

## BUILDING SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD

GLOBAL THINK TANK BY FUTURE IQ PARTNERS AND ST GEORGE'S HOUSE, WINDSOR CASTLE



### SUMMARY REPORT

# AN INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION, ENTITLED 'BUILDING SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD'

HELD IN THE HISTORIC GROUNDS OF WINDSOR CASTLE ON OCTOBER 15 AND 16, 2012

This summary report presents a high-level synopsis of the consultation discussions and findings. A more detailed publication that examines the working group outcomes and recommendations will be published in the coming months.

Summary report prepared by Future iQ Partners

October 31, 2012

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## **LEADING THINKERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD EXPLORING HOW TO BUILD 'FUTURE INTELLIGENCE' CRITICAL TO UNLOCKING PEOPLE'S POWER AND INSPIRATION TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN THEIR OWN FUTURE.**

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### **KEY QUESTIONS EXPLORED DURING THE CONSULTATION:**

- How do we build agile and adaptive workforces capable of responding to emerging economic trends and opportunities?
- How do we build innovation, and find creative ways to add value to traditional industries, especially those based on natural resources, when these sectors are often steeped in tradition and resistant to change?
- What is the role of culture and language in building regional communities; and how do we close the common gap between people's preferred regional future and their expected outcome?
- How might emerging technologies change the quality of life, and particularly the delivery of education and social services within regions? Is this a new opportunity to close the 'tyranny of distance' and develop new economies?
- How might important new trends in civic engagement help in regional advancement, and how can we best stimulate the formation of critical new partnerships and social networks?



# BUILDING SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD

## INTRODUCTION

The Building Sustainable Regional Communities consultation, was held to push the boundaries of current thinking, and was designed to stimulate robust conversations around key themes shaping regional futures. The consultation drew together for the first time, 34 practitioners and leading regional thinkers from 10 countries across Europe, North America and Australia, and explored a series of key questions considered critical to building the future fabric of regional economies and communities.

The Consultation, a partnership between St George's House and Future iQ Partners, examined the challenge of building sustainable regional communities in today's world. In particular, it focused on the situation in developed countries, such as across North America, Europe and Australia. The consultation examined a range of major global trends and their probable future impact on regional communities, and in particular began to identify areas of potential opportunity. The consultation was a mix of insightful and thought-provoking presentations by leading experts, and in-depth discussion sessions, which examined critical issues and case studies of regional initiatives.

Expert Speakers, and associated panels, discussed the key areas of:

- Sustainable Quality of Life
- Future Workforces
- New Economies
- Civic Engagement and Networks
- Language and Culture

A key recurrent theme throughout the consultation was about youth and education. One of the delegates, Lord David Puttnam spoke at the consultation, about his views of the Future – Dangers and Opportunities, and focused upon education, as he showed the trailer to his new documentary “We are the people we have been waiting for”, which focuses on emerging world realities and the legacy that is being left for younger generations.

*The consultation dialogue examined the importance of regional communities. There is no doubt that future trends are creating both compelling opportunities and challenges for regional communities.*



## CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN TODAY'S WORLD

In the current world of elevated uncertainty and volatility, it is becoming even more critical for regions, communities and industries to understand and adapt to unfolding and unexpected future events. Many are facing unprecedented levels of change. For regional and local leaders, this intensifies the urgency of answering the question: “How can we better prepare for change? How do we adapt and continue to build and sustain our local communities and economies? How do we find our power in this situation?”

As countries and economies adjust to this current period of economic volatility, increasingly the effects are being borne at a regional level. As Government funding shrinks, more and more responsibility is being passed down to local and regional levels in a period of sustained global devolution. It is unlikely that small communities will have the capacity or resources to effect the adjustments that are required. This scenario is likely to be further compounded with emerging macro trends such as, declining supplies of fossil fuels, climate change, technological advancement and dependence, and escalating global populations. However, embedded in these changes are new opportunities. Renewable energy and local food systems offer potential new economic pathways for regional and rural areas. Technology could fundamentally alter how educational and social services are delivered, removing the barriers to access even in relatively remote locations.

In most cases, coming together as regional communities offers the ideal course of action. This provides a chance to combine efforts and resources to plan for the future and begin to take the actions that will create sustained prosperity and build vibrant communities. Many of the important issues facing regions such as: new industry development; workforce creation; landscape protection; provision of social services; and, systemic cultural change, will all require regional scale thinking and action.



The challenge for leaders is how to build regional communities and still preserve local values and culture. Local systems will need to create agile and responsive economies and workforces. Leadership will be required to find creative ways to engage the citizenry in defining innovative social and economic solutions while forging new partnerships and networks.

## THE DEMAND FOR MORE ADAPTIVE REGIONAL ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

The consultation dialogue, while focused on tangible region building actions, included a broader narrative and deliberation of the very nature of regional society. The discussions reinforced the necessity for leaders and communities to take ownership of their own future, and become active architects in shaping how their future evolves and unfolds.



Some of the pertinent high-level discussions included:

- We are faced with a rapidly changing world, and the emerging context of the ‘new normal’ of a volatile and dynamically changing world. The attendant consequences are not yet fully understood or their impacts appreciated. How do regions proactively embrace these trends and implications?
- Emerging issues of climate change, changing global political and financial architecture and the increasing disconnect people feel with leadership are leading to disquiet and unease about the future global trajectory. How do we build the visionary leadership to create a renewed sense of community and optimism?
- Society, by and large, is becoming increasingly disconnected and distrustful of the established powerful systems of centralized government, business and financial concerns. How do regions find their voice and role in society?
- Large emerging forces and technological developments are fundamentally reshaping society and how society functions and behaves. How do the natural human connections at a regional scale get built and nurtured?
- There is recognition that people at a local and regional level are feeling increasingly marginalized, alienated and disconnected, and have less ability and confidence to determine and shape their own destiny. How can people regain their power and influence over their own destiny?

- Youth and education, in particular, are critical factors for the future. In large part, the education system is seen as failing to equip young people with the skills, aptitude and opportunities to thrive in a more uncertain and volatile world. How can regions be part of reinventing educational systems?

Some of the high level themes that evolved included:

- There is an emerging need for a reconfiguration of how power and influence is distributed, with more ownership and ability to shape future destiny being located at a local and regional level.
- The process of building local and regional communities can offer an important building block to collectively build better and more responsive regions.
- Grass-roots approaches are seen as essential, to allow local people to find their voice, assemble their resources, and act in collaborative manners to align their regional systems consistent with desired future outcomes.
- There is understanding of the need to understand and engage proactively with emerging trends to build innovative regional economies that build on the inherent local strengths and assets.
- The engagement and development of youth is a central component to building sustainable regional communities. Rebuilding and reinventing the educational systems is essential to creating the necessary agility and skills of future workforces.

## CONSULTATION DELIBERATIONS – HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY

The consultation detailed themes and pertinent questions about what is required to build sustainable regional communities. A summary of the recommendations and considerations includes the following. More detailed examination of these themes will be reported in a subsequent publication. It is recognized that the consultation did not address every important consideration about the future of regions; however, it did allow detailed examination of a range of important themes.

- **Regional economies.** Development of vibrant local regional economies needs to be a priority issue for regional and community leaders. Defining the desired nature of the local economy, and what is consistent with a region's future vision is seen as paramount. The stimulation of local economies needs to be undertaken with a very real understanding of the larger global trends, and clear identification of the real opportunities. At a general level, there appears to be significant potential for meaningful economic development and vitality by focusing on renewable energy opportunities, local food systems and targeted service sectors. Bringing ownership of economic direction and development back into the hands of local people and communities is an important precursor step, but will need to be supported by meaningful assistance and resources. Technology and connectivity with today's communication infrastructure is significantly reducing some of the traditional impediments and barriers and is opening new windows of opportunity for business growth and innovation.
- **Youth, education and workforce development.** These were seen as critical issues. There was a strong view that the current education systems are largely out of step with what is required to equip youth with the skills and aptitude required to thrive in today's world. Regional communities have an opportunity to rebuild

their educational system, and better connect the educational system with emerging workforce demands and needs. It was viewed that education is a 'whole of community' issue, and it is problematic to think the necessary solutions will come from centralized government; meaning that local involvement, impetus and drive is essential. Education must be viewed across the whole continuum from youth through to adults, and provide the mechanism for continually re-skilling and equipping the workforce to be adaptive to changing technologies, needs and skill-sets. Engaging the business community to help identify and define the required educational and workforce-training pathway is an essential element of future success.

- **Networks and Engagement.** Development of dynamic and flexible local human networks is a key aspect of building the inherent capacity for regional communities to adapt, collaborate, respond and evolve. Civic engagement was viewed as an essential tool to weave communities, leaders and organizations together around a common purpose, with strong networks being seen as a pivotal foundation for sustainable regional development. Such dynamic network develop may help overcome the slow pace of institutional and government change, and accelerate information flows that build understanding and recognition of emerging opportunities and challenges. The right kind of dynamic networks will help people quickly build collaborations and partnerships to seize opportunities, share resources and engage people across the spectrum of a community.
- **Language and Culture.** The ability of a regional community to evolve and adapt will be defined, to some degree, by their internal capacity to change and their ability to form cohesive and forward looking perspectives. This contextual environment is critically important; and, this is defined and shaped by the views people hold, their language and conversations, and the way they behave and react to the external



world. Some sense of a cohesive regional identity will be important to build alignment and collaboration. This area is not well understood, but the consultation recognized that people's efficacy about what they can achieve and where they fit into a system, has a high degree of influence on their ability to think and act creatively and differently. The notion of a 'language of success' was explored, and is recognized that the creation of a shared vision, and people's alignment around preferred future outcomes, is an important precursor step to meaningful regional transformational behaviour and actions.

- **New Information Technologies.** The emergence of widespread internet access and technological advances are fundamentally reshaping how people live, interact, and learn. In addition, it is reshaping the way services are delivered and how business and organizations operate. This rapid advancement can offer potent opportunities to regional communities. For decades regional communities have suffered the 'tyranny of distance'; where populations, including youth, migrate out of regions to be closer to services, education, social opportunities and employment. Technology is offering the potential reversal of this trend, with new localized delivery of world-class education; ability for high levels of connectivity regardless of location; and, more immediate access to basic services. This provides the framework to build collaborative community processes that are focused on problem solving and the ability to connect people together in new ways. In addition, technology offers the chance to radically enhance local economic opportunities and build new prosperity.

*"A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

*Margaret Mead*

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The summary overview of the consultation was one of restrained optimism. There are many challenges facing society and regional communities; and, there are very real opportunities. The work of building sustainable regional communities could represent an important fundamental building block to help ultimately shape a better society, and address some of the large-scale challenges that confront the human race.

The underlying thread to all the discussion at this important consultation was that the future is in the hands of the people. Local ownership of the challenges and the solutions is essential.

*It is time for thoughtful and passionate community and regional leaders to step-up and engage their communities and people in collective problem solving discussions and actions.*

The challenge of creating a better future is not to be underestimated, but there are very real and tangible actions and steps that can start regions down a path of future success. It is however, not a path well trodden. While regions across the world share many similar challenges, the solutions are not all known, and the pathways are not well understood. However, many initiatives by local communities in regions all over the world, offer fascinating examples of what can be done. The responsibility of regions and communities is to engage with the challenges, build their 'future intelligence' and seek creative and original solutions in the midst of a rapidly changing society.

This consultation, and the collective intelligence it drew together, will be an important step in contributing to the understanding of what it takes to 'Build Sustainable Regional Communities in Today's World'.

## CONSULTATION PARTNERS

The consultation was conducted under the auspices of St George's House, Windsor Castle, and followed the tenor and protocol enshrined in their philosophy. A St George's House Consultation is underpinned by a vigorous exchange of views, open discussion, intellectual rigour, new thinking and, crucially, a willingness to listen. St George's House is a place where significant subjects are tackled seriously. 'Building Sustainable Regional Communities in Today's World' is one such subject.

The consultation was conducted as a close partnership with Future iQ Partners, who provided the original concept, program design and facilitation, and the sponsorship to support the event. It was a shared commitment to creating a better society, which enabled this partnership to become possible. Future iQ Partners drew on its' experience in helping regions create their futures in a new way for the past 10 years, to set up this global Consultation to discuss the key themes which every community and region deals with as they shape their future.



## FUTURE IQ PARTNERS

Future iQ Partners is an organisation that specialises in helping regions and organizations create their future in a new way. As an organization, it believes the challenge for organizations, regions and communities is to develop their Future Intelligence – that is; have the capacity to understand unfolding trends, develop the systems for agility and then find the new opportunities. Future success will hinge on the ability to be agile and adaptive in order to respond purposefully in a rapidly changing world. Partnering with regions, Future iQ Partners help structure processes that allow long term systemic and sustainable change – ultimately positioning organizations and communities for their future success.

## ST GEORGES HOUSE

St George's House, set within the grounds of Windsor Castle, was founded in 1966 by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, as a place where people of influence and responsibility in every area of society can come together to explore and communicate their views and analysis of contemporary issues. The House is a physical and intellectual space where topics that matter can be dealt with by people who can make a difference. For more information, please visit: [www.stgeorghouse.org](http://www.stgeorghouse.org)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PARTNERS [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com)

**GLOBAL CONTACTS:** Future iQ Partners is a consulting and product design company, specializing in helping regions and organizations create their future in a new way. To contact our key staff closest to you, please call: USA +1 715 505 5046; Europe +353 87 354 0220; Australia +61 419 836 056. Or email us at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com) and one of our team will get back to you.





## CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

The consultation participants were selected to bring together a global think-tank of people who have demonstrated leadership, ability and expertise in building regional communities. This assembly of people was drawn from across 10 countries and three continents in the developed world. Their contributions and thoughtful discussions provided the robust intelligence and content presented in this summary report.

NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
<b>Mr Ernest Adler</b>	Kilpatrick, Johnston, and Adler, Former Nevada State Senator	Nevada - USA
<b>Ms Sarah Adler</b>	United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Nevada State Director, USDA Rural Development	Nevada - USA
<b>Ms Celine Beurle</b>	Future iQ Partners, Managing Director	Republic of Ireland
<b>Mr David Beurle</b>	Future iQ Partners, Partner	Australia
<b>Ms Pam Borda</b>	Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority (NNRDA), Executive Director	Nevada - USA
<b>Dr Colin Campbell</b>	Association for the Study of Peak Oil & Gas, Ireland, Retired	Republic of Ireland
<b>Mr Des Craig</b>	Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development, Director, Rural Community Development	Nevada - USA
<b>Ms Sabrina Curtis</b>	Columbia Basin Trust, Director, Planning and Development	British Columbia - Canada
<b>Ms Kristin Dahl</b>	Travel Oregon, Senior Manager	Oregon - USA
<b>Mrs Sara Eppel</b>	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Head, Rural Communities Policy Unit	United Kingdom

NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
<b>Mr Phil Ferraro</b>	Institute for Bioregional Studies Ltd., Co-Director	Prince Edward Island - Canada
<b>Ms Juliet Fox</b>	Future iQ Partners, Partner	Wisconsin - USA
<b>Dr Linda Honold</b>	Wisconsin Voices, Executive Director	Wisconsin - USA
<b>Ms Kim Johanson</b>	Schlesinger Associates, Vice President	New Jersey - USA
<b>Mr Declan Jordan</b>	University College Cork, Economics Lecturer	Republic of Ireland
<b>Mr Rob Maessen</b>	Noord Brabant Province, Policy Advisor	The Netherlands
<b>Mr Rick Maher</b>	Maher and Maher, President / CEO	New Jersey - USA
<b>Ms Gwen Martin</b>	NumberWorks, Co-Founder & Managing Partner	Minnesota - USA
<b>Mr Michael Martin</b>	Effect Partners, Founder & CEO	Minnesota - USA
<b>Ms Visnja Jelic Mueck</b>	Croatian Rural Development Network, President	Croatia
<b>Mr Al Nygard</b>	Al Nygard Consulting, President & CEO	North Dakota - USA
<b>The Lord Puttnam, CBE</b>	House of Lords, Peer of the Realm	United Kingdom
<b>Mr Marc Rassel</b>	Creative Director, Future iQ Partners	Colorado - USA
<b>Mr Mark Redman</b>	Independent Rural Development	Romania
<b>Dr Forrest Schultz</b>	University of Wisconsin- Stout, Professor, Department of Chemistry	Wisconsin - USA
<b>Mr Bill Sims</b>	Nevada Small Business Development Center/University of Nevada Reno, Business and Economic Development Specialist	Nevada - USA
<b>Dr Sarah Skerratt</b>	Scotland's Rural College, Senior Researcher and Head of Rural Society Research	Scotland
<b>Ms Brigitte Smessaert</b>	The Regional Economic and Social Concentration Committee, Mid West Flanders/Flanders' House of Food, Coordinator	Belgium
<b>Ms Elvira Smid</b>	Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, Senior Director-South, Regional Development Branch	Alberta - Canada
<b>Mr Marien Sonneveld</b>	Interactive Consult, Managing Consultant	The Netherlands
<b>Ms Nancy Willis</b>	Institute for Bioregional Studies, Co-director	Prince Edward Island - Canada
<b>Ms Honor Wilson-Fletcher</b>	Aldridge Foundation, Chief Executive	United Kingdom