

DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

A workshop toolkit

WORKSHOP DEVELOPMENT

This workshop was developed in 2021 by a team of PhD researchers (in alphabetical order: Guilherme Raj, Jacob Smessaert, Julia Spanier, Laura van Oers, and Leonie Guerrero Lara) involved in

The project aims to investigate how grassroots agricultural food initiatives disrupt or ‘unmake’ modern capitalist institutions and practices and under what conditions

the UNMAKING research project in collaboration with Iline Ceelen. UNMAKING is a research project led by Giuseppe Feola at the Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development at Utrecht University. The project aims to investigate how grassroots agricultural food initiatives disrupt or ‘unmake’ modern capitalist institutions and practices and under what conditions. Here is a link to

the project: <https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl/>. UNMAKING is funded by the European Research Council (Starting Grant 802441) and by the Dutch Research Council (NWO; grant 016.Vidi.185.073).

When finalising the toolkit, we had hosted the workshop twice: at the International Degrowth Conference in 2021 in the Hague, the Netherlands, and at the Food Autonomy Festival in 2021 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Now, we want to share this toolkit freely and widely, hoping it can support more people in strategising for food system transformation. Enjoy the workshop!

Utrecht University, 2023



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About the workshop

WHAT IS A DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP?

The degrowth and food workshop is a two- to four hour process where participants engage in open-minded and critical reflection regarding food systems and their relationship to the growth-based economy. The goal of the workshop is for participants to consider the links between the struggle for more just and ecologically viable food systems and the core ideas of a degrowth transformation and, through this, to think about strategies to overcome the obstacles to a food system transformation rooted in societies' current pursuit of endless economic growth.

WHY A WORKSHOP ON DEGROWTH AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION?

The food system is broken and unsustainable. It depends on cheap and abundant fossil fuels, mineral fertilisers, chemical pesticides, capital-intensive machinery and technology, and the exploitation of cheap labour worldwide. Along with the ideology of economic growth that underpins it, conventional agriculture is depleting natural resources, polluting freshwater sources, destroying forests, and drastically changing the climate. Simultaneously, citizens are often disconnected from the food they eat. They do not know where their food comes from, how it has been produced, or what the social conditions of agricultural workers are, and they expect a wide variety of cheap and fresh food all year long.



We consider agriculture and food systems as crucial sites for societal transformation

and efficient new technologies or in terms of individual behavioural change (consumption and lifestyle). Both these transformation discourses direct attention away from systemic issues, notably how societies are organised around the ideology of endless economic growth. This workshop aims to

scrutinise these systemic links between food systems and growth-based economies. We believe this discussion allows for a more nuanced understanding of the processes at play in societal transformation to design tactics, strategies, and ideas appropriate for addressing these crises.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The workshop integrates creative and interactive training methods to motivate reflections and discussions in different group settings with case presentations and interactive activities. The workshop is designed to be facilitated by at least one moderator. This workshop toolkit contains all the information necessary for the moderator to facilitate the workshop. Through interactions between participants in the discussions and exercises, participants can share their experiences, learn from each other, and create new strategies for social change.

Each exercise explains the objectives, the materials, and the preparation needed to facilitate the exercises and presentations. All spoken words are *in italics*; the facilitator can use them as word-for-word speaking points. This toolkit has estimated times for each exercise, helping the moderator through the workshop.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE? Anyone willing to critically reflect on our economic system and who cares about creating more socially just, ecologically viable, and resilient food systems can participate. No previous knowledge or expertise is needed.

WHO CAN FACILITATE? Anyone can facilitate. We provide resources for people with little knowledge of degrowth who would like to facilitate the workshop (see videos below). Ideally, two people should co-facilitate the workshop, but one person can also facilitate it.

WHAT IS A GOOD LOCATION FOR THE WORKSHOP? The workshop can be held indoors or outdoors. If the weather allows it, we recommend holding the workshop in a lush, green space, ideally connected to food production. Such a green setting helps participants engage more creatively with the topics. However, workshop presenters should consider printing this PowerPoint presentation to share with participants unless a projector can be arranged outdoors. Nevertheless, the workshop also works

Participants can share their experiences, learn from each other, and create new strategies for social change

well indoors. We prioritised in-person workshops and saw many benefits of conducting face-to-face activities (for group dynamics, etc.). We do not have experience holding the workshop online, but all workshop activities could easily be translated to an online setting using video-call platforms. One

aspect that may require particular attention when organising the workshop online is the division of sub-groups in Activity 4. For example, many video-call platforms provide 'breakout rooms', which could solve this problem easily.

TOOLKIT STRUCTURE This toolkit comprises workshop activities, a facilitator guide, a degrowth presentation, and activity materials. It is structured as follows:

- This PDF contains an overview of the activities, indicating what material to use and the times for facilitators.
- PowerPoint presentations explain degrowth to refresh knowledge or familiarise those who have not heard of it yet. These presentations can be used during the workshop.
- A file with the obstacle cards supports one of the workshop exercises. The cards should be printed in advance of the workshop.

1/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT

(LARGE GROUP FORMAT – 15–30 participants – 3H–4H)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
1. INTRODUCTION (15 min)	Step 1: <i>Introduction</i>	2 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pens ▪ Stickers for nametags ▪ Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed 	e.g. 10:00–10:15
	Step 2: <i>Participants' introduction</i>	8 min			
	Step 3: <i>Rules</i>	5 min			
2. VISIONING EXERCISE (40 min)	Step 1: <i>Introduction</i>	2 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pens ▪ Markers ▪ Paper for writing or drawing ▪ Flipchart paper 	
	Steps 2–4: <i>Visioning exercise</i>	5 min	Individually		
	Step 5: <i>Drawing</i>	10 min	Individually		
	Step 6: <i>Sharing visions</i>	5 min	Duos or trios		
	Step 7: <i>Sharing visions</i>	5 min	Full group		
	Step 8: <i>Identifying values and principles</i>	10 min	Full group		
	Step 9: <i>Transition to the next activity</i>	2 min	Full group		
3. DEGROWTH INTRODUCTION (12–15 min)	Steps 1–6: <i>Interactive slides</i>	10 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation (included in the training package) ▪ Laptop with internet connection ▪ Projector ▪ White screen ▪ Speaker 	
	Video: <i>Explaining degrowth</i>	2–5 min			

Break 5–10 min

2/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT (LARGE GROUP FORMAT – 15–30 participants – 3H–4H)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE ENVISIONED FOOD SYSTEM (85–105 min)	Steps 1–3: <i>Introduction</i>	10 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacle cards printed double-sided Tape to hang obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room Flipchart paper per group Markers Flipchart with guiding questions Flipchart stand 	
	Steps 4–5: <i>Instructions and clarification</i>	5 min	Full group		
	Steps 6–7: <i>Group exercise</i>	45–65 min <i>Depending on the group size and time needed to strategise in each group</i>	Small groups		
	Steps 8–9: <i>Plenary</i>	20 min	Full group		
	Step 10: <i>Wrap up</i>	5 min	Full group		
Break 5–10 min					
5. PLENARY DISCUSSION (20 min)	Step 1: <i>Bridge to the previous exercise</i>	2 min	Full group		
	Steps 2–3: <i>Learning and takeaway points</i>	13 min	Duos or trios		
	Steps 4–5: <i>Questions and closing</i>	5 min	Full group		

1/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT

(SMALL GROUP FORMAT – up to 15 participants – 2H–2H30)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
1. INTRODUCTION (10 min)	Step 1: <i>Introduction</i>	2 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pens ▪ Stickers for nametags ▪ Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed 	e.g. 10:00–10:10
	Step 2: <i>Participants' introduction</i>	3 min			
	Step 3: <i>Rules</i>	5 min			
2. VISIONING EXERCISE (30 min)	Step 1: <i>Introduction</i>	2 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pens ▪ Markers ▪ Paper for writing or drawing ▪ Flipchart paper 	
	Steps 2–4: <i>Visioning exercise</i>	5 min	Individually		
	Step 5: <i>Drawing</i>	10 min	Individually		
	Step 6: <i>Sharing visions</i>	3 min	Duos or trios		
	Step 7: <i>Sharing visions</i>	3 min	Full group		
	Step 8: <i>Identifying values and principles</i>	5 min	Full group		
	Step 9: <i>Transition to the next activity</i>	2 min	Full group		
3. DEGROWTH INTRODUCTION (12–15 min)	Steps 1–6: <i>Interactive slides</i>	10 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation (included in the training package) ▪ Laptop with internet connection ▪ Projector ▪ White screen ▪ Speaker 	
	Video: <i>Explaining degrowth</i>	2–5 min			

Break 5–10 min

2/2 DEGROWTH AND FOOD: A WORKSHOP TOOLKIT (SMALL GROUP FORMAT – up to 15 participants – 2H–2H30)

PHASE	STEP	TIME	GROUP	MATERIALS	INDIVIDUAL TIMEKEEPING
4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE ENVISIONED FOOD SYSTEM (65–85 min)	Steps 1–3: <i>Introduction</i>	5 min	Full group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Obstacle cards printed double-sided ▪ Tape to hang the obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room ▪ Flipchart paper per group ▪ Markers ▪ Flipchart with guiding questions ▪ Flipchart stand 	
	Steps 4–5: <i>Instructions and clarification</i>	2 min	Full group		
	Steps 6–7: <i>Group exercise</i>	45–65 min <i>Depending on the group size and time needed to strategise in each group</i>	Small groups		
	Steps 8–9: <i>Plenary</i>	10 min	Full group		
	Step 10: <i>Wrap up</i>	3 min	Full group		

Break 5–10 min

5. PLENARY DISCUSSION (10 min)	Step 1: <i>Bridge to the previous exercise</i>	2 min	Full group		
	Steps 2–3: <i>Learning and takeaway points</i>	3 min	Duos or trios		
	Steps 4–5: <i>Questions and closing</i>	5 min	Full group		

Theoretical frame

WHAT IS DEGROWTH? The presentation slides introduce the question: What is degrowth?

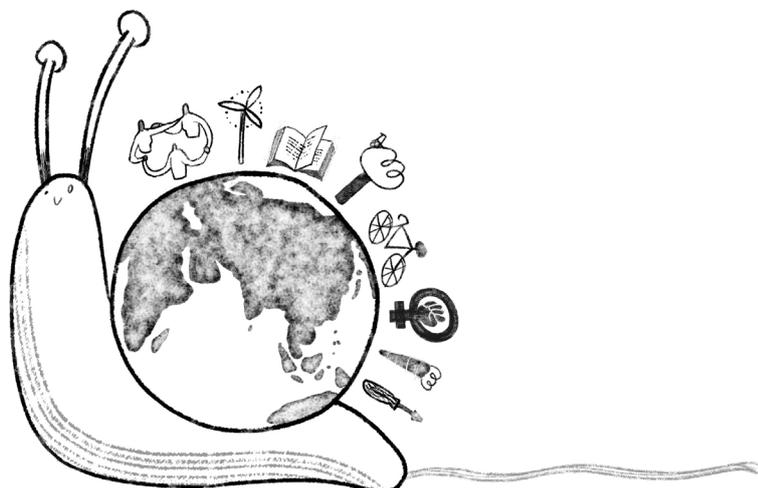
Dr Barbara Muraca explained degrowth during the Degrowth Symposium in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 2019:

“Degrowth is not a reversal of things that we had before. It is not an elephant put on a diet. It is a different creature.”

“Degrowth is not about reversing GDP. People think that degrowth is about shrinking, having less, and living simpler. It’s not the point. The point is that we need a change in the structure of society, and it’s not just a desirable path for the environment. This is the necessary path for us not to get into trouble.”

- Her lecture from the symposium is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5qsUkiiKyM&t=211s>
- The presentations from that day are on the website: <https://ontgroei.degrowth.net/utrecht-degrowth-symposium/>
- There is also much information on degrowth.info.

These links can also be shared with participants at the end of the workshop if they want to learn more about degrowth.

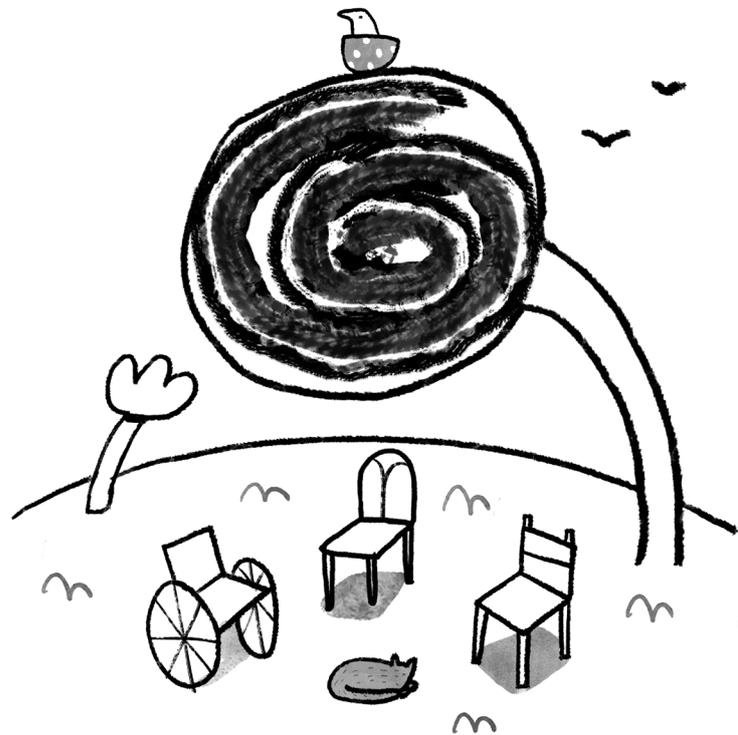


Snail image inspired by: degrowth.info

Workshop exercises and facilitator guide

Degrowth and food system transformation:

The workshop



1. Introduction Session

SESSION OVERVIEW In this session, as the facilitator, introduce yourself, your motivations for giving the workshop, and what the workshop addresses. This session sets the tone for the rest of the workshop. Give some room to explain the workshop experience and set some ground rules for the coming two to four hours, such as ‘listening without commenting on what is said’, ‘respecting different points of view’, ‘we are all on a different path, and no one stands at the same position’ etc. This time would also be the perfect moment to have an introduction round with all participants and let them briefly share their expectations.



OBJECTIVES

- Participants and facilitators get to know each other.
- Participants get to know each other.
- Participants know what to expect.
- Participants know the code of conduct.



MATERIALS

- Pens
- Stickers for nametags
- Flipchart and paper to write the rules if needed



TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS, I.E., 15-30 PARTICIPANTS (TOTAL 15 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 8 min for introducing participants (Step 2)
- 5 min for explaining the workshop and rule setting (Step 3)



TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS, I.E., UP TO 15 PARTICIPANTS (TOTAL 10 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 3 min for introducing participants (Step 2)
- 5 min for explaining the workshop and rule setting (Step 3)



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Set the room up and position the flipchart so everyone can see it.



INSTRUCTIONS

▶ STEP 1

Facilitators welcome participants, introduce themselves, and say a few words about this workshop and its theme.

▶ STEP 2

[May not be needed if the participants already know each other]: Ask participants to introduce themselves – name, what they do in life, and why they are here. This step helps the facilitator prepare for questions or discussions during the workshop.

▶ STEP 3

Explain what the workshop entails and ask participants what rules they would like to create to ensure a safe environment for everyone to participate. Write the rules if you prefer. As the facilitator, you can also propose rules to the group. However, to provide the participants with a sense of co-creation, including them during the rule development might be better.

Possible rules or guiding principles to create a safe space and spark an environment of deeper reflection could be any of the following:

- Be aware of the space (and time) you take up and the position and privileges you bring to the discussion.
- Avoid assuming the opinions and identities of other participants.
- People with disabilities have equal rights.
- Be aware of the language you use in discussions and how you relate to others.
- Foster a spirit of mutual respect by listening to the wisdom everyone brings to the group.
- If you cannot find common ground, agree to disagree.
- Ask before taking pictures of people.
- Give room and space to the words and emotions of others.
- Maintain a welcoming and comfortable environment for everyone.

2. 'Visioning' exercise:

Envisioning socially just and environmentally sound food systems

SESSION OVERVIEW This session makes participants imagine what their desired future food system might consist of through guided questions. After an individual reflection, the participants discuss in groups what they envision and deduce core values for future food systems.



OBJECTIVES

- To develop individual visions for desired food systems
- To reach a collective understanding of the values and principles envisioned for a future food system



MATERIALS

- Pens
- Paper for writing or drawing
- Flipchart paper
- Markers



TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 40 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 5 min for introspection (Steps 2–4)
- 10 min for writing or drawing ideas from the exercise (Step 5)
- 5 min for the small group discussion (Step 6)
- 5 min for the plenary discussion of examples from two to three people (Step 7)
- 10 min for writing the values and core principles (Step 8)
- 3 min for the discussion and wrapping up (Step 9)



TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 30 MIN)

- 2 min for the introduction (Step 1)
- 5 min for introspection (Steps 2–4)

- 10 min for writing or drawing ideas from the exercise (Step 5)
- 3 min for the small group discussion (Step 6)
- 3 min for the plenary discussion of examples from two to three people (Step 7)
- 5 min for writing the values and core principles (Step 8)
- 3 min for the discussion and wrapping up (Step 9)



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Provide each participant with a pen and sheet of paper. Determine how you want to divide participants into groups of two to three people for the group discussion. Set up the flipchart and markers.



INSTRUCTIONS

▶ STEP 1

Introduce the activity as an introspection of their visions and principles related to the envisioned food systems.

▶ STEP 2

Ask participants to sit comfortably in their chairs and close their eyes.

▶ STEP 3

Start the exercise. *Try to envision your ideal food system in a future not too far away.*

▶ STEP 4

Ask the following prompting questions: Leave enough time in between the questions. Be sure to speak slowly.

- *Where do you get your food? What does this place look like? How does it feel to be there? Are you alone? Is it hard to get the food you want?*
- *Where is your food produced? Who produces it? How do they produce it? Do you know them? Do you like them? Do you know how they are feeling?*
- *What does your dinner look like? What does it taste like? Who prepared it? Who does the dishes? Do you enjoy it?*

▶ STEP 5

Ask participants to open their eyes, write the words that came up, and express their feelings using their chosen creative method. For instance, you can suggest they draw their vision/feelings.

▶ STEP 6

Divide participants into smaller groups and let them share their visions, feelings, and experiences regarding the exercise within the group.

▶ STEP 7

In the plenary, ask two to three people to share their visions or what they discussed in the group.

▶ STEP 8

In the plenary, ask participants to deduce the *values and principles* that emerge from their visions and discussions about food production, supply and consumption.

Guidance question: *What are your envisioned food system's values and core principles?*

Write the above question on the flipchart paper. While the participants share their thoughts, note the key values and principles they mention on the flipchart paper.



▶ **STEP 9**

Hang the flipchart paper on a wall to stay present in the workshop and wrap up.

▶ **STEP 10**

Link to the following section on degrowth. Here is a proposal for how you could make a bridge to the following section.

We keep the flipchart paper in sight to keep the values/principles in mind. We want to connect the values/principles you mentioned and the concept of degrowth, which (1) criticises growth-based societies and (2) proposes alternative societal models based on some of these values. To make these connections explicit and explore which specific values/principles you wrote that resonate with degrowth (and which do not), we want to briefly introduce degrowth to get all of us on the same page.

3. Introducing Degrowth

For this section, we prepared two options. Depending on the participants' political consciousness of this topic, you can either present an introductory presentation on degrowth ('degrowth light') or a more advanced presentation. Neither presentation assumes that the group is already familiar with degrowth. The difference lies in the degree to which participants are familiar with critiques of capitalism. It is best to review both presentations and then decide.

Generally, we recommend the following:

- Version 3a is for groups not immediately comfortable with a deeper critique of capitalist society and who prefer a gentler introduction to critical questions about society and the economy.
- Version 3b is for groups where most people are not afraid to criticise capitalism and want to think about capitalism's reliance on global structures of exploitation.



3a. Introducing Degrowth

Light version

SESSION OVERVIEW Give the whole group an easily understandable presentation about degrowth to help familiarise those unfamiliar with degrowth and refresh and complement the knowledge of those who know/have heard of it so that everyone is on the same page. While long debates can be held about degrowth, these slides present some key takeaways. You can use the PowerPoint presentation attached in the annexe of this document.

If you prefer not to use a laptop/projector, you can print the PowerPoint presentation and hand it out to participants or present it freely. However, the short YouTube videos introducing degrowth cannot be presented in this case.



OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the key ideas of degrowth and link the 'visioning' exercise and Part 4 of this workshop: overcoming the obstacles to food system transformation
- At the end of this session, the participants should understand that degrowth
 - is a growth critique and positive vision;
 - is not a recession – It is not less of the same, but building something different;
 - is planned and selective, reducing harmful production and consumption;
 - targets unnecessary consumption, acknowledging that not all people consume the same way but that the ultra-rich drives most consumption and resource use. For example, most flights are taken by a very small percentage of the population;
 - What do we need to (de-)grow? What counts as useful production?



MATERIALS

- Presentation (included in the training package)
- Laptop with an internet connection
- Projector
- White screen
- Speaker



TIMELINE FOR ALL SIZE GROUPS (TOTAL 12-15 MIN)

- 10 min for the presentation (Steps 1-3 and 5-8)
- 2-5 min for the video (Step 4)



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Read the presentation and ensure the sound works for the video. Check the videos in the introduction of the toolkit.



INSTRUCTIONS

▶ **STEP 1**

Start the presentation (Slide 1) and introduce the topic. Make a bridge between the 'visioning' exercise, if possible, by examining the values and principles the participants envisioned for food systems and quickly assessing whether some represent degrowth principles, as you will present below.

- **If yes, you can say:** *We have arrived at quite an impressive number of values and principles for socially just and environmentally sound food systems. We will now discover that the degrowth movement also embraces many of these principles.*
- **If not, you can say:** *Thank you all again for sharing your values and visions for socially just and environmentally sound food systems. Degrowth proposes another vision that we want to introduce to you. Some of the values and principles that degrowth proposes might inspire you further.*

▶ **STEP 2**

Go to Slide 2, 'Degrowth: A vision for the good life for all'.

Here is an overview of values and principles frequently associated with the degrowth movement. Which principles resonate with the ones we just summarised about our envisioned food systems? Which ones do not? These principles already

Degrowth means living well with less by living differently, prioritising well-being, equity and sustainability

*help us understand degrowth better and that degrowth promotes many values that many of us naturally share (such as cooperation and sharing a work-life balance) without knowing the degrowth movement. When you first hear the word degrowth, you may think of something negative, of a critique. Yes, degrowth is about reducing and slowing down, **but by design, it means living well** with less by living differently,*

prioritising well-being, equity and sustainability. A degrowth economy puts well-being ahead of profit, celebrates solidarity and empathy over competition and individualism, and considers human beings part of nature rather than dominating it. Degrowth is more than a critique. It describes a positive vision.

▶ **STEP 3**

Go to Slide 3, 'Let's brainstorm', and ask the group:

Before I go into more detail, there may be many people here who can give their view, perspective, or definition of degrowth. Who has heard of degrowth/the degrowth movement? Do you want to suggest a spontaneous description of what it means to you?

Let two to three people explain what degrowth is from their perspective.

▶ STEP 4

Go to Slide 4, 'Let's listen' – play the video (in the language of choice).
Here is a short introduction to degrowth.

▶ STEP 5

Go to Slide 5, 'Degrowth: Vision and critique', and explain what is written on the slide.

We have learned so far that degrowth has different dimensions. First, degrowth presents a hopeful and positive vision for human societies. Second, degrowth is a critique of a growth-based economy.

▶ STEP 6

Go to Slide 6, 'Degrowth as a growth critique'.

For this workshop, we want to pay special attention to this strength of degrowth: the analysis of how putting economic growth first is a major barrier to making fair and sustainable societies. Degrowth starts with a critique and analysis of the idea and ideology of growth, which is the foundation of Western society.

In modern societies, growth is taken for granted and no longer questioned. However, we should work hard to break down the idea that growth is always good, which means realising that we cannot keep trying to grow at all costs, especially if it hurts people or the environment.

Degrowth also says that economic calculations, such as the gross domestic product (GDP), should not be the basis for making decisions. How does the GDP

measure things? It is the worth of all the goods and services made yearly. The GDP is not a good way to measure how well a country is doing. For example, when a natural disaster, like an earthquake or storm, wipes out the way of life for thousands of people, the GDP may go up because new infrastructure and housing must be built, and people need to be assisted.

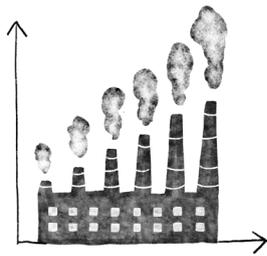
Therefore, the GDP paints the wrong picture of a country. When the GDP is the main factor in making decisions, the needs and well-being of people come second to making money.

Growth that never stops can also lead to too much unnecessary production and consumption. Companies must always improve their products by making new versions or following trends to stay competitive. In addition, products are made to break down quickly, called 'planned obsolescence', forcing people to buy new products. Last, commercial ads encourage overconsumption by making people want things they did not want before.

▶ STEP 7

Go to Slide 7, 'Degrowth: in favour of a good life for all within planetary limits'.
Degrowth calls for a radical reorganisation and resizing of our economies instead of a continuation of this need for growth in our societies.

- *This strategy involves a democratically **planned, fair, and selective** reduction in consumption to get back within the planetary limits and ensure everyone has a good quality of life while ensuring that the remaining consumption is shared fairly. (Planetary limits can be understood as being like the life support system of a spaceship. When they are used up, astronauts cannot continue to live on the spaceship.)*



Degrowth starts with a critique and analysis of the idea and ideology of growth, which is the foundation of Western society

- How does this work in real life? Degrowth is different from a crisis or a recession. With **selective downscaling**, degrowth is both about **having less and having more**: It means cutting back on things like private jets, polluting

With selective downscaling, degrowth is both about having less and having more

industries like oil and coal, and other things that hurt the planet and life on it and harm social justice. At the same time, it is about doing more things that could stop the planet's destruction and social injustice (such as public transport, education, public health, etc.). Not all production and consumption are unsustain-

able in the same way, and not everyone consumes the same amount.

- Finally, moving away from the growth intention means redistributing wealth on a large scale, both within countries and between the Global North and Global South, not only because the richest 10% are responsible for about half of all current greenhouse gas emissions but also because redistribution is an important way to fix social injustices.

▶ STEP 8



Go to Slide 8, 'What is the link with our envisioned food system?'

How does all of this help us move towards our desired food systems? Clearly, what we noticed in our visioning exercise was that our desired food systems are not yet entirely realised. Many aspects of the current food systems are at odds with our desires. Why is that? How can we change it?

What we have learned from this introduction to degrowth:

- First, the need for growth in our societies is one reason our ideal food systems have not come to fruition yet.
- Second, to make our desired food systems possible, we need a radical transformation away from this growth imperative. We must overcome the

obstacles the growth economy poses to food system transformation.

Let's try this in the following exercise.

We need a radical transformation away from this growth imperative.

3b. Introducing Degrowth

Advanced version

SESSION OVERVIEW Give a slightly advanced presentation to the whole group about degrowth to familiarise those unfamiliar with degrowth and refresh and complement the knowledge of those who have already heard of it so that everyone is on the same page. While long debates can be held about degrowth, these slides aim to present some key takeaways about degrowth. You can use the PowerPoint presentation attached in the annexe of this document.

If you prefer not to use a laptop/projector, you can print the PowerPoint presentation and hand it out to participants or present it freely. However, the short YouTube videos introducing degrowth cannot be shown in this case.



OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the key ideas of degrowth and link the ‘visioning’ exercise and Part 4 of this workshop: overcoming the obstacles to food system transformation
- At the end of this session, participants should understand that degrowth
 - is a growth critique and positive vision;
 - is rooted in a critique of capitalist ideology;
 - makes us question established power relations, norms and principles;
 - should be decolonial and in solidarity with social movements in the Global South;
 - calls for a good life for all people worldwide;
 - more broadly implies a political struggle for a radical restructuring of our economies and societies.



MATERIALS

- Presentation (included in the training package)
- Laptop with an internet connection
- Projector
- White screen
- Speaker



TIMELINE FOR ALL SIZE GROUPS (TOTAL 12-15 MIN)

- 10 min for the presentation (Steps 1-2, and 4-8)
- 2-5 min for the video (Step 3)



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Read the presentation and ensure the sound works for the video. Check the videos in the introduction of the toolkit.



INSTRUCTIONS

▶ **STEP 1**

Open the presentation.

▶ **STEP 2**

Go to Slide 2. Ask the participants: *Who is familiar with degrowth or post-growth? What does degrowth or post-growth mean to you?*

Invite a few people to share what post-growth/degrowth means to them.

▶ **STEP 3**

Go to Slide 3, 'Let's listen'. Play the video.

▶ **STEP 4**

Go to Slide 4, 'Degrowth: Vision and Critique'.

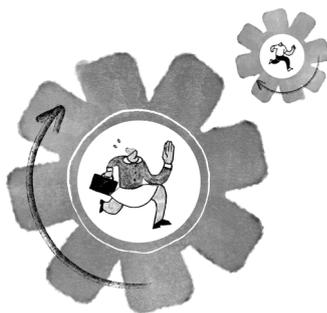
What we thus far understand is that degrowth has different dimensions. Degrowth is a positive vision full of hope for a future society. Degrowth stems from a critique of how economic growth is prioritised in our current society.

If you like, you can quote from the book *The Future Is Degrowth* or inform participants of it in some other way.

▶ **STEP 5**

Go to Slide 5, 'Economic growth: ideology of capitalist societies'.

- *What is the degrowth movement criticising about our society? It asserts that economic growth cannot be separated from resource consumption. Endless economic growth is incompatible with social justice or environmental and climate protection.*
- *While 'growth' in our society has the connotation of being positive, it relies on the exploitation of the environment (resources) and people (labour) and the privatisation of what used to be the communal or public use of goods and services from which only a small group profits.*
- *We are all familiar with the consequences of this: global social inequality, ecological crises, and the destruction of our livelihoods.*
- *This pursuit of perpetual economic growth is rooted in the functioning and ideology of capitalist societies. It is explicitly not just about a capitalist economy but rather a capitalist society. Existing power relationships, dominant norms, values, and ideas sustain the capitalist system that is behind the compulsion to pursue perpetual economic growth.*



▶ **STEP 6**

Go to Slide 6, 'Questioning dominant values and power relations'.

- *The degrowth movement says we must question the capitalist values and principles on which our societies are built.*
- *For example, what roles do individualism; the sacred character of private*

property; adherence to hierarchical, colonial, and patriarchal structures; and the centrality of such ideas as efficiency, profit maximisation, mass production, Western superiority, and the pursuit of economic growth, play in the current social and ecological crises?

(At this point, you can also choose other examples for the slide or your own.)

- *What values and principles are neglected in our society?*

▶ **STEP 7**

Go to Slide 7, 'Economic growth & (neo)colonial exploitation'.

One aspect that deserves special consideration in this context is the link between economic growth and colonial exploitation.

- *Some members of the degrowth movement specifically direct criticism towards countries in the Global North.*
 - *The overwhelming majority of environmental destruction is driven by the excess consumption and use of resources and energy in the Global North, the consequences of which are borne primarily by the Global South (Hickel 2020).*
 - *Consumption and prosperity in the Global North are principally based on exploiting (forced cheap) resources and (forced cheap) labour in the Global South.*
- *Degrowth should be thought of in decolonial terms and stand in solidarity with social movements in the Global South advocating a break with neocolonial dependencies and a self-determined development of countries (often also associated with a rejection of Eurocentric, colonial development indicators, such as the GDP, and a focus on goals, such as 'the good life/buen vivir').*

▶ **STEP 8**

Go to Slide 8, 'Degrowth: in favour of a good life for all within planetary limits'.

What are the requirements of the degrowth movement?

- *We must reduce those things destroying life on our planet and undermining social justice, which means reducing production and consumption in the Global North and breaking Eurocentric, colonial notions of development.*
- *In contrast, degrowth activists demand the expansion of those things that improve life on our planet and social justice, promoting principles and values, such as solidarity, sustainability, sufficiency, justice, cooperation, well-being, and caring.*
 - *Specifically, a redistribution of wealth is required between the Global North and Global South and within countries and regions.*

Degrowth requires us to question the current power relationships and demonstrate a political commitment towards a radical restructuring of society

What does this mean for us in specific terms?

We have learned that individual life changes (such as doing without) and changes at the farm level are important but not sufficient for the required social transformation. Degrowth requires us to question the current power relationships and demonstrate a political commitment towards a radical restructuring of society.

4. Overcoming obstacles to food system transformation

SESSION OVERVIEW The participants will start analysing how a growth-based society hinders transformations towards more just and sustainable food systems using the obstacle cards in the annexe. Participants can come up with strategies to overcome these structural obstacles. In the first phase of this session, the participants should be divided into groups of three to four. Finally, participants will reconvene and discuss their findings in the plenary.



OBJECTIVES

- Participants reflect on the current unsustainable and unjust food systems and the obstacles societies face to introduce a transformation towards more sustainable food systems.
- Participants recognise how changing the food system is related to overcoming the primacy of economic growth deeply enrooted in how societies function.
- Participants identify the usefulness of the degrowth perspective on food system transformation.
- Participants start sketching and reflecting on strategies for moving away from growth-based societies towards alternative food systems.



MATERIALS

- Obstacle cards printed double-sided
- Tape to hang the obstacle cards on the wall, or the cards can be spread on tables in the room
- Flipchart paper for each group
- Markers
- Flipchart with the guiding questions
- A flipchart stand



TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 85–105 MIN)

- 10 min for the introduction (Steps 1–3)
- 5 min for providing instructions and clarification (Steps 4–5)

- 45–65 min for strategy development (Steps 6–7)
- 20 min for the plenary strategy discussion (Steps 8–9)
- 5 min for wrapping up (Step 10)



TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 65–85 MIN)

- 5 min for the introduction (Steps 1–3)
- 2 min for the instructions and clarification (Steps 4–5)
- 45–65 min for strategy development (Steps 6–7)
- 10 min for the plenary strategy discussion (Steps 8–9)
- 3 min for wrapping up (Step 10)



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Print the double-sided obstacle cards, which are in the annexe of this document, and read them in advance. Write the guiding questions on flipchart paper and set this aside until the exercise.



INSTRUCTIONS

► STEP 1

Ask participants to listen to the instructions. Start with these instructions:

- *In this last exercise of the workshop, we explore the usefulness of a degrowth perspective—a perspective that, at its core, tells us that the necessary fundamental changes we need in our society to create a just and sustainable future can only be achieved if we manage to overcome the capitalist rules and norms that currently govern growth-based societies.*
- *Putting this perspective into practice, the workshop developers have created obstacle cards, which I have put [on this wall/table].*
- *The obstacle cards represent specific ways growth-based societies constrain the possibilities of transforming food systems. This list is not exhaustive but provides examples of economic and cultural aspects of growth-based societies.*

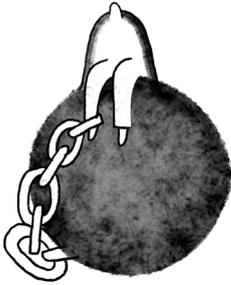
► STEP 2

Show the obstacle cards.

- *For each obstacle, there is a short explanation and examples regarding how it affects the food system.*
- *In this exercise, we use these obstacle cards while strategising pathways to reach our desired food systems. We can think about the structural barriers we must overcome on our journey to more desirable food systems using these obstacle cards. The task is to develop strategies to do so.*
- *Please divide into groups of three to four people (max). In each group, please select one or two obstacle cards, discuss them, and develop specific strategies to overcome this obstacle on our path towards the desired food system.*
- *To simplify this exercise, as a group, pick a specific aspect of your desired food system (such as buying food locally, drastically reducing large-scale farming, reducing food waste, etc.), and strategise only to achieve this specific goal with your specific obstacles in mind.*

▶ STEP 3

Show the participants the guiding questions and indicate how much time they should spend on each question. (They are in the annexe if you want to print them to hand them out to the participants.)



- Vision [time: 5 min]:
 - *On which aspect of our envisioned food system do we want to focus?*
- Obstacles [time: 10 min]:
 - *What does this obstacle mean in practice?*
 - *How does this obstacle relate to our desired food system?*
 - *How does it make transformation difficult?*
- Strategies [time: 20 min]:
 - *How can we overcome this obstacle?*
 - *What is our strategy?*
 - *Who or what does the strategy target?*
 - *What types of specific interventions does it include?*
 - *Towards what or whom are the specific interventions directed?*
 - *Who carries out the strategy?*
 - *How does it help, in practice, to overcome the obstacle you chose?*
 - *How can you evaluate the strategy's effects?*

▶ STEP 4

Provide some more clarification and instruction.

- *You can also come up with other obstacles to the growth in society that you want to overcome.*
- *Consider this obstacle in your groups in your specific context, not in general. Consider how a specific obstacle makes reaching your desired food system difficult and how we might strategise to establish changes in the food system (e.g. circumventing rules, unlearning habits, creating alternative ways of organising collectively, etc.). Be creative with your strategies!*

▶ STEP 5

Explain the time frame for this and where to ask for help.

- *You have about 45 min to discuss and strategise in your groups.*

Ask each group to develop specific strategies and describe them on a big sheet of paper (text or drawing).

- *Afterwards, we will discuss and collectively reflect on some of your strategies in the plenary. We will go from group to group if you want to discuss your ideas.*

▶ STEP 6

Check whether the exercise is understood and answer any questions. Let them form groups, or you can assign groups for them. Let them read the obstacle cards and collect the material they need.

▶ STEP 7

Walk around the room and pass by the groups to see whether they need support. Inform them when they have used 50% of the time and when they have five minutes left.

▶ STEP 8

Call them back into the full group to discuss their strategies.

▶ STEP 9

Ask them to share their experiences from the group work.

- Does anyone want to share which strategy they came up with in their group?
- What do others think about this strategy? Is it feasible? How does it connect to their specific obstacle(s)?

► **STEP 10**

Wrap up the exercise. Here is a possible reflection text that you can use if it works for you and your group. You can also wrap up the exercise in whatever way you like.



The exercise we did today showed us how our growth-driven economy and its reliance on efficiency, profit maximisation, and consumer culture, to name just a few of its features, create barriers and systemic pressures that make it harder to build the food system we want. Strategies to build food systems that are more fair and good for the environment must involve deep systemic changes that go beyond just the food system and include other parts of society, institutions, and values that shape how society is run. Let's look at the case of time. The average work week is 40 hours. Many people, especially women, are involved in care work. Along with getting and preparing food, care work includes caring for babies, children, sick family members, or older adults. They do not have much time left to do other things that take considerable time but are important to the degrowth of food systems, like joining a food collective, working in a community garden, growing and harvesting food, biking 30 min to a nearby farm, or

We need to imagine and plan how we can systemically change the food system beyond capitalist, growth-driven economies and societies

cooking from 'scratch' without using pre-made food. By reorganising and revaluing labour and care work, we can free up the time needed to do these things.

Food production and consumption are also linked to many other parts of the economy, such as infrastructure and mobility, housing and planning, and energy. It is important to

plan how possible synergies can be used and how possible trade-offs can be dealt with to create degrowth-beneficial food systems. For example, affordable housing, especially in cities and metropolises, can make it more important for people to eat food produced ethically and sustainably, which seems impossible when tenants spend half of their income on housing. Implementing a universal basic income could make a big difference in getting more people involved in sustainable and fair food practices. Overall, we need to imagine and plan how we can change the food system and consider the interdependencies we have already discussed and start pushing for systemic change beyond capitalist, growth-driven economies and societies. To do so includes, among other things, building alliances and supporting and being in solidarity with other actors, initiatives and movements.

5. Closing reflection and next steps

SESSION OVERVIEW This exercise helps participants reflect on their experiences throughout the workshop, determine which information, feelings, or attitudes have remained the same or changed because of the workshop, and express any unresolved issues or concerns. Additionally, it allows participants to think about what specific actions they can undertake in the future.



OBJECTIVES

- To allow a final reflection on the workshop
- To answer outstanding questions
- To recap the discussed topics
- To offer the possibility to ask for feedback



MATERIALS

No materials are needed.



TIMELINE FOR LARGE GROUPS (TOTAL 20 MIN MAX)

- 2 min for bridging to the previous exercise (Step 1)
- 13 min for participants to reflect on what they take away from the workshop (Steps 2–3)
- 5 min to answer any outstanding questions and close the workshop (Steps 4–5)



TIMELINE FOR SMALL GROUPS (TOTAL 10 MIN MAX)

- 2 min bridging to the previous exercise (Step 1)
- 3 min to ask what the participants take away from the workshop (Steps 2–3)
- 5 min to answer questions and close the workshop (Steps 4–5)



ADVANCED PREPARATION

No need for advanced preparation.



INSTRUCTIONS

▶ **STEP 1**

Create a bridge from the previous exercise. *Degrowth* gives us tools and a way to look at these different aspects so we can analyse and criticise them. It also tries to develop systemic alternatives to a 'growth' society. Today, we did this for food systems, but similar activities could be done for other sectors and the different ways they are linked.

▶ **STEP 2**

Ask two to three people: *What have you learned?*

▶ **STEP 3**

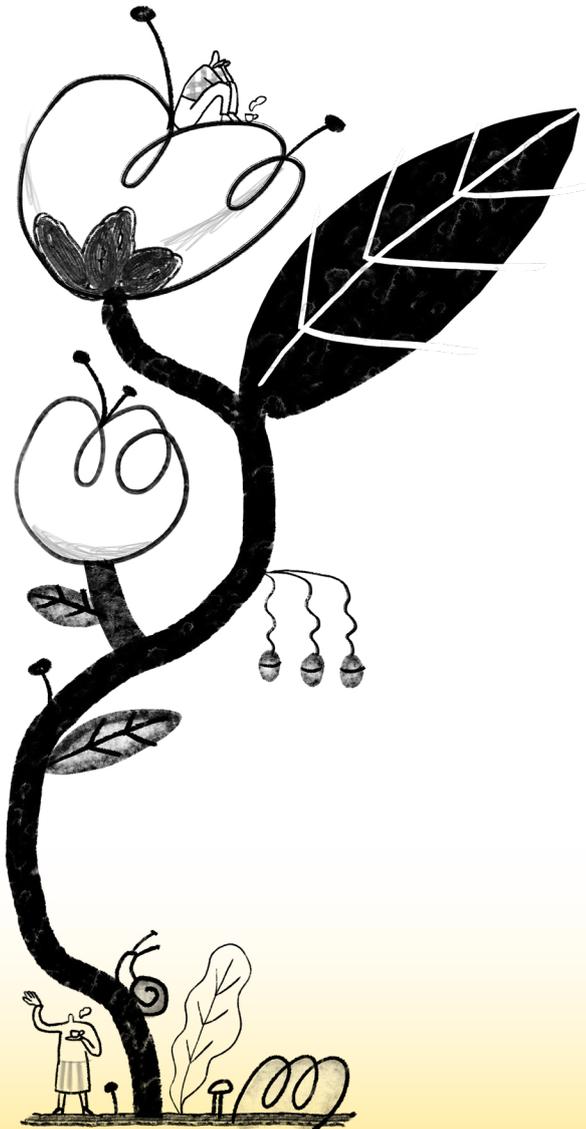
Ask two to three people: *What will you take away from the workshop? What are the possible next steps?*

▶ **STEP 4**

Ask whether there are any unanswered questions and answer them if possible. *Do you still have questions that you would like to ask?*

▶ **STEP 5**

Thank everyone for their time and energy and close the workshop.



Annexes

All annexes are in the zip file, available under:

<https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl/resources/>

- ANNEX 1** Presentation on degrowth and food systems.
- ANNEX 2** Obstacle cards to be printed double-sided.
- ANNEX 3** Guiding questions for the obstacle cards to print and hand out to groups.

