

Methodology for the development of COASTAL generic coastal-rural Future Narratives (visions)

Context

As part of the COASTAL project, future narratives are qualitative storylines which capture a vision of the future of their coastal-rural areas, based on the principle of Sustainable Land-Sea Synergies. Sometimes referred to as a ‘scenario plot’ (Maak, 2001), it should portray a visionary image of the case study areas in a future where the various sectors work together to enhance sustainable land-sea synergies. In so doing, the Future Narrative should explore the state of key drivers in the context of the envisioned future, building a storyline around them (Volkery et al., 2008; Foran et al., 2013). The Future Narrative should convey the potential to inspire participants, as well as mobilise individuals outside the process (Roorda et al., 2012). In the context of the COASTAL project, Future Narratives have been developed by researchers and local stakeholders as part of Multi-Actor Labs implemented in Belgium, Sweden (Noorstrom basin and Baltic Sea), Greece (South-West Messinia), France (Charente River basin), Romania (Danube mouths and Black Sea), and Spain (Mar Menor lagoon).

In the context of the COASTAL project, the generic coastal-rural visions constitute the qualitative portions of generic scenarios defined as prospective scenarios. The methodological decision to start from the envisioned future was essential to enable the formulation of future-oriented strategies that go beyond “business as usual” solutions and are not constrained by vested interests and stakes; this allows genuine solutions to emerge from creative, inspirational and positive future perspectives, rather than from reactive, defensive and problem-oriented approaches (Roorda et al., 2012; VITO, 2012, Roorda and Akinsete, 2013). The exercise draws on ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ (Elliott, 1999; Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Reed, 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008), and so while it is possible to envision a dystopian future, **the focus here is on the positive and envisioning an ideal situation, as a basis of inspiration towards sustainable transformations** (Bennett et al., 2016). The resulting scenarios are often disruptive (making a non-linear break from established trends), challenging the status-quo and thinking amongst stakeholders (European Environment Agency, 2001). They are effectively hypotheses, “that suggest new ways that existing models could be used or new models created” exploring novel drivers and social relationships such as patterns of ownership and governance which could “point to interesting areas for modelers to explore in future generations of scenario models” (Raudsepp-Hearne et al., 2019).

Development of coastal-rural visions

As part of the scenario-development process within the COASTAL project, the team conducted a review of strategic documents. In addition, the team engaged the respective local Multi-Actors Labs in order to develop future narratives, based on an ideal vision of coastal-rural synergies within their respective case study areas. In order to support MAL



partners in gaining a deeper understanding of the process, and facilitate their contributions towards the scenario development process, the research team developed a set of guidelines, for the envisioning exercise to be carried out during the respective MAL multi-sectoral workshops. The document was meant to serve as a quick reference guide for MAL leaders running joint workshops. The guidelines provide concise definitions of key terms, as well as the methodology adopted, before going over the co-creation of the Future Narratives (qualitative portions of the scenarios –). The document presents an overview of participatory scenario-development, outlines key steps, and provides useful tips for both facilitators and participants. In addition, the research team held post-workshop debrief meetings with all 6 MALs.

In structuring the generic scenarios, the WP5 team adopted a developmental framework based on ‘themes, sectors and institutions’ – factors, sectors and actors (Rotmans et. al., 2000). In this case, each scenario is built around the indicative factors/themes as illustrated in figure 1. Within the context of the COASTAL project, the future narratives received from the MALs were reviewed and combined, before conducting a qualitative textual analysis including the already existing local/national scenarios and transition pathways (figure 2), distilling three ‘Central Themes’:

- People and Nature
- Governance and Cooperation
- Circular Economy

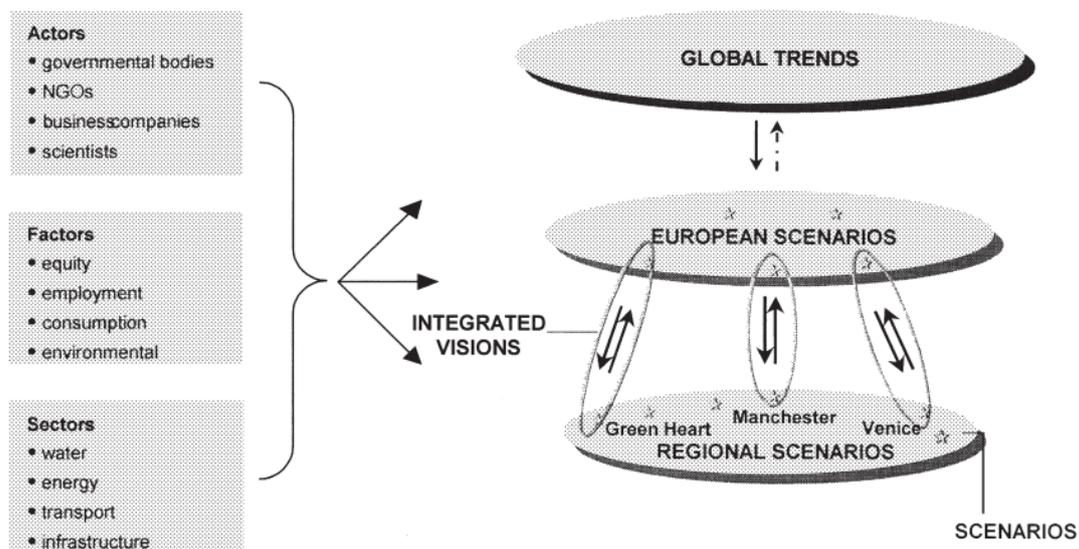


Figure 1: An application of the factors-actors-sectors Framework (Source: Rotmans et. al., 2000)

Under each of this themes, generic visions for coastal-rural synergy were elaborated, a result of a combination of the qualitative analysis of each of the MAL-level Future Narratives, and input from local, national and EU level-strategic documents which include scenarios and territorial visions such as those developed by the six most relevant Directorates General of the European Commission in their strategic plans 2016-2020 (DG Agriculture & Rural Development; DG Climate; DG Energy; DG Environment; DG MARE; DG Transport- figure 3).

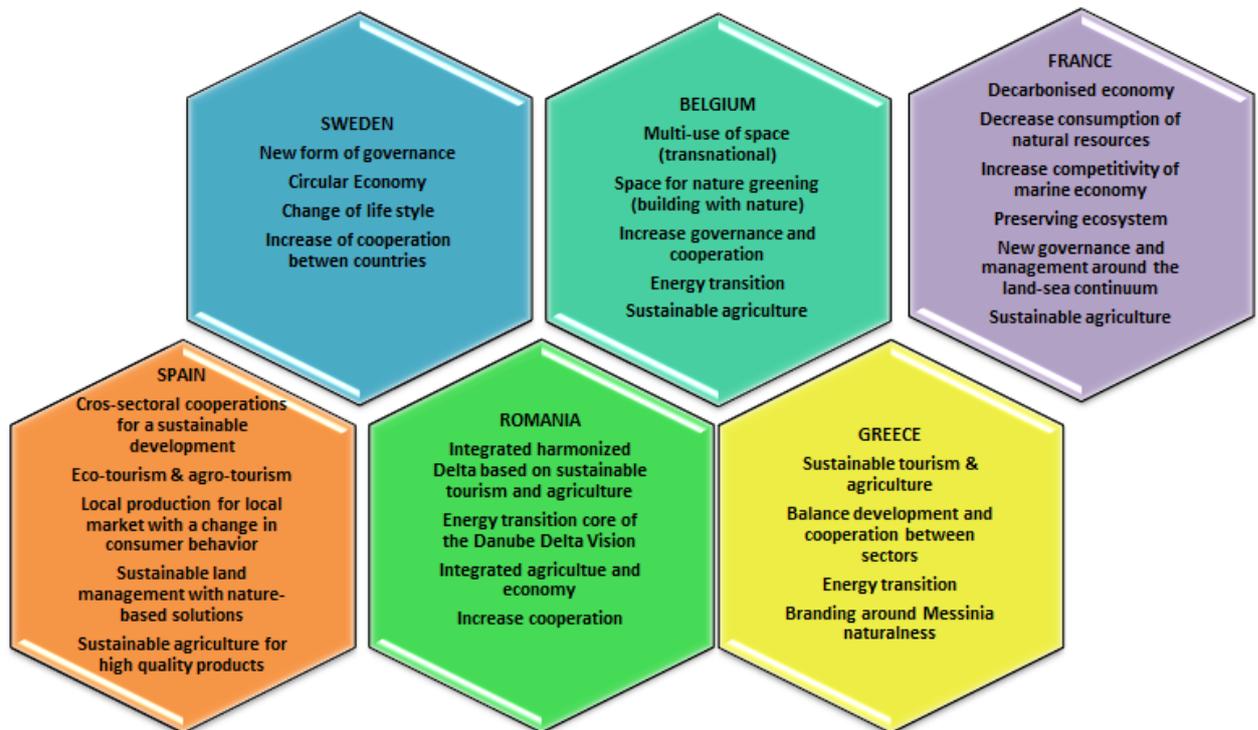


Figure 2: key elements identified in strategic documents and local stakeholders' visions

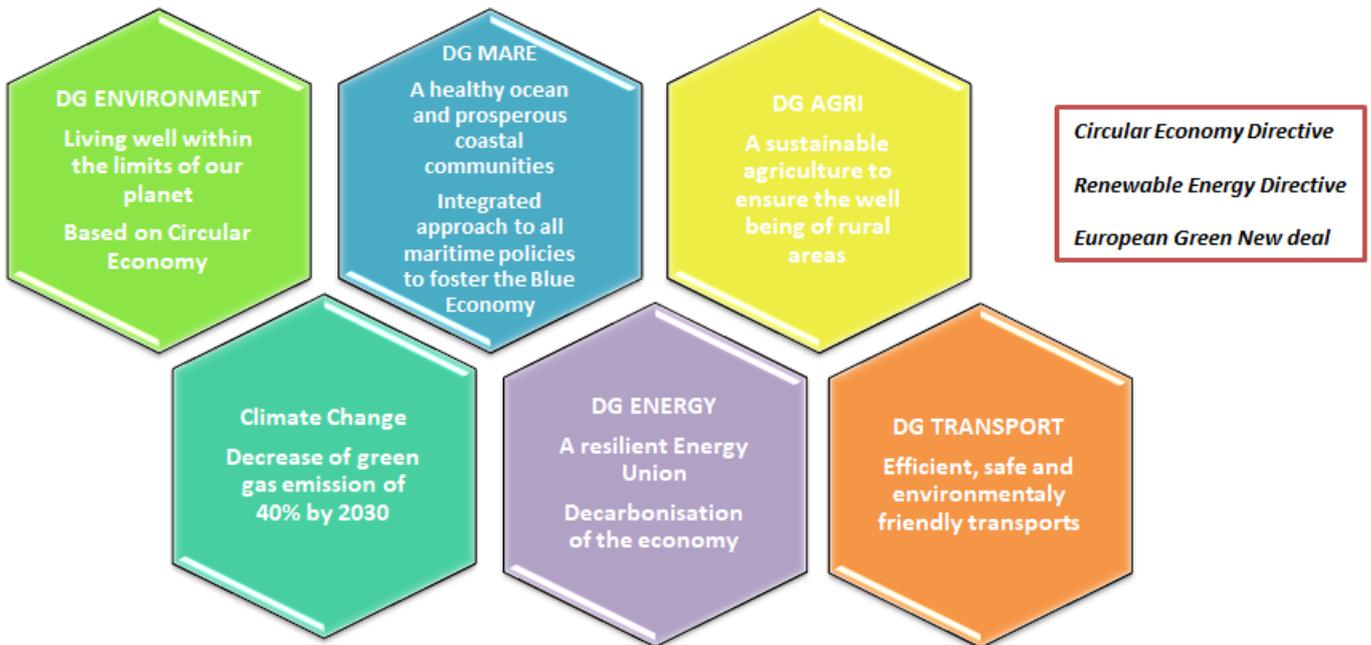


Figure 3: DG strategic visions 2016-2020

