



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY  
CRIS

Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies

GR:REEN

Global Re-ordering:  
Evolution through European Networks

## Future Trends Series - GR:REEN Project

### Title of the report

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**Global Scenarios for the Century Ahead: Searching for Sustainability**

### Area

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Energy and Environment

### Reporter

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Tellus Institute

### Type of the Reporter

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Non-Governmental Organization

### Periodically updated?

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Yes

### First issued year

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1995

### Latest update

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2010

### Official website

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<http://www.tellus.org/>

### Language available

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English

### Short summary

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In this report, several concerns over the need for greater sustainable development are addressed. Areas that are considered include: risks associated with climate change, widespread destruction of the world ecosystems, looming shortages of critical resources, and the need to mitigate poverty and oppression, strengthen social justice and enhance human well being. As a remedy to these challenges, the report highlights the need for "more effective transnational governance as the unregulated growth of globalizing capital, finance, production, and labour markets threaten the long-term stability and fairness of the world economy."

To present possible future trends in the area of sustainable development, four different scenarios are outlined to reveal the fundamental forces driving world development away from or toward sustainability. "The Market Forces scenario relies on price-induced market adaptations and opportunities to address sustainability. Policy Reform focuses on governmental strategies to promote the diffusion of better technologies and mobilize international efforts to alleviate poverty. Great Transition envisions a shift to a development paradigm rooted in new set of core human values that entrains lifestyles, technology and policy to be compatible with broad sustainability objectives. Fortress World considers the dismal prospect of the collapse of civilized norms and degradation of the natural world."

### **Market Forces:**

- In this scenario, policies are driven towards economic growth, free trade, and competitive markets.
- Challenges for sustainable development: “conflicts over scarce energy, water, and food resources, amplified by climate impacts, could lead to a descent toward a Fortress World future.”

### **Policy Reform:**

- In this scenario, governments try to “intervene to redirect economic growth to achieve key internationally recognized goals for poverty reduction, climate change, ecosystem preservation, water supply adequacy, and pollution control.”
- They will focus on “redistribution policies to raise incomes of the poorest regions and most impoverished people. This shift, in turn, will allow poorer nations to accelerate sustainable energy and other environmental investments as they more rapidly convergence toward the living standards and technologies of richer countries.”
- Policy Reform envisions a tremendous shift toward intergovernmental cooperation and effectiveness capable of aligning economic globalization with environmental goals, while muting the social disparities that perpetuate poverty.”
- Challenges for sustainable development: “sustained attempts over the past two decades within the U.N. frameworks to address climate change, biodiversity protection, poverty reduction and other sustainability challenges have not succeeded. That political will has not yet been realized, and remains the critical uncertainty in the plausibility of the reform strategy for sustainable development.”

### **Great Transition:**

- This scenario “envisions a values-led shift in which the citizens of the world drive fundamental change toward a just, sustainable, and liveable future. The ascendant development paradigm will be rooted in popular values stressing human solidarity, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.”
- Challenges for sustainable development: “The immense uncertainty of this scenario is whether the historical agents necessary for such grand political and cultural changes will appear.”

### **Fortress World:**

- This scenario explores the possibility that “powerful world forces, faced with dire systemic crises, impose an authoritarian order in which elites retreat to protected enclaves leaving impoverished masses outside.”
- Challenges for sustainable development: land degradation, biodiversity loss and food scarcity make sustainable development impossible.

## Suggestions

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- In this report, the Great Transition scenario “stands as a desirable vision of progressive adaptations of civilization to the fundamental material and social challenges of this century: living within the bio-physical boundaries of the planet, and living together harmoniously in a much more equitable and globalized world. Dematerialized lifestyles that emphasize the quality of development and individual fulfilment would reinforce technological and policy changes in favour of sustainability.”

## Methodology

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Modelling

## Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

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- Electris, C. et al. (2009) The Century Ahead: Four Global Scenarios, Technical Documentation. Tellus Institute, 2009. [http://www.tellus.org/publications/files/TheCentury Ahead\\_TechDoc.pdf](http://www.tellus.org/publications/files/TheCentury Ahead_TechDoc.pdf)
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. (2005) Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends. Island Press, Series Vol. 1, December 2005.
- Raskin, P. et al. (2002) Great Transition: The Promise and lure of the Times Ahead. Tellus Institute, 2002. <http://gtinitiative.org/resources/gtessay.html>
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- Swart, R., Raskin, P., and Robinson, J. (2004) The problem of the future: sustainability science and scenario analysis. Global Environmental Change, 2004, 14:137-146.