A Reflexive Societal Readiness Assessment

Smart Transport National Conference

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DecarboN8

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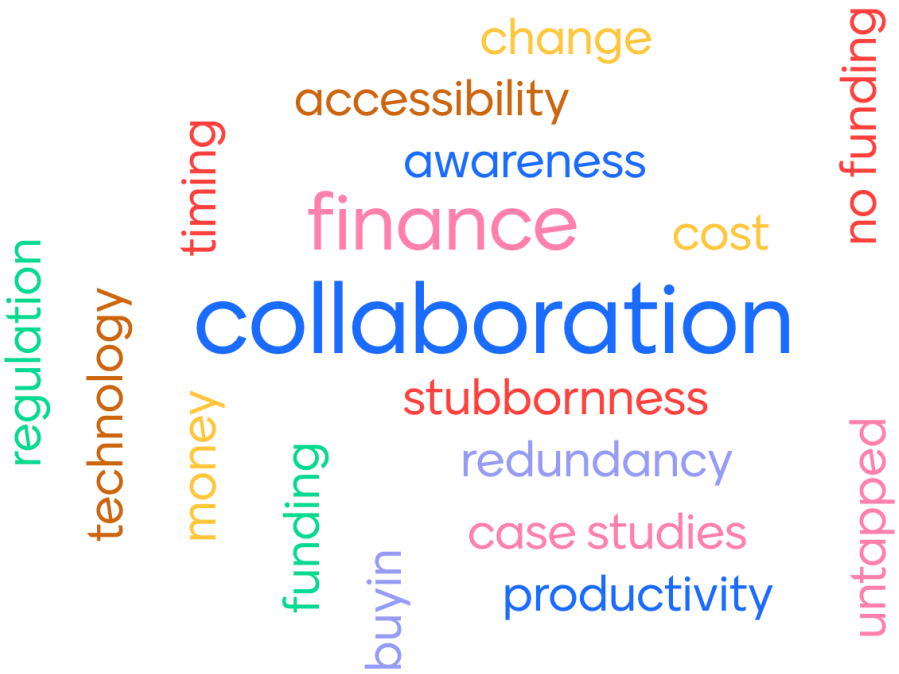
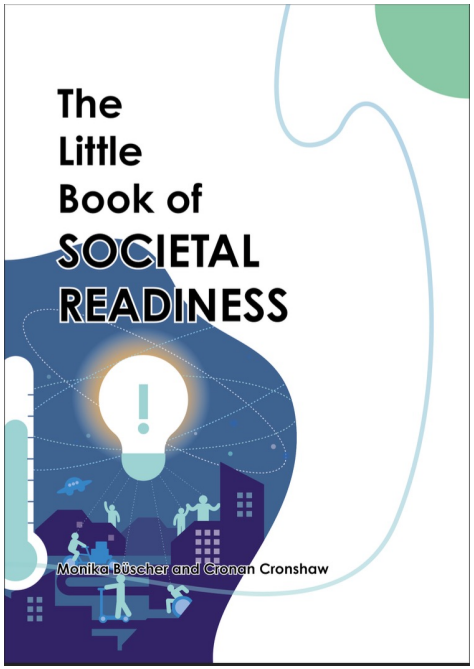
1. What is Societal Readiness and why does it matter?

‘societal readiness is about both society to be ready to integrate innovation and innovations to be ready (and good!) for society and the climate’

Lorraine Smyth, Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership 2022, representing 90+ members from government organizations, businesses, VCS and local communities.

Three keywords that define your key challenges

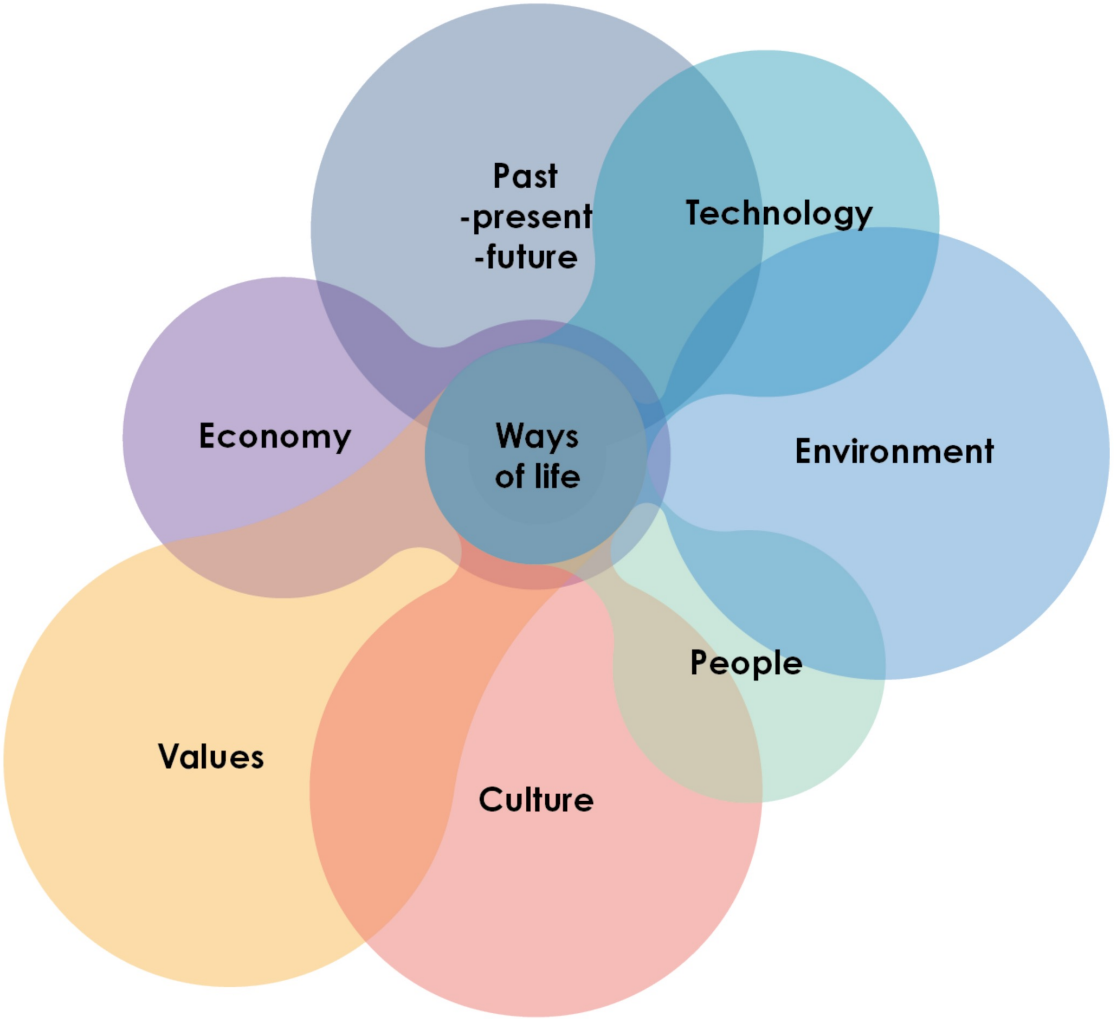




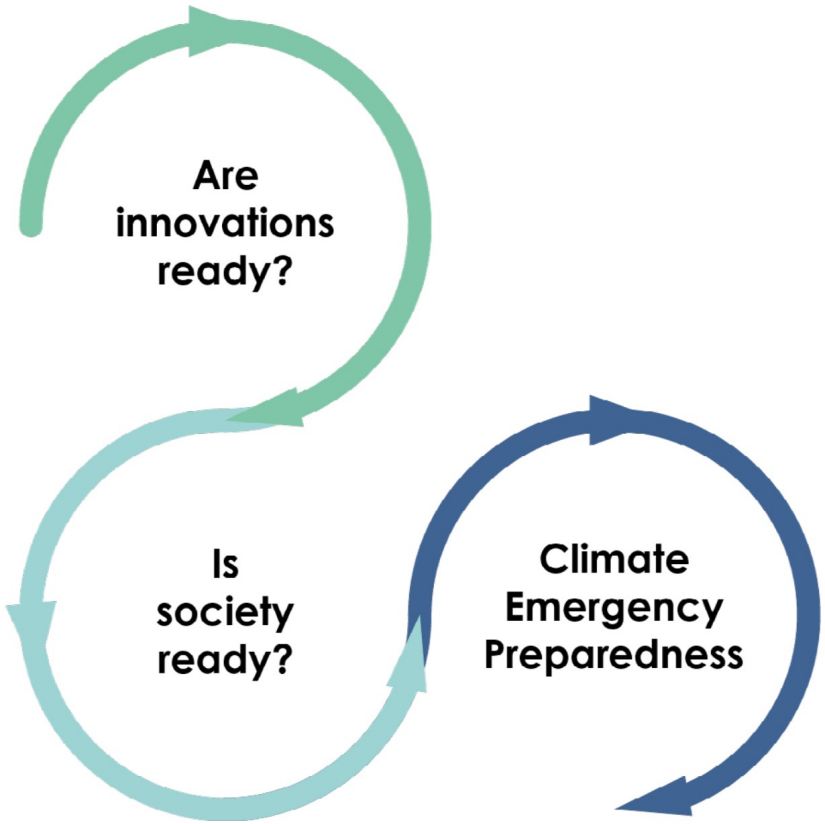
Buscher, Monika and Cronshaw, Cronan (2022) **The Little Book of Societal Readiness**. Imagination Lancaster, Lancaster. ISBN 9781739713324 Available at: wp.lancs.ac.uk/environmental-solutions/files/2022/04/NERC-the-little-book-of-SOCIETAL-READINESS.pdf

Innovations can fail (spectacularly) because of a lack of attention to social and ethical issues:

- Good go way beyond users & technology – attuned with systems
- Innovation is increasingly guided by a focus on ‘Technology Readiness Assessment’, which contributes to failures.
- To change innovation outcomes, we need to change innovation processes.



(Buscher & Cronshaw 2022)



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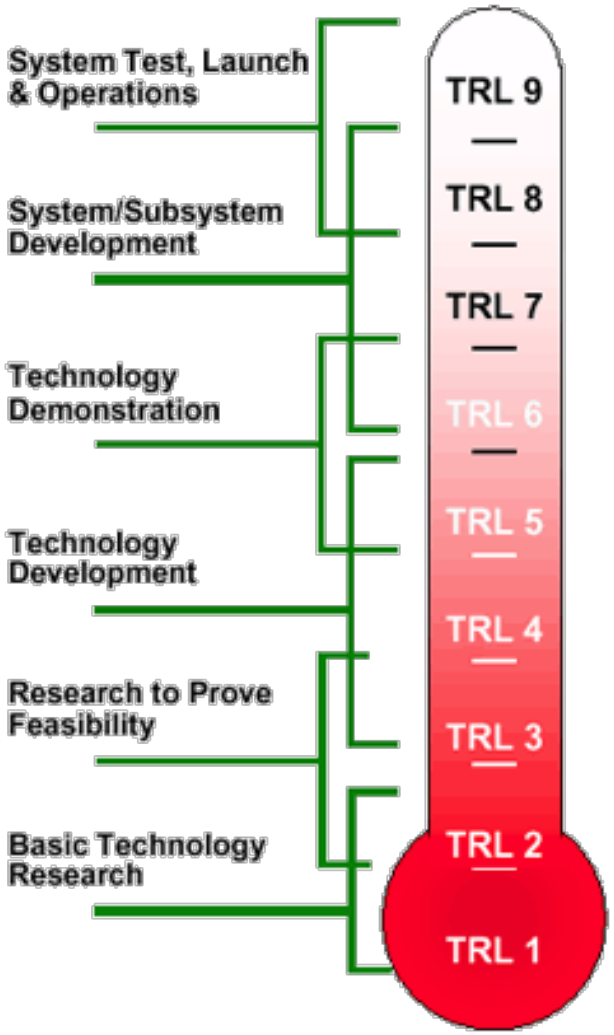

9	Appropriation into everyday lives at a limited scale with demonstrable societal readiness and social good.	IMPLEMENTED
8	Demonstration of societal readiness and social good through experiment with the system and formative evaluation with stakeholders in expected conditions.	
7	Societal readiness of elements evaluated with diverse stakeholders in test conditions.	
6	Societal readiness of prototypes evaluated with diverse stakeholders, examining the range of dissent through dialogue.	DEVELOPMENT
5	Innovation-specific societal readiness has been discussed with a sub-set of stakeholders and addressed.	
4	The innovation is committed to a socio-technical systems perspective.	
3	A limited set of innovation-specific issues of societal readiness have been addressed.	PLANNING
2	Awareness of basic principles of societal readiness and social good.	
1	Awareness of the need to address societal readiness and social good.	

SoRA-DASH

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Societal Readiness Assessment (SoRA)

is an interactive framework for developers and stakeholders to improve the societal readiness of low carbon transport projects.

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SoRA is a reflective, iterative process with many entry points. Assessment of Societal Readiness Levels is a good start, and the SoRA toolbox provides creative methods for improvement. The toolbox includes tools for 'deeper dive' reflection, visioning, stakeholder mapping, equality, diversity and inclusion, and

SoRA is useful from initial project scoping to implementation, and it can be used for social projects (e.g. a walking bus), technological, policy-making, masterplanning projects and more.

SoRA has been developed with projects in the UK, Columbia,

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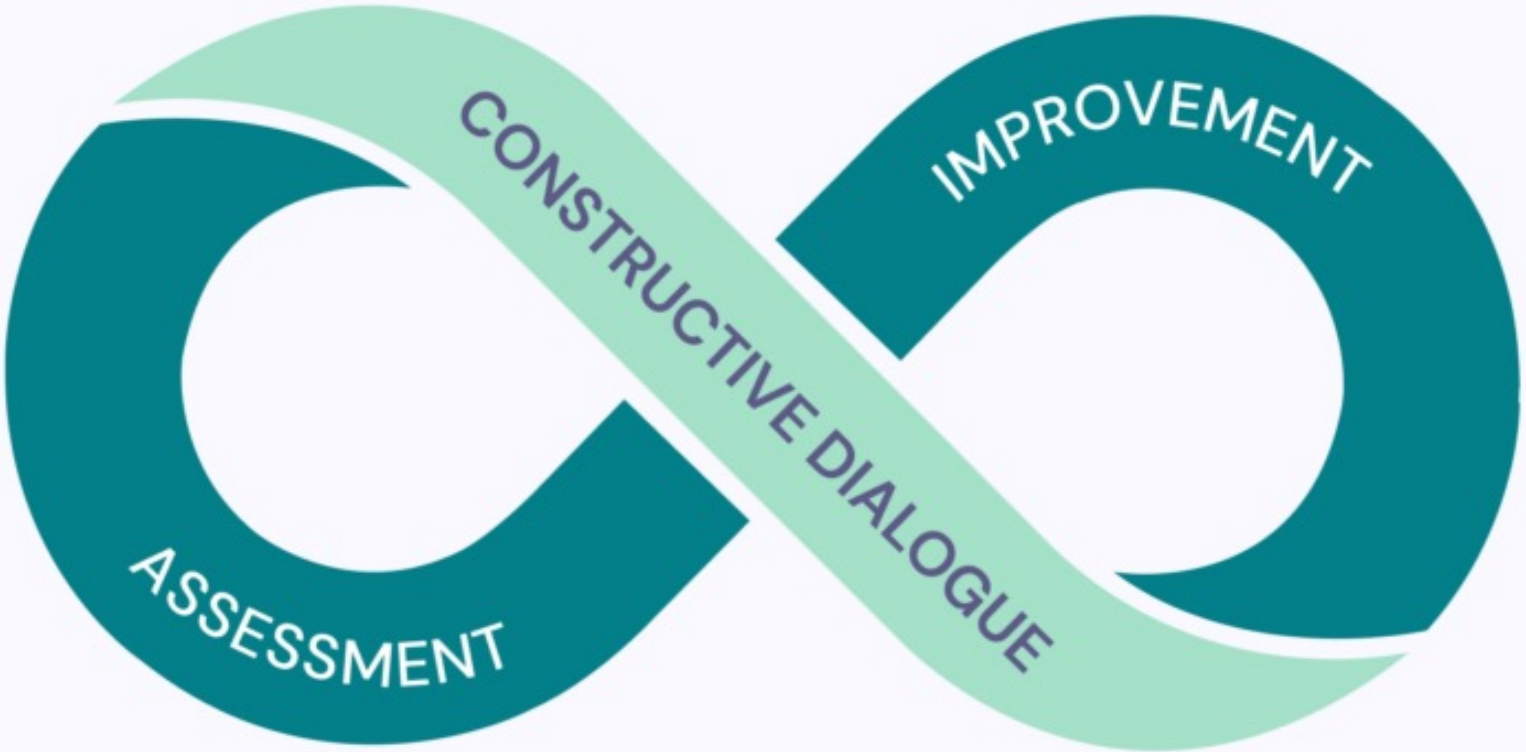
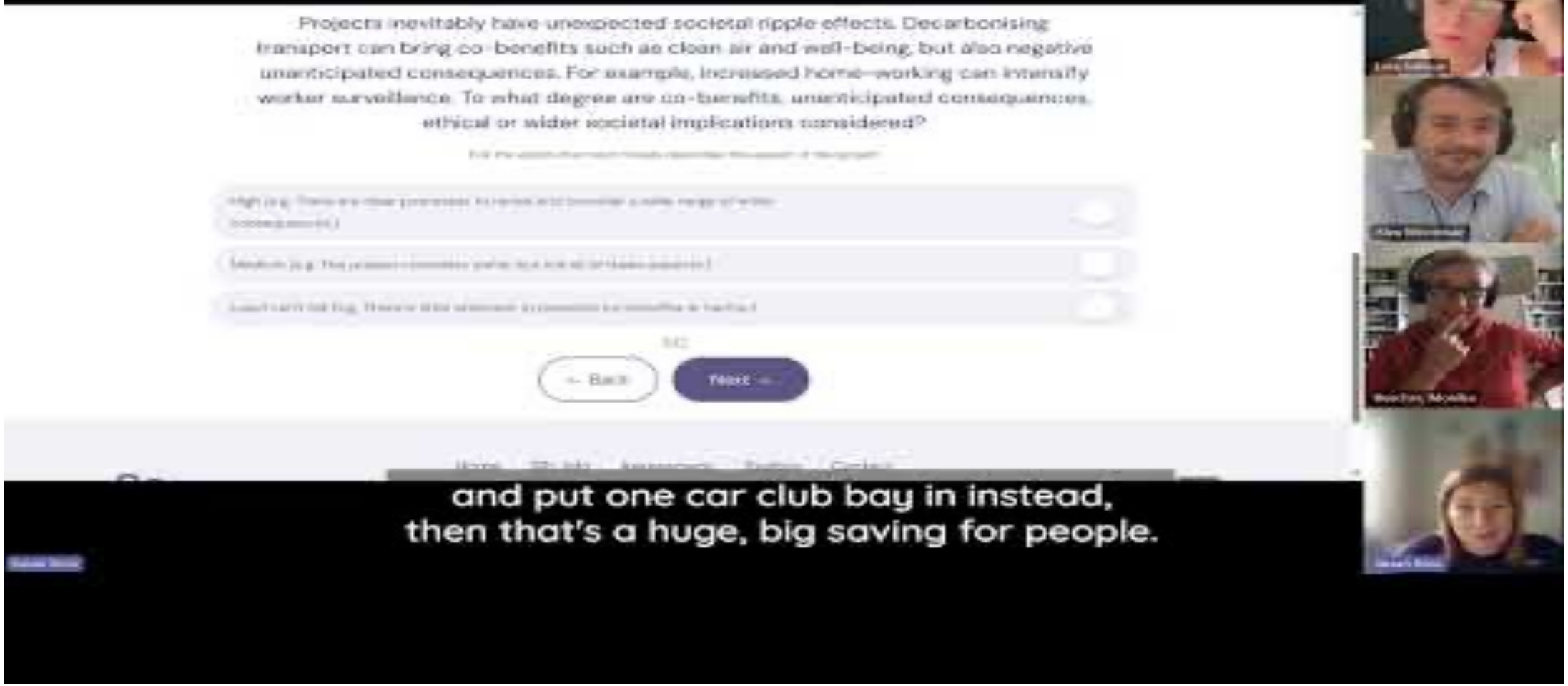

IMPROVEMENT
CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE
ASSESSMENT

Susan Ross, Edge and Alex Merriman, DfT
3 minutes video



PART 1

CARBON REDUCTION

Maximising carbon reduction through reducing the use of carbon intensive materials & enabling low-carbon practices.

PART 2

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Embedding consideration of equity, inclusion and fairness, engaging a wide range of stakeholder views in the project's design and development.

PART 3

SOCIAL GOOD

Optimising the project's contribution to broader social, environmental and economic outcomes, such as democracy, transparency, accountability.

PART 4

FIT FOR A DECARBONISED SOCIETY

Resonance with social practices that lead to decarbonisation and contribute to future ways of living in harmony with nature.

There are four parts to the assessment with three questions each. You will be given an overview of your answers and a summarised report upon completing the assessment.

Part 1 - Carbon Reduction

Maximising carbon reduction through reducing the use of carbon intensive materials & enabling low-carbon practices.

How high does decarbonisation rank as a priority compared to other priorities in the project?

Tick the option that most closely describes this aspect of the project.

- High (e.g. It is explicitly prioritising carbon reduction.)
- Medium (e.g. Carbon reduction is balanced against other priorities.)
- Low/I can't tell (e.g. Decarbonisation is not a major concern.)

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How to improve your SRL?

CARBON REDUCTION	SCORE 6/9
SOCIAL JUSTICE	SCORE 6/9
SOCIAL GOOD	SCORE 6/9
FIT FOR A DECARBONISED SOCIETY	SCORE 6/9

Click on the legend below the graph to see your score for each section with regard to Awareness, Ambition & Deliverability

Your responses suggest that:

This is good! Societal readiness is a complex challenge. To improve further, utilise the SoRA Toolbox. Use the SoRA Stakeholder and Value Mapping tools to strengthen your efforts. Use the SoRA Facilitating Dialogue and Dissent tool to make the most of diverse perspectives.

PART 2 – SOCIAL JUSTICE

Embedding consideration of equity, inclusion and fairness, engaging a wide range of stakeholder views in the project's design and development.

Your results for this section:

Action in this area would boost the societal readiness of the innovation. Social justice is essential to achieving an inclusive low carbon transition. It is an end in itself, of course, and employing social justice as an orienting principle can also increase the political feasibility of low-carbon policies.

Your response suggests that you could increase your awareness and ambition for social justice, and improve the deliverability of your ambitions.

Tool: Deeper Dive

What is this tool?

From discussions with many different SoRA users we periodically distil a list of frequently asked, important, or interesting questions. These can serve as a source of inspiration if you would like to increase the societal readiness of your project.

The purpose of considering these questions is creative reflection, not to find hard and fast answers to tick societal readiness boxes. Be prepared to explore hidden challenges and opportunities related to your project. There may be many different but equally 'good' responses.

Debating what 'good' means is core to this activity. As a rule of thumb, responses that are sensitive to context, recognise diverging, and sometimes conflicting stakeholders, interests and values, and are alert to complex emergent dynamics, are often good.

Deeper dive reflection is best done with other people. This could be members of your team, critical friends, experts, or stakeholders.

Please note that projects may be assessed at various stages. Social justice aspects, for example, may have been considered in the past or may be addressed in the future. We don't want to overcomplicate the questions and therefore use the present tense throughout. Feel free to adapt the questions to address past or future actions – 'How did or how will the project team work out who should have a say in the design process?'.

The benefits of considering these questions in a reflective and creative mode include:

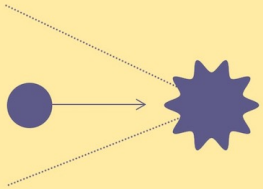
- Inspiration and a better sense of direction
  through attention to values, complexities, emergent dynamics.
- Increased capacity to deal with barriers
  through greater awareness of things that might make it difficult for people to appropriate or be part of the project and other obstacles.
- Increased chance of success
  through focused efforts to explore hidden aspects and anticipate challenges and opportunities.

Practically, you can use the pages below in different ways, as many times as you find useful. For example, could

- Treat it as a canvas to record your responses at a particular time – individually or in groups.
- Use it as a set of prompts for open discussion, addressing some or all of the questions.
- Split into different groups to address the different SoRA dimensions or different questions in each section.

Carbon Reduction

How do you approach maximising the carbon reduction of your project? For example, do you calculate or use a local carbon budget? More detailed guidance is available, for example at: https://carbonbudget.manchester.ac.uk/ https://decarbon8.org.uk/carbon-ambition/ https://environment.leeds.ac.uk/transport-research-themes/doc/energy If you are in the UK, you might also find the UK Department for Transport Carbon Calculator useful: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/carbon-calculator#the-mackay-carbon-calculator



SoRA Backcasting Tool

So you have an idea of where you're trying to get to ... how are you getting there? What does this mean for what to do next?

Download →

APPLIED FOR

IDEATION
IMPLEMENTATION
RESEARCH
xyz

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.
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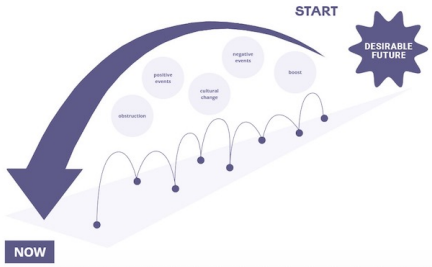
WHAT IS THE TOOL

Backcasting helps to work out a pathway from where you are to where you are trying to reach. It's the route to your vision - working out what might happen on the way and what you can do – in what order – to get there.

We usually think about the next step and the order of the next few steps, but there are risks in taking this approach (more below). Backcasting starts from where you are trying to reach – a shared long-term vision of a world with your innovation in it – and work backwards from there.



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