

SUSTAINABILITIES!

COORDINATE AND PLAN
PUBLIC ACTION

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France Stratégie is an autonomous institution reporting to the Prime Minister and contributes to public action through its analyses and proposals. It leads public debate and informs collective choices on social, economic and environmental issues. It also produces public policy assessments at the request of the government. The results of its work are intended for public authorities, civil society and citizens.





The “Sustainabilities” seminar started in the wake of the Yellow Vests crisis. This deep crisis revealed a triple exhaustion: ecological, social and political. Indeed, it highlighted how difficult it was to tackle jointly the issues of the "end of the world" and the "end of the month".

Moreover, it revealed a “conflict of sustainability”: the preservation of the planet's habitability can amplify social and territorial inequalities. On many fields, we risk exceeding the limits of what our societies and our environment can bear. And on all these issues, our public policies are struggling to provide coherent and sustainable answers.

How can we renovate public action in order to face these cross-cutting challenges? How can we build a reference framework for sustainable public action, capable of safeguarding the future without sacrificing the needs of the present?

To change course implies to change the method, this report argues. We need to renew our democracy and relearn how to plan, in order to "orchestrate sustainability" and to build a long-term, systemic and legitimate public action.

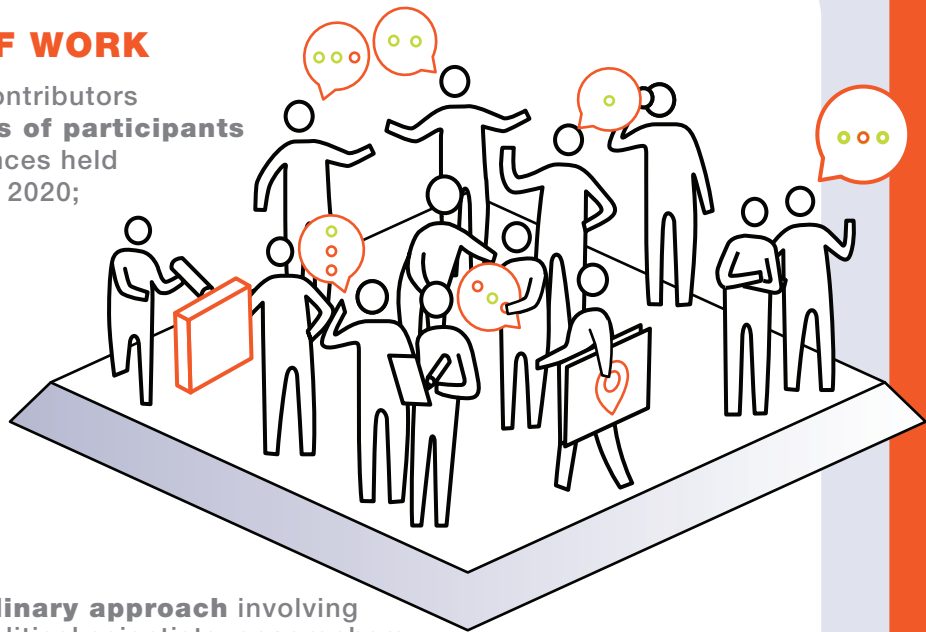
THE ORIGINS OF THE REPORT

France Stratégie is an analysis and forecasting organization on major social, economic and environmental issues. As the distant heir to the Commissariat au Plan, many of its past work have already addressed the notion of sustainability, but without systematically considering sustainability in its plural and systemic dimensions.

Hence the "Sustainabilities" project - plural matters here - has mobilized project managers from all France Stratégie departments and CSR platform: economy, sustainable development, digital, labor, society and social policies... This long-term investment was supported by the entire institution.

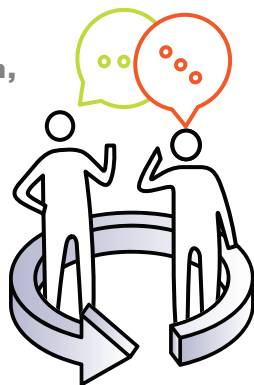
TWO YEARS OF WORK

- Hundreds of contributors and **thousands of participants** to the conferences held since February 2020;

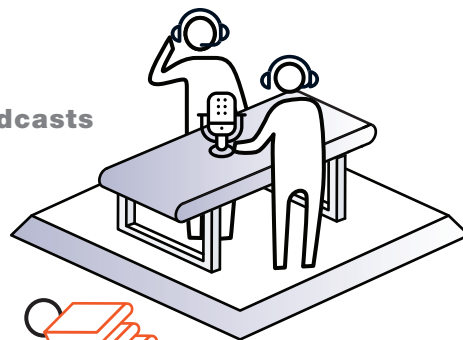


- A **multidisciplinary approach** involving economists, political scientists, geographers, engineers, sociologists, historians, philosophers, jurists, biologists, health professionals, civil society actors, elected representatives, public officials, social partners, etc.;
- Sessions in partnership with expert institutions and civil society organizations;

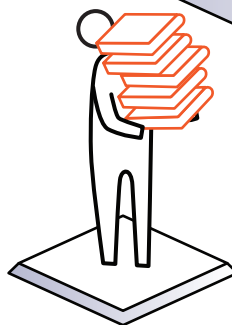
- **3 cycles of reflection,**



podcasts



and **5 published Sustainability Papers** (November 2021)

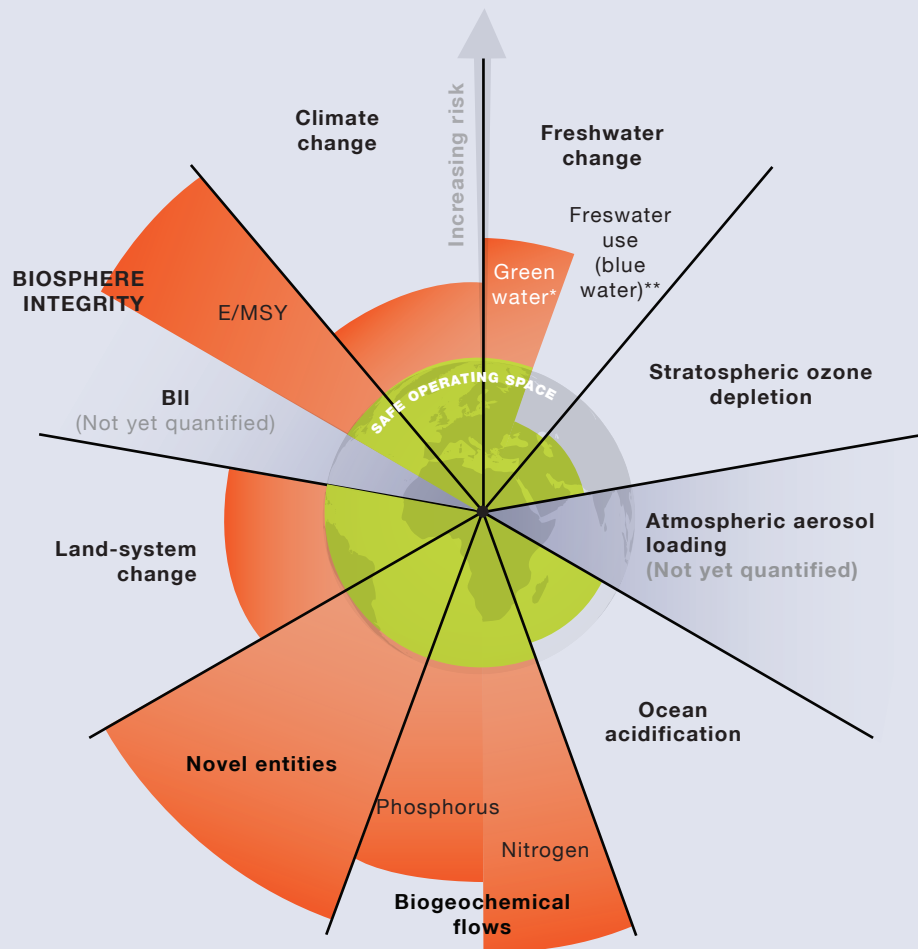


- A **participative work** that has adapted to **crises**

A call for contributions "For a sustainable aftermath: **7 questions** to prepare for tomorrow" (April 2020) and a synthesis of the **450 contributions received** (June 2020);

A platform forum to discuss our synthesis with six citizen consultation platforms (July 2020).

CONFLICTS OF SUSTAINABILITY: UNDERSTANDING THE DEAD ENDS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT MODEL



* Green water corresponds to the moisture stored in the soil and plants
 ** Blue water comes from precipitation, rivers, lakes and groundwater

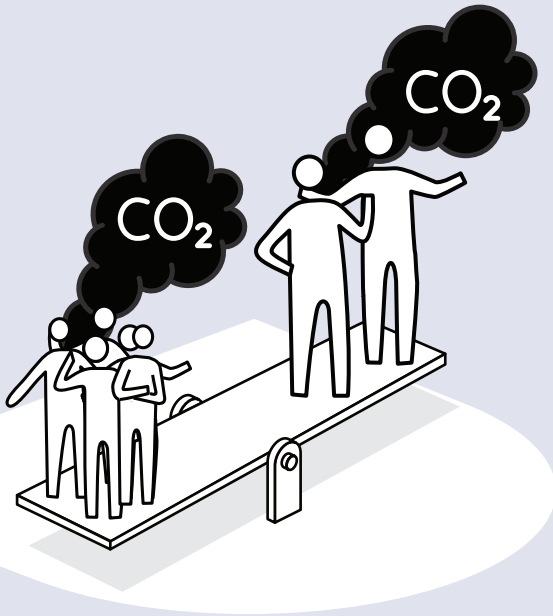
Credit: Wang-Erlandsson *et al.* (2022) - Stockholm resilience centre/Azote

The impact of human activities and growth on Earth habitability (anthropocene) is not new. What is new, however, is the topicality of the threat, the intertwining of the issues at stake and **the urgency to act, both for us and for future generations**. Climate, biodiversity, social inequalities and geopolitical tensions are linked and the challenges are interdependent.



These "unsustainable" paths, in turn, increase the population's need for protection. **Our development model**, based on an alliance between economic growth and social progress, **seems to have reached its limits**. Growth is now coming up against the multiplication of crises and the physical limits of resource depletion. It therefore seems difficult to find in growth as we know it the key to finance the environmental transition and the resilience of our system.

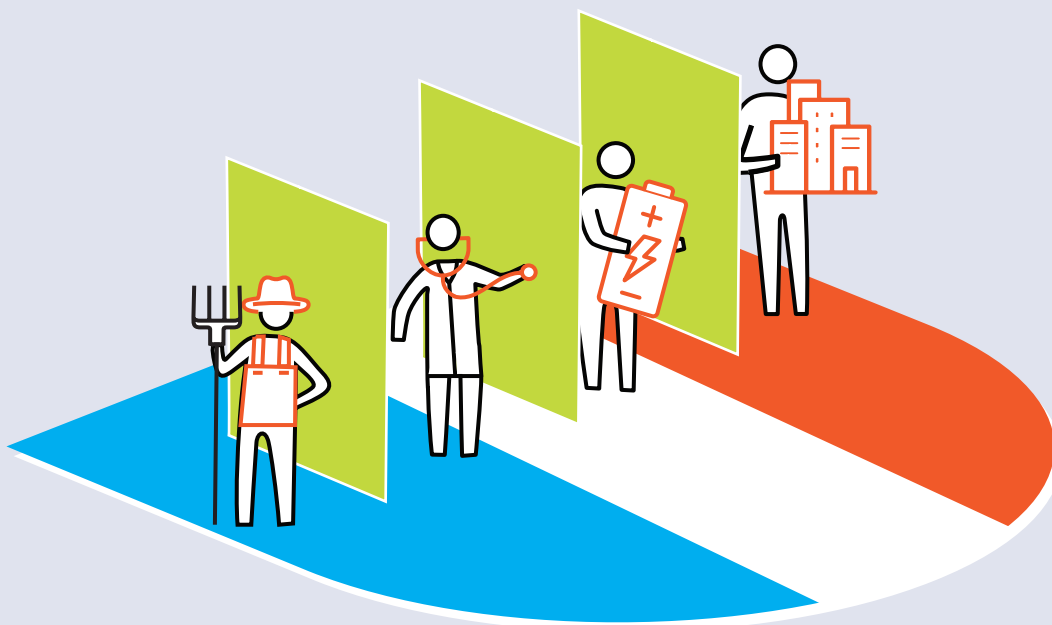
We know that the costs of inaction will only increase, yet we are reacting too slowly and insufficiently.



Deploying a zero-carbon economy by 2050 requires efforts **to be sober**, even in the most optimistic scenarios. While we can already feel the effects of environmental upheaval, efforts to mitigate and adapt to them will have profound impacts on lifestyles and consumption patterns. These will not be **acceptable** for the population, particularly the **poorest**, if the efforts are not equitably distributed.

This interweaving of economic, social and environmental issues makes it futile to think that public policies can be conceived solely from either an environmental, an economic or a social point of view. Both the ecological transition, the transformation of our production and consumption models and the adaptation of our social model must be carried in a context of great democratic mistrust.

Yet **public authorities are not tooled to tackle these "unsustainabilities" jointly.** Although environmental imperatives are gradually being integrated at both European, national and local levels, **public policies are still too compartmentalized** and not well coordinated. This leads to a dilution of resources and a loss of efficiency that can border on incapacity.



THE SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The concept of sustainability appears to be the most appropriate to forge a new grid for analyzing and developing long-term public action. It can help to frame plural and collective responses in order to **meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs."**

The notion is also relevant for thinking about the joint and coherent consideration of social, economic, but also democratic and institutional issues. By using the word in the plural, **we embed the interactions between crises, between challenges, between risks.** We also oblige ourselves to integrate parameters that might seem remote from its primary objective into the design of every public policy.

PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION CHARTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Whereas: "In order to ensure sustainable development, choices made to meet the needs of the present must not compromise the ability of future generations and other peoples to meet their own needs".

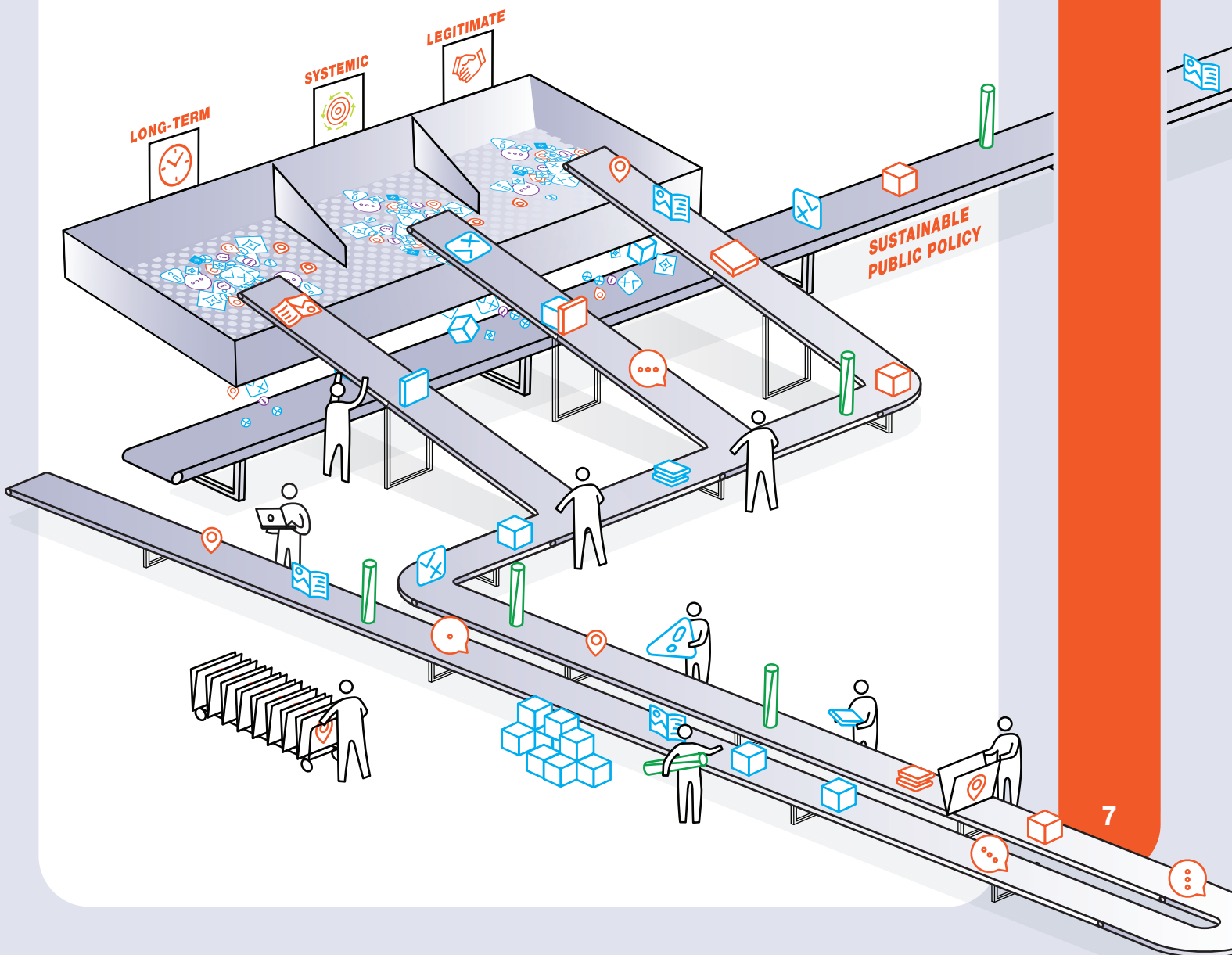
Article 6."Public policies (...) shall reconcile the protection and enhancement of the environment, economic development and social progress."

While the climate must obviously be at the heart of a new intergenerational pact - the Paris Agreement obliges us to do so - it cannot stand alone or be the only horizon. Without justice or progress, social crises will multiply, as or even more severe than those of the late 2010s. Without choice, without the prospect of citizens having a say in the options that affect their future and that of their children and grandchildren, these crises will be democratically insoluble. The challenge is thus to **reconcile the fight to preserve the environment with our collective preferences:** there is no TINA for the climate¹. The paths to the necessary decarbonization must be the subject of deliberation.

A FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR LONG-TERM, SYSTEMIC AND LEGITIMATE PUBLIC ACTION

In concrete terms, a reference framework is made of tools, procedures, instruments, culture... **The sustainability reference framework is the one that allows all policies to be screened against three conditions: long-term, systemic and legitimate.**

A lot of these tools and procedures are available, but they are not sufficiently integrated into the fabric of public action. Reformed impact studies, a better use of sustainable development objectives and new wealth indicators, green budgeting, etc. are all instruments we must mobilize to evaluate public policies in terms of their contribution to greater long-term social, environmental and democratic sustainability. This is also a guarantee of the effectiveness of public action.

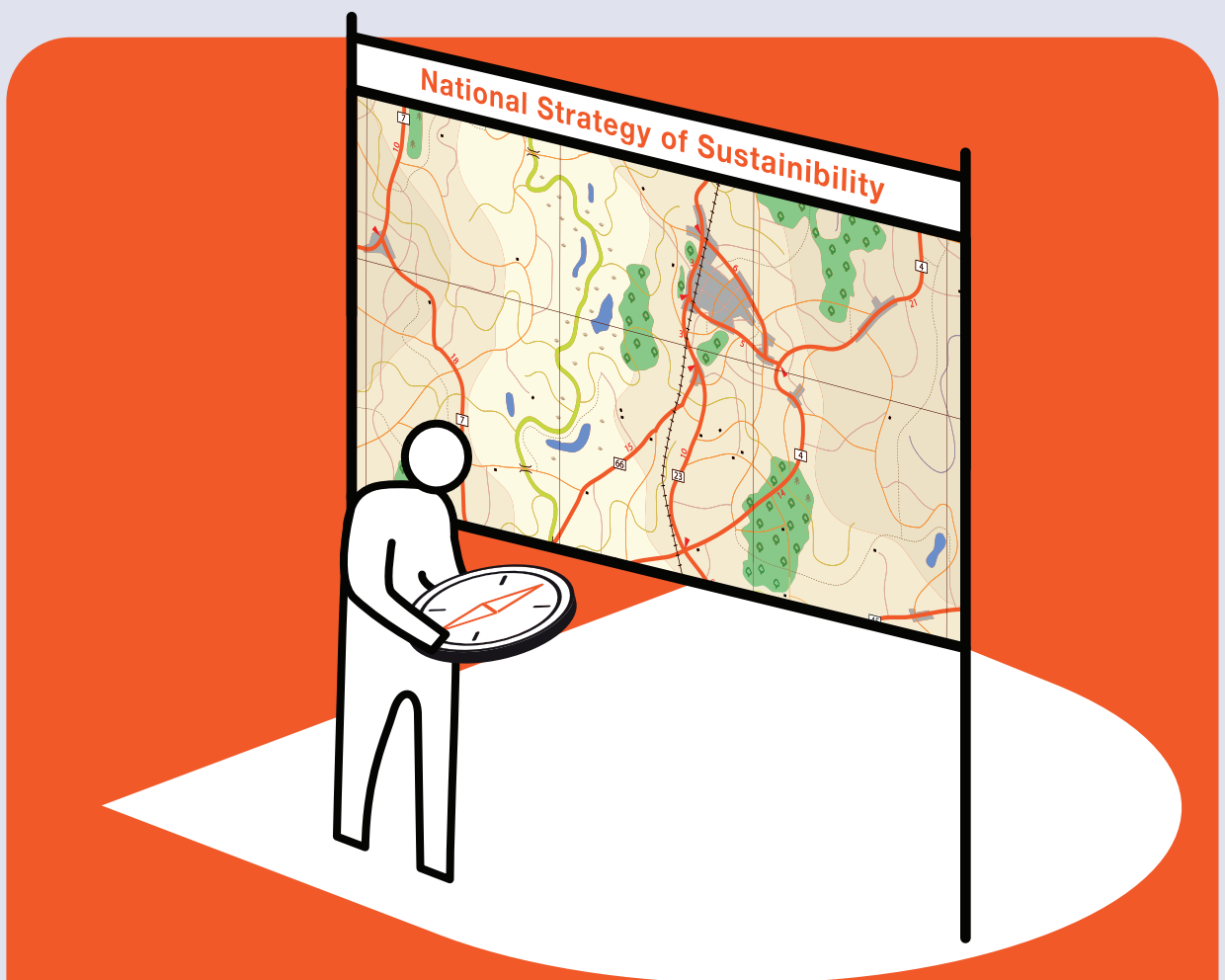


REINVENTING PLANNING: THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Having the right tools is necessary, but it will not be enough to ensure the achievement of sustainability objectives. We need political willingness and a method to achieve them. We propose to experiment a renewed form of planning which would translate the political orientation given by the government in a "National strategy".

As the final product of citizen and parliamentary deliberations, the National Strategy of Sustainability would serve as a map for public action over a five-year period. It would make it possible to build new alliances with citizens, territories and the private sector.

This strategy would have to aim at the vital goal of decarbonization. But it should be broader in scope, without prioritizing the other medium-term objectives. Consumption, production and work, housing, food, education, health care and transportation could be the main themes.



« To (re)think and build public action facing such challenges, there is no global positioning system in which reaching a destination would be as easy entering it in the system (...). To navigate, to move forward, to back-track if necessary, policy makers need not only a compass to identify the destination, but above all a map. This map would allow them to overview, indicating not only the several possible paths, the travel times, the alternative "transportation means", but also the topography, the obstacles to overcome or to integrate, the milestones and the crossroads... The concept of "sustainabilities" seems particularly relevant to draw the legend of such a political map. »

MANAGING SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC POLICIES: WHAT ORCHESTRATOR?

A democratically constructed roadmap and appropriate tools will not be enough. To ensure the integration of sustainability in the making of public policies, a pilot is needed, and more precisely an "orchestrator" to bring coherence to sheet music that is currently played solo.

Orchestrating sustainability means guaranteeing the overall coherence of public action and ensuring seven key functions, articulated around the life cycle of the National Strategy for Sustainability:

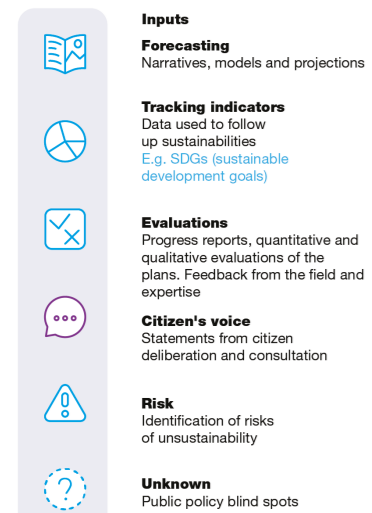
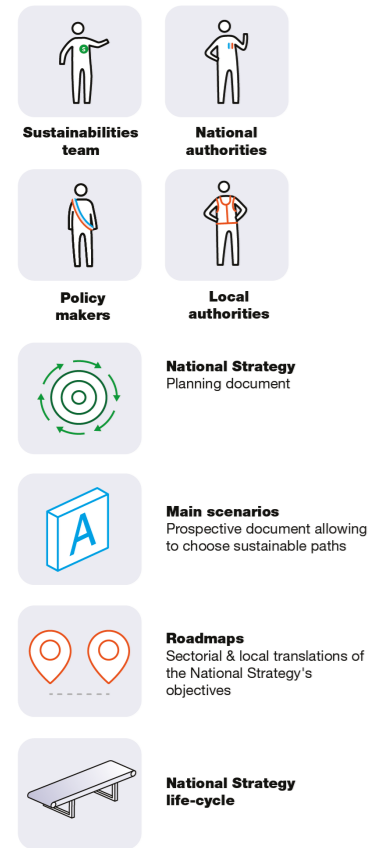
- **the instruction, preparation and monitoring of the National Strategy:** the orchestrator would translate the strategy into shared objectives and sustainable indicators; he would monitor it and prepare the annual presentation of the Strategy's progress to Parliament;
- **advice to the government and formalization of trade-offs:** the orchestrator would alert "in real time" on the risks of unsustainability and on potential conflicts of coherence between policies;
- **foresight and expertise:** the orchestrator would coordinate foresight exercises based on existing production; it would use the results of these exercises to stimulate public debate, advise the government and prepare trade-offs; it would establish a common methodology to promote the territorial and sectoral application of national scenarios;
- **the development of roadmaps and coordination:** the orchestrator would support the administrations in the drafting of roadmaps consistent with the National Strategy; he would facilitate its appropriation by the various territorial levels; he would compile the monitoring data of these ministerial and territorial roadmaps in order to ensure their convergence with the objectives of the National Strategy;
- **Checkpoints and *in itinere* evaluations:** laws and decrees could have to prove their compatibility with the National Strategy; the orchestrator could therefore contribute to new impact studies and/or *at least* examine their quality, coherence, and contribution to the objectives of the National Strategy;
- **facilitating public debate:** the orchestrator would guarantee the participation of the public and the appropriate stakeholders in the major decisions on the Strategy; symmetrically, he would ensure that the results of the citizen consultations are transmitted to the decision-makers;
- **training and documentation:** the orchestrator would set up a resource center to document sustainability issues, train and equip public agents; it would disseminate publications and create methodology to promote transversality and build common practices.

Many actors are already mobilized today on some of these missions. The challenge is to reinvent with them a new orchestration, thanks to which each instrumentalist will play the same sheet music, within a single orchestra, in order to make the voice of Sustainable heard.

COORDINATE AND PLAN SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ACTION

Functions and interactions

Caption



Elaborated with the public policy design agency VRAIMENT VRAIMENT

