The role of visual arts as a communication tool in scenario planning

Jan Hanspach* and Berta Martín-López*

1Leuphana University Lueneburg (Leuphana University) – Scharnhorststr. 1, 21335 Lueneburg, Germany

Abstract

Scenario planning is an increasingly important tool in sustainability science. Scenario planning seeks to elicit and analyse plausible future trajectories of a given (social-ecological) system, through the use of participative focus groups. Scenarios ideally create images of alternative futures that should be plausible, but also should inspire people to think beyond their usual horizons. To this end, effective communication of scenario planning results is key. Frequently (though not always) scenarios are illustrated not only via narratives but also via visual artwork.

In this session, we will share and discuss experiences in communicating the results of scenario planning via visual arts to stakeholders from different backgrounds and scientists from different disciplines.

Guiding questions to be addressed in this session are:
1) How do visualizations of scenarios help to foster discussion among stakeholders?
2) Can scenario visualizations help to generate shared visions of the future considering diverse worldviews and knowledge-systems among stakeholders? If so, can visualizations help to empower stakeholders regarding specific management actions?

The session is planned to consist of three parts. First, a small number of invited speakers (4-6) will present scenarios from their own work in speed talks (describing the key features of the studied system and the scenarios). Second, we will have an exhibition of artwork generated in different scenario exercises (from key speakers) in the same room. Session participants will have time to get inspired by the artworks and informally discuss and share experiences. To address the main questions posed above, we will ask volunteers (as many as key speakers) to try to answer these for each of the scenarios, based on the discussions among all workshop participants. Finally, these volunteers will (briefly) present their observations to all participants, and we will summarize how visual arts can be applied to serve as a tool to foster communication of scenario planning results.

Format of the session: Speed talks, exhibition of scenario artwork, meet and mingle in front of the exhibited pictures, summary of the discussion outcomes with regard to the key questions

Contributing persons (with case study) to scenario exhibition:
Elisa Oteros-Rozas (Transhumance Spain)
Sandra Vilardy (Ciénaga Grande of Santa Marta, Colombia)
Tobias Plieninger (Swabian Alb, Germany)
Garry Peterson (Makanya Catchment, Tanzania)
Berta Martín-López (Doñana, Spain)
Jan Hanspach (Southern Transylvania)

*Speaker
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