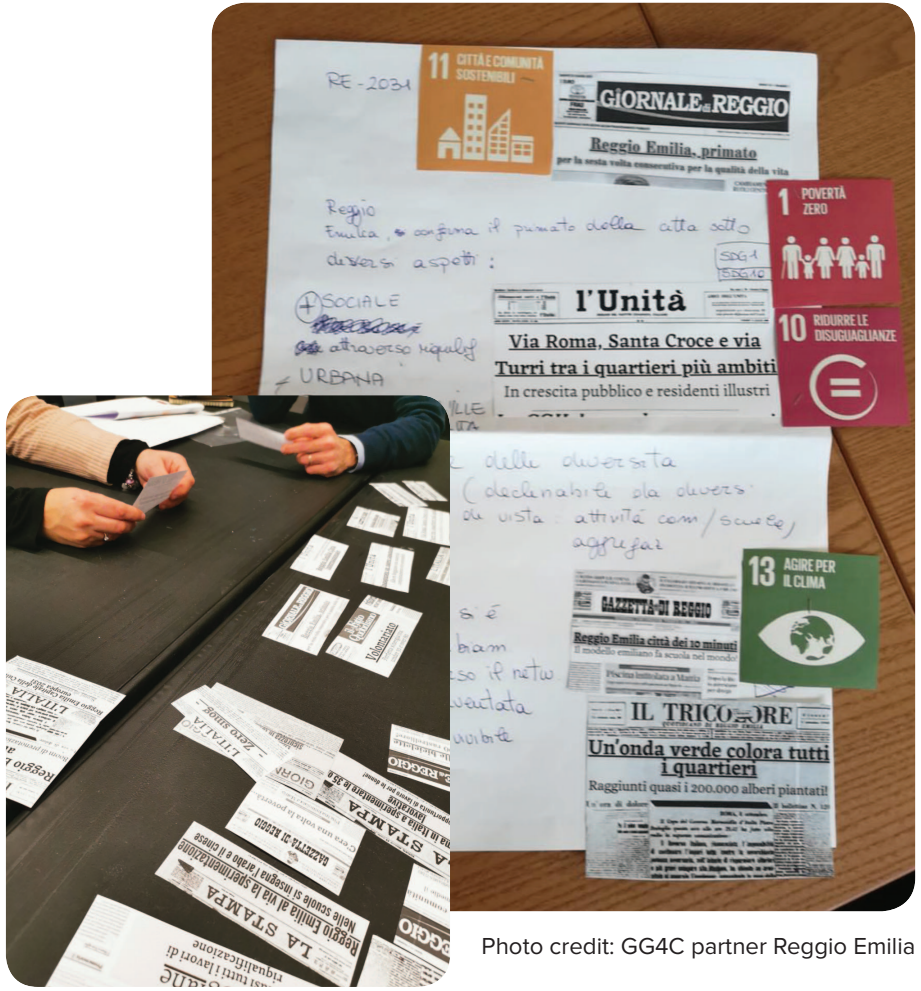


Photo credit: GG4C partner Reggio Emilia

Read Reggio Emilia's full SDG Story

Heraklion's SDG Story: local news from 2031

In Heraklion (Greece) the vision was developed in two steps: first in a face-to-face meeting with local stakeholders gathering ideas for how they imagine the city of Heraklion in 2031, related to the following pre-selected topics: Education and Lifelong Learning, Culture – Tourism – Sports, Entrepreneurship – Innovation – Development.

Based on the inputs, the local team prepared a future newspaper article that was reviewed and validated by the URBACT local stakeholder group

Read the full SDG Story

Photo credit: GG4C partner Heraklion in an online meeting.

The newspaper article tells the story of a transformed city, where residents enjoy sustainable transport, digital services and green areas, while the city has become a world leading sustainable tourist destination.

Read the full SDG Story

Photo credit: GG4C partner Heraklion

GLOBAL GOALS FOR CITIES

"The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) was created in the framework of the Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) project in 2022. Integrated Action Plan incorporated the 17 UN objectives at the local level and gave a significant impetus to the strategic planning of the Municipality and the individual actions for its implementation."

NEWSPAPER HERAKLION

Number: 124564

Monday 29 December 2031

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΥ

Smart, Resilient and Livable Heraklion

Heraklion is the ideal city you choose to live

It was many years ago when the Municipality of Heraklion, after a long consultation with the citizens, defined its vision, thematic strategies and specific actions in order for this Municipality to become a smart, resilient and livable Municipality with a strong tourist and cultural identity.
Today, citizens of Heraklion enjoy in their daily lives the results and the impact of the sustainable urban mobility, integrated urban intervention and sustainable urban development plans. They also enjoy the positive impact of the Heraklion – Smart City strategy, the Sustainability strategy, the Lifelong Learning project "Heraklion – a learning city", the tourism business plan and the waste management plan. The Integrated Action Plan created within the Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) project of the European Cooperation Program URBACT III, in the year 2022, in which the Municipality of Heraklion participated as one of the 19 partners, gave a significant impetus to the strategic planning of the Municipality of Heraklion. The program aimed to integrate the 17 UN objectives at the local level.

We move forward together

The Municipality of Heraklion often uses the slogans "No citizen alone" and "No citizen should be left behind". Throughout time, the Municipality of Heraklion stood next to the citizen in need. Now in the wider area of the Municipality of Heraklion there are homeless day care centers while the implementation of the homeless reintegration program continues, through which the person is given the opportunity to be accommodated in a house for 1 year where during it, through the respective actions, is reintegrated labor market and can now live independently.

The citizen of the city now enjoys a more pleasant daily life and an improved standard of living. It basically uses the Public Transport and the electric minibuses of the Municipality which transport the citizens free of charge. The increase in the use of Public Transport, normalized the traffic problem of the city and contributed to the reduction by 55% of CO2 emissions from the city center. Bicycle use on the roads has increased, the initial network of bicycle lanes is growing and there are charging stations for bicycles and electric passenger cars.

Heraklion Smart City

we said a few years ago and the truth is that rightly an overwhelming percentage of citizens were skeptical about the term and the meaning of this strategy. Nowadays no one disputes the digital transformation that has taken place in the Municipality of Heraklion, where the citizen for most of his transactions with the Municipality is served electronically via Computer or mobile phone. The percentage of citizens aged 60 and over who use these services is also remarkable, after training that they attended in the special training programs that were implemented in the "Demoscope" of the Municipality of Heraklion.

The sidewalks in the city center allow people of all ages to enjoy their walks and shopping without the hustle and bustle of busy streets. "Eleftheria" Square has now been transformed, where more than 50% of it has greenery, benches and elegant spots that are increasingly attracting interest. A few meters from "Eleftheria" Square, "Georgiadis" Park is an attraction both on weekdays and weekends, while "Erythrea" Park is a jewel in South Heraklion.

HERAKLION 2030 CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITY

It was in 2021 when the Municipality of Heraklion managed to join the European Mission "100 climate neutral cities by 2030" and through which a strong impetus was given to projects related to the ways of production and saving of energy through renewable sources and advanced technologies, smart networks, flexible energy management systems, as well as changes in citizen behavior (eg cycling, etc.). The Municipality of Heraklion invested in environmentally friendly technologies, actively supported innovation in all its productive sectors and mainly developed cleaner, cheaper and more environmentally friendly technologies for public and private transport and transportation.

Since 2011, when they were integrated in the Municipality of Heraklion, the former municipalities of Temenos, Paliani, Gorgolaini and Nea Alikarnassos have been a bet for their effective integration.
Particularly important for rural areas was the solution of chronic problems such as irrigation and rural road construction. Both of these issues were resolved within the 2020s while at the same time the agricultural sector of these areas and the home-based industry were further developed.

Strong cultural and touristic identity

Heraklion has become a world destination. The visitor of the city is the person who participates in a conference but also finds some time to enjoy the local cuisine, is the visitor who came to the city to participate in a big sports event but managed to walk in the footsteps of the Minoans and visit Knossos , is the visitor who want to do vacation in western Crete but chose to stay in Heraklion for 2 nights before continuing his/her vacation in other parts of the island.

A market of goals and targets in Trim to create their SDG Story

The local team from Trim (Ireland) was inspired by how a local vision had been developed in the city of Marcoussis (France), where local residents were given fictional money to “shop” for local priorities regarding the future of the city (see the acknowledgements and credits for details on this methodology).

In Trim, they decided to set up the “Trim vision shop”, and wanted to do this face-to-face, but were prevented by Covid restrictions in 2021. So they adapted and moved the shop online.

The first step was to create a local currency, the 100 Trim Euro note: ‘Truro’! Participants in the exercise could spend up to 100 Truros in the shop – no more than that. This limitation was part of raising awareness of the need to work with limited resources.

The “products” offered in the shop included: the SDG targets, pre-selected challenges and strengths related to the city’s sustainable development, and the 5 Ps of the 2030 Agenda (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships). They also added the Imagination Sundial developed by Rob Hopkins.

30 secondary school students and around 10 local stakeholder representatives participated in the online shopping exercise. The cashier receipts from the Trim vision shop could then be used to develop their SDG Story.

Read Trim’s SDG Story

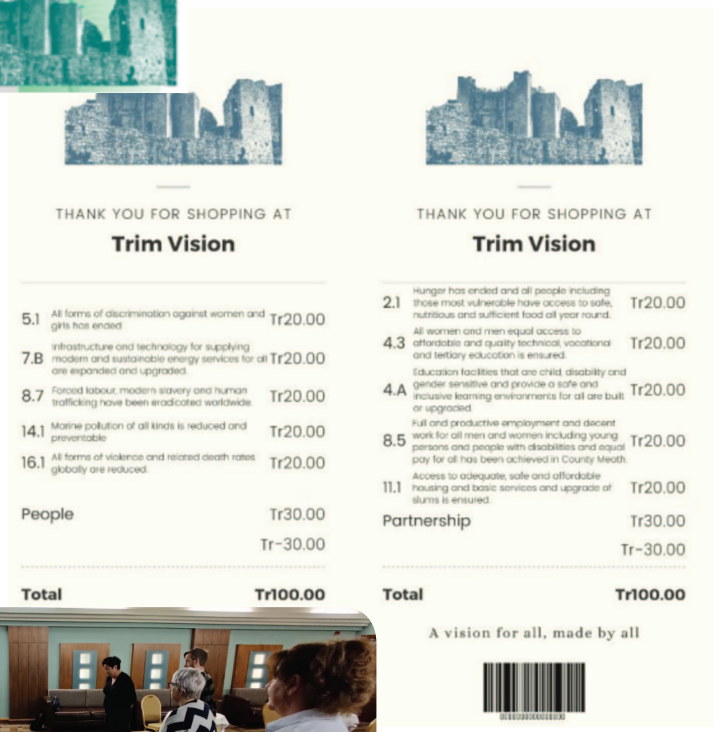


Photo credit: GG4C partner Trim (Meath County)

Breaking policy silos through the SDG Story in Gävle

In Gävle (Sweden) – following years of experience with both sustainable urban development and the 2030 Agenda – the approach to SDG localisation is focussed on enabling improved policy coherence and sustainability governance in the municipal organisation. This involves increased collaboration and shared results across their strategic programmes.

But how to translate this ambition into a story? In Gävle, they took the opportunity to use the creation of a shared SDG Story as a way to bring their three sustainability programmes closer together.

Gävle's SDG Story thus became the first joint product among the colleagues working on Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability Programmes. A great starting point for continuing to bring them under the same management and performance framework and work increasingly across policy domains.

The story was produced using an animated video about "the good life" in the growing city of Gävle.

Sample story boards from Gävle's animated SDG Story

The local context of a growing port city located on the east coast of Sweden.

The whole of society contributes to the goals, while natural resources are protected.

Watch Gävle's full SDG Story

Acknowledgements and Credits for Module 3

This section uses the URBACT Toolbox's "Planning Actions" section to support cities develop a shared vision.

- See: https://urbact.eu/toolbox-home/planning-actions

In addition, inspiration has been taken from the vision of the city of Espoo (Finland), where the city vision is framed as the Espoo Story. Espoo is one of GG4C's Lighthouse Cities.

- See: https://www.espoo.fi/en/city-espoo/espoo-story

Methodologies and tools have also been provided and developed with support from Christophe Gouache, URBACT Lead Expert and Senior Designer and Researcher at Strategic Design Scenarios. In particular, the visioning workshop method presented in this Module has been adapted from the Visions+21 toolbox, a product co-created by Strategic Design Scenarios and the French Ministry for Ecological Transition and Solidarity, together with other partners.

- See: https://www.strategicdesignscenarios.net/visions21-toolkit/
- The Visions+21 toolbox is available open source, under the license Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). See: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

The methodology to develop a market of priorities with an imaginary currency – presented through the example from Trim (Ireland) in this Module – has been inspired by materials presented by Christophe Gouache, referring to an example from Marcoussis (France). The approach is described in the following article:

- See: Gouache, C. (2022). Imagining the future with citizens: participatory foresight and democratic policy design in Marcoussis, France. *Policy Design and Practice*, 5(1), 66-85.

Examples from Global Goals for Cities partners are based on the results from their participation in the URBACT project. For a full list of names by city, please see the Acknowledgements in Module 0.

Module 3: SDG Stories (Vision)

European Union
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better cities