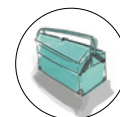
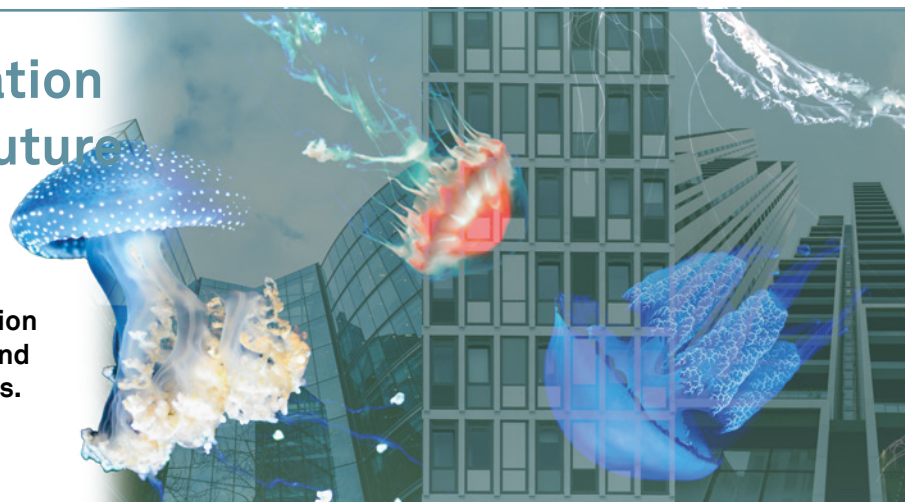


Content of the tool: Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future



Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future

→ How do people picture the urban future? A guided meditation helps to answer this question and discover fascinating new visions.



The topic

The meditation poses open questions that invite participants to imagine buildings, the natural world, human beings and other species in an undefined future. It begins with a body scan relaxation technique to direct concentration inwards and fuel the process of imagination.


The Xtopian moment

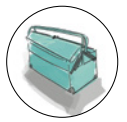
The journey's outcome is uncertain. The images and sensory impressions triggered may be familiar or surprising. The experiences can motivate, inspire and create a feeling of optimism. However, they may also feel confusing and daunting, urging participants to seek to change things. The methodological approach of this exercise reflects the openness of the future and its potential to surprise us.

The target groups

Guided visualisation is a particularly useful exercise in educational settings, in innovative sectors involved in planning and – depending on the target group – in an urban development context. It is suitable for all psychologically healthy adults and young people who are willing to engage with their own mental images and associations. The written texts can be adapted for use with children and read aloud.



Time required	Group size	Format	Location	Materials
Introduction 5 mins Execution 30 mins Follow-up 15-30 mins	Any	Individually – alone or as individual work in a group setting	A quiet, safe environment	Instructions, audio file and playback device or text to read aloud, pen and paper 



The educational goals

Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future fuels the imagination, helping participants imagine different futures and formulate new visions. As part of a guided process of reflection, it can open their minds to ambivalent aspects of debates about the future or mobilise them to address undesirable parts of these ambivalent futures.

Application

We recommend that you try out the Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future yourself first. This is the best way to determine whether the audio file is suited to your aims and target group.

Preparation: Decide whether you want participants to complete the journey alone before the group session. If so, give them the instructions. Alternatively, you may want the process to take place live in the group session. You can adapt the text to your needs and read it out yourself – for example if you want the visions of the future to centre on particular spaces (e.g. workplaces, housing, etc.). Introduce the exercise to participants using the introductory remarks in the instructions. Ensure a relaxed and quiet space where participants will not be disturbed. You may want to complete other exercises to promote concentration or creativity before starting the guided visualisation journey. Have some alternatives ready for anyone who does not want to take part in the exercise.

Execution: As the participants will be exploring their inner self, emphasise that participation is voluntary. If the mind travel will take place live in the group session, you can play the audio file through loudspeakers or ask the participants to bring headphones and access the recording through their smartphone. Young people may find it easier to engage with the experience if they do not feel they are being observed.

Follow-up: A guided group process is a great way to achieve lasting impact from the experience. It can encourage participants to reflect on the meaning of the visions for their life in the here and now: What small thing can I change in my life right now? Do I want to help make these ideas a reality, and if so, how? What do I want to personally avoid? Active listening methods in pairs or small groups are well suited to this. You could then ask these pairs or small groups to give flash feedback in larger groups. Depending on the time available, the participants may want to write down their experiences beforehand or express them creatively in poems, images, sculptures or dance.

Potential and challenges

Guided visualisation enables participants to become aware of the ideas about the distant future that they already carry around inside them. It can also trigger new visions and inspire them to continue thinking about issues of the future. The tool is a good way to initiate creative and critical thinking, for example when you first start working with a new group. In group settings, participants can inspire each other by discussing their experiences. Sharing personal experiences can also strengthen the group's sense of community. Note that the intensity and emotional quality of the visions depend on how relaxed the participants are and on the atmosphere in the room. Sometimes, participants may "see" something they do not like. Guided visualisation without professional supervision is not suitable for people with mental health difficulties.

Source: Jossin, J., Voigt, A., Godlewsky, T., Beecroft, R., Arnold, M., Bernstein, F., Messerschmidt, S., Rothfuss, D., Multhaup, S., Olshausen, I., Aweh, M., Lafratta, M. & Amrehn, U. (2023). *Toolbox for Xtopias: New tools for futurists*. kassel university press. doi:10.17170/kobra-202312089182

We would like to thank: The voice and sound artist for collaborating with us, Marilyn Mehlmann from Legacy 17 for the balloon trip idea, the Robert Bosch Stiftung for the funding.

More info: The audio file and script can be downloaded in German and English at xtopien.org/toolbox.



Instructions for mind travellers

Where are we going?

We invite you to take an exciting guided visualisation journey with the help of our audio file: You can take the journey alone whenever you get a quiet moment and are feeling curious. Or, if you prefer, you can invite others to join you.

The guided visualisation will help you to spontaneously become aware of the images and ideas you are already carrying around with you.

You will travel in your mind to a city of the future. The journey begins with a relaxation exercise to fuel your imagination.

Please note: Guided visualisation is also used in psychotherapy to help people deal with trauma or become more conscious of themselves and their personal goals. If you have recently been struggling with your emotions, if you are taking psychotropic medications or other drugs, or if you suffer from schizophrenia or borderline syndrome, we advise you only to complete the mind travel exercise with professional supervision. The Play Space Xperiment from the Toolbox for Xtopias would be a good alternative way to develop your own visions of the future.

Preparing for your journey

- You will need a device to play the audio file. If you are travelling alone, choose one that allows you to easily press pause. This means you will be able to control the pace of the journey yourself.
- Allow at least an hour to complete the exercise. Choose a quiet time when you are able to concentrate and are feeling curious and ready for the experience.
- Make sure you will not be easily distracted: Ensure you have had enough to eat and drink. Put your phone on silent. Check that the pets have been fed and that the children are safely occupied. Choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed unnecessarily.
- You may want to have a pen and paper ready to write down your thoughts during or after the journey.

- We recommend a relaxation exercise before starting the mind travel. The audio file begins with a body scan exercise. If you already have experience with relaxation techniques, you may prefer to use another exercise familiar to you. In this case, once you have finished your own relaxation exercise(s), start the audio file at minute 15:30.
- Choose a comfortable but mindful position. Keep your feet in contact with the floor. You may sit or lie down. If you choose to sit, try to maintain an upright posture and avoid leaning back.

It is up to you how deep into the experience you want to go. You can steer the journey, change direction and of course stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

Now start the audio file. We hope you enjoy the journey!

Letting the experience sink in

You may want to help yourself remember what you experienced on the journey:

- Start by writing down everything you remember – even things you do not want to share with others. Be guided by the images, sounds, smells, feelings and even tastes that came to your mind during the journey.
- Did you have particular feelings in particular places during the walk? Write these down too.
- Of course, you can also develop these thoughts, images and impressions further, elaborating on them or changing certain aspects. You do not have to limit yourself to your original experiences.

**If you want to creatively express your city of the future:**

- Write a travel report or describe your experiences, draw a sketch, paint a picture, create a collage, or build a space using modelling clay, Lego or other items around the house and take pictures of the results.
- There are no limits to your creativity. You may find that new ideas come to you during the creative process.

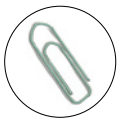
If you want to talk about your journey:

- You may want to tell someone you know about what you saw or experienced and relive some of your thoughts and feelings. You can also expand on some of the ideas for the future together.
- A conversation can also help if you want to get what you experienced out of your head.
- You can invite others to go mind travelling too. You will have plenty to talk about!

To help you reflect on your experience, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What small thing can I change in my life right now to turn an aspect of my positive visions into reality?
- Do I want to help realise the ideas I had, and if so, how?
- What do I personally want to avoid?

You can even formulate specific goals based on these questions. Ideally, make these goals SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.



Application ideas for the guided visualisation journey to the future

The Guided Visualisation Journey to the Future was initially created to track down our own visions of the future for our research project Urban Xtopias. Subsequently, we also used it in an Xtopian course at the University of Kassel (as one of several possible envisioning methods). Students then sketched out their experiences and, if they wished, presented them to others. You can see an example of this documentation below.

You can find the spoken text for the guided visualisation journey and the audio file on our website at https://xtopien.org/guidedvisualisation_xtopias/

