



# Future Workshop

(Resource ID: 69)

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This teaching resource is allocated to following University:

**KFUG - Karl-Franzens-University Graz**

Institution:

**KFUG**

<http://sustainicum.at/en/tmethods/view/69.Future-Workshop>



**Work in pairs**  
**Group work**



**11 to 30**  
**students**



**Up to 3 lecture**  
**units**  
**4-7 lecture**  
**units**  
**up to 1 semester**  
**more than 1**  
**semester**



**Internet**  
**connection**  
**necessary**



**English**

A Future Workshop can be a useful group exercise in taking stock of existing problems and opportunities (social, technological, environmental), and envisioning alternative scenarios for the future.

The basic steps of a future workshop are to identify common problems or issues with a process or system. Then create alternatives that improve or eliminate these problems, and develop the process for how this future might be implemented.

Future Workshops can be an intriguing way of engaging a group with the processes, practicality and logistics of a development project. Through the

activity participants learn to identify restrictions and possibilities within the topic of discussion and think creatively towards solutions

There are typically four phases in a Future Workshop: Preparatory Phase, Critique Phase, Fantasy Phase and Implementation Phase. These different phases are guided by the facilitator, who should provide materials and methods for evaluating the existing situation and the proposed future scenario.

### **Preparatory Phase:**

Define the goal of the workshop and a clear statement of the problem or issue.

Create a list of stakeholders who will be affected by the topic of the Future Workshop.

It is advisable that the facilitators require some preparation on the part of the participants. For the group to engage in meaningful discussions a common understanding of the topic and possible alternatives is necessary. For example, if the topic is transport the facilitator could provide 2 contrasting case studies of cities that addressed this topic in order that participants will already be thinking critically about the topic.

### **Critique Phase:**

Critique of the current system and definition of the goal of the workshop.

Critique the stated problem using brainstorming techniques. Participants could write problems on post-it notes and then stick them on the wall so they can be easily organised into themes (environmental, social, etc.). Once all perspectives of the problem have been collected small groups of 3-5 people could take sets of problems and reformulate them into a concise problem that can be addressed in the next phase.

### **Fantasy Phase:**

Free, open-minded unrestricted thinking of alternative scenarios/ solutions to the problem topic or visions of the future.

Each small group of participants should note down/ articulate their vision of what the future for the topic could look like.

There are many ways to guide this phase. The objective should be to have each of the small groups agree on an outline of their vision for the future and present it to the entire group.

## Implementation Phase:

Brainstorm feasibility of the scenarios and think of possible ways to overcome obstacles to implementation of the groups ideas.

In small groups draw up a strategy, or design a demonstration of the vision. The groups should think critically and creatively about how to overcome barriers and constraints, who potential partners might be in this vision (even real entities or institutions), and refer back to the specific problems identified earlier and state how the new scenario addresses them.

Beyond the practical exercise of a Future Workshop participants could be asked to prepare individual papers or "portfolios" that consider and reflect on the process of identifying problems and opportunities, and the practical measures of developing a feasible solution.

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## Type of teaching method



Brain storming



Discussion / debate



Simulation



Reflection

## Type of teaching method

- Brain storming
- Discussion / debate
- Simulation
- Reflection
- Creative method

## Preparation

Low

## Preparation Efforts Description

The facilitator of this workshop needs to prepare cases/topics to discuss about.

## Related Teaching Resources

No specific previous knowledge / related resources required

## Necessary documents / materials

The facilitator (teacher) of a Future Workshop should prepare a topic for the group to discuss (eg. Mobility/ Transport) and bring useful documents, and other relevant information for that topic.

Topic information should include:

- Relevant information about the topic (articles, an existing proposal, case studies)
- In some contexts it might be useful to suggest some academic literature that informs about the topic

Useful props might include:

- Maps of a city detailing information relevant to the discussion – participants should be able to alter these.
- Implements for altering the map (eg. coloured pens, post-it notes etc.)

## Integration of stakeholders

The Future Workshop is an ideal venue to bring in a representative professional or societal stakeholder (Urban planner, Local Government rep., or NGO rep.). Bringing in such an individual could add huge value to the grounding of the topic within the local development discourse. Depending on the circumstances this person could act as a secondary facilitator in their particular field of expertise.

Additionally, through the Future Workshop the stakeholder will share in the mutual learning afforded by the interdisciplinary approach and the open and democratic structure of the activity where participation and compromise will be crucial to successfully developing a feasible vision.

## Topics of sustainability

Each topic out of which the group can develop a project idea is appropriate for this method. Ultimately, the goal of this method to brainstorm a project idea out of a sustainability related challenge.

## Situations appropriate for this method

N/a

## Strengths of the method

Good for getting diverse stakeholders knowledgeable about key issues and involved in the decision-making process.

Uses a variety of common methods like brainstorming, and envisioning.

The intended learning outcomes are to enable the participants to determine shortcomings in development proposals and opportunities to improve the situation. Further, the activity encourages creativity in tackling real world problems as well as grounding these alternative plans in terms of practical implementation and identify stakeholders, partners and assets that could strengthen implementation

## Weaknesses of the method

Requires a lot of preparation and guidance by facilitator.

Requires proactivity and willingness from participants.

## Assessment / evaluation

N/a

## Sources and Links

Jungk, R, & Müllert, N. (1987). *Future workshops: How to create desirable futures*. London: Institute for Social Inventions. Available: <http://www.imm.dtu.dk/~rvvv/CPPS/6Chapter6Thefutureworkshop.pdf>

## Funded by

This teaching resource, realised within the project ConSus, has been funded with the support of the TEMPUS of the European Union. The contents reflect the views of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.