



## Alternative Futures of Dubrovnik

Written by students of the American College of Management, Dubrovnik and Sohail

Inayatullah

August 9, 2002

Hotels, traffic systems, buses, airports all digitally connected allowing the seamless and energy efficient movement of tourists and goods, ensuring that tourism in Dubrovnik stays clean, green and respectful of its historical splendour.

An independent city – once again – with a valuable local currency, a thriving economy structured around local cooperatives – an example to the rest of the world how money can stay in the community, leading to prosperity for residents.

Drugs, sex, AIDS, Mcdonaldization and even Wal-Marts – the destruction of traditional values that citizens of Dubrovnik hold dear. Mass tourism leading to the breakdown of the infrastructure – pollution, traffic jams and a loss of identity. Dubrovnik becomes just another declining tourism destination.

Citizens develop foresight, a 2020 commission is set up in the City council, and best practices and visioning chart Dubrovnik on a new course. Green spaces are enlarged so that mass tourism development does not destroy what is unique about the city. Ecological design of systems ensures that buildings use energy efficiently. Dubrovnik focuses on two markets – elite as well as student tourists, both necessary for the future of the city.

These four scenarios were developed by students of the American College of Management and Technology. They grew out of the New Wave: Vision of Youth Conference organized by the young people of Dubrovnik (in association with many nongovernmental organizations and governmental organizations). They were the outcome of a lecture given by former UNESCO professor (Trier, Germany, 1999) and currently professor of futures studies in Taiwan and social sciences in Australia, Sohail Inayatullah.

Inayatullah explained that there is not one future, but alternative futures. To minimize risk and uncertainty it is wise to develop scenarios of the future. Of course, gaining clarity on the desired vision of the future is crucial. We are always, consciously or unconsciously, living someone's vision of the future. By developing our own, for our city, nation, civilization, organization, we can decolonize the future and move in the direction we wish.

As well, the vision of the future helps us move out of the jungle. The jungle approach to planning and business is focused on surviving, on being the fastest. From there we can move to the strategic, planning ahead. But further are the mountain tops, the scenarios. These give us the big picture. And high above is the star, the ideal. We may not reach there, but the star gives us a direction for movement. This is especially important as day-to-day we have many crisis. Each crisis overwhelms us. We forget to think strategically, or to search for alternatives, and to stay with our vision. Thus, by developing a landscape of the future, we have a higher probability of realizing our goals.

As argued by researchers on the most successful corporations – those with vision have done the best in terms of longevity and indeed profit.

But along with the vision, is the push of the future. These are trends that are changing the structure of the future. Aging, for example, will have dramatic impacts

throughout Europe. Who will pay for the pension if the worker-retiree ratio moves from the current 3-1 to 1.5 to 1? What will happen to city design as we age as a society? Will young people become a highly valued resource? Or will there be generational wars?

But there are also weights to the future? Along with the pull, the vision and the push, the trends, there is the weight. These are forces and structures difficult to change; for example, patriarchy or male ways of running cities and business, or old traumas from centuries of conflict and war. The weights make it difficult to create our desired future, but they also give us wisdom, knowing what is a fad, and what can truly change society.

Finally, Inayatullah suggested that we need to anticipate the future, to look for emerging issues, that is issues that have still yet to ripen. These can help us avoid future problems as well as gain new opportunities. What are the emerging issues in Dubrovnik, he asked? How might, for example, digitalization change the nature of city governance. This is more than having a nice webpage, but using the internet for more efficient city services, and even for e-governance. How would an e-council change local politics?

Based on his work with the Asia-Pacific Cities Summit (a meeting of hundreds of mayors and deputy mayors), Inayatullah offered, along with aging and digitalization, the following important themes for cities.

These were:

1. Transforming urban sprawl. American cities lose up to 76 billion US\$ a year because of sprawl, that is, waiting in traffic, health costs related to car pollution. A well, recent research shows that there is a direct link between sprawl – suburbanization – and obesity. The changing nature of the city has led to the rise of King Car, such that, instead of walking, cars become the way of movement. This tyranny of distance is one of the causes of obesity and thus cancer and heart attacks in the Western world. 700,000 deaths in developing countries annually could be prevented if three pollutants - carbon monoxide, suspended particulate matter, and lead – were brought down to safe levels.



How can Dubrovnik ensure that traffic jams do not spoil the tourist experience, especially as Croatia moves up the world economy?

2. The greening of the city. This means more than simply more green spaces, but ensuring that all design is based on ecological principles and has a productive after-life. Energy efficiency in buses, in cars, is changing the nature of the city, and creating a new industry. Australia, for example, has a new system to rate all housing, giving stars for the following; (1) biodiversity, (2) embodied energy, (3) energy consumption, (4) water consumption, (5) indoor air quality, (6) resource efficiency, (7) location and transport, (8) waste management and (9) food production



How can Dubrovnik become a greener city? What architectural practices, city planning, needs to be rethought:? What from the past should continue?

3. The healthy city has inner and outer dimensions. The inner dimension is based on perceptions of citizens on the quality of their life. Is it improving?. Externally, it is based on longevity, being free of diseases, reduced infant mortality. 500, 000 Europeans die annually from tobacco related illnesses – all which can be easily prevented. However, the foundations of a healthy city include many variables : environment, social justice, participation, basic needs, connection, urban design, and access to health benefits.

Finally, and most importantly, enhanced health is partly determined by level of social connection in city. Social inclusion leads to better health. Related is the notion of place. This has become more important for individuals and community health as globalization makes place less important for business.

How can Dubrovnik become an even healthier city? Can health become part of its future focus, not just in terms of spas, but in terms of the real social, economic, community and individual indicators?



4. The global-local city. As globalization makes nations more porous and capital freer, it as well opens up space for cities to create the futures they desire. Changes at macro levels are not so easy, but cities, by being attentive to their local citizens and needs, as well as to the larger global environment (pollution, capital flows, tourists, diseases) can in fact dramatically influence the future.





What is Dubrovnik's vision of the future? And who should it align with to create that?  
Which other cities have similar pasts, presents and desired futures?

The session concluded with the development of interactive scenarios – digital outlier,  
back to the past, worst case and best case.

What next then for Dubrovnik?

