



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE: MEMORIES AND HOPES SHAPING SUSTAINABLE LIVEABLE FUTURES

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RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The study explores how ordinary publics construct sustainable futures through emotionally grounded stories. It examines how memories, and hope shape anticipatory imaginaries.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 How are past experiences connected with preferred sustainable ocean futures?
- 2 What emotions structure these future imaginaries?
- 3 How is agency articulated within these narratives?



METHODOLOGY

- Convenience sample at a national sustainability fair in Malta
- Mini-interviews collecting memories, hopes, and actions
- Focus: sustainable ocean futures



MEMORY

Lived experiences anchor us in time and place

“The smell of the sea opens my lungs.”



EMOTION

Memories are emotionally reflected and interpreted

“The sea gives me peace and calm.”



HOPE

Hope emerges through remembered experiences and values

“I seem to have more memories than hopes.”



ACTION

Ideas for action link present to desired futures and reflect agency

“I teach my children to pick up litter.”

STORIES PEOPLE SHARED ABOUT THE SEA		INNER EMOTIONS	DESIRED FUTURE	AGENCY IN ACTION
 Restorative Ecology “The seabed is a desert now.”	Childhood and abundant biodiversity; clearer seas	Grief, shock, nostalgia, sadness	Regenerated ecosystems; healthy marine life	Marine protection; beach clean-ups
 Intergenerational Stewardship “I teach my children to pick up litter.”	Family moments by the sea; learning from parents	Care, attachment, responsibility	Future generations experience and enjoy the sea	Education; role models; supporting social initiatives
 Lost Commons “In the olden days, we were freer.”	Open access to coasts; less development	Frustration, loss, resentment	Public and equitable access to coasts and beaches	Civic resistance; advocacy for public access
 Quiet Sea “Now the sea is too crowded and noisy.”	Calm, silence, and space; peaceful seascapes	Anxiety, overwhelm, longing for calm	Peaceful and solitary seas	Limiting tourism impact; carrying-capacity considerations
 Everyday Stewardship “Everyone should do their bit.”	Clear and clean seas; daily routines by the sea	Hope, determination, sense of duty	Cleaner oceans; less pollution	Waste reduction; everyday actions; responsible choices



KEY INSIGHTS

- Micro-narratives function as everyday forms of futures knowledge.
- Sustainability futures are imagined through memory, emotion, and lived experience.
- Futures are made meaningful and negotiated through everyday life.

“If we destroy the sea, we would be destroying our only resource.”
– Participant, 56F



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