

Submission Guidelines

‘Voices from the Future’ Gallery

What will sustainability look, feel and sound like beyond 2030?

As part of the [SENSE Symposium 2026](#), *Reimagining Sustainability: Connecting Systems, Challenges and Future Pathways*, we are creating the ‘Voices from the Future’ Gallery: a creative space to imagine the worlds we could inhabit in the future, let's say in 2040.

There's no literature to review and no methodology to defend, just your imagination, we invite SENSE researchers, PhD candidates and participants to step into the future and explore sustainability through **stories, images, sounds, data, objects and other creative forms**. What might the world look like in 2040 if we succeed in addressing today's sustainability challenges? What if we don't? What unexpected transformations, tensions, technologies, behaviours or forms of cooperation might emerge? And what would people in the future say about the choices we are making today?

Your contribution can be **hopeful, critical, surprising, provocative, humorous or deliberately speculative**. It does not need to predict the future. Instead, we encourage you to use creativity to open up new possibilities, challenge assumptions and spark conversations about the pathways ahead. We are interested in the idea and perspective, not artistic perfection.

What can you contribute?

You can choose one of the formats suggested below or propose your own creative format. Contributions may be created individually or collaboratively. Ideas include:

-  **Letters from 2040** — write a short letter from someone living in 2040.
-  **Postcards from the Future** — create a visual snapshot of life after 2040.
-  **Sustainability Futures Comic** — tell a future sustainability story through a one-page comic.
-  **Future Headlines** — imagine the headline that could appear in a newspaper in 2040.
-  **Museum of Future Sustainability** — create an artefact from a future society.
-  **Future Soundscapes** — imagine and record what a sustainable future sounds like.
-  **Poetry for the Planet** — express a future sustainability vision through poetry or spoken word.
-  **Data-to-Art** — transform sustainability data into an artistic or visual representation.
-  **Future Narratives** — write a short speculative story exploring a post-2030 future.

You are also welcome to **combine formats** or invent something entirely different. See the section [Contribution Formats & Guidelines](#) for more information.

What happens to the contributions?

We will review all contributions received and confirm their acceptance. Where appropriate, our team may provide light feedback, for example on grammar or alignment with the Symposium theme.

If your contribution is **handmade**, please bring it with you to the Symposium. For digital contributions, we will ask you to provide a printable version so that it can be displayed on the gallery wall.

All accepted contributions will be displayed as part of the **Voices from the Future Gallery** during the SENSE Annual Symposium. Participants will be invited to explore the gallery, exchange ideas and vote for the contribution they find **most inspiring, thought-provoking or innovative**. There are no wrong choices – simply choose what speaks to you!

Together, the contributions will form a **collective collection of imagined futures**, bringing together different perspectives on what sustainability could mean in the future. A selection of contributions will also be shared digitally after the Symposium and with the organisers of the **2027 Groningen Sustainability Conference**, helping to carry these future visions into the next SENSE community event.

If you would prefer to **remain anonymous** or **not have your contribution included in the digital collection**, you can indicate this in the submission form.

Submission

Who can contribute?

SENSE PhD candidates, researchers, early-career researchers and other Symposium participants.

Individual or team?

Both individual and collaborative contributions are welcome.

How creative does it need to be?

As creative as you are willing to go. There are no artistic prerequisites. You do not need to be an artist, designer or writer. We are interested in the **idea and perspective behind your contribution**, not artistic perfection.

Submit your contribution [via this application form](#).

Deadline: 12 October 2026

Submission format: See [Contribution Formats & Guidelines](#)

Questions or doubts? Email us at Symposium@SENSE.nl

Come and give a voice to the future you envision.

General submission guidelines

Contributions should:

- relate to sustainability and the future post-2030;
- be original or created specifically for the Gallery where possible;
- be respectful and suitable for display in a diverse academic community;
- clearly indicate the contributor's name(s) and affiliation;
- include a short title;
- include a short description where relevant.

You do not need to be an artist. The Gallery is about imagining, questioning and communicating possible futures - not about artistic perfection.

We particularly encourage contributions that are **unexpected, interdisciplinary, inclusive, provocative or playful**, and that invite others to think differently about sustainability.

A few guiding questions

You do not need to answer all of these. They are simply prompts to help you imagine your contribution:

What changed?

What sustainability challenges have been transformed?

Who changed it?

Which people, communities, institutions or unexpected actors played a role?

What did we get wrong?

Which assumptions or solutions from today did not work?

What did we not anticipate?

What unexpected challenges or opportunities emerged?

What does everyday life look like?

How have people's homes, cities, food, mobility, work or relationship with nature changed?

What happens between systems?

What new connections, synergies or trade-offs emerged between environmental, social, economic and technological systems?

What choices made the difference?

Looking back from 2040, which decisions made the future possible?

What would you want people in 2026 to know?

Contribution Formats & Guidelines

Not sure where to start? Choose one of the formats below or create your own.

All contributions should respond in some way to the overarching question:

What might sustainability look like in the future?

You can focus on a particular sustainability challenge, system, place, community, technology, policy or everyday experience, or explore connections between several of them.

Proposed formats:

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1. Letters from 2040

Imagine you are living in 2040. What would you write to someone today?

Write a short letter from the perspective of a person living in 2040. Tell us what has changed since 2026, which sustainability challenges were addressed, which remain unresolved, and what choices made the difference.

Your letter could be written by a researcher, policymaker, child, farmer, city resident, activist, business owner, or anyone else you can imagine.

Suggested length: 300-500 words

Format: Text document or handwritten/digital letter

Optional: Add a date, sender, location or visual elements.

Example starting point:

Dear people of 2026, you probably wouldn't believe how different our relationship with water has become...

2. Postcards from the Future

Send us a snapshot from the future.

Create a visual postcard showing a place, moment or everyday scene from a post-2030 world.

It could be an optimistic future, a dystopian future, or something more ambiguous. You can use photography, drawing, painting, digital collage, graphic design or AI-generated imagery.

Suggested format: A5 or A4 landscape/portrait

File: JPG, PNG or PDF

Optional: Add a short message or caption of up to 100 words.

Think of it as a postcard someone might send home from the future.

3. Sustainability Futures Comic Strip

Tell a future sustainability story in one page.

Create a comic showing a situation, challenge, conflict or transformation related to sustainability in the future.

Your comic might follow a character, community, ecosystem, organisation or even a piece of infrastructure.

It can be serious, humorous, hopeful, critical or absurd.

Suggested format: One page, A4

File: PDF, JPG or PNG

Individual or team: Both welcome.

No professional drawing skills required - simple sketches and digital comics are equally welcome.

4. Future Headlines

What will make the front page in 2040?

Imagine opening a newspaper in 2040. What is the headline everyone is talking about?

Create a fictional headline about a major sustainability development. You can also include a short article, photograph, quote or infographic to provide context.

Your headline could describe a breakthrough, a failure, an unexpected consequence, a social transformation or a completely new sustainability challenge.

Suggested format: Headline + optional text of up to 200 words

File: PDF, JPG or PNG

Example:

"Europe's Rivers Flow Freely Again as Continental Dam Removal Programme Reaches 90% Completion"

5. Museum of Future Sustainability

What objects will future generations put in a museum?

Imagine a museum looking back at the sustainability transformations of the 21st century.

Create an imagined artefact from this future museum. It could be:

- a policy document;
- a citizen or ecosystem certificate;
- a product or prototype;
- a piece of infrastructure;
- a map;
- a public information leaflet;
- a technological device;
- an everyday object;
- a photograph;
- a specimen;
- a piece of clothing;
- or something completely unexpected.

Give your artefact a **name, date and short description** explaining what it is and why it matters.

Suggested format: A4 visual/document or physical object

Description: Up to 200 words

6. Future Soundscapes

What does a sustainable future sound like?

Create a short audio piece representing a future world.

It could be the sounds of a city powered by renewable energy, a restored ecosystem, a future transport system, a changing agricultural landscape, a conversation between generations, a piece of music, spoken word or an entirely imagined soundscape.

Suggested length: 1–3 minutes

File: MP3 or WAV

Optional: Include a short description of the scenario you are portraying.

You do not need professional recording equipment. Creativity matters more than production quality.

7. Poetry for the Planet

Use words to imagine what comes after.

Submit a poem, haiku, spoken-word piece or other short poetic response to sustainability and the future.

Your piece might explore hope, loss, transformation, justice, adaptation, nature, technology, intergenerational responsibility or an imagined future.

Suggested length: Up to 500 words

Format: PDF or text document

Optional: Audio recording of the poem may also be submitted.

8. Data-to-Art Challenge

Turn sustainability data into something people can feel.

Take a sustainability dataset, indicator, trend or statistic and transform it into an artistic or creative visualisation.

The contribution could be an illustration, collage, data sculpture, abstract visualisation, interactive concept, map, animation or another creative interpretation.

The aim is not simply to display data, but to **communicate a future sustainability story through data and art.**

Suggested format: A4/A3 visual, digital artwork or other visual format

Accompanying text: Up to 150 words explaining the data and the creative interpretation.

Please provide the source of any external data used.

9. Future Narratives Lab

Tell a story about a world that does not exist yet.

Write a short speculative story set in the future.

Your story could follow an individual, community, organisation, city or ecosystem navigating a transformed world. It could explore a successful transition, an unexpected consequence, a conflict between sustainability goals, or a future that takes a completely different path from what we expect today.

Suggested length: 500–1,000 words

Format: PDF or text document

Think beyond conventional science fiction: the story can be grounded in real sustainability challenges, technologies, policies and social dynamics.

10. Your own format

Have another idea? We want to see it.

You are not limited to the formats above.

You could contribute:

- a speculative map;
- a future policy;
- an imagined social media post from 2040;
- a future recipe;
- a prototype;
- a board game;
- an interactive installation;
- a photograph;
- a short film;
- a visual manifesto;
- a fictional advertisement;
- a future ecosystem profile;
- or something we have not thought of yet.

If your format is different from the ones above, simply provide a short description when submitting your idea.