



Future Design

AS A POLICY INSTRUMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Introduction



Welcome

Introduction



Background

- BSc Environmental Sciences, environmental policy focus
- Currently pursuing Master's degree Philosophy
- Completed an internship at the Scientific Council for Government Policy in the Netherlands
- Published research paper: "Talking back to the future: giving a voice to future generations"

Content



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Intergenerational problem

As pointed out in the paper “Proposals for the G7 Hiroshima Summit based on Future Design”:
“discussions about the future are stifled by short-term interests of individual nations, preventing consensus-building and the development of creative visions for the long-term future.”

Gap between generations, especially when it concerns climate change: actions now have long-term impacts, yet the unborn generation on whom this will have impact are either not represented, or underrepresented.



Intergenerational problem

“The two basic social mechanisms of today (i.e. the state and democracy) do not guarantee sustainability, and thus survivability.”

“We treat the future like a distant colonial outpost devoid of people, where we can freely dump ecological degradation, technological risk, nuclear waste and public debt.” The Good Ancestor, Roman Krznaric

How to create a peaceful world in the future, given the inequality between generations?



The setting

Project on Climate Policy at internship

Identified future generations as crucial to fair climate policy

Literature on future generations

Future Design chosen as promising policy instrument to test

Similarities and differences between Japan and the Netherlands



The setting

Similarities and differences between Japan and the Netherlands

Similarities: climate change is increasingly institutionally recognized and addressed, democratic, wealthy (thus having means to address the problem)

Differences: type of environmental issues, population, population density and population growth, cultural practices

These factors are important to account for when applying Future Design in different environments!

- “Jullie zijn de toekomst! Om precies te zijn, jullie zijn naar 2060 gereisd. Je bent nog steeds dezelfde persoon en even oud als nu. Maar de wereld is veranderd...”
- You are the future! To be precise, you have traveled to 2060. You are still the same person and the same age. But the world has changed..



The setting

Thus, the scenario chosen for differed from the literature that we found from Japan, specifically in “Reconciling intergenerational conflicts with imaginary future generations: evidence from a participatory deliberation practice in a municipality in Japan”

In that case study, the goal was to create a future vision of the town in 2060, with issues in mind such as population and revitalizing the town economy.

In the Netherlands, the population is still increasing and is expected to continue to increase, hence population decline is not an issue the Dutch are worried about.

Additionally, foreign investors bought many houses, facilitated by the Dutch government (a policy practice now under much scrutiny).

Different environmental issues: the Netherlands is a low-lying country, at increasing risk of being swallowed by the ocean. Water safety is of increasing concern.

=> Proper housing is an increasing issue, with abovementioned factors

Conducting Future Design



Participants between the ages of 20-50 were invited

Given the experimental setting for us, the participants all had at least some familiarity with policy issues and were for the most part scientifically educated.

Both groups representing current and future generations were briefed about the state of affairs on housing; current shortages of houses, environmental costs of building houses and government plans to resolve the problem.

In addition, the future generation group was given information about how the Netherlands in 2060 would look like.



Conducting Future Design

The question both groups were faced with: how do you make sure the Netherlands remains a comfortable and safe place to live in 2060?

Session #	Type of deliberation	Activity
Plenary meeting	All participants, forming two generation groups	Icebreaker and introduction
Session 1	Separate deliberation	Preparing 8 policy measures to address the issue
Session 2	Separate deliberation	Prioritizing 6 out of a minimum of 16 policy measures
Session 3.1	Combined deliberation	Spokesperson motivates each group's choices
Session 3.2	Separate deliberation	Opportunity to change priorities based on other group's motivations
Session 3.3	Combined deliberation	Spokesperson motivates final choice of the group, consensus-building to provide a final list



Result

Highest priority policy measure for current and future generation, respectively, after session 2

	Number of points	Goal	Measure	Instrument
Current generation	15	Less taxing building materials in 2030	Stimulate sustainable alternatives for concrete, discourage concrete use	Compensate for use of an alternative and tax concrete use
Future generation	15	Mitigation and improved infrastructure	Car-free city areas, bike as standard vehicle	

Note the difference in focus, highly specific versus broad

Result



	Current generation		Fictious future generation	
	Own proposals	Proposals from future generation	Own proposals	Proposals current generation
Session 2	5 (48)*	1 (12)	5 (55)	1 (5)
	√	√	√	√
Session 3.2	5 (55)	1 (5)	4 (50)	2 (10)
	√	√	√	√
Result after session 3.3	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)

*Read as: number of policy proposals (number of acknowledged points)

Results



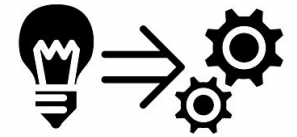
Points	Goal	Measure	Instrument
10	In 2025 the housing-crisis will be unburdened by using the spaces of empty buildings efficiently	E.g. using empty stores and offices for regular housing	Adapt so-called 'destinationplans', make investment for entrepreneurs attractive
15	Nice living environment	Nature norm	
5	Legal and financial enabling of more diverse forms of living together (beyond standard family unit)	Adapt taxes and loans to this new reality	
15	As of 2030 all new houses must have been built sustainably	Adapt permits and requirements for buildings	Permits
10	Living flexibly, flow in living circumstances	Make sure rental housing is owned by a social cooperation	
5	Shared care for the neighborhoods	No top-down planning for communities	Make money structurally available for communities to carry out their projects

Results



Qualitative comparison

Future generation	Current generation
Regard for the values and lifestyle of the people in 2060	Strong cares for problems and unfulfilled needs that are visible now
Holistic focus, proposals are in sync with each other	Strongly solution-oriented towards one specific problem (housing scarcity)
Strong focus on futural physical and societal changes	Strong focus on quick and effective measures to relieve current burdens
Focus on consultation citizens and government with less authoritative power	Focus on a government with more authoritative power to quickly realize and regulate housing initiatives



Implementation

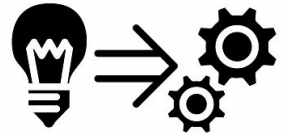
After conducting Future Design in the Netherlands, the question is: how suitable do we think Future Design is to implement there as a policy instrument?

What can be possible barriers to its suitability?

- Scale
- Participants
- Limited resources: choice of method?

Why Future Design over other methods of representing future generations, like having a commissioner?

Implementation



Good news: there is generally a lot of interest in Future Design in the Netherlands.

- E.g. I have been approached by the province of Gelderland and the University of Utrecht:
- ‘trickle-down’ of Future Design, knowledge of the existence of Future Design is increasing!

Future Design has been conducted several times now, in different versions. The results are similar: bridging the gap between generations, broadening understanding about future issues

Currently collaborating with colleagues to publish about Future Design and appropriate scale: supra-national (EU), national, regional, local?

Discussion

Japan: similarities and differences?

Have you identified any differences in results from this application of Future Design compared to the versions you know?

In your professional opinion, what scale is most appropriate for Future Design?

How would you describe the interest in this method from policymakers, stakeholders, or the general public?

What can you identify as the biggest barrier to implementing Future Design?

Are there important shortcomings of Future Design that need addressing?

