THE VISION HANDBOOK

VALUEBASED REFLECTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

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This handbook aims to support education and advocacy for a sustainable future through values-based dialogues on and explorations of sustainability, relying on tests and experiments conducted by the ten partners in the Urban Age Ethics and Social Inclusion (URGE) project. The project members most directly involved in the development of the method hold a multitude of linguistic, cultural, national, and regional backgrounds, and professionally represent diverse fields such as social work, social work education, pedagogy, social design, photography, psychology, and yoga amongst others. This invaluable diversity has greatly enriched the development of the process and its method. In addition, the participants in the pilot tests and experiments have consisted of students, social workers, service users, and other stakeholders in urban social work and urban development, many of whom have also contributed to the research within the URGE project and the community of support surrounding the project.

Animated illustrations in this handbook originate from the URGE project animated film, Undrowned: Stewart's Journey Towards Eco-Social Work (2026).

For more information and open-source resources on education and advocacy, please visit www.urbanurge.eu.

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INTRODUCTION

VISION is a method intended for use in education and advocacy aimed at creating a sustainable future. Through reflective dialogues on and explorations of the values related to sustainability, VISION urges participants to turn towards what is important to them. Furthermore, by systematically mirroring and reflecting on these values from different angles, participants listen deeply to each other and learn together. This reflective process works to create a more solid foundation for participants—a form of 'self-gravity' to their values base, supportive both in educational settings and when taking part in change processes more broadly. At the same time, VISION aims to protect the complexity and diversity of a group during such processes, given that these qualities are under extreme pressure in our increasingly polarised world. The overarching idea is that change for a more sustainable future can emerge from reflecting on one's values and, consequently—over time—participants will think and act accordingly. VISION does not dictate to individuals what they should think nor what they should do. Instead, it insists that reflection is greatly needed and that we, as human beings, must relate actively to the kind of future we wish for ourselves and for all living beings on our planet.

Consequently, the tools outlined in this handbook are designed to cultivate stronger voices in relation to sustainability, including those often underrepresented. This is achieved not only by enabling individuals to articulate their thoughts and values more clearly, but also by fostering an environment in which respect and active listening are prioritised, allowing for meaningful collective reflections to take hold. The VISION method can be used to strengthen and build togetherness in a group or community already engaged with each other. It was also developed to create opportunities for dialogue amongst people who would otherwise not have listened to nor learnt from each other. Moreover, such individuals may not have even met, given that one contemporary problem is that increasingly we only engage with people who share our own ideas and outlook on the world. This development is fuelled by the growing use of technologies and social media as the primary source for information, and in urban areas by commercialisation, financialisation, and gentrification, further pushing vulnerable populations to the margins. In this light, creating spaces and places where people from diverse backgrounds can meet, means working directly with the social dimension of sustainability. Thus, the goal of VISION is just that: to provide a method for genuine meetings which are simultaneously as neutral and as objective as possible. Consequently, these tools are also created for use in scenarios where individuals from varying power dynamics and backgrounds can come together to engage on equitable terms, such as during public hearings, local community celebrations, or other kinds of community activities.

The VISION method was developed to support the education of agents of change for a sustainable future and to give social workers and educators alike a method which can be used to include sustainability perspectives into their practice. As such, its focus on advocacy as well as group and community work remains methodically rooted in the social work tradition as described below, although the method can be used by anyone who wishes to educate and advocate for change and for a sustainable future.

THE ROOTS OF VISION

Professional engagement to actively promote the understanding that all members of society should thrive and enjoy equal rights has remained central to the social work profession since it was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century. As such, educating and advocating for social change can be inspired both by the tradition of social work and the current global agenda of the profession. The ideals and values in VISION are deeply rooted in the values and perspectives outlined in the global definition of social work, articulated by the International Federation of Social Workers:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014)

This most-recent definition of the profession places Indigenous knowledge on equal footing with knowledge from the social sciences and humanities, which have otherwise dominated the general outlook on knowledge for centuries. Indigenous means 'from the land' and thus the definition connects the practice of social work to nature and the planet. This represents an ontological turn for the profession, which has since greatly impacted global bodies of social work. Furthermore, this scope of understanding has resulted in inviting individuals from all corners of the world on equitable terms into the profession of social work, in pursuit of establishing a more inclusive global community of social work practice. It is, therefore, essential that we disclose upfront that VISION was developed within the European tradition of social work and that we draw our main inspiration from protreptic, a philosophical practice originating in ancient Greece. The protreptic tradition specifically underscores the importance of promoting the common good, a fundamental principle for many philosophers at that time who sought to identify effective strategies for cultivating a cohesive society. Interest, however, extended beyond Greece to our times; thus, Indigenous knowledge from various European nations and other regions of the world embodies similar principles, emphasising the importance of interconnectedness and reciprocity vital to a society's prosperity.

To give the profession a common global direction, IFSW, together with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), also formulated the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Framework for 2020–2030, under the title *Co-Building Inclusive Social Transformation* (IFSW et al., 2020). Every other year, a sub-theme from a different region of the world is selected and celebrated at the annual World Social Work Day event held in March, encouraging members of the profession to learn from their colleagues in diverse contexts. In 2020–2022, the theme was *Ubuntu*, focusing on the traditions and philosophies of the Sub-Saharan African continent, encapsulated in the phrase 'I am because we are.' In 2024, the theme was *Buen Vivir*, highlighting Meso- and South American cultures, positing that true wellbeing is attainable only through being part of a community that lives in harmony with nature and collaborates towards balanced development. Most recently, in 2026 at the time of writing, the theme is *Co-Building Hope and Harmony: A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society*, which further highlights the vital role of social work in bringing people together across communities, cultures, and systems to shape a more inclusive and sustainable tomorrow. Other themes have explored the importance of solidarity across generations, the importance of co-building processes, and the importance of sustainability more generally.

In this way, the joint global bodies of the social work profession have made important strides towards changing the agenda and ontology of the profession in globally inclusive ways since releasing the most-recent definition of the profession in 2014. This background laid the foundation for VISION, and we developed the method to give social workers concrete tools to promote these principles and values in their practice. Developed under the Erasmus+ KA2 *Urban Age Ethics for Inclusion* (URGE) project (2023–2026), our primary purpose was to examine the ways in which social work can address the global environmental crisis, largely related to an extractive economy mirrored in new waves of urbanisation. Our scope rests on the principle that this and other crises of our times, related to, for instance, disconnectedness and capitalisation, require agents of change who can initially *think* differently, laying the groundwork for imagining another kind of future and eventually beginning to act in order to change it.

CONTENT

The VISION handbook consists of two parts. Part One summarises the background knowledge and inspiration which serves as the foundation of VISION as a distinct method. Part Two describes how the method and its various tools can be used to facilitate dialogues on and explorations of values, ultimately transforming knowledge into action.

PART ONE

Chapter 1 *The New Protreptic: Philosophical Dialogues on Values* presents the philosophical and reflective method called the new protreptic, which heavily inspired how VISION works with reflections on values. A protreptic dialogue urges participants to turn towards what is essential in their lives, to examine selected values from various angles through a systematic process. This way of reflecting together can help individuals and groups establish a more solid foundation for their values, helping everyone to stand stronger and, at the same time, establish collective awareness. Because the protreptic process includes a high degree of awareness regarding the quality of the event, participants are guided to be present together. This can also foster a sense of cohesion and togetherness within a group, and, because there are no right or wrong answers, it provides both the facilitator and participants with a way of listening to and learning from each other, grounded in a general deep respect for diversity. Through this inspiration, VISION seeks to create a form of 'we thinking', raising awareness of the ethical dimensions of human interaction by relating the values examined to the notion of a common good. Furthermore, the generality and anonymisation derived from the abstract form of reflection in the new protreptic avoid psychologising and create a space for meeting each other on more equitable footing.

As explained above, the purpose of VISION is to give educators and advocates seeking a sustainable future a concrete method for and tools to include sustainability perspectives into their practice. Therefore, the values examined in VISION are specifically related to sustainability, which shifts the method towards a more normative stance than that in the new protreptic. In **Chapter 2** *Sustainability and Sustainable Cities*, we outline the critically inspired standpoint for this normative approach. Based on sustainability and degrowth theories amongst others, the literature provided and selected parts of the knowledge in this chapter can serve as the background information for use in classes, workshops, groups, and seminars on sustainability. Through an examination of values specifically related to sustainability, students, groups, and communities gain a deeper awareness of their role in creating a more sustainable future. This represents a shift in focus towards social work methods which are collective and eco-oriented embedded in eco-social work, an approach to social work practices we also present in Chapter 2. Thus, this chapter offers social work educators and future professionals a theoretical and methodological foundation for the inclusion of a systematic focus on sustainability in their practice.

Chapter 3 *Advocacy for a Sustainable Future* presents the methodological foundation for VISION in social work advocacy. At the macro-level, VISION equips social workers to facilitate dialogues amongst diverse individuals including decision-makers, emphasising shared human values over political roles. This fosters awareness of and interaction amongst participants who may not normally connect with one another, enhancing the social dimensions of sustainability. At the meso-level, VISION provides tools for group dialogues, promoting unity and mutual support within groups and communities. On the micro-level, VISION benefits social workers during one-on-one interactions with service users, enhancing value awareness and empowering participation in advocacy. It also helps social workers recognise and separate their values from those of service users, an essential component to effective advocacy. In addition, VISION dialogues in educational and organisational settings can cultivate the skills needed to advocate effectively, providing a strong values-based foundation to support challenging advocacy efforts. Whilst, in

this way, VISION has the potential to elevate dialogues to a more general and less conflictual level, the method is not intended as a conflict mediation approach and must be implemented judiciously in groups or communities experiencing open conflict. Thus, in situations characterised by significant tension or power imbalances, facilitators must still possess mediation skills to navigate these dynamics, whereby alternative mediation methods may prove more suitable.

Each chapter ends with a summary regarding how the perspectives presented have influenced VISION and includes a separate list of references.

PART TWO

To assist in the application of VISION in different contexts and settings, Part Two outlines how to work with VISION in practice, including tools for both preparation and processing.

Chapter 4 *Values in VISION* introduces how values are understood within VISION and how to choose which value to examine in both verbally based dialogues—presented in **Chapter 6**—and the more creative and nonverbal ways of exploring—outlined in **Chapter 9**. This chapter also outlines several sustainability-related values from which to choose, inspired by the new protreptic, sustainability, and degrowth theories, as well as eco-social work, advocacy, and research completed as a part of the URGE project (see www.urbanurge.eu/research).

Chapter 5 *Assessment and Preparation for VISION Processes* continues by underscoring the importance of thorough preparation before initiating any VISION process, given that the method must be used appropriately and in relation to the context of the participants. Here, we provide a preparation checklist based on social work assessment criteria and insights from the URGE project.

In **Chapter 6** *The VISION Process*, we describe the systematic way of working with VISION. This chapter offers an overview of and explanation for how to begin, navigate, and complete a VISION process. In doing so, we also include advice on how much time is needed for dialogues with individuals, as well as with both smaller and larger groups. Although VISION was developed as a tool for group and community processes, the tests relying on it in various contexts have demonstrated that it can be highly beneficial for social workers to employ as a supplementary method for working with individuals, including mandated social work cases. The kind of reflection VISION promotes allows professionals to understand service users as individuals with values and perspectives that may not always emerge in a more results-driven setting. Moreover, the development of self-awareness is as valuable for service users as it is for everyone else, given that it helps them gain a clearer understanding of their own position and articulate their needs more effectively, thus enabling the social worker to work from an empowerment-based approach.

In VISION, however, the primary objective is to give social workers a method for use within more collective approaches. Thus, **Chapter 7** *Facilitation Skills in VISION* introduces the facilitation skills needed when working with VISION in groups and communities. Whilst the process and questions described in **Chapter 6** remain the same, the professional communication a facilitator must apply differs. The likelihood of a more complex situation when group dynamics are at play increases; in addition, the reflective processes of the individual participants may also shift. Chapter 7 thus introduces facilitation techniques for VISION processes, highlighting notable exceptions when working with groups, including a step-by-step guide for group facilitation. For those interested in improving their facilitation skills further, the reference list provides additional reading and sources for facilitator training.

When using VISION in educational settings, the process from **Chapter 6** and the facilitation skills outlined in **Chapter 7** also apply. However, a classroom is a unique setting in its own right. Thus, **Chapter 8** *VISION in Education* applies the transformative approach to teaching VISION subscribes to within education. The overall objective of the URGE project was to enable future social workers to become agents of change. Consequently, this chapter specifically describes a method for social work education which can be used when teaching for a sustainable future and when promoting eco-social work in the classroom.

No matter where it is used, VISION as a method remains distinct in its focus on promoting sustainability as a common good. This focus is underscored by the research completed within the URGE project. In **Chapter 9** *Value Catalogue*, with questions, exercises, and creative activities, we present a catalogue of 12 values our research identified as particularly relevant to sustainability. For each value, we also provide their etymology. In addition, we outline our suggestions for supplemental questions in dialogues and suggestions for exercises and creative ways of exploring each value.

INTRODUCTION REFERENCES

International Federation of Social Workers, International Association of Schools of Social Work, & International Council on Social Welfare. (2020). *Co-building inclusive social transformation*. https://www.ifsw.org/2020-to-2030-global-agenda-for-social-work-and-social-development-framework-co-building-inclusive-social-transformation/

PART 1: VISION BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

I**mage credit**: Screen grab from *Undrowned: Stewart's Journey Towards Eco-Social Work* (2026), an animated film by Line Gammelgaard & Dorthe Juliane Høvids.

Part One (Chapters 1–3) explores VISION as a reflective and dialogical framework which supports social work practice across the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. In this part, we introduce the philosophical foundations of protreptic-inspired reflection, highlighting how VISION strengthens self-gravity, facilitation and listening skills, collective awareness, and ethical engagement. Here, we also further examine how VISION can be applied to promote sustainability and advocacy by creating equitable spaces for dialogue, fostering value awareness, and empowering individuals, groups, and communities to engage with social, environmental, and structural challenges. Together, these chapters establish VISION as a values-based approach to build cohesion, amplify voices, and support transformative social action.

CHAPTER 1. THE NEW PROTREPTIC– PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES ON VALUES

One of the main sources of inspiration for VISION originates with protreptic, a philosophical form of dialogue that examines existential and values-based dimensions of life. Protreptic is rooted in the European philosophical tradition dating back to ancient Greek philosophy, namely the now-lost *Protreptikos eis ten philosophian* (*Accompaniment to Philosophy*), written by Aristotle around 310 BC. In the early 2000s, Ole Fogh Kirkeby, a professor of Management Philosophy at the Copenhagen Business School, adapted his research on Greek philosophy into what he called the new protreptic—an approach intended for use in the humane education of modern-day leaders (Kirkeby, 2009, 2016). The new protreptic has since been used in and adapted to different areas of practice, including coaching and leadership training, education, and some areas of social work. It was from these adaptations that the idea of examining how protreptic could be useful in social work, education, and advocacy for a sustainable future took hold. Embarking on such a journey, a basic knowledge of protreptic proves helpful. Therefore, in this chapter, we present the perspectives and background of protreptic, closing with an overview of how VISION can be used for protreptic reflections in education and advocacy.

MIRRORS FOR PRINCES – THE ETYMOLOGY AND HISTORY OF PROTREPTIC

Linguistics serves as a cornerstone to Kirkeby's (2016) work, more precisely the etymology of words and values. In etymology, the goal is to understand the deeper meanings of something through its history of meaning and how that meaning has been used and developed over time. As such, a person's choice of words is never coincidental, Kirkeby (2016, p. 36) claims, and a protreptic dialogue examines and clarifies the background of those word choices, bringing the person towards a deeper self-understanding and self-awareness. A good place to begin is with the etymology of protreptic itself. '*Protrebo*' means 'to confront with' (gently but insisting) or 'to urge', and, according to Kirkeby (2016, p. 40), protreptic traces can be found in two traditions in European history.

The first tradition positions philosophy as a field in which human beings can find their true self, as seen in the writings and thoughts of, amongst others, Seneca (*Exhortationes*, written between 40–65 BC), Cicero (Hortensius, 45 BC), and Plato (*Alcibiades*, written between 393–388 BC). Traces of protreptic can also be found in the Christian tradition, namely in the letters of Paul. Kirkeby (2016) also mentions that similar traditions and practices of self-examination are found elsewhere, in many cultures and religions around the world, given that it is a general human trait to search for understandings of the self and its relation to the world around it.

The other tradition is related to the purpose of protreptic, namely, to 'soften the tyrant'. Aristotles' original work on protreptic was dedicated to King Themison of Cyprus and consisted of suggestions and advice pertaining to the ways in which he could control vices and promote virtues through ethical reflection. Ultimately, this would allow him to balance and manage the important and powerful tasks necessary for a king to rule. As such, it represented an early version of the genre of didactic political writings, referred to as the *mirrors of princes* (in Latin, *specula principum*). It was within this tradition that thinkers such as John of Salisbury (1159/1990) and Thomas Aquinas (1267/1949) formulated their thoughts and advice on good leadership for kings and future rulers, reflecting the values and political landscapes of their time.

At the time of Aristotle, philosophers were interested in creating a just society, which required leaders to think and act not only for their own benefit, but in order to achieve the common good. The idea of the common good was central to Aristotle, an idea which is also a cornerstone of the new protreptic. Therefore, protreptic is not just about reflection and dialogue for its own sake. Instead, protreptic requires an individual to know themselves more deeply, thereby shaping their actions in a more reflective and deliberative way. As such, action is built into the method.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND AWARENESS AS COLLECTIVE PROCESSES

Beyond inspiration from Aristotle and linguistics, various theories of the self and awareness have supplied the new protreptic with insights and vocabulary to understand how consciousness works. In particular, the thoughts of Sigmund Freud and his theoretical model of mental structure is worth mentioning, specifically the unconscious, pre-conscious, and conscious (Freud, 1915, cited in Kirkeby, 2016, p. 82). Based on these distinctions for consciousness, albeit with a sceptical distance from many other elements of Freud's work, Kirkeby (2016) argues that a protreptic analysis of values and an exploration of their etymology can serve as a bridge between the conscious and the pre-conscious parts of mental structures. Such an analysis can bring forward those parts of ourselves of which we are not consciously aware, but which are somehow imbedded in our mental structures. The internal and external dialogues a person has with themselves and others, along with the primary verbal examinations of a value or word upon which such dialogues are based, may potentially widen their perspectives and deepen their self-awareness. This can lead to what Kirkeby (2016) described as '*self-gravity*' ('*selvtyngde*', our translation). Self-gravity is a self-made word (*neologism*) from Kirkeby, describing a state of being that feels like having solid ground beneath one's feet (Kirkeby, n.d.). The idea is that, when rooted in your values in such a reflected and conscious way, it also brings about a sense of being the 'master in your own house'.

An important note following this individual self-awareness is that, in the end, knowledge refers to a collective process (Kirkeby, 2009, p. 35). The quality of the event, through contact with others, evokes awareness. This relates to what Kirkeby referred to as the principle of *translocutionarity* (another neologism), which states:

> *I do not know what I mean until I hear what I myself am saying. I do not know what I do until I experience myself doing it. I do not know what I know until we experience ourselves performing it.* (Kirkeby, 2009, p. 35)

This underscores how, through contact and interaction with others, we eventually become ourselves and that we, as human beings, are co-dependent in the process of creating awareness.

VALUES AS MOTIVES OF ACTION

In the new protreptic, values are defined as the motivating factors influencing an individual's actions, essentially serving as the underlying reasons for their behaviour. Etymologically, the term 'value' is derived from meanings such as 'to turn towards', 'to be drawn by', or simply 'to be strong'. Values are synonymous with concepts such as 'ideal', 'norm', 'maxim', and 'attitude'. Amongst these, 'ideal' aligns most closely with 'value' in its etymological roots, given that both pertain to something that is 'perceived' (Kirkeby, 2016, p. 180). An individual's perception and understanding of life are reflected in their collection of values and their worldview. Engaging in a protreptic dialogue serves to clarify this collection of values, elevating it to a more conscious level and enabling the individual to manifest it as their own. This process involves assembling what can be referred to as a personal *'garland of value*s' ('*værdikrans*', our translation), another neologism introduced by Kirkeby (n.d.).

Whilst the new protreptic shares many similarities with therapy and uses some of its vocabulary, it is quite different from (a Freudian understanding of) therapy. Thus, there is no interest in trauma, repressions, personal stories, and narratives. Instead, the values are believed to serve as the underlying motivation behind a person's actions. Values are intimately connected to fundamental needs, given that they simultaneously interact with and are influenced by an individual's drives, desires, and tendencies, frequently residing in the more subconscious aspects of the self (Kirkeby, 2016, p. 177). In the tradition of the mirrors of princes, the idea was that vices or deadly sins should be controlled by virtues (see also Olden-Jørgensen, 2006), and in protreptic these control mechanisms lie in the process of enhancing the importance of virtues through a protreptic analysis. When systematically analysed in this way, it

becomes clearer how values are more than or a mere means to achieving individual happiness and avoiding pain. Bringing them forward to a more conscious place, always in light of a common good, renders values fit to act as foundations for life. In this process, the values one bases their life upon must also be investigated in light of from whence these values originate. As a part of any analysis, we must therefore remain critical of the values an individual is exposed to through their upbringing, along with those values taken from or internalised through one's cultural and societal context. This process of reformulating values and making them one's own, sometimes turn values that were, at first glance, extremely important into something less prioritised and vice versa. This process is natural when values are seen from a new, mature, and more detached perspective. Thus, the process in the new protreptic focuses on strengthening the positive sides of the values in a person's life, making choices easier and eventually leading to the possibility of certainty. This results in feeling certain that you did the right thing, and just knowing what is right can bring about contentment and a peace of mind. But these feelings are more than simply individual benefits given that they might also prepare an individual to overcome the need to judge others (Kirkeby, 2016, p. 186).

The values of the facilitator

A person who works with values in this way will be more capable of assisting others in their search for a more well-founded worldview. Therefore, protreptic facilitators should have done the work themselves and should know their own values, which will allow them to avoid making the central person a means rather than an end to a dialogue. If a facilitator does not subject their values to such inspection, there is an inherent danger that they will use values as a cover for hidden motives or the fulfilment of basic needs, thus deceiving both themselves and others (Kirkeby, 2016).

Both Kirkeby and his colleagues Kim Gørtz and Mette Mejlhede emphasise in their practical book *Protreptic in Practice* (2015) that facilitating such dialogues requires a strong ethical foundation, because working with an individual's worldview is a powerful thing to do. Rooted in respect, otherness, companionship, openness, and humility remain crucial. It is also important to recognise how working with values and strengthening them can manifest in such a strong way for an individual that their newfound solid ground and values become something for which they will fight or even die. Respect for the powerfulness of the method is therefore rather important, including recognising its inherent potential for manipulation (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015; Kirkeby, 2016).

A protreptic dialogue thus strives for generality and anonymisation, whilst avoiding psychologising. Such dialogue also inspires the focal person(s) to accomplish a mental turn towards their norms, values, ideals, thoughts, and practices, whilst also always respecting their secrets. There are no confessions, exceptionally unstable grounds must be respectfully bypassed, and there should be no interest in guilting or shaming. The focus lies on what brings out the strengths and power in a person, that which can push a person forward for their own sake and for the sake of the common good. Thus, the facilitator must always bear in mind that the focal person alone knows their own right path (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015; Kirkeby, 2016).

The ability to meet the focal person with attention and determine what that person needs to move closer to these states of being deeply depends on intuition and an ability to sense what is needed. A solid experience with protreptic dialogues can sharpen these senses and abilities, such as hearing what is not said or even what is going to be said next as well as listening with advanced awareness to the moods of the focal person. Furthermore, the structure of a protreptic dialogue is described as a composition and compared to creating music—together.

Examples of values in the new protreptic

According to Kirkeby (2016, p. 205), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has recognised a set of fundamental and universal values across the globe. He noted that these values are also regarded as foundational principles in Greek philosophy. These core values include goodness, truth, justice, and beauty, each of which serves as the basis from which other fundamental values can be derived. *Goodness* is then related to values such as love, imagination, care, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, gratefulness, faith, and goodwill. *Truth* relates to wonder, knowledge, certainty, perception, endurance, truthfulness, functionality, stability, generality, possibility, and necessity. *Justice* relates to responsibility, community, hope, togetherness, recognition, loyalty, solidarity, sympathy, decency, respect, autonomy, and a sense of utopia. *Beauty* relates to greatness, generosity, attention, courage, harmony, self-control, creativity, a visionary will, and a careful will to shape.

Kirkeby (2016) asserts that individuals residing in a society or structure which allow them the freedom to engage with their own set of values will ultimately align with the fundamental values previously mentioned. Consequently, freedom is incorporated as a central value in the new protreptic alongside the other four values. For Kirkeby (2016), the capacity to translate these values into actions embodies the concept of phronesis—that is, practical knowledge. This reflects the practical application of making values tangible and actionable. Ultimately, values hold significance given how we utilise them, their manifestation as the solid foundation upon which we stand, and their role in enabling us to contribute to the common good. Throughout dialogues in the new protreptic, these five values frequently serve as focal points for examination, particularly towards the end, since they facilitate reflections leading to the essence of the matter, where a sense of stillness or even reverence may occasionally arise (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015; Kirkeby, 2016).

Adapting the new protreptic in VISION

The new protreptic has served as a huge inspiration within VISION. In essence, protreptic promotes a communication paradigm of 'we thinking' rather than 'me thinking', based on the idea of the common good dating back to Aristotle. The mindset and approach to dialogues from protreptic are largely adapted within VISION. However, some elements are emphasised more than others, the most important of which include the fundamental outlook from protreptic on the common good, the understanding of awareness building as a collective process, the clear focus on the quality of an event, the ability to be present in the process on the terms of the other(s), and the critical questioning of power positions related to the mirrors of princes. Within VISION, this highlights a focus on community, interdependency, conviviality, reciprocity, sensibility, care, coexistence, and responsibility, whilst aligned with an overall focus on sustainability in the URGE project. Furthermore, it places sustainability as the potential common good to strive for, with a strong orientation towards political and social justice, accountability, and civic mindedness to help achieve collective prosperity. We describe this in further detail in Chapter 2.

There are also some elements of the new protreptic which have been developed further within VISION, because of the target groups and field in which it is aimed. In social work on the micro-level, protreptic is adaptable without requiring more substantive changes, focusing on dialogues aimed at meeting the focal person as a human being. To help facilitate this kind of verbally based dialogue, VISION provides a cue card that can be used when that kind of dialogue is possible. This tool is largely adapted from the works of Kirkeby (2009, 2016) and Gørtz and Mejlhede (2015).

But, because protreptic is based on verbal communication, the method can in some cases have implications when using it in social work and social work advocacy beyond the micro- and case-based levels (see Chapter 3 on advocacy for further details). This can occur initially when service users are unable to communicate verbally, either in limited ways or entirely. Secondly, because it is highly verbally dependent, individuals from diverse backgrounds and power positions do not always experience equal access to participation in a group- or community-based

dialogue, such that the development of verbal language skills can be related to and dependent upon the life circumstances of a person, leaving some participants in vulnerable starting points.

Furthermore, in social work practice with a global perspective and a focus on sustainability, a pragmatic ontological horizon proves useful. Based on the international definition of social work practice (IFSW, 2014), the profession must include all relevant sources of knowledge and traditions. Writings and thoughts about being, self, self-awareness, mental structures, and consciousness have strong traditions in most Indigenous, religious, and philosophical traditions around the world, which Kirkeby (2016) also mentioned. But, where the new protreptic relegates this notion to a footnote, it is natural for a method in social work to further emphasise these elements. As Heather Boetto (2019) explains, social work in a sustainability perspective must include holistic perspectives, including focusing on coexistence, co-dependency, and responsibility on a much broader scale than we have been accustomed to, widening the perspective in ethics for social work (see Chapter 2 for further details). These perspectives offer valuable insights if the aim is sustainability, both for human beings as well as other species and the planet itself.

This leads to a critical standpoint specifically in relation to the linguistic focus in Kirkeby's (2016) work, calling for a deeper analysis. Notably, Kirkeby's choice of focus rather explicitly lies on the capacity to grasp the world through and with words. As he explains, something is not real for a person until they hear themselves say it (Kirkeby, 2016, p. 35; Kirkeby, 2009, p. 35). The body is valued yet understood through an etymological lens as representing the origin of words, meaning that most words can be backtracked to pre-language sounds, which communicate relations, senses, and actions. Thus, it becomes possible to talk about a *'sense of gravity*' and about '*being* the master of one's own house'; it is something realised in a bodily way. As such, the body, the senses, and intuition are highly welcomed in the new protreptic. Still, the tool for Kirkeby is verbal—an explicit choice or distinction made throughout his work.

Given this verbal focus, an important task in the development of VISION has focused on widening the toolkit to include nonverbal and creative tools to help bridge the gap between the pre-conscious and the conscious parts of the self in multiple ways, especially when working with groups. These alternative tools and exercises can be found in Chapter 9 and may be used when it is necessary to create a more equal playing field for participants and/or adapting ways of thinking into a less verbally dependent process. Such instances may occur when a group represents a high degree of diversity, may not share the same language, or may explore their own values in varying verbal and nonverbal ways. These are still based on the philosophy of protreptic, but they use nonverbal communication and creative and bodily inspired approaches. They are developed to either supplement the verbal dialogue or replace it entirely and are inspired by different traditions such as the arts, mindfulness, yoga, and theatre amongst others. Here, the heritage of protreptic is that they are intended to support a quality of care, conviviality, and reciprocity during the process and in the presence of participants, thereby strengthening the relationship between them and their willingness to listen to each other.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

VISION can be used for protreptic inspired reflection through:

- Building 'self-gravity'. The protreptic-inspired way of reflecting together within VISION can help individuals and groups establish a more solid foundation for their values.
- Improving facilitations skills. A solid foundation for one's own values helps to differentiate between one's own opinions and those of another, thereby allowing an individual to serve more strongly as a facilitator grounded in one's own values.

- Building collective awareness. VISION enhances the awareness built through interaction and contact with others and can be used to work with processes in groups and communities.
- Establishing togetherness. VISION's focus on 'we thinking' and the quality of the event, emphasises the need to be present together, and to listen and learn together. This also fosters a sense of cohesion and togetherness within a group.
- Improving listening skills. Because VISION also emphasises intuition and listening for the needs of others and because there are no right or wrong answers, VISION encourages both facilitator and participants to listen to each other with deep respect.
- Including holistic perspectives. VISION raises awareness of the ethical dimensions of human interactions by always relating the values examined to a common good and related to the values of goodness, truth, justice, beauty, and freedom found in all corners of the world.
- Creating equitable ground. The generality and anonymisation within VISION, including avoiding psychologising, helps create a space for meeting each other in a more equitable space.
- Exploration of etymology. The etymological root of a word often hides dimensions of its meaning, of which we were not consciously aware, bringing analytical depths to a dialogue.

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CHAPTER 2. SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

VISION promotes the idea that social work is ethically bound by a responsibility to take an active role in producing sustainable cities and communities. Facing global climate collapse and extreme urbanisation, doing so requires an updated understanding of what sustainability means for social workers, and what constitutes a sustainable urban community. We must, therefore, ask: What role do social workers play in creating, growing, and supporting sustainable urban communities? In this chapter, we present a possible answer to this question. We show how social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability are equally important and in what ways perspectives on sustainability have inspired the VISION method. We conclude this chapter with an overview of how VISION can be used to promote sustainability.

CO-BUILDING INCLUSIVE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The role of social work in the transition towards a more just and sustainable world has been increasingly emphasised in recent years. As mentioned, sustainability is a major theme within the Global Agenda for the Social Work & Social Development Framework for 2020–2030, captured under the headline *Co-Building Inclusive Social Transformation* (IFSW et al., 2020). The mandate for social workers actively promoting the transition to a more sustainable future also aligns with the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2018). Nevertheless, for the profession more broadly, working from a sustainability perspective remains relatively new. As Boetto (2019) claims, social work from a sustainability perspective requires future social workers who can initially think differently, which further requires the formation of a new ontology for the profession. A new ontology must involve more holistic and critical ways of understanding the role and position of human beings in the world, and, over time, allow practitioners to realise in which ways they can play an important role in creating a more sustainable world.

The formation of a new ontology is impossible to outline in a short introduction to sustainability. That said, the following elements could very well count as pieces of a larger puzzle in the broader ontological picture. Within VISION, inspiration stems from definitions of sustainability, growth, critical theory, and eco-social work, with a specific focus on social work in urban development and the research conducted within the URGE project.

Three pillars of sustainability

Understanding the role of social workers in relation to sustainability begins with a definition of sustainability. Definitions of sustainable development and sustainability in general often take their starting point from the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987), which presented the theme from an international perspective. In a process led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the resulting report, Our Common Future, was published by the United Nations (UN) in 1987 and is now commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report. Therein, sustainable development was described as '*(…) development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*' (WCED, 1987, p. 41). Based on this report, sustainable development was further divided into three pillars: economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Purvis et al., 2018). Applying this definition, social work quite easily fits into the economic and social sustainability pillars. The statement of ethical standards provided earlier generally promotes taking responsibility for engaging people in achieving social justice in relation to society; for working towards the equitable distribution of resources; for challenging unjust policies and practices; for building solidarity; for holistic approaches to understandings and interventions; and for promoting the right to participation (IFSW, 2018). Therefore, considering the social, and perhaps even the economic dimensions of sustainability, are naturally embedded within the practice of social work. This may be accomplished through, for instance, work couched in inclusion, self-determination, and the redistribution of economic resources through welfare services and taxation to name just two examples.

Yet, viewing this work as part of a sustainability agenda might require additional adjustments to our thinking.

That said, the environmental pillar requires a bit more analysis in relation to the profession. A rather simplified way of illustrating this might be that, without the sun, the planet, and photosynthesis in nature, neither the social nor the economic dimensions would exist. Through this perspective, we must include environmental dimensions in social work practice (or any practice for that matter). In what follows, this basic notion is explored more deeply through a more substantial argument justifying why the environmental dimension of sustainability—just as the social and economic dimensions—is relevant to social work. We also introduce the ontological and methodological consequences of a holistic understanding of sustainability.

GROWTH-CRITICAL THEORY

Since the Enlightenment period, societal development and wellbeing in the global North has been based on the pursuit of growth. For centuries, this growth has centred on the extraction of wealth, lives, and natural resources from the global South. But, with environmental collapse and the continuing and staggering lack of social justice, growth has been identified as our most fundamental problem. Economic anthropologist Jason Hickel provided a striking description of our relationship to growth:

> *We tend to take growth for granted because it sounds so natural. And it is. All living organisms grow. But in nature there is a self-limiting logic to growth: organisms grow to a point of maturity and then maintain a state of healthy equilibrium. When growth fails to stop—when cells keep replicating just for the sake of it—it's because of a coding error, like what happens with cancer. This kind of growth quickly becomes deadly.* (Hickel, 2021, p. 19)

Thus, to survive and create a more just setting, we must transition to a post-growth world. A simple way of understanding the transformation the profession relies on, we turn to the work of macro-economist Timothée Parrique, known for his work on degrowth and growth-critical theory. According to Parrique (2019), for a long time the planet has been telling us to reduce our production and consumption and to transition to a steady-state economy where planetary boundaries, rather than the pursuit of growth, guide our development. This transition—called degrowth—must be planned democratically and rely on considerations of social justice and quality of life to reach balance and sustainability—known as post-growth.

Parrique's (2019) research offers concrete examples of our disruptive consumption patterns: the emissions connected to our information and communications technology emit 830 million tonnes of CO2 per year. To break it down a bit further, the International Energy Agency estimates that one hour of Netflix streaming alone is equivalent to driving 0.5 km in a car. Furthermore, the total number of YouTube videos streamed in 2016 emitted 11 million tonnes of CO2—equivalent to the yearly carbon footprint of a city the size of Frankfurt, Germany. CO2 emissions cause issues such as drought, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, the acidification of water, and wildfires amongst others, which in turn carry severe consequences for human wellbeing. We are more interconnected to the natural world than many of us think, justifying why social work must revitalise and rethink its concept of holistic social work.

Economic anthropologist Jason Hickel expressed this interdependence and connectedness when stating that:

> *We've forgotten how to pay attention to the relationships between things. Insects necessary for pollination; birds that control crop pests, grubs and worms essential to soil fertility; mangroves that purify water; the corals on which fish populations depend: these living systems are not 'out there', disconnected from humanity. On the contrary: our faiths are intertwined. They are, in a real sense, us*. (Hickel, 2021, p. 9)

The core values of growth-critical theory

The core values identified in the field of growth-critical theory correspond quite well with the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles. These core values in growth-critical theory are *autonomy, sufficiency, and care* (Parrique, 2019; see also the International Degrowth Network [n.d.]). Let us look a bit more closely at these values.

1) Autonomy. People need to feel as if they have a say in the kind of world in which they want to live, preferably on an everyday basis. We need participation, a voice, and a sense of agency when planning which sectors should scale down production and which sectors should be allowed to grow. Approaches to this kind of democracy can be rooted in decentralisation, critical collective empowerment, and de-privatisation.

2) Sufficiency. We need a more nuanced approach to wellbeing. Consuming, earning, and owning more are not equivalent to an improved wellbeing or quality of life. Naturally, a certain degree of economic freedom is nice, but a de-selection of products and services damaging to the environment is not equivalent to a decline in wellbeing. Most of us can do nicely with less.

3) Care. Without the social infrastructure upheld through noneconomic and non-commercial transactions such as reciprocity, care, and trust, a market-based economy could not exist. The often invisible and sometimes precarious work and efforts put into upholding the social infrastructure supporting a global economy should be recognised as equivalent to so-called formal work in the production spheres.

According to existing research—ranging from the first large-scale computer-simulated calculations of the implications of continued worldwide growth carried out in the 1970s (Meadows, et al., 1972/2004) to the current critical growth theories such as those represented by Parrique and Hickel—sustainable development must never decouple from environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Acknowledging that the planet's natural resources are finite, we must debunk the economic growth model that has dominated our thinking since the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment period. Sustainable development should, therefore, be carefully designed and planned to avoid a chaotic recession or economic meltdown leading to further inequality. Recognising social justice means promoting equitability whilst simultaneously addressing the systemic failures that led to our very different circumstances and possibilities in the first place. We have a shared albeit very different responsibility for contributing to a more just world, depending upon our socioeconomic position—some of us must produce and consume far less and relinquish certain privileges, whilst others amongst us must profit from the transition to a more sustainable future.

Conviviality

To connect all of this to social work, we turn now to some of the core values of the profession, such as democracy, social justice, and wellbeing. The argument for infinite economic growth has relied on the notion that we need growth to reduce poverty and inequality. Typically, we tend to think of economic growth as something that benefits the general population—growth is necessary for wellbeing. However, according to growth-critical theory, economic growth has not been accompanied by the redistribution of resources one might expect. Specifically, when looking at the correlation between wealth and environmental strain, justice seems compromised. According to the *World Inequality Report* (Chancel et al., 2022), the world's top 10% wealthiest households owned 76% of the planet's resources and held more than 50% of the total global revenue in 2021. According to Oxfam, the wealthiest 10% of people carry the responsibility for half of the world's emissions (Khalfan et al., 2023). Thus, there is an imperative and urgent need to rethink how the good life that growth has granted a few can instead be distributed to a shared good life, which includes all human beings and even other beings and the planet itself.

The concept and value of conviviality, often linked to growth-critical theory, comprises a possible way forward in a single word (Krüger, 2019). The literature often attributes the use of the term conviviality to Ivan Illich (1973/2021, p. 20), who referred to it as '*individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value*'. Originally, the term related to the act of eating together and enjoying the preparation and consumption of a meal, and the company of others taking part in it. In relation to a critique of growth, conviviality uses this as a metaphor for other kinds of sharing and being together, emphasising the enjoyment of the process.

Thus, instead of being filled with uncomfortable restrictions, depriving people from the good in life, degrowth, and the idea of taking less from shared resources become something to enjoy, finding other ways to obtain a joyous life other than those based on mass consumption.

ECO-SOCIAL WORK

Social work can significantly contribute to fostering a democratic and inclusive transition from growth to post-growth, without undermining the right to growth for those who have yet to benefit from the prosperity experienced in recent decades. Such an approach to social work is found in what associate professor of social work Heather Boetto (2019), amongst others, has referred to as eco-social work. This approach aligns with the principles of conviviality and growth-critical theory, outlining ways of thinking and doing social work inclusive of nature's rights alongside other rights the profession aims to protect, focusing on reciprocity, understood as co-dependency and coexistence between all beings.

Boetto (2019) describes social work as a profession shaped by modernity, demonstrating how values such as rationality, independence, and self-reliance have been adapted into much of conventional social work. Whilst the mandate to think holistically has always pervaded within social work, this has traditionally meant including a person's entire environment when decisions about help, care, and support are made. The dark side of this perspective means that anything nonhuman can be considered an objective entity—awaiting human dominion and consumption—and encouraging alienation from the natural world. However, the current collapse in sustainability tells us that the natural world and its resources are not separate from humans. Thus, to speak of holistic social work is speaking to our deep interdependence with the natural world. As beautifully expressed by Boetto (2019), social work may be a human-centred profession, but it must also be a human-in-systems–centred profession. At the heart of eco-social work lies an understanding of the delicate balance of the planet's ecosystems and their ability to sustain humanity—and an acknowledgement that the disruption and destruction of healthy ecosystems threaten life on Earth for all living organisms. Moreover, eco-social work echoes ecological feminism whereby they share a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic coexistence, intuition, and collectivity. Finally, Indigenous knowledge and wisdom is juxtaposed with scientific knowledge—as outlined in the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession adapted in 2014.

There is something quite hopeful in the realisation that we do not need to innovate and invest our way out of the sustainability collapse, but can instead begin by rediscovering what is already in the world. We can learn from those who came before us. In his research, anthropologist Enrique Salmón (2000) argues that part of the solution to the many crises capitalism and the Anthropocene have caused lies in a kin-centric worldview—that is, a connected or kin-based worldview upon which many Indigenous perspectives are based, and which is also part of eco-social work.

In social work, we already have well-described methods suitable to sustainable development, including community work, multidisciplinary work, rights-based approaches, anti-oppressive practices, dialogue, and advocacy to name a

few. In other words, for social workers, the most pronounced transition lies not in the acquisition of completely new knowledge about the environment or traditional natural sciences, but rather in a shift in orientation regarding the place and position of humans in the natural world. This represents a shift from a human-centred (Anthropocene) orientation to a more eco-social, holistic orientation where values such as democracy, participation, and social justice are considered in relation to the preservation of the planet's ecosystems. Within this framework, humans are not viewed as owners of planetary resources but as stewards responsible for their care and continuity (Parrique, 2019).

This perspective resonates with the principles articulated in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) and is central to many Indigenous philosophies, such as *buen vivir*, often translated as living well or in harmony with nature, and ubuntu, which emphasises mutual responsibility and solidarity. In *buen vivir*, for example, individuals' rights to own, sell, or possess are subordinated to the rights of nature and the collective wellbeing of communities.

Taken together, these Indigenous and sustainability-oriented perspectives suggest that social work already possesses many of the conceptual and practical tools necessary for an eco-social transition. At the same time, they reveal a persistent gap between global ethical frameworks and everyday professional practice. This gap is particularly apparent where social work—especially at the micro- and clinical-levels—remains insufficiently connected to broader international, ecological, and relational debates. Challenging this disconnect highlights the importance of situating routine practice within a broader understanding of justice, responsibility, and interdependence.

Social workers, then, have the potential to act as key agents in the transition to a sustainable future. This requires a recalibration of our mindset and values to include a more holistic understanding of our tasks and the professional ethos. The good news is that the role in this is much like the role we normally associate with that of a social worker: to think and reflect critically, to facilitate, to communicate, to involve diverse actors, and to act responsibly on knowledge in pursuit of collective wellbeing.

Eco-social work in practice

In numerous European countries, the sustainable development initiatives we have outlined may not be explicitly included in a social worker's primary responsibilities or formal job descriptions. Nevertheless, there are many instances in which individuals successfully make significant strides towards what we refer to as eco-social work. For instance, the research conducted within the URGE project, which focuses on sustainability, democracy, social justice, and wellbeing across various scales, provides a pertinent example (Hoborg Gammelgaard, 2024).

In one of the cities involved in our research, a team of social workers from the municipality's department of social services is dedicated to assisting individuals who have experienced homelessness to transition to more permanent housing solutions. Whilst individuals are allocated affordable housing within the nonprofit housing sector, it is important to recognise that securing shelter does not always equate with the ability to create a home or foster a sense of belonging. The team, therefore, focused on how to re- and upcycle furniture, household appliances, and other essential items rather than purchase new products to create a sense of home. In this way, they could promote sustainable production and consumption practices on a larger scale. At the same time, the project provided and developed meaningful employment opportunities for individuals engaged in social employment at the city's recycling centres, thereby fostering inclusion, purposeful work, and an improved overall wellbeing. Furthermore, they actively engaged in establishing social and professional networks amongst professionals and citizens committed to sustainable development, enhancing the sharing and redistribution of knowledge. As part of their project, the team also used the insights from individuals accustomed to critically evaluating their consumption patterns to actively engage in degrowth by design.

Naturally and importantly, here we must avoid romanticising scarcity or suggesting that individuals in vulnerable situations should bear the responsibility for sustainable development whilst others continue to advance without consideration. However, when social work interventions incorporate the perspectives, knowledge, and values of those most accustomed to reflecting on their consumption patterns, these voices often provide a sophisticated understanding of our interconnectedness with the natural environment. Indeed, those individuals engaged in social employment in our example embody growth-critical perspectives which align with the theoretical insights of researchers such as Parrique, Hickel, and Boetto, even if they did not refer to the approach as 'eco-social work'. What the method can offer is a more systematic focus on and reflection of one's practice, integrating sustainability into all phases of social work interventions, illustrating a way forward which recognises and acts upon the state of the world.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND SOCIAL WORK

Following from this and inspired by social work pioneer Jane Addams, ethics and sustainability can be viewed as deeply intertwined, including in relation to urban development, a focus of the URGE project. Addams (1902) focused on creating better life circumstances for the urban poor following the wave of industrialisation at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1902, she emphasised how a socially diverse city, with space for the marginalised and vulnerable citizens as well as the wealthy and resourceful, is a place where humanity and democracy can thrive. As Addams (1902, p. 7) put it, it is necessary to '*at least see the size of each other's burdens*' to have a democratic society. Absent contact with people different from us, we risk living in segregated and conflicting urban spaces.

We argue that social workers must take part in urban development, which is further underscored by research demonstrating how cities have developed from welfare to wealth cities, creating a need to understand the role of social work in urban development in new ways. The different welfare states developed in the 1900s became a primary resource for tackling urban poverty and conflicts. The term 'welfare cities' has been used to describe how the public sector planned, and at times built, its way out of urban social problems such as poor housing, health, and infrastructure. However, today we face a different situation. The private sector is a powerful player in urban development, whereby we are witnessing a transition from welfare cities to 'wealth cities' (Bärnheim et al., 2020). Too often, the public is not co-producing cities (Sennett 2018). At the same time, urban social problems such as poverty, loneliness, and substance misuse amongst others are dealt with as individual problems rather than as expressions of structural injustice. Thus, we face an ethical challenge in the development of cities. As described by UN-Habitat (2024), we are currently facing a global environmental collapse, largely related to these new waves of urbanisation. The deindustrialisation of European cities accompanies widespread commercialisation and marketisation of the urban landscape. Vulnerable citizens, who are not included in co-producing the city, are being pushed to the margins, both geographically and in the form of marginalisation and discrimination (Stiglitz, 2019; Sassen, 2018).

Such issues are directly addressed by institutions of social work. In The Global Agenda, as described above, the IASSW specifically states: '*Social work and social development practitioners and educators have an essential role to connect people, communities, and systems; to codesign and co-build sustainable communities and to promote inclusive social transformation'* (IFSW et al., 2020, p. 6). On city development, the Brundtland Report further states:

> *Good city management requires [the] decentralization of funds, political power, and personnel to local authorities, which are best placed to appreciate and manage local needs. But the sustainable development of cities will depend on closer work with the majority of urban poor who are the true city builders, tapping the skills, energies and resources of neighborhood groups and those in the 'informal sector'.*
> (WCED, 1987, p. 23–24)

This highlights the important role social workers play in the development of sustainable cities.

SUSTAINABILITY-RELATED VALUES WITHIN URGE

The URGE project was based on research completed during a previous project, which established that social workers lack access to communicative spaces where decisions about urban development are made (URBAN SOS, 2019). Ethnographic research completed in that earlier project's European cities demonstrated how this is a genuine problem for social workers, who are ethically bound by the mandate to strengthen inclusive, sustainable communities. Consequently, social workers are tasked with advocating for vulnerable urban populations, embedding values of sustainability into community-building efforts, whilst lacking the tools to do so. Therefore, the URGE project aimed to identify ways to empower social workers to advocate for vulnerable urban populations and equip them with tools, perspectives, and methods to become agents of change for a sustainable future. Beyond developing VISION as a method that can be used for this purpose, research has been completed in the five cities involved in the URGE project, each focusing on different issues relevant to the local settings. Per the objective of the entire project, the research had a shared focus on *sustainability, inclusiveness, vulnerable populations, and voices not usually heard in development processes*. Moreover, the overarching objective of the research process lay on developing a digital map of the different conflicting values in the data (see www.urbanurge.eu). Based on this research, 12 values with specific relevance to sustainability in urban areas were identified. These values are presented in the values catalogue in Chapter 9, each with suggestions for dialogues and activities which can serve as focal points for students, groups, and communities working with sustainability and sustainable cities. Those values from the URGE project are *participation, inclusion, safety, protection, agency, power, community, self-determination, sustainability, belonging, diversity, and equity*.

SUSTAINABILITY AND VISION

In combination, the VISION method and social work provide a powerful framework for creating sustainable cities through inclusive and participatory urban development. VISION fosters values-based conversations that prioritise human dignity, social justice, and ecological responsibility, and can be used to create opportunities for the inclusion of marginalised voices in decision-making processes. By promoting systems thinking and co-production, VISION can be used to bring social workers, planners, and communities together to design socially grounded solutions, countering market-driven 'wealth city' trends. In practice, social workers play a crucial role by planning and facilitating community workshops, during which residents, officials, and professionals collaboratively shape public spaces, housing, and green areas (City of Helsinki, n.d.-a). Advocating for social work representation on municipal planning boards embeds social equity into urban policy, whilst initiatives like mixed-income housing prevent segregation and promote empathy and democratic values, as documented in Helsinki's efforts to end long-term homelessness (City of Helsinki, n.d.-b). At the grassroots level, social workers lead projects such as urban gardens, recycling programmes, and energy-saving campaigns, complemented by digital tools like participatory budgeting apps that amplify marginalised voices. Together, these approaches transform sustainability from a top–down policy into a lived practice, making cities more democratic, inclusive, and resilient—where sustainability is understood as both social and environmental, not merely economic growth.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

VISION can be used to promote sustainability through:

- Knowledge-building. Social workers and social work educators can use the reference list and selected parts of the information in this chapter in classes, workshops, groups, and seminars about sustainability. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of sustainability and reciprocity.
- Awareness-building. Through examinations of values related to sustainability, students, groups, and communities can gain a deeper awareness of their role in creating a more sustainable future. This is a crucial element to becoming agents of change.

- Shift in focus. Teaching and practicing VISION in relation to social work methods that are collectively and eco-oriented can create a foundation for future social work professionals, which will naturally and systematically focus on sustainability in their practice.
- 'Self-gravity'. The examination of values related to sustainability and sustainable cities can help individuals and groups to create a rootedness or gravity to their values and is needed when advocating for sustainability.
- Social sustainability. When social workers create spaces for VISION dialogues in groups, this can serve as a sustainability action in itself, creating interactions and an exchange of ideas amongst participants who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet or listen to one another. Recognising that such encounters are scarce, the dialogue itself becomes an important action, with the meeting of diverse perspectives contributing to the social dimensions of sustainability.

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CHAPTER 3. ADVOCACY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

One aim of VISION centres around developing new dialogue-building and exploration tools for advocacy, tools which foster shared values, participation, and inclusion to empower social work professionals as agents of sustainable urban change (URGE, 2023). In his book *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City*, urbanist Richard Sennett (2018, p. 268) discusses the climate crisis and asks: '*Can the city build its way out of such crises?'*. The answer is complex. But, in light of the three pillars of sustainability, according to Purvis et al. (2018), 'building' in more sustainable ways both environmentally and economically speaking, must be supplemented by cooperation and conversations resulting in solutions which include social dimensions as well. Yet, conversation and decision-making in urban development is often polarised and conflict-ridden, whereby multiple disparate perspectives, interests, and power positions collide. Dialogue takes place under pressure, in part due to the fast-paced life that has led to deficient ethical articulations of societal developments (Rosa, 2010). Research demonstrates that having a voice in such processes of change is a major part of creating social sustainability (Brennan et al., 2017; Checker, 2011). Therefore, the tools within VISION have also been developed to strengthen social workers' ability to advocate on behalf of and with vulnerable urban populations, ensuring that they have a voice in urban planning processes. To do so, a basic knowledge about advocacy in social work is needed. In this chapter, we present an overview of the method from a sustainability perspective, closing with an overview of how VISION can be used for advocacy purposes.

SPEAKING TO POWER

Inspired by eco-social work, collective methods such as community work, group work, and advocacy are valuable to the profession, moving its practice towards a focus on sustainability (Boetto, 2019). As Professor Liz Beddoe (2024) puts it, the struggle for change and the achievement of just societies is hard, and calls for greater activism, spanning national and regional boundaries, building strength through relationships and solidarity. As early as 2013, Beddoe and Professor Phillip R. J. Harington (2013) argued that civics practices should be the new professional paradigm for social work. They suggested that social workers—especially during times of change—must be able to communicate on several levels, both informally within practice and in everyday situations with service users and co-workers (Harington & Beddoe, 2013). Furthermore, they must also develop an ability to communicate in more formal and scientific ways, which they refer to as *speaking to power* (Harington & Beddoe, 2013). In other words, they must be both the optimal case workers and agents who gather knowledge and communicate it further. They argued for professionals who would not only focus on 'what works', the primary regime in the years of new public management, but also on what does not work—and saying so out loud.

Currently, the need for advocacy and a strong value base have become increasingly acute as we face crises at the local, national, regional, and global levels (Beddoe, 2024). Whilst speaking from the viewpoint of a social work educator, her points apply to practitioners as well:

> *We face challenges from many directions. Our governments want us to prepare functionaries equipped to make social problems go away, without addressing structural factors. Our statutory employing organizations want graduates ready for practice, shelf-stable, resilient, and not likely to rock the boat. The community sector wants us to show leadership in holding the line against the roll-back of progressive, redistributive policies and programmes. Our universities are cutting courses and decimating departments in the social sciences. In many countries, we face the rise of populism, which is serving to legitimize racism, misogyny, and bigotry. This is not a time for social work in the academy to be quiet.* (Beddoe, 2024, p. 2833)

Language and value development

So, what can social workers do to become more capable in speaking to power? This question, amongst others, inspired the URGE project, which in part took inspiration from research completed in another Erasmus+ project, Urban SOS (Rauhala et al., 2022). We understood from our collaboration with our practice partners that most social workers find that the knowledge gained through their everyday interactions with vulnerable populations in urban social work is rarely used to qualify discussions of and decisions about sustainable urban development and design.

As Beddoe and Harington (2013) argued, during times of change it becomes increasingly important for practitioners to successfully vouch for their work—that is, to live up to what they call 'veracity', being truthful to yourself and in what you believe. To attune social work to the challenges it faces, different approaches are therefore needed. As such, practitioners should engage in practice-based research to broaden their understanding whilst adopting language that resonates with decision-makers. They must inform policy through practice, which requires advocacy, community engagement, fundraising, and project management skills to strengthen the profession (Boetto, 2019; Harington & Beddoe, 2013). In line with VISION, this work must rest upon strong values at both the individual and professional levels.

ADVOCACY IN SOCIAL WORK

When learning to speak truth to power, an overview of the history and different levels of advocacy offers a solid starting point. Advocacy has a quite long tradition in social work, extending back to Jane Addams and Paulo Freire, both pioneers of the profession who acted upon critical thought in favour of more just communities. For Addams (1902), social workers should play the role of co-builders of those just societies, by strengthening collectiveness and social bonds. To her mind, individuals standing together and helping each other are less likely to fall victim to the exploitative mechanisms of early industrialisation. For Freire (1973), the primary motivation behind his important pedagogical work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, centred around analysing how power structures always favour some individuals over others, leaving the latter with few options to change their situation. They were often deprived of the knowledge, language, and resources to change things by themselves, whilst those already holding power had little motivation to alter the status quo. In a social work inspired by Freire, the role then focuses on spreading knowledge and building resources towards resisting. Freire believed that oppression lives in the hearts and minds of the oppressed; to combat this, conscientisation—the process of becoming aware of oneself in one's own world—represents the first step towards liberation. Other theorists and practitioners have inspired social work advocacy as well, but Freire and Addams serve as founders of the community-based tradition of achieving social work's goals of social justice, equality, and the promotion of human dignity as spelled out in IFSW's (2018) statement of principles for ethical social work practice. This leads to our definition of advocacy in VISION: the act of promoting and supporting the rights to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and wellbeing of individuals, groups, or communities.

Social workers, grounded in Freire's ideas, work from the position that people are capable, knowledgeable, and continuously growing. They are trustworthy and their behaviour is purposeful. Freire believed that the right to self-determination was a foundational principle on the road to conscientisation. When social workers interact with people in precarious situations, it is necessary to understand their context and respect their knowledge whilst supporting their expanding ability to act on things about which they feel strongly. As catalysts, social workers act to stimulate the self-awareness of those with whom they work through critical dialogue and support for collective transformation (Christian & Jhala, 2015).

ADVOCACY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS: CAUSE AND CASE ADVOCACY

More broadly, advocacy can be understood in multiple ways. Practiced in multiple professions and contexts, advocacy in social work often distinguishes between *cause* and *case* advocacy (Scourfield, 2021; Guy, 2004).

Cause advocacy is understood as a form of social action aimed at influencing public policy and social change in favour of a specific cause or issue. Differing from service delivery, cause advocacy focuses on providing direct assistance to individuals or groups in need, taking various forms, such as lobbying, campaigning, protesting, petitioning, educating, or mobilising. Cause advocacy can also involve various actors, such as individuals, organisations, coalitions, movements, or networks (TearFund Learn, 2022). The process proceeds as follows:

- Identify the cause (i.e., environmental conservation, human rights, education reform, or sustainable cities).
- Build the case (i.e., gather relevant data, research, and evidence to understand the root causes and impacts).
- Mobilise support (i.e., individuals, communities, organisations, and policymakers through grassroots campaigns, social media activism, community organising, and strategic partnerships).
- Influence public opinion (i.e., writing op-eds, organising public events, leveraging social media platforms, and/or engaging with traditional media outlets).
- Engage with decision-makers.
- Create lasting change.

By contrast, *case advocacy* focuses on pleading the case of an injustice and recommending changes to laws and legislation to meet the needs of specific groups. Case advocacy pleads on behalf of the individual, family, or small group and first involves collaborating with a client, then going with them to the site of the injustice and assisting them as they navigate other systems of redress.

The micro-, meso-, and macro-levels

Another way of differentiating advocacy practices lies in viewing it in relation to the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of social work practice. The micro–meso–macro framework of advocacy is rooted in ecological systems theory and has been further developed within social work scholarship, notably in Jansson's (2019, pp. 10–11) multilevel model of policy and practice advocacy. Figure 1 below illustrates these levels.

Figure 1. Advocacy at the micro-, meso-, macro-levels. Image credit: Leigh Anne Rauhala, adapted from Jansson's (2019, pp. 6–9) multilevel model of policy and practice advocacy.

First, macro-level advocacy reflects social workers involvement in the policy and governmental systems that play a larger role in the lives of entire communities and regions, often referred to as cause advocacy. For example, social workers at this level may work in policy advocacy, research, and administrative roles. At the meso-level, social workers advocate for and with communities, schools, teams, or organisations. Their day-to-day work involves less one-on-one communication than at the micro-level, but still includes work on the personal level. This also includes advocacy at the organisational level. Finally, in micro-level social work, advocacy focuses on the small units or systems which reflect social workers' primary focus within a welfare system. At this level, social workers interact directly with their clients in rather small groups or one-on-one. This is the most intimate level of social work and is often referred to as case advocacy.

USING THE POWER CUBE TO MAP THE POWER

One concrete way to plan an advocacy approach relies on mapping power relations surrounding a specific topic. According to the Campaign Bootcamp and the University of Sussex (n.d.), power mapping offers a highly useful way to construct an advocacy campaign. Schutz (in Gaventa, 2019) further argues that, within the human and social services, we often narrowly focus on individual users without considering collective and systemic challenges. The power cube (see Figure 2), developed by Gaventa (2019), can serve as a tool to support social workers to think more critically and direct their advocacy efforts in the right direction. The power cube can also be used to help identify and create spaces where service users, professionals, and policymakers can reflect on their values together.

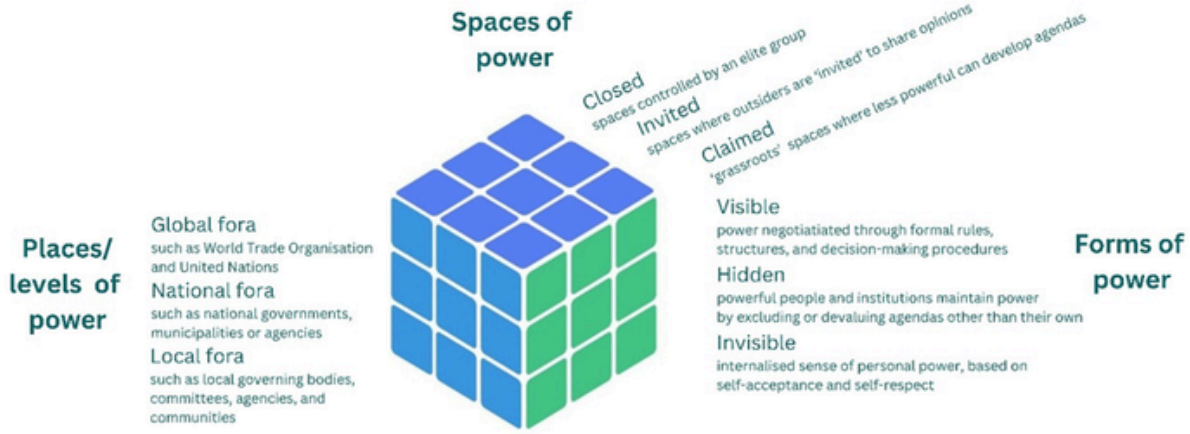

Figure 2. The power cube framework. Image credit: Leigh Anne Rauhala, adapted from Gaventa (1997), cited in Luttrell et al. (2009; see also Rowlands, 1997).

To illustrate the application of the power cube, we use the example of immigration.

In *places* of power, multiple layers of authority operate within a global context. These levels interact in complex ways, such as follows:

- At the *global level*, which might include international refugee conventions, global immigration trends, or EU border policies and restrictions.
- At the *national level* through national immigration laws and asylum procedures or policies related to integration benefits including language courses or living subsidies.
- At the *local level* through access to municipal housing or school integration policies.

Spaces of power consist of areas controlled by elite groups, such as managers or members of parliament. These spaces are often private, hidden behind closed doors with opaque means of communication to those not considered members of the group. In the context of immigration, this might include:

- *Closed spaces* such as parliamentary committees in which immigration policies are decided. These usually comprise small groups of people who make decisions amongst themselves and then communicate decisions once they are made.
- *Invited spaces* such as parliamentary consultations with experts, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), or limited participation amongst migrants. These might involve invitations to share lived experiences related to a topic under discussion or a policy debate. In these settings, a diversity of people may participate in decision-making, although their input and visibility are not necessarily guaranteed in final decisions.
- *Claimed or created spaces* such as immigrant-led advocacy groups, social media campaigns, or grassroots movements. These consist of spaces where traditionally marginalised groups come together to create a space to try and make the changes they feel are important or necessary.

Forms of power refer to how individuals, organisations, or governments exercise their authority. In relation to immigration, examples of exercised power include:

- *Visible power* or structural forms of power such as immigration laws, asylum policies, and social benefits regulations.
- *Hidden power* such as policymakers or lobbying groups attempting to influence agendas, how the media frames immigration, or general barriers to participation (i.e., language accessibility or childcare availability), limiting the ability of specific individuals or groups to take part in society.
- *Invisible power* in the form of cultural norms and stereotypes which shape attitudes towards migrants, which in turn can create an internalised sense of powerlessness.

Often social workers can help groups and individuals to see where their spheres of influence might be situated and attempt to raise their problem with those at higher levels of power within society. An analysis relying on the power cube can make it more concrete where individuals' possibilities lie, thereby helping groups to emerge from dialogues regarding their values in order to form an actual plan of action. For further examples on how to use the power cube, Gaventa (2019) offers 16 examples in his chapter, 'Applying power analysis: using the "powercube"', to explore forms, levels, and spaces in further detail.

Precautions in advocacy

Whilst advocacy remains a core task for social work practice, we cannot move forward without understanding the cost of advocacy. There are real, tangible, and unintended ways in which engaging in advocacy can deplete scarce resources, both in relation to time and to financial reserves, at times even working against the cause. Bad publicity, a loss of social capital or alienation, and false hope all demand discussion and exploration by both the service user and the professional before undertaking these advocacy efforts. More positively, advocacy carries benefits, although the criteria for success and the desired outcomes must be clearly defined.

Furthermore, according to Freire (2000, 127), those in positions of power are not inherently predisposed to listen, given that their primary concern lies in maintaining control rather than engaging in dialogue. In addition, as Beddoe (2024) reminds us, the struggle for just societies can be hard. These points, however, only emphasise the importance of cultivating a strong community and a solid value base. Sharing thoughts and perspectives with others and articulating what is important can also act as a kind of armour in work towards a more sustainable future. A strong value base can also serve as the foundation for establishing contact with others pursuing the same agenda. Recalling the introduction to this chapter, strength builds through relationships and solidarity—locally, nationally, and internationally—whereby an awareness of being a part of a global professional network with the same goal of collective wellbeing also helps.

Finally, caution must be taken to ensure that advocacy—especially when carried out on behalf of someone—does not stifle their voice; balancing reciprocity and conviviality amongst those whose case or cause advocacy is the focus of action must be preserved in order to avoid reproducing unjust power relations. Scholars such as Timothée Parrique (2019) from the field of macroeconomics, Françoise Vergès (2021) from the field of decolonial feminism, and Heather Boetto (2019) from the field of eco-social work advocate for decolonising the mind, emphasising that a dignified life—grounded in autonomy, sufficiency, and care—must be accessible to all, or it cannot truly exist for anyone.

Or, as so beautifully expressed by Australian Indigenous activist Lilla Watson,

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. (Watson in Vergès, 2021, p. 19)

VISION AND ADVOCACY

As this chapter shows, the task of advocacy for a sustainable future requires a solid value base, collectivism, and community. Beyond this, engaging in advocacy requires an ethical foundation, knowledge, skills, and passion, all of which the practitioner working with individuals and groups can clarify by using VISION. As previously mentioned, VISION has also been developed for use in teaching sustainability-related subjects and specifically to raise awareness amongst social work students regarding its role for a sustainable future. Social work is a normative profession with a strong ethical framework as described by all of the international social work bodies (IFSW et al. 2020; IFSW, 2018; IFSW, 2014). Becoming a professional social worker is not simply a process of adapting uncritically. Educating professionals who can speak to power demands nurturing their ability to think and to reflect by and for themselves, allowing students to develop their own positions in relation to the fundamental values of the profession. VISION was also developed to assist with this process.

In this way, VISION serves as a method for dialogue, facilitating interactions amongst individuals occupying diverse positions. Whilst VISION can be employed within an advocacy framework, it should not be viewed as a comprehensive advocacy process on its own. When a VISION dialogue aims at advocacy, it may be beneficial to include an observer who can summarise key take-away messages and assist the facilitator in documenting the needs and aspirations of VISION participants for future advocacy efforts. Moreover, it is advisable to engage participants in post-VISION dialogues regarding actionable steps they can take to amplify their voices in future advocacy actions. These may include using the power cube to map power dynamics. Regardless of the specific case, a debriefing is advisable when ending a VISION dialogue used specifically for advocacy purposes.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

How VISION can be used for advocacy purposes through:

- Creating space for dialogues. At the macro-level, VISION gives social workers tools and a format for facilitating dialogues between people coming from varying positions of power and diverse backgrounds, to listen to and learn from each other. This includes inviting decision-makers and politicians to the table as human beings instead of merely representing their official roles. The idea is to make values visible and support dialogues, also bringing awareness to those at the policy development level, to meet each other as human beings where listening is potentially a little easier since the subject focuses on shared human values rather than politics.
- Creating community. At the meso-level, VISION offers social workers tools and a format for establishing dialogues in and with groups. Building a shared and solid foundation of values through VISION dialogues and activities can unite a group or community, establish a collective direction, and sharpen stakeholder arguments. Simultaneously, it can create a space for mutual support in situations when group members are not listened to by those in power.

- Strengthening voices. At the micro-level, VISION tools can help social workers prepare for processes and meetings in situations involving both cause and case advocacy efforts. These tools can be used in one-on-one dialogues with service users to promote value awareness and foster empowerment, enabling individuals to participate with their own voice, even in contexts of injustice.
- Building self-awareness. VISION can be used by social workers to become aware of their own values and better distinguish between their own values and those of service users. This is crucial in advocacy, where the social worker sometimes takes up the cause of others and must set aside their personal values in order to work from the perspective of the service users.
- Building armour. The development of competencies required when wanting to speak to power can be cultivated through VISION dialogues. A strong foundation in values can also serve as armour for the sometimes hard task of engaging in advocacy.

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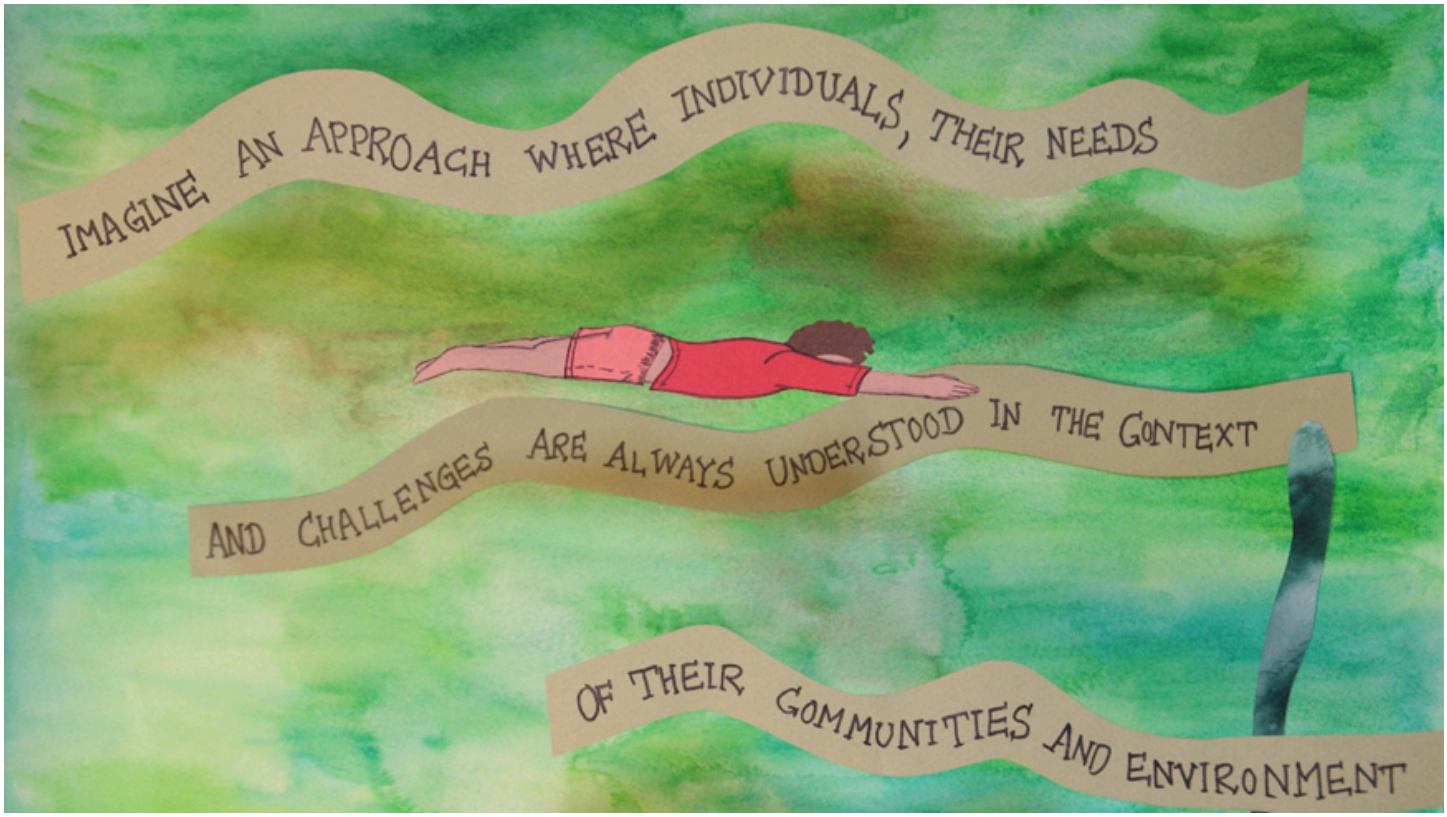
PART 2: VISION IN PRACTICE



I**mage credit**: Screen grab from *Undrowned: Stewart's Journey Towards Eco-Social Work* (2026), an animated film by Line Gammelgaard & Dorthe Juliane Høvids.

Part Two (Chapters 4–9) outlines the core methodological foundations of VISION, focusing on how to clarify values, prepare and facilitate dialogue processes, and apply the method in educational settings. In this part, we position value clarification as the central starting point of VISION, demonstrating how reflective, multi-perspective exploration supports the development of self-gravity and provides a strong ethical foundation for sustainability, advocacy, and social change. We further highlight the importance of careful assessment, preparation, and facilitation, emphasising the facilitator's mindset, ethical responsibility, and attentiveness to context in creating inclusive and open dialogue spaces.

This section also grounds VISION in practical application through the value catalogue introduced in the final chapter. The value catalogue presents 12 core values, their etymological roots, and suggested exercises to employ. This catalogue functions as a practical resource to support the selection of values and the design of dialogues and explorations, specifically in relation to those themes most relevant for building sustainability awareness. Taken together, the chapters in Part Two illustrate how VISION combines conceptual depth with practical guidance to support structured yet open-ended reflection, shared learning, and transformative educational practice.

CHAPTER 4. VALUES IN VISION

The examination of values related to sustainability lies at the centre of any VISION process.

Imagine placing a value inside a prism, where it is reflected from many different angles and perspectives, each adding new dimensions and understandings to how it can be perceived. This mirroring process can establish *'self-gravity*', and potentially provide inspiration, foresight, and a clear-sightedness regarding what is needed. In this chapter, we present our understanding of values within VISION, providing an overview and starting point for facilitators when initiating a VISION process. We close this chapter with a guide regarding how to choose or identify a value to examine.

As we described in Chapter 1, values are understood as core beliefs and principles guiding an individual, group, or society's behaviours, decisions, and actions, inspired by the new protreptic (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015; Kirkeby, 2009, 2016). These values represent what is considered important in life, and act as a moral compass influencing our choices and attitudes. Values are often deeply ingrained and shaped by culture, religion, family, and the society in which we are reared. Rather than innate, they are developed as we interact and share experiences with others. Moreover, values help us to determine right from wrong, and play a role in establishing our personal identity. Unlike moods or opinions, values tend to endure, remaining stable over time, whilst also being dynamic and potentially evolving as we experience various life events or are exposed to new ideas. Values are subjective and can vary between individuals and cultures, and they help us to navigate complex situations, make decisions, or solve problems.

To summarise what we discussed in Part One and contextualise moving forward, in VISION the core work revolves around exploring the values we adhere to by analysing the ways in which they take up residence within us and become stronger, forming the foundation for our belief systems. Borrowing from the protreptic framework, this allows us to become the master of our own house. Couched within protreptics, VISION has further adapted the idea that clarifying, exploring, analysing, and deepening values can help us to create *'self-gravity*' or a more solid foundation and a '*garland of values*' for ourselves. In addition, from advocacy, the VISION method has adopted the notion that advocating for a sustainable future requires a solid value base, a safe community, and the development of competencies required when speaking to power (Harington & Beddoe, 2013). As such, a more solid foundation to our values can serve as armour for this task and as 'the common third', potentially uniting a group or community, charting a direction, and sharpening our arguments, even if they are not heard by those who hold positions of power. The VISION approach also underscores growth-critical theories, such that specifying key values is needed, since it allows for a more precise formulation of the goals of degrowth resulting in a more concrete path to follow (Parrique, 2019, p. 252). Finally, as outlined in Chapter 2, drawing on eco-social work, VISION adopts the understanding that social workers carry an active responsibility to rethink their professional roles and practices in response to socio-ecological challenges (Boetto, 2019). Value clarification within VISION can serve as an initial step, shifting the focus towards sustainability. In professional settings, establishing a personal and collective value base provides a foundation for establishing a direction and building arguments that support a sustainable future.

VALUES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In the new protreptic described by Kirkeby (2009; 2016), it is up to participants and the facilitator to decide which values to examine. Crucially, this choice must remain unrestricted. But because VISION is a method for social work students, professionals, and other agents of change, rooted in a normative viewpoint as described in the knowledge section (see p. 26), VISION argues for working with a specific set of values, all related to sustainability and social work.

VISION includes a catalogue of values from which to choose, which are of particular relevance to sustainability and sustainable cities derived from research completed within the URGE project, which we described in Chapter 2. These consist of *participation, inclusion, safety, protection, agency, power, community, self-determination, sustainability, belonging, diversity,* and *equity*. According to the URGE objective, the research more broadly focused on *sustainability, inclusiveness, vulnerable populations,* and *voices not usually heard within development processes*, despite the differing settings in each of the five cities. Moreover, the overarching objective of the research process focused on developing a digital map of the various conflicting values within the project materials (see https://urbanurge.eu/research/).

In addition to these research-based values, further values can be identified from the knowledge base of VISION, outlined in Part One of this handbook. These can also be used as the primary subject for a dialogue or as a backdrop for reflection, shifting to a focus on sustainability.

As we described in Chapter 1, in protreptic, the universal values of *freedom, beauty, justice, truth*, and *goodness* can be used in dialogues, helping to identify the core or the depth of a specific value.

In Chapter 2, we outlined growth-critical theories and eco-social work. Values such as *conviviality, autonomy, sufficiency, care, justice, wellbeing, sovereignty, community, holism, reciprocity, connectedness,* and *interdependence* can help sharpen the focus towards sustainability and a connection to the planet even further.

Finally, Chapter 3 focused on illustrating the relation between advocacy and collective social work practices, in which core values such as *social justice, human rights, freedom, diversity, equality, tolerance, understanding,* and *participation* can serve as inspiration when seeking to connect a dialogue to the practice of social work.

CHOOSING A VALUE FOR A VISION PROCESS

During the planning stages for a VISION process, facilitators must choose how to decide upon a value. This choice depends upon how much time is available, how confident the facilitator feels in their role, and the purpose and setting of the process. Facilitators can select one of the following three ways to decide upon a value:

1. let the focus person or group collectively decide the value as the first step in the process,
2. decide beforehand which value is meaningful to explore, or
3. provide a short list of values from which participants can choose.

Option 1. Allowing individuals to choose their own value is a solid option if there is sufficient time available, if the group knows each other well, if the group has previously tried VISION, when the group is less diverse, or when the group or focus person(s) expresses a preference to choose for themselves after being presented the process method. Deciding upon a value can sometimes strengthen the sense of agency, which in groups requires solid facilitation skills helping the group balance between time to think and reflect and the need to move forward in the process. Their choice of value can either remain completely free from control or related to a specific topic such as sustainability or advocacy. To facilitate the process of identifying a value, the facilitator can begin the dialogue by asking participants what currently puzzles or preoccupies them, and then help them identify and choose between key values from these inputs. Finding a value can sometimes take up to 15–30 minutes, requiring the facilitator to possess solid mediation skills since participants need to reach consensus, a challenging task at times.

Option 2. Deciding upon a meaningful value to explore beforehand represents a solid choice in situations requiring a better understanding of a specific topic, particularly when combined with having less time available for the dialogue or the process. If the group consists of diverse populations or hidden power dynamics exist, a good strategy may also rely on saving the collective reflections for the actual VISION process itself rather than spending

valuable time reaching consensus on the specific value to address. This may be relevant, for example, in teaching situations, public debates, or public hearings. It also requires less experience from the facilitator; but, of course, the choice of value must still be well-argued so that participants align with the decision.

Option 3. Presenting a selection or list of values from which participants can choose combines the first two options. This provides participants with something from which to choose, setting the scene with relevant values for a specific process, whilst also granting a sense of agency to participants.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

VISION can be used to clarify values, by:

- Examining values. The examination of values related to sustainability lies at the very centre of the VISION process. Within VISION, values are understood as core beliefs and guiding principles shaping how individuals, groups, and societies think, decide, and act. Working with values is, therefore, not a secondary activity, but the foundational starting point of VISION, allowing participants to articulate what they consider important, meaningful, and worth working for in relation to a sustainable future.
- Exploring values. Values are explored through a reflective process, focusing on their many dimensions and perspectives. VISION approaches values as complex and multifaceted, inviting participants to examine them from various angles, much like a value placed within a prism and reflected back through multiple viewpoints. This mirroring process enables deeper insight, whereby each perspective adds nuance and understanding to how a value is experienced, interpreted, and enacted in practice.
- Establishing 'self-gravity'. Through the clarification and deepening of values, VISION aims to establish what is described as 'self-gravity'. Drawing on protreptic philosophy, the process of analysing and verbalising values helps individuals and groups develop a more solid inner foundation—a steadiness from which one can stand, speak, and act. This grounding allows participants to become more fully 'at home' in their own value base, strengthening coherence between beliefs, identity, and action.
- Clarifying the value base. A clarified value base is essential for advocacy, sustainability, and social change. VISION integrates insights from advocacy, growth-critical theories, and eco-social work, emphasising that working toward a sustainable future requires clearly expressed and shared values. Such a foundation can function as both armour and orientation, supporting collective action, sharpening arguments, and sustaining efforts to speak to power, even in contexts where voices may not be readily heard.
- Choosing values. The choice of value within a VISION process is itself a meaningful and contextual decision. This chapter emphasised that facilitators must carefully consider how a value is selected—whether by participants themselves, by the facilitator in advance, or from a curated list—based on time, group dynamics, diversity, and purpose. Regardless of the approach, the selection of values should support both a sense of agency and a focused exploration that aligns with the overall aims of the VISION process.

CHAPTER 4 REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 5. ASSESSMENT AND PREPARATION FOR VISION PROCESSES

It is essential that a VISION process is based on a thorough assessment and analysis of the specific context in which it will be implemented. Pilot tests of the method, conducted within the URGE project, suggest that VISION frequently fosters an atmosphere of openness and trust amongst participants and facilitators. This dynamic necessitates careful management and raises significant ethical considerations. First and foremost, the facilitator must recognise the power inherent in their role. Specifically, they occupy a position of influence when guiding the dialogue, and this responsibility must be approached with respect for the trust participants grant them to create a safe and supportive environment. The confidentiality of the space must be emphasised from the outset, particularly in situations in which participants come from various positions of power and when the VISION process is intended for advocacy purposes, where understanding the unique dynamics and challenges of the environment can significantly influence outcomes. In situations in which open conflicts arise within a group, a mediation approach may be more appropriate rather than continuing with the VISION process. Furthermore, it is important to declare the purpose for using the method, especially if applied in mandated social work settings. Whilst both classic social work and VISION share an ethical commitment to wellbeing, they differ in their approach in one important regard: whilst social work often accompanies a set purpose, protreptic practice encourages reflection without a fixed goal. In many cases, social workers operate under specific mandates and policies, focusing on interventions aimed at improving the wellbeing and the lives of service users. By contrast, protreptic practice emphasises reflection as the primary outcome, allowing actions to organically emerge. Thus, VISION requires careful consideration of its purpose and participant needs, including assessing if a results-oriented approach is better, and in order to avoid implying openness if it is not genuine.

Assessing these elements requires using the preparation checklist below. Facilitators must tailor the VISION methodology to the target group's needs, which involves evaluating which components will best serve participants. In social work, the process begins with an analysis of needs, resources, and goals. Thus, it is important to identify meaningful objectives for participants, enticing them to personally engage with the process. Some VISION elements may be more beneficial, necessitating adjustments to foster reflection and open-mindedness. Strategic planning of a dialogue is crucial, for which the preparation schedule may inspire and guide the effective design of the dialogue.

The checklist in Table 1 is based on pilot tests of VISION conducted within the URGE project and established social work assessment criteria, such as those found in Karen Healy's (2012) Social Work Methods and Skills (2012).

TABLE 1. PREPARATION CHECKLIST*

Considerations	**Reflections**
What are the needs, resources and barriers for the participants?	
Does the diversity of the group require you to take any special precautions (e.g., power dynamics, hierarchy, language, etc.)?	
What would be a meaningful purpose about which participants could meet?	

What values in relation to this purpose are relevant to explore? Should the group choose the value freely, will you provide it to them, or will you present a few values from which they can choose?	
Is there something in your own role or the organisational framework you need to consider (e.g., power balances, reputation, value base, access to the target group, etc.)?	
To which resources do you have access (e.g., time, space, funds, knowledge, competencies, etc.)?	
Based on your analysis, would a verbal or a more creative approach work better? Or would a combination work best?	
What would be a suitable meeting place (e.g., neutral territory, good atmosphere, openness, etc.)?	
How do you safeguard the group such that they feel safe participating? How will you ensure confidentiality?	
Would it be helpful to present participants with something about which they can meet—such as a common third/ creative input?	
Can you offer something that makes them feel welcomed, appreciated, and cared for (e.g., food, drink, recognition, a story, etc.)?	
How do you invite people so that their curiousness, open-mindedness, and sense of togetherness are ignited?	
How do you introduce the method in a meaningful way and introduce your own role as a facilitator?	
What tools, exercises, and creative activities from the VISION Handbook can you use?	
How do you end the process in a positive way and how will you debrief participants and yourself?	
If used If used for advocacy purposes, how do you assist the group in bringing their voices forward (e.g., power mapping using the power cube, dual leadership, other ways, etc.)? What other things do you need to consider?	

This checklist is also available as a cut-out sheet in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 5 REFERENCES

Healy, K. (2012). *Social work methods and skills: The essential foundations of practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

CHAPTER 6. THE VISION PROCESS

In this chapter, we outline the different spheres of and elements in a VISION process. In particular, we highlight important elements vis-à-vis the facilitator's mindset and clarification of the objectives, along with considerations related to varying group sizes and the time required for a VISION process. Furthermore, we describe three reflective spheres integral to a VISION process, along with examples of questions used for each sphere. We close this chapter with our recommendations for ending a VISION process.

The example questions for the three spheres have been compiled as a speaking card, which we include as a cut-out in Appendix B. This speaking card, developed as part of the URGE project, is informed by protreptic principles, as well as theories and perspectives from eco-social work, degrowth theories, and collaborative methods of social work. Furthermore, the guidelines and considerations presented in this document are based on the pilot testing of VISION we conducted in the five cities participating in the URGE project.

By way of introduction, we provide several circumstances via which to foster understanding, acceptance, and use of participants' thoughts and values, which rely on guiding questions belonging to what we term '*explaining it*', '*sensing it',* and *'expanding it'* (the three spheres of questions detailed below). These questions might seem rather abstract, whereby some may even seem weird or silly. Thus, it might take some time to get used to using them. Please remember that they are purposefully formulated in this way to help participants in VISION dialogues articulate their thoughts and values more clearly. In addition, they have been formulated in this way to avoid answers that take their point of departure through concrete examples or events that happened in our lives. Thus, the questions are meant to help facilitators and participants avoid psychologising, guiding them to place reflections over attitudes.

THE MINDSET OF THE FACILITATOR AND CLARIFICATION OF THE OBJECTIVES

Regardless of the context in which VISION is deployed, the process consistently upholds the fundamental values derived from protreptic principles. To avoid psychologising, the objective does not focus on revealing any hidden truths. Instead, emphasis is placed on attentively listening to participants' voices and listening with the intent to understand rather than to respond (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015; Kirkeby, 2009, 2016). Participants' confidentiality must be safeguarded; and, if a particular theme proves challenging or if participants are hesitant to engage with a specific topic, it should never be imposed upon them. The facilitator must approach this process with an honest, curious, and non-judgmental mindset, avoiding any moralising. Hence, the facilitator is responsible for structuring the dialogue, but does not dictate its content. Moreover, the facilitator cannot ascertain the significance of the values in question for participants, nor can they predict or dictate the direction of the process.

GROUP SIZE AND TIME

A VISION process can be effectively conducted in pairs, in small groups of three to four individuals, or in larger assemblies. Determining the appropriate group size is essential, taking into consideration the available resources, any potential barriers or challenges, and the specific needs of the participants. Best practices in social group work suggest that the optimal group size consists of six to eight individuals, which fosters a safe environment and ensures that all voices are heard. Whilst larger groups can also be accommodated, additional considerations ensure inclusive participation from all members when working in larger groups as well.

A VISION dialogue amongst pairs and smaller groups requires a relatively short timeframe, given that it is meant to spark further reflections amongst and within participants, without specifically or definitively reaching a conclusion.

Some reflections might not be immediately apparent or conscious, but instead follow later, perhaps even a few days or weeks later. Thoughts and reflections about one's innermost values in the abstract form of a VISION dialogue take time and cannot be forced, such that a gentle opening of reflections is sufficient. Therefore, it is also not possible to outline strict guidelines on the length of a VISION dialogue, since the timeframe will vary and depend on the person and the setting. That said, in what follows we provide approximate timeframes for a VISION dialogue depending upon the size of a group.

In pairs and smaller groups, a timeframe of 15–30 minutes is sufficient for a primarily verbally based dialogue. If creative exercises and activities are also employed, the timeframe can be extended.

In groups consisting of four or more individuals, the process is expected to take between 45 minutes to one hour, depending upon factors such as group size, planned activities, and the specific objectives of the process. Experience with community initiatives (from pilot tests of VISION) indicates that beginning the VISION process with a pair-based check-in fosters a sense of inclusion amongst participants, particularly in larger groups in which some individuals may be more reluctant to speak. In such circumstances, we advise incorporating some of the more creative and less verbally based exercises and activities outlined in the value catalogue in Chapter 9. The facilitator holds the crucial responsibility of consistently inviting all participants into the collective dialogue and, when necessary, managing contributions from those who may assume a dominant role within the group.

In educational contexts, VISION can be combined with training on sustainability, ethics, communications, and advocacy-related topics, as either the basis of a full course or as a part of selected classes.

Chapters 7 and 8 outline further instructions for facilitating group and teaching processes.

THE VISION PROCESS FROM BEGINNING TO END

When beginning the VISION process, it is important to introduce the method and clarify the role of the facilitator to participants. We recommend using one of these opening sentences (which you can modify to your liking):

- Today, we will try something a little different, as we attempt to find new inspiration about …
- I would like to try something new today, which can help us get to know each other without revealing things that are perhaps too private or too sensitive to us…
- To spark a dialogue about something that is important to all of us and which we may find difficult to discuss or understand, today we will try a different approach where there are no right or wrong answers.

It is also essential to emphasise that, as with all group processes, the discussions and information shared are confidential and will remain within the group. If somebody wishes to use elements from the process in other places or for other purposes, they must first ask for permission to do so from and within the group.

Spheres and questions in a VISION process

A VISION process moves through the following three spheres: '*explaining it', 'sensing it',* and *'expanding it'*, which we detail below. This process is inspired by the new protreptic, namely the book *Protreptic in Practice* (Gørtz & Mejlhede, 2015) and the three artistic proofs known from classic rhetoric—logos, pathos, and ethos—first presented by Aristotle.

Throughout the entire process, the facilitator acts as a curious companion to participants, seeking to open up or broaden the meaning of the value or concept discussed. The facilitator should practice creating their own questions and using their own words as much as possible, following the principles and key competencies described below.

The most important part of the dialogue will always lie in the answers and responses offered rather than the questions asked. Thus, it is key to listen to and follow what participants say, letting go of perfection and the desire to do it right, trusting that the next question will often come naturally. Participants should complete the reflective work, for which short questions are often the most effective. At times, it may even be sufficient to simply repeat what was said last, particularly during the second and third spheres. Silence is also necessary—and at times sufficient—to prompt reflection. Often, this also means that more questions will emerge during the first sphere, with fewer raised during the second sphere, and only a few emerging in the third sphere. During the third sphere, reflections require a slower pace and participants often need more time to choose their words, particularly given that this method of speaking and thinking may be unfamiliar to many.

First sphere: Explaining it (logos)

The process begins with a logical and analytical sphere, exploring the what, where, how, and when of a value, including its opposites (what is it not, where is it not, etc.). These represent basic human cognitive strategies for understanding the world and can, therefore, constitute a good starting point for the process. For variety, and to widen the range of reflections, the facilitator can also be inspired by the logical categories of *substance, place, quality, relation, position, belongings, active, passive, quantity,* and *time*.

During this first sphere, the role of the facilitator is analytical, creating an overview of participants' understandings of the concept or value and gathering information for subsequent use in the dialogue. Crucial here is focus on the other/otherness as a purpose, aimed at viewing the value as the other sees it: to expand one's own presence and to remain open to participants' moods, vibrations, and ideas without overtaking them. At the same time, critical openness is employed, demanding a critical stance towards what the other says, whilst simultaneously protecting one's sense of self. The idea is to question fixed and frozen images (such as 'that is just the way it is' or 'it always/never happens').

Examples of questions for the first sphere: Explaining it

In your own words, how would you describe […]?
Where does […] come from?
What is the purpose of […]?
What shape does […] take?
What is […] made of?
Is there a limit to […]?
What is […] not?
What is the quality of […]?
Does […] have any brothers or sisters?
How is […] doing today?
How is […] affected?
How long has there been […]?
How is […] related to autonomy/sufficiency/care/conviviality?
What is central in […]?

Second sphere: Sensing it (pathos)

The second sphere focuses on the ambiance that the selected value conveys or embodies, diving deeper into the essence the identified value possesses, exploring its inner elements, such as emotional states, mood shifts, sensations, meanings, and intuitions. During this sphere, the role of the facilitator is to further explore those elements that appeared most significant or meaningful during the first sphere, employing the more intuitive facets of communication and fostering an environment for deeper contemplation. Participants are encouraged to deviate

slightly from their normal thought processes, promoting new viewpoints whilst also proceeding with caution. This entails a slow approach, where emotions are gently addressed and ideas are respected and nurtured. No thoughts are deemed incorrect or insignificant—often, the simplest insights can be the most profound. Therefore, it is crucial to have established a safe space which encourages conversation. Furthermore, if discussions become overwhelming or challenging to articulate, the facilitator can steer the dialogue back to a more comfortable space. Occasionally, reflections can significantly expand at this stage, leading participants away from the core value. In such cases, the task of the facilitator is to gently guide participants back to the essence or core of the value.

Examples of questions for the second sphere: Sensing it

How do you sense […]?
How do you know if […] has been there?
Where does […] live?
What mood does […] bring with it?
How can […] become a friend?
How is it possible to accommodate […]?
What states of being can be experienced by giving […] to others?
What states of being can be experienced by receiving […] from others?
What states of being can be experienced by giving […] to yourself?
In what ways can […] connect humans to one another other?
In what ways might it make sense to say that […] has something to do with our relationship to other living species or to the planet?

Third sphere: Expanding it (ethos)

During the second sphere, the aim focuses on meeting or seeking the essence of a chosen value, such as by examining its relation to some of the cornerstones of human relations in ethics, aesthetics, science, politics, and society. Here, the value comes alive and can speak, think, sense, and vocalise amongst other actions. It may be useful to explore the relationship of the value under discussion to core values such as good, beauty, true, and just, along with freedom. It may also be interesting to examine their opposites or 'cousins', such as how the value relates to the values of bad, ugly, false/lies, unjust, evil, the hidden side, disgust, unfairness, poeticism, and its relationship to the universe. The hidden side of a value refers to what can emerge when a value is held unconsciously as a truth or enacted without critical reflection, contextual sensitivity, or relational awareness. For example, values such as responsibility, efficiency, or care may, when not reflected upon, lead to control, exclusion, or exhaustion, not because the values themselves are flawed, but because they are enacted without sufficient reflection or relational attunement.

The facilitator's role is to relinquish control and create space for organic dialogue, often at a reflective pace allowing participants to explore values more deeply. This can be challenging for participants given the abstract nature of values. Facilitators should simplify discussions, reaffirm that there are no right or wrong answers, and remain vigilant regarding their own biases and emotions. Closely observing participants' needs and interactions remains crucial to fostering a supportive environment. Facilitators must also allow the process to unfold organically, demonstrating humility by avoiding control and refraining from claiming credit for the dialogue. They should also recognise when discussions reach their natural conclusion, maintaining an openness to further exploration. This approach empowers participants to apply the insights they gain beyond the session.

Examples of questions for the third sphere: Expanding it

Where is […] headed?
What happens in the space between […] and its opposite?
Is justice/injustice associated with […]?

Is […] for everybody?
What does truth/a lie say to the […]?
When is […] good/bad?
How is […] related to freedom?
Is there beauty/ugliness in […]?
How is […] related to the stars or the moon?
What roots […]?
Where can […] take us?
If […] could speak, what would it say?

When do you end a dialogue?

The objective of a VISION process is not to reach a conclusion, but to initiate further exploration and reflection. Recognising the appropriate moment to pause involves observing when reflections organically come to a close or when it becomes evident that no additional questions are required or that certain insights may need time for contemplation. At times, silence or a sense of ease may be felt. In fact, nonverbal cues such as expressions from participants' eyes and their body language, often accompanied by smiling, may indicate to the facilitator that this is an appropriate and conducive moment to conclude the process. We recommend the following for closing remarks:

- This seems like a good place to stop. Thank you very much for all of your thoughts and reflections.
- Okay, we will stop our exploration now. Thank you very much for your time and your honest reflections. Some of you may continue thinking about this process in the back of your mind in days or weeks to come.
- We have now examined the value from various perspectives, and our time is coming to a close. This is consistent with the intended purpose of VISION, where we do not necessarily arrive at a concrete conclusion. I appreciate everyone's participation, and I would like to kindly remind you that our discussions during this forum should remain confidential and only amongst us.

Throughout the process, the facilitator should summarise and repeat what participants have said, keeping track of the dialogue and using their answers as stepping stones for the next steps in the process. VISION ends with a short debriefing, asking participants if there is something that they feel still needs to be said and how they felt about reflecting together in this way. This step is not an evaluation of the dialogue or the facilitator, but a shared reflection of the experience.

If the VISION process is intended to inform advocacy, it can be followed by a summary and a process that can guide participants towards using their insights and shared explorations to raise their voices towards actions. It may be valuable to map the different power positions within the group, using the power cube as a tool (see Chapter 3 on advocacy).

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

VISION can be used to clarify values:

- We position the VISION process as a carefully structured, yet open-ended dialogue method grounded in protreptic principles. In doing so, we outline the key elements shaping a VISION process, including the facilitator's mindset, the clarification of objectives, and practical considerations related to group size and time. Rather than offering a rigid formula, we emphasise attentiveness to context and participants, underscoring that VISION is designed to open reflection rather than produce fixed outcomes or definitive conclusions.
- The role and mindset of the facilitator are central to maintaining the integrity and depth of the process. The facilitator is expected to adopt a curious, non-judgmental, and non-moralising stance, focused on listening with the intention of understanding rather than responding. Drawing on protreptic traditions, in this chapter we

stress the importance of confidentiality, respect for participants' boundaries, and avoiding psychologising, whilst clarifying that the facilitator structures the dialogue without controlling its content or direction.

- Practical considerations of group size and time profoundly shape how the VISION process unfolds. VISION can be conducted in pairs, small groups, or larger assemblies, with each constellation requiring different facilitation strategies to ensure inclusion and balanced participation. Whilst small groups allow for shorter, verbally focused dialogues, larger groups demand more time and often benefit from creative or less language-dependent exercises. Across settings, we highlight in this chapter that reflecting on values unfolds at its own pace and should not be forced.
- At the core of the method lie the three reflective spheres guiding the progression of the dialogue. The VISION process moves through the spheres of 'explaining it', 'sensing it', and 'expanding it', corresponding broadly to logos, pathos, and ethos. Each sphere invites a distinct mode of reflection, shifting from analytical description to experiential and emotional exploration, and finally toward ethical and relational expansion, with the facilitator acting as a curious companion who follows participants' expressions closely.
- We emphasise that a VISION process is defined as much by how it ends as by how it unfolds. Ending a dialogue is understood as a moment of attunement rather than closure, recognising when reflection has reached a natural pause and when insights require time to settle. The process concludes with a brief shared reflection and, where relevant, may be extended toward advocacy by helping participants carry their insights forward into action whilst remaining faithful to the exploratory and non-conclusive character of VISION.

CHAPTER 6 REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 7. FACILITATION SKILLS IN VISION

Following the previous chapters—in which we described the process of identifying a value, preparing the process and analysing the context and target group, and the overview of a VISION process from beginning to end—in this chapter, we outline basic information related to facilitation techniques. This includes how to develop your facilitation skills, navigating neutrality and leadership, and noticing power structures and adjusting facilitation to them. Here, we continue to introduce strategies for guiding discussions back to a more abstract level given that participants often need some assistance in such dialogues. We also provide examples regarding how to consistently ensure all participants feel included, recognising that, within any group, some individuals will be more and less vocal. The key element of a VISION process is to foster mutual learning amongst all participants. We close this chapter with step-by-step instructions for a group-based VISION process, which also appears as a cut-out in Appendix C.

VISION is meant to serve as a supplemental method for social workers who already have access to and training in communicating with individuals as well as in facilitating group practices and community organising. As we explained in Chapter 3, VISION must also be used cautiously, particularly when working with highly diverse groups and when engaging in advocacy. With this in mind, we have also provided a list of resources for those needing a more thorough introduction to facilitation techniques at the end of this chapter, which includes resources related to group-based social work, community organising, and advocacy. Within these diverse frameworks, social workers function as facilitators, wielding varying degrees of formal leadership in their efforts to sculpt group dynamics, foster dialogue, and cultivate supportive environments.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR WITHIN VISION

The role and mindset of the facilitator in a VISION dialogue are essential to its effectiveness. Given that protreptic explorations can significantly influence an individual's worldview, it is imperative that this method is employed carefully and with a keen ethical awareness of one's own role and biases. In advocacy contexts in particular, where various power dynamics remain at play, the facilitator often holds the most influential position in the room. Notably, the facilitator possesses the ability to guide the process ethically and inclusively, ensuring that all participants are heard whilst consistently emphasising confidentiality and a focus on the common good. As such, it is essential that the facilitator recognises their power and responsibility in this role, clarifying their own core values and ethical principles to engage meaningfully with participants and identify what is significant to them. This engagement can take a range of forms, including when the facilitator actively participates—not simply facilitates—in protreptic dialogues themselves. In advocacy settings involving larger groups, the inclusion of a co-facilitator may also prove beneficial, given that they can summarise the process and assist during subsequent steps, as we described in Chapter 3.

DEVELOPING FACILITATION SKILLS

As a facilitator of group and community processes, facilitation refers to assisting the group to achieve their purpose, enabling the process of connecting to each other for the sake of the common good. Similar to other kinds of communication, facilitation skills and tools can be studied and learnt, whilst other elements resemble an artform (Axner, n.d.). As such, no single way of facilitating exists. It is also important to find your own voice and style, to feel secure and comfortable with what you are doing, allowing you to remain present and able to sense what is going on within the group.

For individuals new to facilitation, we recommend reading about the subject and observing experienced facilitators prior to undertaking the role yourself. In addition, a valuable approach to becoming comfortable as a facilitator is to recognise transferable skills from various spheres of life which may enhance facilitation efforts. Experience gained

from volunteer work, serving in the hospitality industry, caring for children in educational settings, or participating in group projects during academic pursuits may all serve as beneficial experiences, particularly when reflecting on the elements contributing to success. Consider what factors in these activities fostered effective group dynamics and what elements may have hindered them. More formally, those competencies required for facilitating a process can be informed by experiences such as chairing meetings, teaching, performance arts, therapeutic practices, or providing supportive environments in spiritual contexts. As Kirkeby (2016) explains, a protreptic dialogue closely resembles the process of creating music with others. For this reason, conducting an orchestra also offers a solid example of the role of a facilitator within a VISION process—that is, creating space for resonance, connecting people to one another in a group, making the space safer for a group, and engendering both autonomy and care amongst and between participants. The reflective processes in VISION can also be used by facilitators to nurture facilitation skills themselves, examining values such as leadership, power, listening, voice, agency, humility, or service.

FACILITATOR NEUTRALITY AND LEADERSHIP

A good, open-source resource for learning basic skills in facilitation can be found in the *Community Tool Box (CTB)*,from Kansas City University (n.d.). In their section on facilitation, they point out three basic principles in facilitation:

- *A facilitator is a guide helping people to move through a process together, not serving as the seat of wisdom and knowledge. That means that a facilitator is not there to give their opinions, but to draw out the opinions and ideas of members of the group.*
- *Facilitation focuses on how people participate in the process of learning or planning, not simply on what is achieved.*
- *A facilitator is expected to remain neutral with regard to content and outcomes, structuring and supporting the process without taking sides in participants' positions.* (Axner, n.d., Chapter 16, section 2)

However, as a facilitator, it is impossible to remain completely neutral. Our reactions are visible from our facial expressions, body language, speech, voice intonation, tone of voice, and movements. Therefore, we recommend developing a shared understanding within the group concerning your role in facilitating the process, emphasising your ideal of neutrality specifically regarding the *content*. Simultaneously, the facilitator should acknowledge their role as leading the *process* for the benefit of the group. To do so, it is important to remain aware of the body language within the group and always check back with the group when sharing your own ideas and thoughts (Axner, n.d.). This also requires accessing as well as using your senses and intuition, remaining aware of both what is and is not said. Wisdom can be found employing these skills through the practice of 'holding space', the roots of which lie in holistic traditions. As Heather Plett (2020) explains, holding space refers to being present, compassionate, and supportive of someone without trying to fix or change them or their circumstances. Furthermore, doing is described as highly related to simply being a human, whereby facilitation represents a dynamic skill requiring practice and presence, and which changes over time—just as we do as individuals throughout our lives.

FACILITATION, LANGUAGE, AND POWER

VISION is designed to facilitate interactions amongst individuals from diverse backgrounds and with varying power dynamics, fostering a neutral and shared environment. This approach emphasises core values, encouraging participants to recognise one another as human beings rather than merely as representatives of their respective functions or societal roles. When facilitating such diverse groups, it is important to remain aware of the dynamics of power and language. Language is loaded with power dynamics, influencing the ways in which individuals and groups establish social hierarchies and maintain systems of dominance (Riaz, 2023). Institutional power, such as in legal and educational systems, is often maintained through language, where biased language practices and regulations can marginalise certain groups. However, language can also serve as a catalyst for positive change by raising awareness

of these power dynamics, giving marginalised voices a platform, and creating more inclusive, equitable societies, which is also the purpose of VISION. Language can both reinforce power—by upholding social hierarchies, specifically through gender, ethnicity, and class distinctions—as well as challenge power. According to Bourdieu (1991), language serves as a form of symbolic power, reproducing and symbolising social hierarchies. We observe the latter in initiatives focused on revitalising languages and giving space to alternative linguistic practices such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) techniques and nonverbal communication through creativity (Light & McNaughton, 2014; United nations Education, Social, and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2019).

Furthermore, as a facilitator, you must be aware of and plan for how to create an inclusive space for group members with varying language skills. This can be accomplished by using creative methods such as art, clay, dance, and music to represent ideas, feelings, and value-laden topics a participant does not have the vocabulary to describe. Such techniques may also be useful if a participant has difficulties with verbal-language expression. The value catalogue (see Chapter 9) in VISION includes suggestions for such activities, where some of the values are supplied alongside suggestions for alternative exercises and creative activities to supplement or even replace verbal dialogue.

DEALING WITH DISRUPTIONS

CTB (Axner, n.d.) offers some advice on how to deal with disruptions. Some measures prevent disruptions, including agreeing on the agenda, defining the ground rules and outcomes, listening carefully, showing respect for alternative experiences, and identifying the group's expectations. In addition, it is important to remain in the facilitator role, attempting to avoid defensiveness by taking a 'mental step' back before responding when criticised. If a disruption occurs, it may help to revisit the ground rules and agenda, honestly view what is happening, and allow the group to decide upon the next step. It may also help to take a break to subsequently find a way back to common ground (Axner, n.d.). Some of these techniques draw from methods in conflict resolution such as mediation. Additional information related to these topics and techniques can be found in Folger et al.'s (2011) work on conflict resolution.

REDIRECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES

Facilitators must always use their intuition to determine when to pause and which questions to ask from the three spheres, employing the example questions outlined in Chapter 6. Best practice involves aiming for a rather abstract dialogue which includes all participants, along with avoiding psychologising and sticking to habitual thought patterns, which frequently impede new insights from emerging. Often, participants will return to familiar territories, offering examples or conflicts from their personal stories. This is natural, particularly given that there are no wrong answers; however, to elicit new perspectives and openings for the development of ideas, facilitators should attempt to gently guide the dialogue back towards a more objective and neutral sphere, without singling out anyone.

To redirect conversations, facilitators may use the following:

- How can these feelings, experiences, and thoughts represent something general in human life?
- To view it from a slightly broader perspective, what could be the most essential element of the value or concept?
- How would this be understood if we were to view it from a more general perspective?

To invite all To invite all participants to take part in a dialogue, facilitators may use the following prompts:

- I would like to invite anyone who has additional insights on this theme to share their thoughts on the discussion thus far.
- The aim of this dialogue is to collaboratively explore various viewpoints, and I encourage others to contribute their insights.
- Because this dialogue is intended to create a space for learning from one another, there are no right or wrong answers. I welcome any of you to provide new/other perspectives.
- To enhance our understanding of this value, I would like you to discuss the following question in pairs.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR A GROUP-BASED VISION PROCESS

The structure below summarises the facilitation guidelines we have outlined in this chapter and can be used as step-by-step instructions when facilitating a group-based VISION process. We recommend using the preparation checklist in Chapter 5 to analyse and assess the needs of the target group and then adjust the steps that follow according to the direction the group takes.

- Begin with a short welcome and an introduction to the method, your role, and the theme (such as sustainable cities) upon which the process will focus. Provide an answer to the question 'why are we here?'. Some examples might include 'We're here today to share ideas around values. These values can be personal values or other values important to you as a participant. In this session, we will use sustainable cities [or whatever you choose] as the overall theme in our discussions.'
- If group participants are not familiar with one other, consider beginning the group with a short round of introductions or an icebreaker, which can take place in pairs if the group is large group and time is short.
- Help the group establish its own ground rules. Some examples include the following:
    - Treat others with respect.
    - Do no argue—remain curious about others' ideas or opinions.
    - Do not interrupt one another.
    - Respect the group's time (allow others to respond).
    - Consider all comments or thoughts with curiosity rather than judgement.
    - Do not be defensive if someone disagrees with you.
    - Focus on looking for reflection rather than a concrete conclusion. Often things will fall into place later in the day or in the days and weeks that follow.
    - Remember that this space we are creating is confidential in order to allow everyone to reflect freely and openly.
- If the value is stated by the facilitator, present it with an argument regarding why this value was selected. (If you are working with subjects related to sustainability, see Chapter 4 for suggested related values.)
- If your preparation suggests that it is more appropriate for the group to decide upon a value together, follow these steps:
    - Open the group discussion by inviting participants to share what values come to mind when thinking about a topic.
    - Keep track of the values mentioned somewhere so that the group can see them.
    - Summarise and clarify important ideas and values that arise during the discussion. Often, more values will be mentioned; the role is then to help the group to choose between them.
- Use selected questions from the speaking card and/or exercises from the value catalogue to prompt reflections about the value through the three spheres. Redirect participants to the abstract level when needed and ensure that all participants are invited to the dialogue without forcing them to speak.

- End the session by gently summarising the process and offering space for debriefing. Debriefing in VISION is understood as a shared moment of attunement, where participants are invited to briefly reflect on their experience of reflecting together, through open questions such as 'How was it to reflect together in this way?' or 'What stays with you from the dialogue?' An easy and supportive closing sentence might be: 'This seems like a good place to stop.' The purpose of the debriefing is not to draw conclusions, evaluate outcomes, or assess the facilitator or the process. Rather, it serves to acknowledge what has taken place, to allow impressions and insights to settle, and to support a sense of closure without finality. In this way, the dialogue remains open and alive beyond the session, and the process ends on a respectful, grounded, and positive note.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

We focused on how facilitation skills are used in VISION:

- We position facilitation as a central, ethically charged component of the VISION method. Building on earlier chapters, we position facilitation not merely as a technical skill but as a relational and ethical practice significantly shaping how VISION dialogues unfold. Because protreptic explorations can influence participants' worldviews, facilitators are called to act with care, self-awareness, and responsibility, particularly in advocacy contexts where power dynamics are present and unequal.
- The facilitator's role balances leadership, neutrality, and ethical awareness. Here, we stress that facilitators inevitably hold influence within a VISION process and must, therefore, remain conscious of their power, biases, and values. Whilst striving for neutrality with regards to the content, facilitators are also responsible for leading the process, holding space, safeguarding confidentiality, and ensuring that dialogue remains focused on the common good rather than individual agendas.
- Facilitation skills are both learnable and deeply personal. As such, facilitation is described as a practice which combines acquired tools and techniques with intuition, presence, and personal style. Thus, we encourage facilitators to find their own voice, draw on transferable life experiences, and view facilitation as an evolving practice rooted in listening, resonance, and care.
- Language, power, and inclusion require deliberate attention throughout the process. As such, VISION is designed to create shared spaces across difference. Yet we emphasise in this chapter that language itself carries power and can either marginalise or include others. Facilitators are thus encouraged to remain attentive to linguistic hierarchies, different communicative abilities, and unspoken dynamics, and to use creative and nonverbal methods when needed to ensure that all participants can meaningfully contribute.
- Effective facilitation involves redirection, responsiveness, and an open and reflective tone. We highlight in this chapter the importance of gently guiding dialogue back to an abstract, shared level when discussions become overly personal or fixed, whilst avoiding psychologising and judgement. We also stress strategies for handling disruptions, inviting quieter voices into the dialogue, and recognising when reflection has reached a natural pause—ending not with conclusions, but with openness, shared insight, and the possibility of continued reflection beyond the session.

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CHAPTER 8. VISION IN EDUCATION

Whilst this handbook is written placing VISION primarily in the context of social work education, the framework is intentionally designed for adaptation and application across educational settings. Grounded in social work's ethical, relational, and critical traditions, VISION nonetheless offers a general-purpose pedagogical approach to developing critical thinking, deep listening, value awareness, and reflective capacities amongst learners more broadly.

As we explained in Chapter 1, the shared focus on core values, coupled with the ideal of objectivity, creates a nurturing and safe environment in which students can explore and discover their own value systems. This reflective process crucially allows individuals to examine how their personal values align or contrast with the values upheld by their chosen profession. Such exploration is vital to developing a strong ethical foundation which guides their future decisions and actions as professionals.

Furthermore, the solid grounding in values VISION establishes benefits the overall learning process. VISION provides students with a reliable framework to lean into, especially in an era characterised by rapid change and uncertainty. In a world where truth often resembles a matter of negotiation and where the continual influx of information and misinformation from various media sources can fragment attention and hinder genuine connectedness, the need for a supportive learning environment becomes even more important.

A supportive learning environment is particularly relevant for young people today, who are navigating not only the complexities of their educational journeys, but also the broader societal challenges impacting their mental health. The pressures of a fast-paced life and a strong emphasis on achievements represent contributing factors to the mental health crisis amongst today's youth, a situation exacerbated by the looming and overarching climate crisis threatening us all outlined in Chapter 2. As highlighted by scholars such as Hartmut Rosa and Wolfgang Endres (2016) in their book on the pedagogy of resonance, along with writings on the achievement society by Byung-Chul Han (2015), these issues are interlinked and underscore the importance of fostering resilience and critical thinking skills amongst students. By engaging in reflective practices through the VISION process, students are better equipped to confront these challenges.

TEACHING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

To effectively educate agents of change, it is essential to activate their hope, imagination, attentiveness, and trust in response to the challenges confronting young people. Doing so also aligns with the concept of conviviality, presented in Chapter 2, underscoring that enjoying work towards a more sustainable future is acceptable. As pedagogical scholars Häggström and Schmidt (2022) argue in their book, *Relational and Critical Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development: Belonging and Sensing in a Vanishing World*, it is imperative to address several significant issues within this pedagogical approach:

How to create a pedagogy of hope when living in a culture of fear? How to regenerate socio-ecological cultures on a dying planet? How to re-imagine the world when our imagination is hijacked by commercialisation? How to be attentive and mindful in times of perpetual distraction? How to build trust when distrust and doubt seem intentionally cultivated? How to find common ground in a polarised and divisive world? (Häggström & Schmidt, 2022, p. 3)

When employed in educational settings, VISION can be used to create exactly that kind of atmosphere, in which students are encouraged to (re)build their hope and trust, both of which are necessary to become active co-builders of the future. The method allows for deeper reflections on the role of social work vis-à-vis the transition to a sustainable future. VISION works well in educational settings when combined with an emancipatory transformative

pedagogy (Freire, 1973; hooks, 1994), focusing on critical explorations of modernity and its social, economic, and environmental implications for an unjust reality. Lecturer in social work Peter Jones (2013, p. 218) asks: '*[S]hould students be educated about sustainability or for sustainability […]? The first implies simply adding another content area to the curriculum, the second at least opens up the possibility of exploring new ways of doing things as well as new areas of knowledge.*' Simply adding environmental content to an existing, non-transformative curriculum results in no substantial change, since the very foundation of modernism and growth is sustained (Boetto, 2019; Jones, 2010, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2012; Papadopoulos, 2019).

VISION offers educators a method to use both when teaching *about* and *for* sustainability. As a starting point, if changing the entire curriculum is not currently possible, the method and its tools can be used separately in selected classes, such as courses and lectures on eco-social work, collective methods, social work ethics, or communication, prompting reflections and helping students understand sustainability perspectives as a natural part of education. However, once the aim focuses on changing the curriculum and learning outcomes, VISION can be systematically integrated throughout an extended curriculum because it supports an ethically based and respectful formation process, designed to empower students to discover their own connections to the future and examine their roles within it. Furthermore, as a method, VISION can be utilised to enhance awareness of social work advocacy and the essential contributions of social work in fostering a more sustainable future. VISION also holds the potential to equip students with the competencies necessary to employ it as a method when they serve as facilitators in their future social work practices.

Those interested in learning more about an emancipatory transformative approach to teaching will find inspiration in bell hooks' (1994) classic *Teaching to Transgress*. Drawing from Paulo Freire and Thích Nhất Hạnh, hooks perceives education as a form of liberation, emphasising that it transcends mere knowledge acquisition. Education fundamentally liberates individuals from oppressive 'banking' models of education, where students are relegated to passive recipients of information. Educators are encouraged to cultivate a learning environment characterised as joyful, passionate, and transformative. This approach entails not only inviting their own vulnerability into the classroom, but also creating a space where students feel comfortable sharing their own vulnerabilities. hooks' (1994) classic serves as a guide for educators who wish to foster critical consciousness and social change. Inspired by such thoughts, employing VISION in educational settings also results in establishing a loving atmosphere in which students can together explore such issues more freely. Many of the exercises from the value catalogue (see Chapter 9) can be used to create such a setting, alongside the techniques for facilitation explained in the previous chapter.

For deeper reflections and an analysis of the use of VISION in educational settings, see our website (www.urbanurge.eu) for further materials.

HOW TO USE VISION IN EDUCATION

In what follows, we provide some concrete suggestions for how to make VISION accessible in educational or training settings, and how it can be employed in social work education.

- Use the preparation checklist in Chapter 5 to prepare both teaching and other transformative group processes.
- Chapters 2 and 3, including the resources in the respective reference lists, can serve as a foundational knowledge base for courses focused on social work advocacy, sustainability, and the development of sustainable cities. In addition, Chapter 7 is useful when teaching facilitation skills employing collective methods.
- A simple way of introducing VISION as a method is to use the speaking card in Appendix B for pair-based work using VISION dialogues focused on values central to a class or a course. The questions can also be useful for an in-depth exploration of any specific topic (e.g., ethics, communication, childcare, and homelessness).

- For an even simpler method, use three questions: one from each of the three spheres (i.e., '*explaining it*', '*sensing it*', and '*expanding it*') in the speaking card as a way to check-in (e.g., for a check-in about social work: How would you describe social work to someone who does not know what it is? How do you know when social work has been there? When is social work good/bad?).
- For a deeper understanding of the method, offer one or several classes about VISION and the background on new protreptic, sustainability, and social work advocacy, with the possibility of demonstrating a group session where the class assumes the role of participants and the teacher serves as facilitator. Then, continue with the above-mentioned steps to explore and refer to the value catalogue (see Chapter 9) for ideas on creative exercises. For example, students can make their own speaking cards by hand in a creative exercise using colours. Throughout the course, students can receive additional practice in groups and pairs using their own speaking cards.
- Examples of adapting VISION to a full course, scaffolding, ready to use PowerPoint presentations, and detailed descriptions of creative pilot tests conducted in the URGE project can be found at www.urbanurge.eu.
- The URGE project has also produced teaching materials (podcasts, explanatory films, and an analogue dialogue game) for use in the teaching process both *about* and *for* sustainability, all of which are available as open-source materials via www.urbanurge.eu.

THIS CHAPTER WAS ABOUT…

We outlined how VISION can be used in educational settings:

- VISION serves as a value-based educational method empowering students as agents of change. As such it, facilitates structured reflection through dialogue and exercises which support both individual reflection and shared learning. By centring core values and emphasising a respectful, objective approach, the method creates a safe learning environment in which students can explore what matters to them whilst engaging with others in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.
- Value reflection supports ethical formation, professional identity, and resilience in times of uncertainty. In this chapter, we highlighted how examining personal values in relation to professional values enables students to develop a strong ethical foundation for future practice. VISION provides a stable, reflective framework at a time marked by rapid change, information overload, mental health pressures, and the climate crisis, helping students cultivate resilience, critical thinking, and a deeper sense of orientation and connectedness.
- VISION aligns with emancipatory and transformative pedagogies to teach both about and for sustainability. Rather than adding sustainability as a discrete topic, in this chapter we position VISION as a method supporting deeper pedagogical transformation grounded in hope, imagination, trust, and conviviality. Whether used in selected classes or integrated across curricula, VISION supports a learning atmosphere which empowers students to view themselves as co-creators of a sustainable future and equips them with competencies for facilitation, advocacy, and socially engaged professional practice.

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CHAPTER 9. VALUE CATALOGUE

In this chapter, we outline the value catalogue, which defines 12 values of special relevance when working towards a sustainable future. Facilitators can use this catalogue to choose values for dialogues and explorations of topics most relevant to building sustainability awareness.

As we explained in Chapters 2 and 4, the values in this catalogue rely on research conducted within the URGE project. The list of values and questions we provide do not represent a checklist, but can instead serve as inspiration. Each value is intended as a subject to analyse, such that participants in a VISION exploration are expected to render the values meaningful to their own situations and contexts. To do so, each person should examine the meaning and weight of the value for a specific place and in a specific moment.

This catalogue describes the etymology of each value and the questions derived from it for verbal dialogues that can supplement those included on a speaking card, adding value-specific content to the questions. Under each value, we also include suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire reflection through other means. These activities and exercises are not value-specific and thus can be used when exploring other values as well. Questions, exercises, and activities are meant to inspire facilitators, aiming to spark their own creativity and provide them with ideas for additional ways to explore the value under question. Feel free to further expand upon the ideas we present herein.

The etymological explanations for each value are derived from the online etymological dictionary, etymonline.com.[1] According to their website, the dictionary was established in 2001 by Douglas Harper, who continues to oversee its development, whilst the etymonline domain name has been in use since 2003. In addition, Talia Felix, an independent researcher, has served as the associate editor since 2021. In their own words, '*Etymonline aims to weave together words and the past, answer common questions, and sow seeds of serendipity*' (Harper, 2025). Briefly, serendipity means to find something for which you were not intentionally looking.

We encourage facilitators interested in exploring values beyond those listed in the catalogue below to conduct their own research to uncover the etymological nuances associated with a particular value.

The following is a detailed list of 12 values, accompanied by their respective exercises and activities, which are intended for effective navigation in a VISION process.

[1] See https://www.etymonline.com/, last accessed 1 May 2026.

LIST OF VALUES AND EXERCISE SUGGESTIONS

VALUES: RELATED ETYMOLOGY, QUESTIONS, AND EXERCISES

1. Participation

Etymology: 'The act or fact of sharing or partaking in common with another or others; act or state of receiving or having a part of something', late-14th c., *participacioun*, from Old French *participacion* (13th c.), and directly from Late Latin *participationem* (nominative *participatio*) 'partaking', noun of action from past-participle stem of Latin *participare* 'participate in, share in, partake of; to make partaker, to share, impart', from *particeps* (genitive *participis*) 'partaker, comrade, fellow soldier', also, as an adjective, 'sharing, partaking', from *pars* (genitive *partis*) 'a part, a piece, a division' (from PIE root *pere- 'to grant, allot') + *-cip-*, weak form of stem of *capere* 'to take', from PIE root *kap- 'to grasp'.[2]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- In your own words, how would you describe 'participation'?
- How do you sense/know if participation has been here?
- Is there a limit to how many parts you can divide something into?
- Can something be shared and still be the same?
- Can there be too much participation?
- Is participation something everyone should always take part in?
- How is it possible to grasp what full participation means to society?
- What role does individuality play in participation?
- Can a person be incapable of participation?
- How is participation related to conviviality?
- If participation could speak, what would it say?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Group drawing

Duration: 30 minutes

Description: Everyone in the group receives a sheet of A4 paper. Each participant folds their paper in half twice, creating four (4) equal horizontal pieces. Each person begins by drawing a picture of a fantastical creature on the left-hand side for two (2) minutes. Following the time limit, the individual folds the paper, leaving enough visible for the next person to continue the drawing. Complete four two-minute time slots, so that each picture consists of four pieces drawn by four different individuals. After the fourth round, share the results. Talk about how the process relates to participation.

2. Inclusion

Etymology: 'To include': early 15th c., 'to shut (someone or something) in materially, enclose, imprison, confine', also 'to have (something) as a constituent part', from Latin *includere* 'to shut in, enclose, imprison, insert', from *in-* 'in' (from PIE root 'en' 'in') + *claudere* 'to shut' (see close (v.)). The alleged Sam Goldwyn-ism '*Include me out'* is attested from 1937. Related: *'Included; including'*.[3]

[2] Extracts compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/participation, last accessed 1 May 2026.

[3] Extracts compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/inclusion, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- Where does inclusion come from?
- How do you know if inclusion has been there?
- What does truth say to inclusion?
- How is inclusion related to autonomy?
- Is inclusion for everybody (no matter their values)?
- Can inclusion imprison someone/something?
- What happens between inclusion and openness?
- How is inclusion related to freedom?
- What would inclusion and justice say to each other?
- How is inclusion related to the stars or the moon?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

The nautilus

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Description: Participants sit or stand in a circle, holding hands whilst maintaining an approximate equal distance from one another. Create an opening in the circle between two individuals, guiding one participant to step forward and the other to step back, thereby forming a nautilus shape. Instruct participants to adjust their positions to establish a configuration for the newly formed opening allowing them to sense one another's presence. This arrangement should enable individuals to turn and address any other member of the group if they wish to contribute, whilst also providing the option for discretion as needed.

Clarify that the purpose of this formation is to facilitate group dialogue, allowing for the possibility for anyone to step away, if necessary, without disrupting the integrity of the circle. Engage in a discussion regarding how this structure may influence the dynamics of a group dialogue.

You can continue by having a verbal VISION dialogue (about inclusion or related topics) in this nautilus-shaped formation, extending the duration of the exercise.

Acknowledgements: This exercise was inspired by Esben Banke and Di Ponti and their restorative work with the people of Fredens Havn ('The Peace Harbour') in Christianshavn, Copenhagen, Denmark.

3. Safety

Etymology: Early 14th c., *savete*, 'freedom or immunity from harm or danger; an unharmed or uninjured state or condition', from Old French *sauvete*, *salvete* 'safety, safeguard; salvation; security, surety', earlier *salvetet* (11th c., Modern French *sauveté*), from Medieval Latin *salvitatem* (nominative *salvitas*) 'safety', from Latin *salvus* 'uninjured, in good health, safe' (from PIE root 'sol-' 'whole, well-kept'). From late-14 c. as 'means or instrument of safety, a safeguard'.[4]

Suggestions for value specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What is the purpose of safety?
- Where does safety live or exist?
- When is safety good/bad?
- How is safety related to belief?

[4] Extracts compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/safety, last accessed 1 May 2026.

- Can you be certain about being safe?
- Who is responsible for safety?
- What role does safety play in a good life?
- Does safety come with a prize?
- What is the relationship between safety and creativity?
- How is safety related to courage?
- What are the boundaries of safety?
- If safety could speak, what would it say to us right now?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Safer and braver spaces
Duration: 35 minutes
Description: In pairs, explore your safety zones by moving nearer/farther away from each other. Determine each person's personal boundaries whilst:

- standing side-by-side,
- standing in front of one another, and
- standing back-to-back, whilst
- making eye contact in each position [except when standing back-to-back].

Talk about how different each position is. What circumstances would make the experience different? (If you know the other person, the surroundings, the context, and, for instance, being in a metro or on a bus versus being in a park, etc.).

After sharing, identify a common pose that might portray the idea of 'being safe'.

For the next part of the exercise, two pairings from the first part come together, establishing a four-person group. In these small groups, participants share a story about someone who did something brave. After sharing, the group finds a common stance/posture that illustrates 'being brave'.
Discuss the difference(s) between 'safe' and 'brave' spaces.

4. Protection

Etymology: Mid-14th c., *protecciоun*, 'shelter, defense, that which shields from harm or injury; keeping, guardianship, act or state of protecting'; late-14th c. as 'that which protects', from Old French *proteccion* '*protection*, shield' (12th c.) and directly from Late Latin *protectionem* (nominative *protectio*) 'a covering over', noun of action from past-participle stem of *protegere* 'protect, cover in front', from *pro* 'before' + *tegere* 'to cover' (from PIE root *(s)teg- 'to cover').[5]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What shape does protection take?
- What mood accompanies protection?
- Is justice/injustice associated with protection?
- How does protection relate to sufficiency?
- What does protection hide?
- What are the secrets of protection?

[5] Extracts compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/protection, last accessed 1 May 2026.

- How can a shield protect you as well as block you?
- Is defence necessary without an attack?
- What would armament for peace look like?
- What is the relationship between protection and beauty?
- How are safety and protection related? How are they different?
- How are safety and care related? How are they different?
- How can we describe the relationship between freedom and protection?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

The protective cape

Duration: 10 minutes

Description: This exercise is highly adaptable and can be facilitated in various settings, but is particularly effective when conducted outdoors, weather permitting. Facilitating the activity outside fosters a deeper connection to nature and the environment, enhancing participants' engagement and embodiment.

How the activity works: Instruct participants to sit or stand quietly for a moment. Instruct them to let their body relax into the position, noting their body's contact points with the ground and/or what they are sitting on, focusing on the feet, the buttocks, and the thighs. Participants should feel their breath moving in and out, noting how their belly and their chest move. Instruct them to allow their breath to slow down, lengthen, and soften. Once settled, invite participants to think about a colour which to them that represents protection; instruct them to simply pick whatever comes to mind first. If nothing comes to mind, they can simply pick any colour they like. Now, they should imagine, see, or think about a cape—a large comfortable cape, one that a superhero would wear, made from the most amazing material they have ever seen or felt, in a shape that would be super comfortable to wear, and in the exact colour representing protection that came to their mind. This cape is their own personal super-protective cape, which can cover their entire body when needed. The cape works as a magical shield, letting in everything from the outside which is beneficial, positive, and supportive, but keeping out anything harmful, evil, or destructive. At the same time, the cape also lets everything beneficial, positive, and supportive out to others, whilst it resists sending out anything harmful, evil, or destructive. Let participants bring to mind the cape when working with protection in a VISION process. In addition, encourage them to use the cape when exploring any other value. Try replacing 'cape' with 'bubble'.

Acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by yoga teacher Aase Kristensen, Lytzen and Kineweskwêw (2025), and was customised for the VISION framework by Sanne Vinther Nielsen.

5. Agency

Etymology: 1650s, 'active operation'; 1670s, 'a mode of exerting power or producing effect', from Medieval Latin *agentia*, abstract noun from Latin *agentem* (nominative *agens*) 'effective, powerful', present participle of agere 'to set in motion, drive forward; to do, perform', figuratively 'incite to action; keep in movement' (from PIE root ag- 'to drive, draw out or forth, move' and might also be the source of: Greek *agein* 'to lead, guide, drive, carry off', *agon* 'assembly, contest in the games', *agōgos* 'leader', *axios* 'worth, worthy, weighing as much'; Sanskrit *ajati* 'drives', *ajirah* 'moving, active'; Latin *actus* 'a doing; a driving, impulse, a setting in motion; a part in a play'; *agere* 'to set in motion, drive, drive forward', hence 'to do, perform', *agilis* 'nimble, quick'; Old Norse aka 'to drive'; Middle Irish *ag* 'battle'.[6]

[6] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/agency, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- In your own words, how would you define 'agency'?
- What is agency made of?
- How can agency become a friend?
- How is agency related to freedom?
- What kind of fuel does agency need?
- How is it possible to endure agency?
- If agency is overwhelming, how is it possible to moderate it?
- What is the relationship between agency and truthfulness?
- Is agency authentic?
- Can agency be a role one assumes or does agency only exist when it is fully authentic?
- Is agency a battle? How do you prepare for it?
- Is agency a choice or is it obligatory?
- How do you know if you want agency?
- How is agency related to peace?
- How is agency related to autonomy?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Circling values: A nonverbal drawing method to dialogue

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Description: This activity allows participants to explore together one value through silent and visual expression, supporting inclusion, creativity, intercultural dialogue, and equal participation. The dialogue is formed on paper rather than through spoken language, rendering the activity accessible to groups with varying language abilities.

Materials needed:

- A value card for each table from the value catalogue
- Drawing paper, preferably A3 or A4
- Coloured pencils or markers (optional items include printed pictures without words, and glue, for participants who feel more comfortable working with ready-made visuals)
- A timer
- A quiet space

Step 1: Individual silent drawing (15 minutes).

Each table is assigned one value from the VISION catalogue, such as inclusion, agency, safety, community, belonging, or sustainability. Each participant sits at a table with a blank sheet of paper. For 15 minutes, participants draw the value in silence. Instead of using words or numbers, encourage participants to express the value through shapes, colours, symbols, pictures, or scenes.

The following are example introductory prompts the facilitator may provide to participants before the silence begins:

- If this value had a shape, what form might that shape take?
- If this value had colours, which ones would represent it?
- If the value took place in a specific location, what kind of place would that be?
- Focus on what the value feels like rather than what it literally is.

These prompts help participants approach the abstract nature of values through creative imagery and reflect the nonverbal approaches encouraged in the VISION materials..

Step 2: First rotation (5 minutes).
Following step 1, participants leave their drawings on the table. Each individual moves to the table to their right. They now sit in front of someone else's drawing detailing the same value. Their task is to contribute something to the drawing only if they feel the value is missing an element. They may add lines, colours, shapes, or small details. They may also choose not to add anything if they feel that the drawing already fully expresses or captures the value. None of the details already in the drawing may be removed. This step reinforces respect for others' interpretations and prevents one viewpoint from dominating.

Step 3: Second rotation (5 minutes).
Following step 3, participants move to their right again. They now sit in front of a drawing that has already been modified by two other individuals. Again, they may add something or choose not to. This continues to build a shared and collective interpretation of the value.

Step 4: Continue rotating until everyone returns to their original drawing.
Participants continue rotating every 5 minutes until they return to the drawing they originally created. They now see how others have interpreted, expanded, or reshaped their original expression of the value. This moment often solicits surprise, curiosity, or mixed feelings, and becomes the foundation for the verbal dialogue that follows.

Step 5: Opening the verbal dialogue (10–15 minutes).
Once everyone has returned to their original drawing, the facilitator opens the discussion. The conversation is guided by the drawings rather than personal stories.
Example reflections include the following questions:

- How do you feel seeing how your drawing has changed?
- Which additions do you easily accept and which leave you feeling uncomfortable?
- Did someone add something you never considered for this value?
- Does the drawing still reflect what you initially intended?
- If there is something you want to change, why would you want to make that specific change?
- What does this process tell us about how values change when others influence them?

This discussion helps participants explore how values shift, expand, or evolve when shared in a group setting.

Step 6: Collective reflection (5–10 minutes).
The following example questions can be used to guide the discussion amongst the entire group:

- Do we share the same understanding of this value?
- Where did we differ and where did we agree?
- What can this exercise teach us about living together in a diverse community?
- How might this value support a more sustainable and inclusive future?

This final step mirrors the VISION method's movement from abstract thinking to collective awareness and finally to practical meaning-making within community settings.

Acknowledgements: This exercise was customised to the VISION framework by peer support and family work planning officer Nora Dadi.

6. Power

Etymology: ca. 1300, *power*, 'ability; ability to act or do; strength, vigour, might', especially in battle; 'efficacy; control, mastery, lordship, dominion, ability or right to command or control; legal power or authority; authorization; military force, an army', from Anglo-French pouair, Old French povoir, noun use of the infinitive, 'to be able', earlier *podir* (9th c.), from Vulgar Latin **potere* (source also of Spanish poder, Italian *potere*), from Latin *potis* 'powerful' (from PIE root *poti- 'powerful; lord').[7]

Suggestions for value specific questions in VISION dialogues:

- What is power?
- Is there a limit to power?
- How is it possible to accommodate power?
- Is there beauty/ugliness in power?
- Is power something you have the right to or something you earn?
- What is the relationship between power and wisdom?
- What lies in the difference between 'power to' and 'power over'?
- What skills are needed in order for power to be sustainable?
- What is the relationship between strength and power?
- What would it mean to be good at having power?
- Where would we be without power?
- How are power and sufficiency related? How are they different?
- Does power always have a winner and a loser?
- How is it possible that something quite small can be rather powerful?
- What are the limits of/to power?
- What would power look like if you saw it from the moon?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

VISION human library: Borrow a value for a youth dialogue activity

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Description: This activity helps young people explore values in a concrete and engaging way by interacting with other youth who temporarily embody a value from the VISION catalogue. Instead of borrowing a life book, participants borrow a value (see Pardasani & Rivera, 2017). This method supports abstract thinking, strengthens group connections, encourages agency through personal interpretation, and supports inclusion by allowing for participation in multiple ways. The activity is especially effective for multilingual and multicultural youth groups and aligns with VISION's creative and nonverbal approach to values.

Participants: Between 8–20 young people; suitable for groups with mixed-language abilities and diverse cultural backgrounds

Materials:

- Tables (one table per value)
- Printed value cards from the VISION catalogue such as participation, inclusion, safety, agency, belonging, equity, sustainability, power, and community

[7] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/power, last accessed 1 May 2026.

- A5 question cards with five (5) dialogue questions
- Stickers or post-it notes
- Optional: drawing materials to support nonverbal expression

Roles:

Youth sitting at tables

- Each person sitting at a table represents a single value rather than a personal story.
- Examples include: I am inclusion, I am safety, I am agency.

Readers

- Youth walk from table to table.
- They borrow a value by asking the dialogue questions.

How the activity works:

Step 1: Choosing values (5 minutes).

Volunteers choose a value from the VISION catalogue and sit at the table assigned to that value. Each table clearly displays a sign such as 'I am belonging', 'I am community', or 'I am agency'. This step creates a clear structure and prepares the setting for a dialogue.

Step 2: Readers rotate (20–30 minutes).

Readers move from one table to the next. At each table, they engage with the value by using the five (5) prepared questions. After a few minutes, they move to another table and continue in the same way. The conversations remain value-centred and guided by curiosity.

The five questions card:

These questions follow the VISION dialogue structure whilst remaining faithful to protreptic principles. They avoid defining the value and prevent the value book from shaping the listener's understanding too strongly.

Five (5) questions to ask a value:

1. How do you experience yourself as this value? (This keeps the conversation open and reflective without defining the value for the listener.)
2. Why do people and communities turn to you? (This connects the value to a shared life, community, and sustainability.)
3. In what moments do you find yourself becoming visible or needed? (This links the abstract idea of the value to concrete situations.)
4. What tends to happen in your absence? (This reveals the challenges, imbalance, or conflict related to the value.)
5. In what ways can young people more fully invite you into their daily lives? (This connects the value to agency and everyday action.)

Readers use these questions as a guide at each table.

Step 3: Creative finish (10 minutes).

Participants return to a communal circle. Each reader places one sticker or one drawing on the table representing the value that felt most meaningful to them. Each reader also shares one word they will take home from the activity. This supports VISION's emphasis on collectively building awareness and using creative and nonverbal methods in dialogues.

Why this works amongst youth

The activity makes values concrete by turning them into characters embodied by peers. It encourages creativity through movement, conversation, and optional drawing. It avoids personal disclosure, thereby supporting emotional safety. It is also culturally sensitive and suitable for groups with diverse backgrounds. The activity also mirrors the VISION approach to participation, inclusion, community, and agency, and reduces language barriers and supports equal participation.

Optional enhancements

Use emotion cards: Participants may choose an emotion that resonates with the value, such as hopeful, strong, calm, or uncertain. This deepens reflection.

Use photo prompts: Tables may include photographs that visually represent the value. Readers can point to photos when verbal expression is difficult.

Use drawing boards: Participants may sketch the value or illustrate their understanding during the dialogue. Drawing is a recognised support tool in the VISION process for nonverbal communication.

Acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by Rahul Pardasani and William Rivera (2017), and was customised to the VISION framework by peer support and family work planning officer Nora Dadi.

7. Community

Etymology: Late-14th c., 'a number of people associated with one another by the fact of residence in the same locality', also 'the common people' (not the rulers or the clergy), from Old French comunité 'community, commonness, everybody' (Modern French communauté), from Latin communitatem (nominative communitas) 'community, society, fellowship, friendly intercourse; courtesy, condescension, affability', from communis 'common, public, general, shared by all or many' (see common (adj.).[8]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- Has community always been here?
- What is community not?
- What does it mean to offer community to others?
- How is community related to the stars or the moon?
- Community is related to the ordinary or typical. What are the strengths of this? What are the weaknesses?
- What characterises duties in a community?
- How much and what do members of a community need to have in common to be considered a community?
- What makes a community strong or exceptional?
- Is a community changeable?
- Who decides the balance between giving and taking within a community?
- What is the relationship between community and collectivism?
- Is community reserved for human beings, or do other species have the right to form communities as well?
- If community could speak, what would it say?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Waving reeds

Duration: 10 minutes, with the possibility of extending it to a full day with follow-up activities

[8] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/community, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Description: This exercise is highly adaptable and can be facilitated in various settings, but it is particularly effective when conducted outdoors, weather permitting. Facilitating the activity outside fosters a deeper connection to nature and the environment, enhancing participants' engagement and embodiment.

Stand in a circle with a little distance between one another. Feel the ground under your feet, rooting the soles of your feet into the ground. Push down and lengthen your body upwards, as if someone was pulling a string from the top of your head. Once standing straight like this, shake out any stiffness and allow your belly and chest to relax and soften. Close your eyes, if it feels comfortable; otherwise look at the ground in front of you. Make space for breathing in and out, feeling the belly and chest moving in and out with each breath. Remain here for a few breaths. Now, transfer your weight to the front of your feet, without lifting your heels from the ground. Return to the middle and then transfer your weight to the heels, again without lifting the front of your feet from the ground. Return to the middle and then move the weight to the left side of your feet, maintaining contact with the ground with the right side. Return to the middle and find your balance, where the weight is equally distributed across all four sides of your feet, and take a deep breath here. Now, gently open your eyes, sensing your surroundings whilst not focusing or unblurring your vision and without making eye contact with the people around you. Start taking small steps towards the middle of the circle, moving a little closer to each other, until you can feel the arms of your two nearest-neighbours against your own arms. This contact should be rather firm, yet still allow everyone to maintain a sense of their own personal space. Close your eyes again or look at the ground. Use your tactile sense and intuition to start a soft wave in the circle, moving from the right to the left, adjusting to each other, taking your time together to find a common pace and rhythm, like the gentle swaying of reeds in the wind. Once established, remain in that wave for a few moments, just being and noticing the experience. When finishing, take your time to find a stillness together again and move a bit away from each other before opening your eyes, looking around, and seeing each other anew.

Use this exercise to begin reflections about *community, participation, belonging, inclusion, safety, care*, and other related topics. Make sure to introduce the exercise thoroughly, emphasising that it requires contact with other people's arms from the side, however, which is less intimate than standing in front of each other. Make space to allow people to decline to participate if they do not want to. If participants do not know each other very well, let them move further away from each other before looking at one another and allow the follow-up to focus on the value that you are exploring, leaving any individual feelings that may have come up out of the discussion. The exploration following the exercise can also take the form of a drawing, writing in silence, or talking in pairs before sharing in the group.

This exercise can last from 10 minutes to an entire day, particularly if you elaborate with other creative exercises as well. If participants do not know each other, it works better when lighter and shorter.

Acknowledgements: This exercise was inspired by R. W. Kimmerer (2020) and customised to the VISION framework by Sanne Vinther Nielsen.

8. Self-determination

Etymology: 1680s, 'determination of mind; determination by one's own will or powers without external influence', from self- ('oneself', also 'automatic') + determination ('conclusion, boundary', noun of action from past-participle stem of Latin *determinare* 'to enclose, bound, set limits to'). The political sense, action of a people in deciding its statehood and form of government, is attested by 1911, popularised in 1918 by US President Woodrow Wilson in reference to the settlement of World War I. The idea itself is from the 19th c., and Churchill compared Fichte's *Selbst bestimmung*. Related: *self-determined; self-determining.*[9]

[9] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/self-determination, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What is self-determination?
- What is self-determination not?
- What is it to allow others their self-determination?
- How is self-determination related to the stars or the moon?
- What is the relationship between the self and others?
- How can you describe the space for confusion or doubt in self-determination?
- When does self-determination become a battle?
- Is there loneliness where self-determination is?
- How is self-determination related to togetherness?
- How is self-determination related to autonomy?
- How can self-determination be gentle?
- How can self-determination be balanced?
- How is self-determination related to freedom?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

The king's successor

Duration: 45 minutes

Description: In pairs or small groups, one person takes the lead, walking around the room—perhaps outside, time and space permitting—using different movements and expressions, such as raising one arm and walking backwards amongst others. The other(s) participants follow and repeat the actions and patterns of the person leading. The person leading can experiment with just doing things without paying attention to others and having all attention directed towards them. Is there a middle way? In addition, both the individual in the lead and those following experiment with ways of tuning into each other, opening their senses to what the others are doing, and shifting the pace and the rhythm. How long does it take before you are tuned in? Does it become easier over time or more difficult? Take turns assuming the lead.

After the exercise, discuss the experiences of assuming the different roles. Do you have a preference? What are the challenges to each role? What are the advantages?

9. Sustainability

Etymology: 1907, in reference to a legal objection, from sustainable + -ity. General sense (in economics, agriculture, ecology) by 1972 in economics, 1979 in conservation and environmentalism. Sustainability is defined as a *requirement of our generation to manage the resource base such that the average quality of life that we ensure ourselves can potentially be shared by all future generations. ... Development is sustainable if it involves a non-decreasing average quality of life.* [Geir B. Asheim, 'Sustainability', The World Bank, 1994]

sustain (v.)late-13th c., *sustenen*, transitive, 'provide the necessities of life to'; by early 14th c. as 'give support to (an effort or cause)'; also in physical senses, 'keep from falling or sinking, hold up or upright'; also 'give assistance to; keep (a quarrel, etc.) going'. Taken from the stem of Old French *sostenir, sustenir* 'hold up, bear; suffer, endure' (13th c.), from Latin *sustinere* 'hold up, hold upright; furnish with means of support; bear, undergo, endure'. This is from an assimilated form of *sub* 'up from below' (see sub-) + *tenere* 'to hold' (from PIE root *ten- 'to stretch').

[9] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/self-determination, last accessed 1 May 2026.

The meaning 'continue, keep up' (an action, etc.) is from the early 14th c. The sense of 'withstand, endure (pain hardship, a shock) without failing or yielding' is from ca. 1400. The legal sense of 'admit as correct and valid, uphold the rightfulness of' is from the early 15th c. Also from the early 15th c. as 'suffer (a loss)'.[10]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What is the quality of sustainability?
- What does it mean to be sustained by others?
- Is sustainability heavier or lighter?
- What is its shape: is it rounder and softer or square and sharp?
- How is sustainability related to conviviality?
- What roots sustainability?
- What is added to sustainability given that etymologically to sustain relates to suffering and endurance?
- What can assist sustainability to be easy or soft?
- Can sustainability support itself, or does it need help—and, if so, from whom?
- What role would sustainability like to play in life?
- What would human existence look like without sustainability?
- Is there ever a break in sustainability?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Art from scraps

Duration: 30 minutes to 2 hours

Description: Make art objects out of scrap/used items and things found in nature, which participants bring and find or which the facilitator provides.

Yarn wrapping

Duration: 45–75 minutes

Description: This exercise invites participants to engage in nonverbal reflection about values from the value catalogue through a tactile connection to colours and yarns. The method requires minimal technical skills whilst providing great artistic potential. The process is meditative, encouraging individuals to let go and embrace chance.

Participants: Between 8–20 people; suitable for groups with mixed-language abilities and diverse backgrounds.

Materials:

- Small bundles of leftover yarn in multiple colours and textures
- One piece of square cardboard 10 x 10-cm per participant
- A bowl with one small piece of paper per person with selected values from the value catalogue
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Pictures/ examples of yarn wrappings

How the activity works:

Provide each participant with a cardboard square and have them draw a value from the bowl. Begin the exercise by giving participants one minute to reflect on what colours, textures, sensations, and shapes the value evokes for

[10] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/sustainability, last accessed 1 May 2026. Note here that references in brackets are taken directly from the source.

them. Next, ask them to select a yarn bundle for their first wrapping. Instruct participants to attach the end of the yarn to the back of their cardboard square with a piece of masking tape and begin wrapping the yarn around the square. When they feel that enough yarn has been wrapped, they should switch to another colour, attaching the other end of the yarn to the back of the cardboard as well.

The yarn should cover the squares in a random pattern, evolving as the activity continues. Participants may work individually on their own square for a more calming experience, although this might place pressure on some individual to achieve a specific outcome. Alternatively, encourage participants to swap squares with another participant several times during the process. This approach allows participants to contribute to each other's work rather than only focusing on their own. If participants swap squares, allow 2–4 minutes between each swap.

Once all the squares are completed, gather the group at a table and assemble the squares together as if putting together a puzzle. Invite a volunteer to place their square first, and then have participants add their squares one by one, considering how each fits with those already on the table. This collaborative process results in a shared artwork, which can be secured in place by placing duct tape on the back of each piece. Alternatively, participants may take home one of the small squares as a keepsake.

This exercise can also be completed by wrapping yarn around pieces of wood, allowing for a tactile and visually engaging experience. Alternatively, you can use old or gently used children's books as the base, providing an opportunity to repurpose materials. Another option is to create letters out of cardboard and use them to write out the values.

Acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by A. Kirketerp (2024) and was customised to the VISION framework by Sanne Vinther Nielsen in collaboration with arts and design teacher Maria Lykke Andersen.

10. Belonging

Etymology: Mid-14th c., 'to go along with, properly relate to', from be- intensive prefix, + *longen* 'to go', from Old English *langian* 'pertain to, to go along with', which is of uncertain origin but perhaps related to the root of long (adj.). The senses of 'be the property of' and 'be a member of' are attested from the late-14th c.[11]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What are the main ingredients to belonging?
- Does belonging have any siblings?
- What does it mean to belong to yourself?
- Where is belonging headed?
- Is there room for difference when belonging is present?
- Can belonging to someone/something also resemble being in a straitjacket?
- How is belonging related to self-determination?
- What happens between belonging and freedom?
- What does it mean to belong to the planet?

[11] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/belong, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Letters of acknowledgement
Duration: 10–15 minutes
Description: Participants each have a piece of paper taped to their back. They take turns writing on each other's backs what they appreciate in the person. Afterwards, read the paper and talk about what this exercise does in relation to belonging.

Activating the senses related to belonging
Duration: 5–10 minutes
Description: This exercise is highly adaptable and can be facilitated in various settings, but it is particularly effective when conducted outdoors, weather permitting. Facilitating the activity outside fosters a deeper connection to nature and the environment, enhancing participants' engagement and embodiment.

Open your senses and intuition to what you are doing right now.

Look around you and note everything you see: colours, brightness, shades, things, people, natural elements, and man-made objects. What are they made of, and what are their qualities? Close your eyes and see them. What do you notice now?

Feel how your body touches other elements: the ground, the chair, and the air around you. Feel the temperature against your skin, the texture of the fabric of your clothes, the rhythm of your pulse, how your heart beats in your chest, how your stomach and your chest move in and out as you breathe. Sense the ambiance in the room. What does your sixth sense tell you?

Listen to the sounds around you—the loud and quiet ones, the sounds outside the space you occupy, those closer to you, and the sounds coming from your own body. Listen beyond what you hear with your ears; listen to the room and the things you previously noticed, their silent voices and their tales of where they come from, how they found their way to that space, how they are doing, and ask if they are carrying a message for you. Note the contact you make with the ground below and stretch your awareness even further down, imagining that you can extend roots down into the soil beneath the ground, thinking about how you are connected to the planet.

Notice the smells around you and those coming from yourself. Notice the little whiskers in your nose, feeling them vibrate as the air flows in and out. Note how the temperature is different as it flows in and out. Note how, as you breathe in through your nose, further nuances appear.

Shift your focus to your tastebuds. What is the taste in your mouth in this moment when you are neither eating nor drinking anything? What does your mouth itself taste like? Think about the enormous power of your tastebuds to differentiate between so many tastes and thank them for their abilities.

Take a moment to feel your entire body at the same time and rest here for a bit. Note again your pulse, heartbeat, and your breath moving in and out. Take a last deep breath, and slowly open your eyes. Sit quietly for a few moments, tuning in to your surroundings.

Acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique, often credited to psychotherapist Betty Alice Erickson (Martinez, n.d.) and described by A. Lytzen and C. R. Kineweskwêw (2025), and was customised for the VISION framework by Sanne Vinther Nielsen.

11. Diversity

Etymology: mid-14th c., *diversite*, 'variety, diverseness'; late-14th c., 'quality of being diverse, fact of difference between two or more things or kinds; variety; separateness; that in which two or more things differ', mostly in a neutral sense, from Old French *diversete* 'difference, *diversity*, unique feature, oddness': also 'wickedness, perversity' (12th c., Modern French *diversité*), from Latin diversitatem (nominative *diversitas*) 'contrariety, contradiction, disagreement'; also, as a secondary sense, 'difference, *diversity*', from *diversus* 'turned different ways' (in Late Latin 'various'), past participle of *divertere* (see divert). Specific focus (in a positive sense) on race, gender, etc., 'inclusion and visibility of persons of previously under-represented minority identities' by 1992.[12]

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- In your own words, how would you describe diversity?
- How is diversity doing today?
- In what ways can diversity connect humans—to one another?
- What happens in the space between diversity and equity?
- What happens to diversity if it has courage?
- How can diversity feel safe?
- Why is difference sometimes frightening?
- What happens when everything is the same?
- How does life react to perfectionism?
- Can there be too much diversity?
- If diversity was an animal, which animal would it be and what would be its main strengths and weaknesses?
- If diversity was a planet, what kind of planet would it be? What kind of environment would it have?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Grounded in yourself, open to other beings

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Description: Sit comfortably in a chair, with both feet on the ground and your back not resting against the back of the chair. Notice the parts of your body that touch something: your feet inside your shoes, touching the soles. Your toes, which may be free enough so that you can wiggle them a little bit. Your thighs against the seat of the chair. Feel your sitting bones and tailbone press into the seat of the chair, letting yourself settle here. From here, stretch the top of your head up towards the ceiling, feeling your spine lengthen from within. Feel the breath move your belly and chest in and out, allowing them to soften so that the air can move freely. Now, lean your weight as far forward as possible, without lifting the sitting bones. Lean back in the same way, as far as possible, without losing contact with the ground under your feet and the seat below your thighs. Find your centre in the middle of these two extremes, sitting tall and centred, whilst simultaneously soft and comfortable. Now, mentally lean forward again, but this time imagine leaning using your mind and sensations, but do not move. In the same way, mentally lean back inside yourself, without physically or visibly moving. This results in a feeling of resting and leaning back inside yourself, and you can imagine how this mental gesture can give space to others to be just as they are, without judging or wanting anything from them, allowing you to do the same. Remain at peace with yourself. Sit here as long as you have time to or would like to, noticing the breath moving your body from within, deepening the sense of being in your own space with each exhale. When it is time to return, open your eyes and look around you, and sit still for a few breaths before moving on with your day.

This same exercise can be done whilst standing

[12] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/diversity, last accessed 1 May 2026.

Heavy shoes

Duration: 25–35 minutes

Description: Do a class/group scale exercise which allows all voices to express their opinion about something, such as the question: 'How do you feel if you must speak in front of others?' Draw an imaginary line/scale on the floor: at one end lies '1', which is equivalent to 'I hate it and feel awful', whilst at the other end lies '10', equivalent to 'I love it and feel great'. Each person now positions themselves on the scale between the two extremes indicating where they feel they belong most often. Ask selected volunteers from the middle and the two ends to explain why they placed themselves where they did. Move on to a session during which the group members give good advice to each other on how to handle being nervous or insecure. End the exercise with the following simple and rather tactile advice, reflecting the name of the exercise: 'If you need to ground yourself for an exam, presentation, or dialogue, try to wear heavy shoes. Or imagine that you are wearing heavy shoes.' If you have time and feel comfortable doing so, you can guide participants in a short meditation during which you instruct them to feel a pair of imaginary heavy shoes, maybe even growing roots down into earth below.

Contributor and acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by Deep Democracy (Lewis, n.d.).

12. Equity

Etymology: Early-14th c., equite, 'quality of being equal or fair, impartiality'; late-14th c., 'that which is equally right or just to all concerned', from Old French equite (13th c.), from Latin aequitatem (nominative aequitas) 'the uniform relation of one thing to others, equality, conformity, symmetry'; also 'just or equitable conduct toward others', from aequus 'even, just, equal' (see equal (adj.)).

In law, 'fairness in the adjustment of conflicting interests; the settlement of controversies by the dictates of good conscience' (natural equity), late-14th c., from Roman naturalis aequitas, the general principles of justice which corrected or supplemented the legal codes ('governed by benevolence, while justitia yields to another only what is strictly due', Lewis & Short).

Hence, in England and the US, also 'justice based on such principles, the system of jurisprudence as to what is fair and what is not', and 'a court or jurisdiction in which these doctrines are applied' (1590s).

The Latin word also meant 'a quiet, tranquil state of mind; moderation, evenness of temper.'

The L. æquitas was somewhat influenced in meaning by being adopted as the ordinary rendering of Gr. ἐπιεικεια ..., which meant reasonableness and moderation in the exercise of one's rights, and the disposition to avoid insisting on them too rigorously [Oxford English Dictionary].

From the 1620s as 'an equitable right, that to which one is justly entitled', especially a right recognised by courts of equity that is not provided for in the common or statute law (such as certain property rights of wives). Equities, 'the ordinary shares of a limited company', carrying certain rights to assets and profits, is attested by 1904.

By the 1980s, it had taken on extended senses in sociology, such as 'allocating benefits in various policy fields in such a way as to provide groups, persons, and places with at least a minimum level of benefits so as to satisfy basic needs' [Stuart S. Nagel, 'Equity as a Policy Goal', 1983].[13]

[13] Extract compiled from https://www.etymonline.com/word/equity, last accessed 1 May 2026. Note here that references appearing in the etymology text box or in square brackets are taken directly from the source.

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- What is equity?
- How is equity affected?
- In what ways could it make sense to say that equity has something to do with our relationships to other living species or to the planet?
- How do you know if equity is present?
- What does it mean to be benevolent?
- If equity is a matter of sensing what is fair, who has the power to decide what that means?
- Does equity have any problems?
- If we say that there is something wrong with equity, what could that be?
- If power will not listen, how can equity find its way?
- What kind of soil provides a good conscience and the best conditions in which to thrive?
- If equity could speak, what would it say?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Concept spotting

Duration: 60 minutes to 2 hours

Description: Go to a museum, a park, or somewhere else with a lot of diversity. Walk around in small groups or pairs, finding examples of equality, sameness, inequality, and equity for at least 20 minutes. Give participants the etymology of each of the concepts for which they are looking. Instruct them to take pictures of the pieces they find which resemble the concepts. Gather the group together again and let each person find a new partner with whom to share their findings. End the exercise with a group discussion about what they noticed during the trip.

CHAPTER 9 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: PREPARATION SCHEDULE

Considerations	**Reflections**
What are the needs, resources and barriers for the participants?	
Does the diversity of the group require you to take any special precautions (e.g., power dynamics, hierarchy, language, etc.)?	
What would be a meaningful purpose about which participants could meet?	
What values in relation to this purpose are relevant to explore? Should the group choose the value freely, will you provide it to them, or will you present a few values from which they can choose?	
Is there something in your own role or the organisational framework you need to consider (e.g., power balances, reputation, value base, access to the target group, etc.)?	
To which resources do you have access (e.g., time, space, funds, knowledge, competencies, etc.)?	
Based on your analysis, would a verbal or a more creative approach work better? Or would a combination work best?	
What would be a suitable meeting place (e.g., neutral territory, good atmosphere, openness, etc.)?	
How do you safeguard the group such that they feel safe participating? How will you ensure confidentiality?	
Would it be helpful to present participants with something about which they can meet—such as a common third/creative input?	
Can you offer something that makes them feel welcomed, appreciated, and cared for (e.g., food, drink, recognition, a story, etc.)?	
How do you invite people so that their curiousness, open-mindedness, and sense of togetherness are ignited?	

How do you introduce the method in a meaningful way and introduce your own role as a facilitator?	
What tools, exercises, and creative activities from the VISION Handbook can you use?	
How do you end the process in a positive way and how will you debrief participants and yourself?	
If used for advocacy purposes, how do you assist the group in bringing their voices forward (e.g., power mapping using the power cube, dual leadership, other ways, etc.)?	
What other things do you need to consider?	

APPENDIX B: SPEAKING CARD: QUESTIONS IN A VISION DIALOGUE

Use your intuition to choose from the following questions. Or create your own by adding new questions, reformulated questions, or translations.

Explaining it (logos)

In your own words, how would you describe […]?
Where does […] come from?
What is the purpose of […]?
What shape does […] take?
What is […] made of?
Is there a limit to […]?
What is […] not?
What is the quality of […]?
Does […] have any brothers or sisters?
How is […] doing today?
How is […] affected?
How long has there been […]?
How is […] related to autonomy/sufficiency/care/conviviality?
What is central in […]?

Sensing it (pathos)

How do you sense […]?
How do you know if […] has been there?
Where does […] live?
What mood does […] bring with it?
How can […] become a friend?
How is it possible to accommodate […]?
What states of being can be experienced by giving […] to others?
What states of being can be experienced by receiving […] from others?
What states of being can be experienced by giving […] to yourself?
In what ways can […] connect humans to one another other?
In what ways might it make sense to say that […] has something to do with our relationship to other living species or to the planet?

Expanding it (Ethos)

Where is […] headed?
What happens in the space between […] and its opposite?
Is justice/injustice associated with […]?
Is […] for everybody?
What does truth/a lie say to the […]?
When is […] good/bad?
How is […] related to freedom?
Is there beauty/ugliness in […]?
How is […] related to the stars or the moon?
What roots […]?
Where can […] take us?
If […] could speak, what would it say?

APPENDIX C. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR A GROUP-BASED VISION PROCESS

- Begin with a short welcome and an introduction to the method, your role, and the theme (such as sustainable cities) upon which the process will focus. Provide an answer to the question 'why are we here?'. Some examples might include 'We're here today to share ideas around values. These values can be personal values or other values important to you as a participant. In this session, we will use sustainable cities [or whatever you choose] as the overall theme in our discussions.'
- If group participants are not familiar with one other, consider beginning the group with a short round of introductions or an icebreaker, which can take place in pairs if the group is large group and time is short.
- Help the group establish its own ground rules. Some examples include the following:
  - Treat others with respect.
  - Do no argue—remain curious about others' ideas or opinions.
  - Do not interrupt one another.
  - Respect the group's time (allow others to respond).
  - Consider all comments or thoughts with curiosity rather than judgement.
  - Do not be defensive if someone disagrees with you.
  - Focus on looking for reflection rather than a concrete conclusion. Often things will fall into place later in the day or in the days and weeks that follow.
  - Remember that this space we are creating is confidential in order to allow everyone to reflect freely and openly.
- If the value is stated by the facilitator, present it with an argument regarding why this value was selected. (If you are working with subjects related to sustainability, see Chapter 4 for suggested related values.)
- If your preparation suggests that it is more appropriate for the group to decide upon a value together, follow these steps:
  - Open the group discussion by inviting participants to share what values come to mind when thinking about a topic.
  - Keep track of the values mentioned somewhere so that the group can see them.
  - Summarise and clarify important ideas and values that arise during the discussion. Often, more values will be mentioned; the role is then to help the group to choose between them.
- Use selected questions from the speaking card and/or exercises from the value catalogue to prompt reflections about the value through the three spheres. Redirect participants to the abstract level when needed and ensure that all participants are invited to the dialogue without forcing them to speak.
- End the session by gently summarising the process and offering space for debriefing. Debriefing in VISION is understood as a shared moment of attunement, where participants are invited to briefly reflect on their experience of reflecting together, through open questions such as 'How was it to reflect together in this way?' or 'What stays with you from the dialogue?' An easy and supportive closing sentence might be: 'This seems like a good place to stop.' The purpose of the debriefing is not to draw conclusions, evaluate outcomes, or assess the facilitator or the process. Rather, it serves to acknowledge what has taken place, to allow impressions and insights to settle, and to support a sense of closure without finality. In this way, the dialogue remains open and alive beyond the session, and the process ends on a respectful, grounded, and positive note.