

Tasmania Together

The vision „Tasmania Together“ was developed more than 10 years ago in a broad and participative process. Specific goals and a large number of indicators allow politicians to align their actions to the vision and to support economic and societal priorities. Even if the project has not run without frictions, it is nevertheless exemplary for other visioning projects at the regional and local level.

A prosperous and harmonious society

In October 2000 the Community Leaders Group of „Tasmania Together“ published its first vision for the year 2020 with 24 goals for this island state with 500,000 citizens: “Together we will make Tasmania an icon for the rest of the world by creating a proud and confident society, where our people live in harmony and prosperity”. In this vision all Tasmanians enjoy a reasonable standard of living in a safe environment. They feel encouraged to learn and develop new skills throughout their entire lifetime. Tasmanians maintain a healthy lifestyle and coordinated health service are provided for all citizens. An inclusive society acknowledges and respects its multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect, particularly the Aboriginal community. Tasmania is recognised nationally and internationally for its innovation, pursuit of excellence and creativity in arts and culture.

In this vision all Tasmanians have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The government is open, seeks and listens to people’s views and ideas, and uses them in decision making at all levels. There is great cooperation at all levels of government and among political parties to improve the lives of Tasmanians. The government is accountable to the people and it plans for the future.

Until 2020 the economic conditions for all Tasmanians will develop favourably as well: More and more Tasmanians will have safe, flexible, well-paid and meaningful jobs. The innovation system is strong and employees will be offered innovative and creative qualifications and further education. The gross domestic product, investments, exports and productivity will grow strongly, supported by many new, small enterprises. The natural and cultural heritage will be valued and protected. A good balance between environmental protection and economic and social interests will be found.

¹ This is a translation of the German note „Tasmanien Gemeinsam“ published in mid-2011 as issue three in our series “Schöne Aussichten” (Positive Futures), where we analyze how attractive visions about the future are formulated, implemented and tracked. The other issues have not been translated.

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Indicators and targets for the year 2020

The general vision and the 24 goals published in the year 2000 were backed by a large number of indicators and corresponding targets for the year 2020. Thus, it can be examined – at least for the indicators chosen – whether Tasmania develops into the desired direction. The Progress Report 2009 showed an improvement for half of the goals in relation to the previous year. For the other half no improvement or even deterioration was measured.

A broad and participative process

In May 1999, after consultations with all other political parties, the newly elected Labor Premier Jim Bacon appointed 22 members of a Community Leaders Group to develop a vision for Tasmania in 2020. The group represented many social groups and all regions of the island. The project was financed through the state budget.

For July 1999 the Community Leaders Group invited 60 further individuals to a three-day search conference, where a first draft of „Our vision, our future“ was compiled. At the end of 1999, the draft was sent to 14.000 citizens and organizations with the request for statements. This was followed by 60 public meetings (even described by critics as well attended and vivid) and 100 consultations with organizations of the civil society. 160 detailed written statements and 4.000 forms with critical comments were received, 6.200 contributions were left by visitors of the website and 2.500 postcards that had been sent to every household in Tasmania were returned.

In October 2000 the revised vision with its 24 goals was officially published. In the following steps, the general goals were backed by 212 indicators and targets – the so-called benchmarks. Since 2001 work on the vision, goals and indicators is coordinated and undertaken by 9 members of a Progress Board, supported by a small secretariat. The members are appointed by the Premier. They monitor Tasmania's progress towards achieving the vision and report every second year to the parliament. Details are regulated by the Tasmania Together Progress Board Act 2001.

Under the act it is required that the vision is reviewed every 5 years. The citizens have to be asked whether their priorities have changed, what has remained important and what is believed to become more important within the next 10 to 15 years. Between August and December 2005, 35 citizens' forums were held as part of the review process, and an information bus visited at 90 different places. More than 2.000 people sent back their questionnaires and 90 made formal submissions. In June 2006 all findings were published in the publication „What we heard“ and a revised vision was published thereafter. According to the revised vision, Tasmania no longer aspires to be a model for the rest of the world, and societal harmony is no longer mentioned explicitly.

Improvement for half of the goals

Representative steering group

Substantial feedback from Tasmanians

Roadmap "Tasmania Together"

- Aug 98 Jim Bacon (Labor) elected
- May 99 Community Leaders Group appointed
- Jun 99 Search Conference
- Dec 99 Draft vision published
- to May 00 Public consultations
- Oct 00 Vision and goals published**
- to Jun 01 212 indicators developed
- Sep 01 "Tasmania Together" published
- Oct 01 Progress Board appointed
- Jul 02 Elections: Labor wins 52% (+7%Pt)
- Aug 02 Progress Report in Parliament
- Mar 04 Jim Bacon steps down
- Aug 04 Progress Report in Parliament
- Aug-Dec 05 Consultations for review
- Mar 05 Labor government confirmed
- Aug 06 Progress Report in Parliament
- Dec 06 Parliament approves revised vision
- Aug 08 Progress Report in Parliament
- Mar 10 Labor government, tolerated by Greens
- Aug 10 Progress Report in Parliament
- Sep-Dec 10 Consultations for review

Source: Zentrum für gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt

Instead, the natural environment is now mentioned (see table on the right). The 24 goals of the first vision were merged into 12 goals and 212 indicators reduced to 143.

In autumn 2010, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary, the second revision began. Over 5.000 citizens took part. The Progress Board evaluated the findings in 2011 and submitted its proposed amendments to parliament in November 2011.

Vision is communicated broadly

From the outset the project has been widely communicated. Particularly intense was the consultation period at the start with 14.000 copies of the first draft being sent out, many events and the postcard campaign. Today there is a Progress Report published every other year, a well-maintained website, brochures (including „51 Ways to make Tasmania a better place“), an electronic newsletter, a Facebook page and press reviews. „A Youth Challenge“ aims to motivate new and young participants. Particularly valuable is the online data base that explains each of the currently 143 indicators, how they are defined, why they were selected, what targets were set, how data are gathered and whether the goals will be achieved. All this has been made possible by 6 employees working in the small secretariat.

Joint vision to ease conflicts

„Tasmania Together“ was initiated in 1999 by the newly elected Labor Premier Jim Bacon, who had replaced the conservative minority government tolerated by the Greens. Bacon wanted to appease the situation heated by at least three conflicts:

- In 1998 Labor and Conservatives had decided to reduce the number of seats in parliament from 35 to 25 to keep the emerging Greens small.
- In 1997 gaming machines had been permitted in hotels and bars, which was controversially discussed in the public.
- A conflict over clear-cutting rain forests had been going on for years.

Inspiration for the project came from an information trip to the US-State of Oregon, taken by the earlier Labor Premier Michael Field almost ten years before. There were similar conflicts over the clear-cutting of rain forests, and in 1989 the Democratic governor Neil Goldschmidt launched the project „Oregon shines“ to develop common goals and appease the situation.

Vision: version of 2000 - 2005

“Together we will make Tasmania an icon for the rest of the world by creating a proud and confident society, where our people live in harmony and prosperity.”

Vision: version since 2006

“Tasmania is an island community, unique for its natural and cultural environment, where people enjoy a prosperous lifestyle based on quality, creativity and opportunity.”

Source: www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au

Transparency through publicly accessible database

Ease conflicts

Inspiration from Oregon

A promising perspective for many

The Tasmanian vision formulated in the year 2000 with its 24 goals appears to be desirably for many people, particularly for those, whose situation would be affected by improvements in at least one of the 212 measured variables. Some examples:

- Those who ranked among the 10% Tasmanians living below the OECD-defined poverty line in the year 2000, benefit if the so defined poverty disappears until 2020 (indicator 1.1.3 in the 2001 report).
- Anyone using public transport would benefit, if the portion of people feeling safe there rose to 85% by 2020 (from 53% in 2000, indicator 2.1.4).
- Anyone at risk of diabetes should benefit from the actions taken to reduce the portion of people suffering from Diabetes Type 2 from 8.7% in 2000 to 5% in 2020 (indicator 5.1.3).
- Women may benefit if they indeed earn as much as men by 2020 (2000: 85%, indicator 9.3.2).
- Young people would benefit, if 90% of all municipal councils have youth advisory committees by 2020 (from 30% in the year 2001, indicator 15.1.2).
- Enterprises will profit, when 95% of them have access to the internet by the year 2020 – in relation to 42% in the year 2000 (indicator 19.4.1).
- All citizens will profit, if from 2010 onwards the air is as clear everywhere in Tasmania as regulated in the National Environment Protection Measure (indicator 24.3.1).

Powerful opponents in the timber industry

In a project as transparent and indicator-based as „Tasmania Together“, opponents are easily identified: All actors whose own goals are targeted for reduction in the future. Thus, the tobacco industry would not be pleased, if the portion of smokers decreased from 26% in 1995 to 10% in 2020. However, the major opponents have been and still are operators of gaming machines and the timber industry:

- The portion of people at risk of problem gambling should be reduced from 0.9% in the year 2000 to 0.5% in the year 2020 (indicator 5.3.1 of 2001). However, until 2005 the portion rose to 1.7%, and until today 2.500 gaming machines remain licensed in hotels and bars.
- The initial goals from 2001 and the latest goals from 2009 envisioned an end to the clearing of old-growth rain forests by 2010 (indicator 24.2.1). However, no consensus on this issue had been reached and the debate had been led so heatedly that two critics of the clearing (Gerard Castles and Anna Pafitis) were excluded from

Improvement in many areas expected

Powerful opponents

No progress in fight against gambling

the Community Leaders Group. They were replaced by a representative of the Premier and a student. Nonetheless, the area cleared in 2010 was only half the size of the area cleared in 2002 (see chart).

Ambitious goals

Many goals of „Tasmania Together“ are ambitious and some even appear to aim excessively high. Will women really be earning as much as men in 2020? Can poverty disappear completely by then? And can the growth of Tasmania's gross domestic product of annually 1.7% at the end of the 1990s be increased to 4% by 2020?

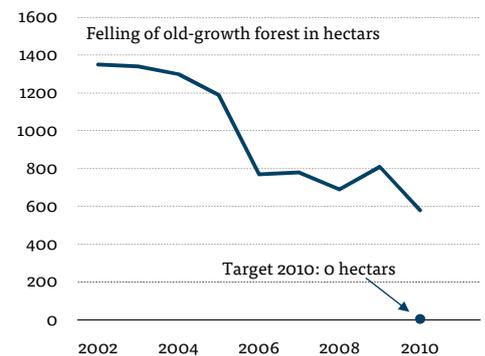
In any case, huge effort on all levels will be necessary to make the vision reality – and this is precisely what it was formulated for in the first place. However, the vision itself and the indicator reports do not mention either the costs of the desired change nor any positive or negative interdependencies between the different fields. The vision and the indicators by themselves provide only limited priorities for acting, since there are many fields in which the goals have not yet been achieved. There is no statement as to what goal is particularly important and where time and money should be spent to make the biggest difference for Tasmanians. All these issues have been left for political discussion.

Great impact

Over the years, „Tasmania Together“ has unfolded great impact in many directions; partly because of the project's good connections with many other stakeholders. Examples of connections and impacts include:

- Through the biennial parliamentary debate on the Progress Report, members of parliament are confronted with a structured approach, and have at least a cause of friction, if not a basis for their further work.
- There is a horizontal integration process between „Tasmania Together“ and all public institutions to align their plans, budgets and reports to the goals of the joint vision. For example, there is the „Tasmanian Tobacco Action Plan“ to reduce the number of smokers.
- Partnership agreements are signed for important topics to enable joint actions. Currently, there are 29 agreements, with participants including business associations and organizations for volunteers, young people, old people and women.
- In 2007 a guide for local authorities was published to enable a coordination of their activities with the vision for the state. The guide includes a range of indicators, which are particularly relevant for the municipalities. At least five municipalities had already aligned their own plans to „Tasmania Together“.

Target not yet reached



Source: Forestry Tasmania, Stewardship Report

Partisan influence

Well connected with parliament, local authorities and civil society



To give orientation in the large field of action, the Progress Board identified 18 indicators as particularly relevant for further attention. These indicators have developed relatively slowly and an improvement would enjoy broad public support. Most of these indicators overlap with the priorities of the current Labor government. In these areas new partnership agreements of interested and motivated groups are particularly easily possible.

Since the 1998 election the Greens have doubled their percentage of votes - from 10.1% in 1998 to 21.6% in 2010 - this might possibly be attributed, at least partially, to the high visibility of Green topics such as the protection of the old-growth rain forests in the “Tasmania Together” process.

In any case, „Tasmania Together“ is internationally and nationally acknowledged. The OECD Progress Project refers regularly it, and many scientific articles analyse the project from different points of view, e.g. the democratic theory (deliberative and participative vs. representative approaches). Other Australian federal states such as New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have launched similar projects.

Impressive but challenging project

„Tasmania Together“ is a successful and impressive project. It should be, at least in parts, realizable in Germany as well. In times of short-term orientation caused by media and politics, a clear long-term orientation is pursued. It is also exceptional, that political actors agree to let their actions be measured. The vision can be adopted by many stakeholders, since it was developed in a broad participatory process. Deep underlying conflicts and different interests were made visible, even if they have not yet been solved.

Many transparent indicators provide relevant information as a basis for better informed discussions and decisions. It appears to be a reasonable and effective approach to first develop a general vision, followed by more concrete goals backed with several indicators and targets. The same applies for the regular update of vision and indicators.

However, the project also faces typical challenges and dilemmas. Without the Premier’s impulse and without the tax funding the project might not have emerged at all. At the same time it is criticized, that the politicians reserve for themselves the democratic freedom of not adopting the findings and priorities on a one-to-one basis. Had the project solely been developed without public support (civil society project), it would possibly have had less budget and impact. It is always difficult to navigate through the “Bermuda Triangle” of partisan politics, participation and budget. Furthermore, a broad consensus was achieved with the vision – although a lack of innovative strength was occasionally observed.

The big test for „Tasmania Together“ is still to come when the initial project ends in 2020. Will there be follow-up projects? Will the lead be handed over to a university (as it was the case for the Canadian Index of Wellbeing)

Particularly relevant indicators reflect party programme

Project internationally acknowledged

Long-term orientation

Uncertain future



or a private think tank? The opposition Conservatives are already demanding the end of the project.

Website:

www.tasmaniatgether.tas.gov.au