

Building Participatory Future Scenarios for a Socioecological Transition

**Methodological guide
2024 Version**



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Building Participatory Future Scenarios for a Socioecological Transition

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Xarxa d'Economia Solidària, XES (the Catalan Network for Solidarity Economy) has led the preparation of the guide. This organisation advocates for an economic system that respects people, the environment and the land. It abides by democratic, horizontal, transparency, equity and participation criteria.

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1.

Introduction

We deal with more news every day related to extreme weather events, the cost-of-living crisis and water scarcity. What was terrible speculation about the future until now has become a harsh reality. This is what we call ecological realism. It's now more crucial than ever to prepare for potential situations arising from the socioecological crisis.

We must highlight that scenario planning is a methodological tool to favour this collective dialogue and not to issue precise forecasts for the years ahead. On the contrary, the future is hard to predict and will probably be a mix of all our forecasts, at different times and places.

Therefore, collectively building future scenarios is valuable because it helps us develop a shared vision of our hopes and fears for our territories. On the one hand, it allows us to face dystopias and understand the main glimmers of hope we must capitalise on from grassroots movements facing unfavourable scenarios. This is essential for increasing our awareness of the collective paralysis caused by dominant dystopian thinking.

On the other, it 'forces' us to exercise utopian thinking, not from a naive point of view decontextualised from present challenges but compelling us to imagine a complex society where *nowtopias*¹ have become hegemonic, with their contradictions and conflicts. As Alexandra Rowland,² who coined the concept of *hopepunk*, states, utopia isn't a stable system. Imagining the future, whether to confront dystopia or to promote utopian ideas, is in itself a subversive act. It challenges the constraints of a perpetual present and counters the bleakness of the future brought about by the ongoing capitalist crisis.

Therefore, this guide features a series of methodological recommendations and narrative and communicative tools to help replicate the work of building futures scenarios everywhere possible and democratise the collective capacity to think about the future and anticipate what may come.

¹ Chris Carlsson i Francesca Manning, 2010: Nowtopia: strategic exodus. Antipode.

² Alexandra Rowland, 2019: An atom of justice, one molecule of mercy, and the empire of unsheathed knives. The Stellar Beacon. Hopepunk issue.

2.

Ecological realism: the basic premise

To position the socioecological crisis as a pillar of exploratory work, we must address the scientific forecasts for the coming decades concerning the behaviour of natural systems and how they can affect human systems. It is particularly relevant to consider three main factors of ecological realism: the consequences of climate change, the depletion of fossil fuels and critical resources to provide renewable energy and the impact of biodiversity loss.

When planning a workshop, we should consider the 2030-2050 predictions based on the most accurate scientific information available. We should rely on trustworthy sources to reduce the ideological weight of the presentation. It is a starting point that offers us the board game to carry out an exercise in collective creativity, helping us obtain a consistent and credible outcome.

A useful source to provide context is the latest report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which concludes that:

- Human-induced climate change has a global impact and is accelerating and intensifying.
- It is worse than we thought: the impacts and risks are becoming more serious earlier, and the uncertainty grows when reaching tipping points.
- It is profoundly unjust: people with less responsibility in the climate crisis bear most of the impact.
- The worst is still to come: we face higher risks and irreversible losses with current policies.

It is also interesting to use less common sources (and less likely to be labelled as ecologist), such as the World Economic Forum risk analysis³ that we display in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Analysis of the main risks in the next two to ten years, World Economic Forum.

³ World Economic Forum, 2023: The Global Risks Report 2023, 18th Edition. Available here: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf

Top 10 Risks

“Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period”



Source: World Economic Forum, Global Risks Perception Survey 2022-2023

We also think it is valuable to illustrate the consequences of climate change in the workshop’s geographical context. In the case of Catalonia, we have used the following:

- Extreme weather events: drought, heat waves, cold waves, torrential rain, increase of the likelihood of forest fires...;
- Loss of soil fertility and increase of desertification;
- Migration of population due to the hardships of living in their region caused by changes;
- Increase in conditions related to pollution and the effects of climate change. Surge of invasive species, for instance, mosquitoes carrying diseases (such as dengue fever);
- Rise of the sea level in the coastal areas of the Iberian Peninsula. Melting glaciers in the Pyrenees.

Another field is the high-impact fossil fuels, the depletion of key minerals used in technology to provide energy through other sources, and the quantity and type of energy they can yield. In this sense, we want to highlight the following effects:

- Depletions of fossil fuels and decline of the available energy for daily consumption.
- Difficulties in moving people, goods and information across long distances and reshoring the flux of people and goods.
- Potential interruption of basic supplies such as electricity, water, food...
- Constraints to resources for digitisation and electrification: difficulties accessing complex and high-consuming technology; use of simpler technology and reconversion of productive processes.
- The emergence of new massive-use energy sources such as biomass, solar and wind power.

A general aspect to consider is that climate change will not affect everyone equally because there are different degrees of social vulnerability in Western societies and the world. Therefore, we must consider the risk of increasing social inequalities, as well as the opportunity to create a more just, equitable, and participatory society to address a challenge that affects all of humanity.

We must also emphasise that this context does not only offer risks and vulnerabilities. It can also open opportunity windows because moments of instability always create situations that can lead to social change.

Lastly, we want to underline we should avoid explaining climate change and its consequences as inevitable and stress the urgency of reducing CO₂ emissions. To secure a better future for everyone, we must cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40 to 55% in the coming years. Various future scenarios are possible; human activity will determine if the future is more or less fit to live in. Anyhow, we must navigate the balance between accepting inevitable global heating and the necessity for adaptation while insisting on mitigation.

3.

Objectives, public and scope of scenarios

When approaching the work of scenario building, it is essential to plan ahead by clearly defining the goals, target audience, and available resources. In this section, we provide some pointers for this analysis.

Setting goals

Scenario building workshops may deploy various techniques and formats to achieve different objectives:

1. Raise awareness about the socioecological crisis.
2. Bring together actors on a shared vision of possible future scenarios.
3. Develop and prioritise shared strategies to face the socioecological crisis.
4. Practice utopian thinking and the capacity to imagine desirable futures.

In general, we can differentiate between workshops with a strong strategic focus and those pushing creativity and practising utopian thinking. This does not mean both factors cannot coexist, but depending on the public and context, emphasising certain techniques favouring one factor or the other might be necessary.

For example, in the experience of Futurs imPOSSIBLES, most of our workshops have had a strategic factor, focusing on strengthening the capacity of social agents and their communities to address the socioecological crisis. Therefore, it has been crucial to work on all scenarios (positive and negative) and explore the strategic priorities. For other workshops, addressed to a general audience, we have focused on practising utopian creativity to tackle dystopia.

Defining the public

As in all participatory processes, we must know what public we expect to involve in the work of scenario building. A premise to consider is that the more diverse the public, the richer the outcome: building scenarios is the result of the experience of all participants.

Segmenting the public is hard, but we can provide a couple of general pointers:

If we face an audience with little idea about the socioecological crisis, we will have to expand the first part of the work, based on giving background information (ecological realism mentioned in section 2). It is probably worth it to begin with the

goal of raising awareness and creating a shared vision of desirable futures to tackle the hegemony of dystopian thinking.

On the contrary, if the public is well aware of the situation, we do not have to spend as much time on the basic premises of ecological realism. Instead, we can focus on building a shared vision and developing a strategy. In this case, it is valuable to address all kinds of scenarios (positive and negative).

Working with people well aware of the environmental situation does not mean we always have to focus on strategy building. We may want to change the collective mood and boost hope, and so, we can focus on creative work and training utopian thinking.

Another possibility is focusing on strategic development with a diverse public. In this case, we must have enough time and resources because advancing through the different stages of the workshop must be accessible and inclusive for everyone, no matter their previous background.

Establishing the scope

Besides the goal and the public, we must also define the workshop scope. This implies answering two questions:

- 1. *What is the subject matter?***

We must set the area of exploration we want to work in: a region, an economic sector, an organisation... It is crucial to have a clear subject matter to establish the scope of the exercise.

- 2. *What is the temporal range?***

This is the second conditioning element. In general, when working with a larger work frame the temporal range is longer. In the case of Futurs imPOSSIBLES, we have usually been working at a 20-year distance in Catalonia or smaller areas. If the period is shorter, it is harder to imagine drastic changes. In addition, if it is longer, it is harder to establish ties with current trends or dynamics.

4.

Methodologies for participatory building of future scenarios

There are several methodological options for a participatory workshop on building future scenarios. In any case, relying on a group as diverse as possible will guarantee a rewarding process, particularly in two ways. On the one hand, due to the exchange of knowledge captured in stories about the future. On the other, due to the joint effort between social actors or individuals from the same context who can drive the desirable futures and avoid the undesirable through collaboration in the present.

One of the most common and tested methodological approaches is based on a 2x2 grid with 2 drivers of change and a key question to guide the work. In processes that allow enough time for involvement at all stages, these drivers are selected and can generate 4 different scenarios in every workshop (depending on the drivers), as detailed in section 4.1. In other circumstances, we can start from predefined scenarios (established through deskwork, context analysis, and scenario objectives) or concise future stories that can serve as a foundation for dialogue.

Sometimes, it can be beneficial to adopt a more open methodology that does not depend on outlining scenarios or temporarily clarifying uncertainties, but instead encourages a collective envisioning of a desirable future. In this field, we find ourselves in full-fledged exploration, and that's why we present three different methodologies: the Three Horizons model, the appreciative gaze approach and training utopian thinking through what we called "Chronicles of the Great Transition". We believe it is essential to imagine plausible and desirable futures grounded in ecological realism, as we need alternatives to the catastrophic narratives that dominate our world.

In the following sections, we briefly explain four participatory methodologies for building future scenarios:

- / Scenario planning through drivers of change
- / The Three Horizons model
- / Appreciative gaze approach
- / Chronicles of the Great Transition

4.1. Scenario planning through drivers of change

This methodology serves a strategic purpose: uniting various stakeholders to examine possible future scenarios and helping them identify the strategic priorities needed today to prevent undesirable outcomes and work toward achieving desirable ones.

In this sense, future scenarios must be relevant, possible, plausible, internally consistent, and applicable to different development alternatives. They should not be forecasts or prolongations of current dynamics.⁴ They answer a key question defining the geographical or sectoral scope of the exploratory work and focus on a limited number of strategic topics such as food, communities or production.

Usually, we can conceptualise a scenario-through-drivers workshop in two parts: the first would be building the scenarios, and the second would be developing proposals for the future (actions or strategies) to advance towards desirable outcomes and avoid undesirable ones.

Stage 0: creating scenarios

We must outline two possible starting points:

- a) Creating scenarios from scratch.
- b) Working from predefined scenarios.

We have developed four predefined scenarios (option b) within the Futurs imPOSSIBLES campaign. We detail this methodology in this section. This helps conduct the workshop more straightforwardly and expand the ‘conversations on the future’ to more contexts, without needing much time or resources.

Therefore, we begin with predefined scenarios at a Spanish and European level, which we have adapted to more local or sectoral contexts to enable participants to relate them to their own realities. If enough time is available, you can create the scenarios from scratch (option a). In **Table 1**, we explain how to do it.

Table 1. Creating scenarios from drivers of change

The methodology we usually employ uses a grid with four quadrants, each representing a future to explore. The two axes of the grid (X and Y) are the **drivers**

⁴ European Environment Agency, *Looking back on looking forward: a review of evaluative scenario literature*, Technical Report 3/2009, 2009; S. Milne, *Scenarios and personas: towards a methodology for portraying the carbon intensity of UK lifestyles to 2030*, RESOLVE Working Paper 06-09, 2009; P. Nicol, *Scenario planning as an organisational change agent*, Graduate School of Business, Curtin University of Technology, 2005.

of change, which represent the factors with the potential to influence the workshop's subject matter (geographical area, sector, organisation) within the temporal range. Each quadrant defined by the axes makes up a **future scenario**. The axes make us stand at a crossroads where we have to collectively and creatively think: *what would life look like if X and Y were to happen?* The answer to this question, which describes what this future looks like and how we have reached it, is the **story about the future** for each scenario.

If there is enough time to involve participants in creating the axes, we can discuss the most relevant and uncertain drivers of change⁵. As mentioned, these drivers configure the axes and then the four scenarios. The most typical change driver categories are:

- Demographic. Such as the population pyramid, national migrations, rural/urban distribution of population, etc.
- Scientific and technological. Such as technological innovation and development, the degree of technological dependency, investment in technology, etc.
- Economic. Such as the influence of international policies, economic regionalisation/globalisation, employment, etc.
- Environmental. Such as the availability of natural resources, changes in land use, climate change, biodiversity loss, etc.
- Psychosocial. Such as ecological conscience, culture of participation, etc.

Gathering the necessary scientific evidence to provide a context to change driver analysis is paramount to fulfilling this task. Selecting these drivers will exert a deep influence during the rest of the exploratory work. Thus, we should begin with an initial information-sharing process to level participants' knowledge and foster balanced discussions.

For instance, to compile the report *Consumption and Global Change*,⁶ future scenarios were employed to envision the future of consumption and lifestyles in Spain in 2035 and 2050. The discussion on the main drivers of change outlined two axes: democratic regeneration and the speed of the ecological crisis. Therefore, the worst scenario depicted a democratic regression and a quick and severe acceleration of the ecological crisis. The best scenario was the opposite: democratic regeneration and moderate effects of the ecological crisis.

⁵ Drivers of change are the primary underlying forces of trends and the factors that have the potential to influence the subject matter over time.

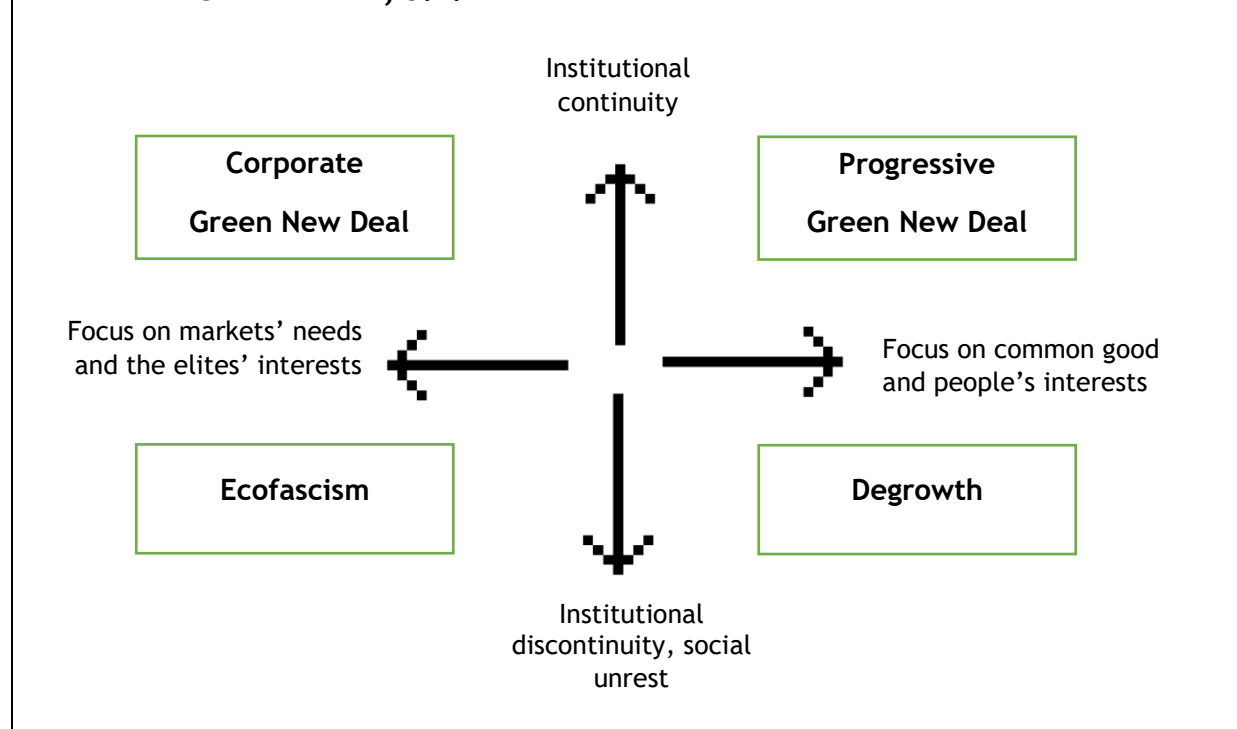
⁶ Cambio Global en España 2020/50. Consumo y estilos de vida (2011). Centro Complutense de Estudios e Información Medio Ambiental (CCEIM) i Centre de Recerca i Informació en Consum (CRIC).

Concepción Piñeiro and Jose Luís Fernández Casadevante initially elaborated the four scenarios we have worked on.⁷ These scenarios took into account two essential and uncertain drivers of change for a socioecological transition:

- A sociopolitical factor: the level of institutional stability or breakdown, which relates to the extent of social unrest.
- An economic factor: the degree to which the economic system aligns with market logic and the interests of the elites, or, on the contrary, responds to the logic of the common good and the interests of the majority.

By combining these two factors, we can develop four stories that explore possible futures, each with varying probabilities, but significant enough to consider (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Four future scenarios facing the socioecological crisis by Piñeiro, C. and Fernández Casadevante, J.L.



In **Annex 6a**, we display the stories describing the four scenarios, with 2045 as the chosen projection year. These stories were drafted thinking at a State and European level and have been updated with the results from further workshops. In workshops with lower participation, or where we aim to simplify the content, we have reduced

⁷ These stories synthesise those gathered in the text “Disputar el mañana. Escenarios de futuro, resiliencia y narrativas ecosociales”, written by José Luís Fernández Casadevante ‘Kois’ and Concepción Piñeiro.

the scenarios to two: a desirable one, 'Living Better with Less,' and an undesirable one, 'Our Lifestyle Is Non-Negotiable.' You can find them in **Annex 6b**.

Stage 1: Building future scenarios

This stage focuses on exploring various scenarios and tailoring future visions to align with the workshop's specific geographical, sectoral, or organisational context. Normally, we must divide the participants into as many groups as scenarios, so that each person will only work on one scenario. It is important to clarify this from the beginning, otherwise participants may think they'll have time to work on all scenarios. Participants will probably ask what the criteria are to choose one scenario over the other, but there is not a clear answer: surprisingly, many people choose the non-desirable scenario, maybe because they think it has a higher probability. Others choose desirable scenarios because they want to focus on positive pathways...

Once divided into groups, work begins. Firstly, we **travel to the future** through the stories. A simple but effective way is to read the story together, with each participant reading aloud a paragraph.

Once all participants "are" in the future, the collective **building exercise** begins. It has to orbit around specific elements that facilitate the exploration. For example, in the case of a workshop conducted in a town with 20,000 inhabitants on the outskirts of Barcelona, the exercise revolved around a core question (setting the scope and temporal range of the workshop) and three further questions (setting the topics to explore):

What will the town look like under this scenario in 2045?

How will this scenario express itself in:

- *the community, care and social cohesion?*
- *the agrifood system?*
- *access to housing and urban planning?*

These questions are the same for the four scenarios. We can use several techniques to advance the workshop, group discussion, writing, drawing, acting, etc. The outcome must be a description of the region's or specific area's situation for each scenario and topic. It is crucial to have a series of guiding questions prepared to encourage reflection in each area. We offer some examples on the three topics below:

a) Access to housing and urban planning

- *How many inhabitants live in the town? Has this number increased or declined?*
- *What role does the town have in relation to its surroundings (e.g., the capital of the county, the capital of the country...)?*

- *How has urban planning and land use evolved? Are there more fields or more paved roads?*
- *What is the dominant type of access to housing?*
- *How have the neighbourhoods and population evolved?*

b) Community

- *What role does the community have when satisfying individual needs?*
- *How is gender, origin, age, and body diversity tackled?*
- *What kind of social conflicts exist? Is there violence? Who exerts it?*
- *How have migratory fluxes evolved, and what impact have they had on the community, neighbouring links, etc?*
- *What role do community economies (consumer cooperatives, care networks, exchange and mutual aid networks, community spaces, etc.) have in the social fabric?*
- *How relevant is commons-based resource management?*

c) Agrifood system:

- *Has the production of basic foods risen in the region? What is the degree of self-produce? What are the dominant productive techniques?*
- *What is food like (access to fruit and vegetables, proteins, processed foods...)?*
- *What is the culture around food consumption (in terms of cooking, producing and buying food?*
- *How has the supply chain evolved?*
- *Are there inequalities in food consumption?*
- *What role do agroecological initiatives play in producing and consuming?*

Following the same example, the outcome of the workshop could be synthesised like this:

| Ecofascim | Corporate Green New Deal | Progressive Green New Deal | Degrowth |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Community, care and social cohesion | Community, care and social cohesion | Community, care and social cohesion | Community, care and social cohesion |
| Agrifood system | Agrifood system | Agrifood system | Agrifood system |
| Access to housing and urban planning | Access to housing and urban planning | Access to housing and urban planning | Access to housing and urban planning |

To finish the exercise, we can illustrate the scenarios through creativity. For example, participants can design the front page of a newspaper summarising the scenario. This task helps participants express the scenario through people, places, businesses, etc., of their communities.

Lastly, to close this stage, once participants have described life in 2045, we can bring up the following question: ***How have we reached this situation?*** This question aims to reconstruct the sequence of events leading up to the scenario. This part of the workshop allows us to start working on the strategy because it forces participants to identify the cause-effect relation connecting the future with the present. Based on the experience of Futurs imPOSSIBLES, this is probably one of the most gratifying tasks, so it is worth assessing how much time and thoroughness to invest in it. For instance, a comprehensive way of tackling the temporal reconstruction of a specific geographical area would be the one below:

| | 2024 - 2030 | 2030 - 2040 | 2040 - 2045 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| What has happened at the State/European scale? | | | |
| What has happened at the local scale? | | | |
| What was your role in it? | | | |

The stories resulting from this exercise are mainly qualitative. What matters is the logic within the scenario and the links between factors triggering different situations. Sometimes, stories feature percentages or quantities to illustrate the enormity of changes. However, this should be, above all, a qualitative proposal. Quantitative modelling of scenarios requires other techniques than the ones described in this guide.

Things to consider:

How much time do we need for this stage?

A minimum of two hours. We must consider the justification of the scenarios and the basic premises on ecological realism, the creation of the workgroups, the immersion into the future, the building of scenarios by topics and the reconstruction of the temporal range. We should set aside around 2.5-3 hours for a

quality temporal reconstruction. If we want to reduce the workload, we can scale down and tackle only two topics.

How many facilitators do we need?

We define the number of facilitators according to the maximum number of people that allows an inclusive deliberative process. Normally we would say that the maximum limit is 10 people per facilitator. The desirable number of people per group is six or seven. This number will also depend on the number of scenarios to develop. At times, we can plan a four-scenario workshop expecting 30 people to show up, but in the end, only 15 are present, and we can no longer develop the four scenarios. Therefore, we recommend setting up a registration form and correctly sizing the team.

What to do if participants do not trust the scenario or want to “escape” from it?

Once we are deep into dialogue, it is common for participants to want to get out of the scenario they are developing. This can happen in two different ways. The first is that participants may question the scenario. The second is they may draw up another scenario. This can happen if someone is working on an undesirable scenario but tries to find glimmers of hope. On the contrary, someone is developing a desirable scenario and wants to introduce critical or pessimistic elements.

In any case, as facilitators, we must insist on the rules of the game to make sure it works: it is a speculation exercise, and we must accept the scenarios we are creating. To prevent these dynamics, we recommend warning participants at the beginning or even beforehand, so that they arrive mentally prepared. We must clearly state that no scenario will actually happen. The future will probably be a mix of all our forecasts in different spaces and moments. If some participants prefer not to work on a scenario, we can make them change groups, so they feel more comfortable.

What to do if participants do not agree on the scenario description?

One of the main goals is achieving a coherent and agreed description of each scenario. Disagreements are common, but to reap the rewards of the work, we need to achieve a shared and agreed vision. To settle disagreements, we can place clashing descriptions into several moments (‘first this happened, then this evolved towards this other thing’) or places (‘this happened here, and this somewhere else’).

How to manage emotions and their impact?

Some issues may affect individuals who are unfamiliar with the topics discussed, sometimes leading to reactions commonly associated with traumatic situations, such as freezing, fighting back, or fleeing. As trainers, we must be aware this can happen. However, the workshop doesn't contemplate a space to talk about emotions. These kinds of spaces are not common in public contexts and can cause unease among participants. To take into account this dimension, we recommend giving some space, at the end of the workshop, to talk privately to the persons in need of emotional comfort. It is important to give importance to these emotional reactions and not to hide it or underestimate it.

Stage 2: Strategic prioritisation and proposal building

In this second stage, the goal is building shared strategies and knowing which to prioritise. Therefore, we will work on the desirable and undesirable aspects of the different scenarios to define the actions and strategies. This will help us advance towards the desirable one while avoiding the undesirable one.

One of the most effective ways to do so is to divide into groups, not by scenarios but by topics. Following the previous example, we would make groups for each of these topics:

- *Community, care and social cohesion*
- *Agrifood systems*
- *Access to housing and urban planning*

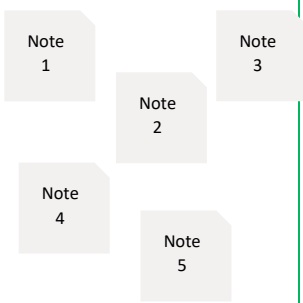
The first task for each group is to identify all **future aspects** mentioned earlier and relate them to the topic of each scenario. Ideally, each group will have members from all scenarios. Typically, the trainers are responsible for gathering all the future aspects of each topic and preparing them for review among the participants. We can do this in between stages or the days before holding the second stage of the workshop.

While reviewing the future aspects of each topic, the group should agree on whether they are desirable, undesirable or mixed. **Desirable in green, undesirable in red and mixed in yellow.** To clarify the ambiguities of mixed aspects, we can invite participants to explain what should happen for those aspects to stop being mixed and become desirable. Like this, we would end up with a classification with only desirable and undesirable aspects.

Once we have the list of desirable and undesirable aspects for each topic, we can begin working on ideas to walk towards the desirable future from the present, considering the undesirable to avoid it. We can group these proposals into strategies that include various measures. A good option is using sticky notes because they can be grouped together.

A possibility, before brainstorming, is identifying all present aspects (the *seeds of the future*). Like this, we have a diagnosis of the starting point. Once we have identified the future and present aspects, we can start working on those strategies that can strengthen what we have today to achieve desirable futures and avoid undesirable ones.

We can imagine the following diagram:

| Community, care and social cohesion | | |
|--|--|--|
| Present aspects with which we can connect the proposals (the <i>seeds of the future</i>) | Proposals on sticky notes which configure strategies | Future aspects (marked as desirable, undesirable or mixed) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Present aspect 1 ■ Present aspect 2 ■ Present aspect 3 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Future aspect 1 ■ Future aspect 2 ■ Future aspect 3 ... |

The result of the exercise should be a set of strategies and actions grouped around each one. We recommend a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one: choosing fewer actions to develop them thoroughly and with enough time.

Based on this identification, we can follow suit by drafting an action plan or strategic plan, considering various tasks: prioritising strategies and actions, timeframe, resource allocation, etc. The level of thoroughness of the tasks will depend on each case.

In **Annex 6c**, we include a practical sheet with the steps to develop the methodology.

Guiding notes:

How much time do we need for this stage?

We need a minimum of 1.5 hours to obtain the table on seeds of the future, strategies and actions. We will need more time if we want to prioritise and explore how to accomplish the actions and strategies. All in all, stages 1 and 2 can be done over a one-day workshop with a breakfast and lunch pause, committing six or seven hours in total. Alternatively, we can structure the workshop in two days in three-hour sessions. The first day would be for building scenarios and the other for proposals and organising into action groups to carry out the ideas.

How can we foster creating disruptive or innovative actions?

When planning actions and strategies, it is normal to fall into already existing frames. This is why it is interesting for participants to imagine disruptive solutions. To do so, we can explicitly propose that there has to be at least one proposal that looks impossible or hard to imagine today. We can also prepare the more common answers as a starting point and ask what else can be done. We can also start from the seeds of the future and ask what we need to scale.

Can we progress faster through the seeds of the future?

If we prefer not to spend much time identifying what already exists, the workshop facilitators can previously prepare a catalogue of inspiring projects related to preidentified desirable aspects. Usually, ensuring group diversity results in more diverse seeds and strategies.

4.2 The three horizons model

In the three horizons version, we only address one future scenario (the desirable) to identify the issues in the present we want to modify and then establish the transformation proposals to deal with them and achieve the desirable future.

The three horizons methodology is explained in **Figure 3**, where the X axis represents time (from the present to the future) and the Y axis represents dominant dynamics. This is the description of each horizon:

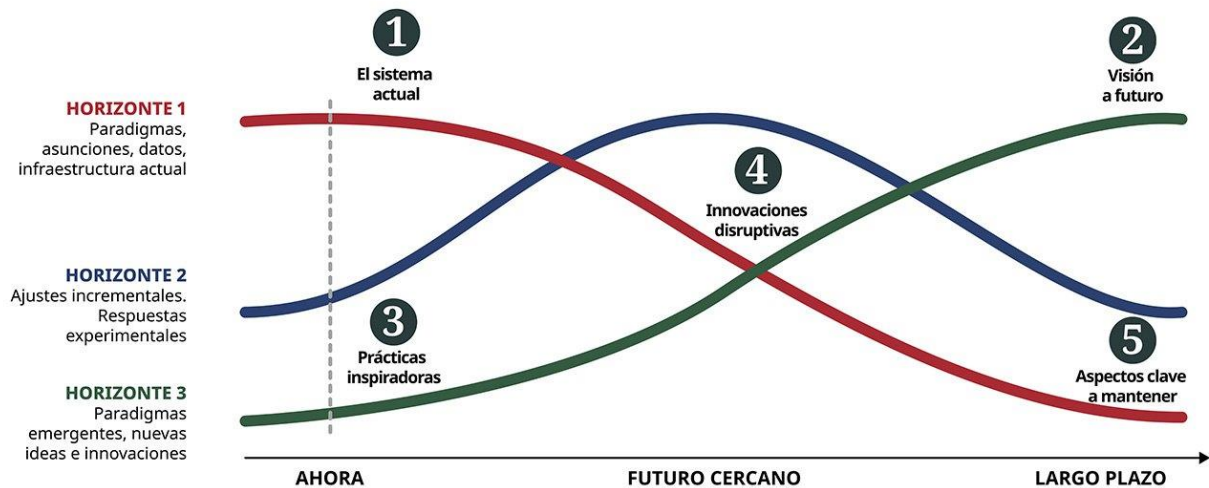
Horizon 1 (H1) depicts the undesirable present dominant issues causing the current socioecological crisis. The goal is for these dynamics to decline and stop being dominant in the future.

Horizon 3 (H3) displays the desirable dynamics for socioecological transition, which currently exist cut off from each other (they are seeds)⁸ but are not yet dominant. The goal is for them to prevail in the future.

Horizon 2 (H2) portrays the path between horizons 1 and 3. The goal is diminishing the undesirable issues in the present, growing and multiplying the existing seeds for socioecological transition, so they become dominant in the desirable future.

Figure 3. Three horizons methodology diagram

⁸ Inspired by the project Seeds for Good Anthropocenes, <https://goodanthropocenes.net/>



This methodology defines a workflow with these steps:

1: Diagnosis: the current system

Participants can identify the current difficulties of socioecological transition and the biggest challenges. Questions to guide reflection: *What's going on today? How would we define business as usual? What do we take for granted? What weaknesses does this paradigm have?*

2: Future vision: the desirable scenario

The key question to guide reflection is: *What's the future of the subject matter up to 2045 in relation to the crisis and the socioecological transition?* Participants can think and dream of their desirable future. Other questions to guide reflection could be: *what do we want to promote? Towards where do we want to go? Which opportunities do we want to capitalise on?*

3: Inspiring projects: the seeds of the future

Participants can think of projects, initiatives, and actions (seeds of the future) in the present that feature elements from the desirable future. Questions to guide reflection include: *are there emerging signs today that foretaste the future?*

4: Disruptive innovations: strategies

Participants can think and codesign strategies to develop in the present. On the one hand, to tackle undesirable aspects (current issues and challenges) and make them disappear, and on the other, to achieve the identified desirable aspects (desirable futures). Questions to guide reflection include: *what practical*

tests, experiments, and initiatives are beginning to appear to offer answers to the weaknesses of Horizon 1?

5: Key aspects to maintain: what don't we want to lose

Lastly, we think about which aspects of the present we want to preserve and defend so they do not get lost. Which aspects of Horizon 1 (strengths, characteristic features) don't we want to lose despite changes and the passing of time? Which do we have to fight to keep alive?

We can skip this last step if we are short on time and also if we believe it's more convenient to finish with step 4, the disruptive innovations.

A possible variation is starting with steps 2 (desirable future) and 3 (seeds of the future) and then step 1, focusing on the main challenges and characteristics of the current system which hinder seeds of the future from becoming widespread. Lastly, do step 4: identify disruptive strategies to reduce or banish the obstacles of the dominant system and scale seeds of the future to achieve the desirable future.

When planning the desirable future, we can use the positive stories in **Annex 6a** and **6b**, combined or on their own.

Several of the aspects of developing scenarios through drivers of change also apply, particularly those outlining the workshop's scope (geographical, sectoral, organisational) as well as the core topics to analyse.

4.3 Appreciative gaze approach

Despite not having much experience in this methodology, we believe it's valuable to include it because it cherishes existing initiatives and helps identify challenges to expanding them. Working with an appreciative gaze approach allows us to modify people's perception of their organisation and their relationship with the socioecological crisis. Feeding the self-perception of being seeds of the future for a socioecological transition is valuable. The Garúa cooperative defines it in the following words:⁹

What if we look at some current experiences and movements and project them with hope towards the future? What if, instead of pointing out their limits, biases and shortcomings, we imagined the potentialities

⁹ <https://www.garuacoop.es/semillas-de-futuro-microutopias-mirada-apreciativa-y-alternativas/>

they could deploy in favourable political, economic and cultural contexts?

(...) We have to train appreciative inquiry towards specific alternative experiences. We owe them the inspiration to envision what our neighbourhoods and towns could look like if we someday achieve the transition towards societal models more in sync with ecological limits and social justice and democracy criteria.

A workshop like this consists of the following steps:

1: Diagnosis

Introduce the basic premises of ecological realism explained in Chapter 2.

2: Catalogue of inspiring experiences and selection of micro-utopias

Select current experiences to set as examples. Social and Solidarity Economy is one of the main sources to look at because we can find examples in all sectors: energy communities, agroecological consumer cooperatives, housing cooperatives, shared mobility initiatives, etc. This selection can be done before the workshops (with the organisers) or during the workshop.

3: Travelling to the future and creating the scenario

Form groups for each chosen micro-utopia and consider the following situation: we are in 2045 and have achieved a fair and democratic ecological transition. This experience, which was a minority option in 2024, is now majoritarian. You, who saw this change happen, can you tell us what the initiative consisted of, and which factors transformed the experience from being minoritarian to dominant?

Therefore, it is necessary to provide an initial description of the predominant initiative, followed by an identification of the factors that have contributed to the process of mainstreaming.

4: Potentialities of micro-utopias

At this point, we can ask participants which changes these experiences have achieved in 2045 and ask them to classify them into factors:

- Psychosocial
- Sociopolitical
- Economical and productive
- Environmental

- Gender
- Technical and scientific

These workshops combine the dimension of training utopian thinking and a strategic dimension. Regarding storytelling, the results have potential because, beginning from existing initiatives, we can materialise and generate an alternative desire to the actual consumerist society and envision an inspiring story about alternative ways of living. José Luís Fernández Casadevante ‘Kois’ strengthens this idea:¹⁰

The best raw materials we possess to unchain this enthusiasm exercise are our humble alternatives. We must look at them with gratitude, imagining what fruits we would pick if these projects grew and enjoyed institutional legitimacy, resources and favourable laws. Where it's easier to find shortages, lacks and faults, the challenge is highlighting their capacities and guessing the keys that can make these micro-utopias more feasible, realistic and inspiring.

In any case, it is a whole milieu to explore.

4.4 Chronicles of the Great Transition

If our main goal is to combat a mood of collective defeat and foster utopian thinking, we will focus on working with desirable scenarios. This does not mean that we can't include strategic elements in these workshops, but it isn't essential because the first goal is valid in itself.

Our proposal focuses on placing participants at the centre of the Great Transition, encouraging them to narrate and shape its development. These are some elements to consider when working on desirable scenarios:

1. We must make an initial diagnosis so that everyone begins at the same point and understands the premises of ecological realism. We must define how and when we do this diagnosis.
2. When planning the workshop, we must have a clear idea of the outcome and the return participants will receive. This can be an incentive. We must include the artistic dimension. A relatively accessible way is using artificial intelligence tools to draw landscapes from the participants' descriptions. If more resources are available, we can integrate artists or architects into the workshop so they can perform their art. This

¹⁰ *Tirant pedres a la lluna ens anem fem forts*, dins de *Futurs (im)possibles. Propostes i imaginaris per una transició ecosocial*. Rubèn Suriñach and Eva Vilaseca (coords), published by Pol·len Edicions. November 2024.

does not necessarily have to happen during the workshop. The return can be made a few days later through an exhibition or a return session.

3. When envisioning utopian futures, it is essential to avoid portraying all scenarios as perfectly harmonious. Incorporating dynamic elements, conflicts, and contradictions is necessary to create realistic stories and foster deeper engagement.

From this general starting point, there are various methodological options. We provide an example of a workshop from Futurs imPOSSIBLES based on the *hopepunk* story¹¹ you will find in the **Annex 6d**.

Part 1. Basic considerations: ecological realism and desirable futures

With all the participants together, we create an initial moment to:

- Explain the frame of building scenarios: ecological realism, therefore, a realistic diagnosis of socioecological challenges.
- Contextualise the need to combat dystopian thinking and train the capacity to imagine a better future.
- Desirable future: make clear we will work from a scenario in which the ecological transition has been addressed with justice, social cohesion and citizen democracy/participation.

Part 2. Presentation of the news from the future and creation of topic-specific groups

We introduce the front page of the newspapers from the future, where we find five or six articles from 2045. In this example, we worked on three newspaper front pages, focused on the following topics:

- How we work
- How we live together and care for each other
- How we learn and have fun

Of course, in each context, we can decide which topics to address and which news to write about.

Allow participants five minutes to select the topic they are most interested in. Then, divide them into three groups, each focusing on one front page.

Part 3. Travelling to the future and creating news

This is the central part of the workshop. To start, with the subgroups formed, we do a round of introductions, so participants become familiar with one another. After that, we briefly explain the exercise. It is important to remind participants to prepare for

¹¹ Hopepunk is a subgenre of speculative fiction that emphasises hope and community struggles as drivers of stories. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hopepunk>

their journey into the future, setting the tone for their upcoming immersion into the year 2045.

We have done the trip to the future based on the hopepunk story (Annex 6c), a first-person story on how the Great Transition was achieved. There are various ways to share the story, but the method we typically choose is reading aloud, with each participant taking turns to read a paragraph.

Once we arrive in the future, participants have to organise between them to form groups of two or three people who will work on the same piece of news. We ask each group to develop the news according to the following structure (we can provide a template to ease the process):

- Headline
- Lead-in
- Body: who, what, when and why
- Brief statement of the protagonists
- Photo and caption

To develop the exercise, we can ask participants to divide into roles. For instance, one is the journalist, and the rest are the protagonists of the article. In fact, we can prepare a list of possible protagonists for each piece of news. It is valuable to include protagonists who are opposed to the news or are adversely affected. Like this, we have a conflict within the utopia.

While doing the exercise, the trainers can check on groups and solve doubts or help clarify the situation. We must highlight two elements the article should include:

- How we have reached this achievement.
- Consider ecological realism to some extent.

In Table 3, we present a potential methodological expansion developed by Xixa Teatre, aimed at discovering the deeper aspects of role-playing in this type of workshop. This approach allows us to explore the contradictions and conflicts in desirable scenarios.

| |
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| <p>Table 3. Methodological alternative: forum theatre and workgroups.</p> |
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|---------------------------------------|
| <p>By La Xixa Teatre¹²</p> |
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|--------------------------|
| <p><u>Objective:</u></p> |
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| <p>This methodological expansion aims to foster discussion about the future scenario and broaden the range of arguments in favour and against the new reality. By doing so, it encourages reflection and stimulates critical thinking.</p> |
|--|

¹² <https://www.laxixateatre.org/>

Description of the intervention:

Based on identified roles, the characters develop a simple representation. Each character adopts a point of view representing one opinion of the featured articles. We recommend suggesting points of view highlighting favourable aspects of the news as those aspects in which certain collectives can be adversely affected.

Step by step:

1. The journalist character presents the articles as a live news broadcast.
2. Character 1 is asked about their opinion of this new situation, and they give their opinion.
3. Character 2 is asked for their opinion.
4. The action is repeated as many times as necessary, depending on the number of characters.
5. Characters discuss.
6. The journalist asks the public: Which of these characters best represents your opinion? Whom do you support?
7. Once the public answers, the journalist suggests they stand on stage with the character they support.
8. Then, the public can share their opinion and try to convince those with another opinion to change places.
9. If no one changes their opinion, the journalist suggests a hypothetical argument that would make someone change posture.

Part 4. Sharing news and closing

Once all subgroups have done their exercise, we generate a plenary space to briefly share the pieces of news. We can generate a final speaking turn for participants to share reflections, ideas, emotions, etc. the exercise has awakened.

For this type of workshop, the return to all participants is a 2045 newspaper gathering all the articles drafted by participants in a format compatible with social networks.

This type of workshop is less demanding for trainers because participants have more autonomy in drafting news, and time-wise, 1.5 hours is enough.

5.

General recommendations on the participatory building of future scenarios

- How can we run an accessible workshop from the point of view of privileges and power dynamics?

Accessibility, inclusion, and well-being of participants are key elements in the success of a participatory process, which is guided by values and principles such as equal opportunities—linked to integration and social justice—human rights, representativity, a gender approach, equity, and parity.

In addition to these principles, we must ensure inclusive participation that considers gender, social class, age, and diversity, with particular attention to power dynamics both within the group and in the broader societal structures.

To apply these accessibility and inclusion measures and procedures, we must fulfil the following actions:

- Identify the limits and obstacles to democratic participation, accessibility and horizontal inclusion.
- Establish measures to eliminate or mitigate inequalities in participation possibilities.
- Carry out an ongoing assessment of participation.

Below, we introduce some measures worth developing to ensure the accessibility, inclusion and well-being of participants:

Facility accessibility: The workshop venue must be accessible to individuals with mobility impairments, ensuring they can participate equally.

Material and content accessibility: Materials must be adapted to ensure comprehension and we need to give special attention to participants with disabilities or specific cognitive needs. Materials and content should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Be concise and easy to read.
- Incorporate diverse participation methods (oral, visual, and written).

- Ensure content is inclusive and adapted to participants' diverse needs. This may include subtitles or transcriptions for audiovisual materials and descriptions for images to accommodate hearing disabilities or visual impairments.

Language accessibility: Considering language diversity, we might need the help of professional translators.

Inclusion during the workshop: We must take into account equal opportunities among participants when expressing themselves. We recommend working in small groups with a maximum of 10 participants. Trainers should manage intervention times to guarantee equal participation. The round-robin technique is useful to achieve this.

Inclusion in contents and materials: The materials used in the workshop should use inclusive language and visuals that reflect the diversity of the population, aiming to challenge discriminatory stereotypes and roles that reinforce social inequalities.

■ How can we close workshops?

We should not close the workshop just by reviewing the outcomes. Instead, we must leave a final closing space so the group can assess the results and provide feedback. This space can serve as an open forum where participants express what they feel: strategic reflections, emotional reactions, or unshared ideas about the future.

Close up the workshop by recognising the energy committed by participants and the importance of doing similar exercises. We can say something similar to 'The inhabitants from the future thank you for being here' as words of celebration.

We can also explore future steps. In the case of organisations attending the workshop from a strategic approach, we can reflect on what they will do the following day with those results and how they will link them to their sociopolitical advocacy. For individuals who are not part of any organisation, it may be useful to suggest nearby groups and organisations they could join. We should compile a list of potential options to share.

6.

Annexes

6.a. Description of 4 scenarios for strategic planning

Author: adaptation by Rubèn Suriñach based on the work of Conchi Piñeiro and José Luís Fernández Casadevante 'Kois'



Degrowth

‘Living better with less’ was the slogan of ecologist movements to share their vision for the future at the beginning of the new millennium. At first, these ideas and countercultural practices became very popular among youth movements advocating for environmental and climate justice. Over time and with more frequent natural disasters and socioeconomic crises stemming from resource depletion, the need to live better with less became common sense. Despite this, the mass media and economic and political powers continued to promote a reality and social aspirations completely detached from this new way of thinking.

This cultural change didn’t happen spontaneously. Grassroots movements led it, favouring the people’s self-organisation and the strengthening of communities to tackle social and economic turbulences derived from the ecological crisis. Thus, unions, feminist groups, community-led initiatives, antiracist groups, housing unions, defence of public services movements, and the social and solidarity economy came together to place the socioecological transition at the centre of their strategy.

While this new socioecological sensibility began to appear, the future was no longer seen as a threat but rather an invitation to think of alternatives. This reactivated political imagination. Stories began to appear around a future in which societies had succeeded in undertaking a fair ecological transition. The literary and artistic trend of ‘ecological realism’ helped to highlight the potentialities of community practices and the solidarity economy: consumer and worker cooperatives, agroecology, complementary currencies, shared vegetable gardens...

Facing a massive attempt to privatise the water supply (where it had been nationalised), the degrowth movement entered the public sphere through strong social mobilisation that demanded deepening political and economic democracy. This movement, with a focal point in rural areas, unchained massive civil disobedience acts that reached cities. This wave of mobilisations launched an expansion of citizens' institutions, such as water defence committees and local assemblies for socioecological transition. The movement was so strong that the government had to call snap local elections. Disruptive candidacies that brought together activists and people with experience in institutional political parties achieved wide majorities in towns and cities, later spreading through the different levels of government.

It was the start of an exciting process in which, the socioecological transition, drove a plurality of demands related to federalism, feminism, antiracism, LGBTBIQ rights, etc. Leveraging enthusiasm and social protagonism, a strong process of political decentralisation, economic relocalisation and ecological restoration took place.

In politics, representative democracy was combined with institutional creativity, which led to the development of participatory and direct democracy mechanisms. The increase in self-government dynamics allowed for focalising policies towards building resilience, decarbonisation and the rise of local sovereignty.

Under the constant threat of financial markets, the economy evolved towards a postcapitalist system, with a predominance of solidarity economies and the public sector in some strategic sectors. The market economy – strongly regulated – continued having a role when acquiring certain non-basic goods and services. This system reduced the dependency on financial markets and removed several spheres of life from the market. The relevance of economic sectors from rural areas caused the population's return to the countryside and medium-sized cities. This meant the population in big cities shrank.

Feminism was key when defining the notion of labour in society because it included the care economy and commitment to the community as priority elements in the time distribution of the population, alongside productive labour.

Ecofascim

At the 1992 Rio Summit, George Bush famously declared, "The American lifestyle is non-negotiable." This statement implied that if capitalism and consumerism proved incompatible with sustainability and democracy, then the latter would have to give way. Prioritising a lifestyle over the well-being of people had significant implications, as this lifestyle became increasingly accessible to a smaller and smaller segment of the population. Since the twenties, the world saw great economic and social instability driven by the energy crisis and the worsening effects of climate change: restrictions on water consumption, electricity shortages, and disruptions in the supply of goods became the norm. To face social unrest, borders were strengthened, and police and the army were given increased power to maintain order.

The closure of borders and the tightening of migration policies weakened multilateral political and economic governance structures (such as the UN and WTO) and undermined the cohesion of transnational actors like the EU, ultimately leading to its dissolution. Former currencies reappeared, and fresh ones were invented when new countries were created, implying a constituent gesture. This led to a rise in nationalism. People also began grouping around less plural and strongly discriminatory ways of thought. This surfaced a conservative traditionalism which reinforced heteropatriarchy, racism, xenophobia and ableism. In particular, borders were used to protect wealthy countries and regions from the influx of millions of people fleeing areas of the world which had become uninhabitable.

In economics, an alliance between large corporations and political powers enabled the State's apparatus to serve a two-tiered economy: one for the elite and another for the rest of the population. Like this, an 'assisted capitalism' was maintained, which continued accumulating power and wealth for the elite while profiting from the precarious and increasingly unprotected labour of the poorer classes. The new 'national spirit' meant that, despite the vast economic disparities between the majority of the population and the elite, the conflict erupted within the working class, with minorities being scapegoated.

This led to failed uprisings that called for political, economic, and territorial transformations. These actions were deemed violent and they were strongly repressed by the State. Moreover, under the pretext of preserving security and social peace,

freedoms and fundamental democratic principles were curtailed, including the right to assembly and protest. The army became a central player in ensuring social control, complying with certain logistics tasks and civil protection, looking over the safety of commercial spaces where restricted markets operate in upper-class areas and coordinating the ration cards of the poor.

Borders were also established within countries. A strong spatial and geographical segregation appeared, strengthening preexisting inequalities. Geographical planning was based on a strategic division into four categories: cities, rural areas, nature-protected zones and sacrificial zones.

Despite migration towards rural areas, cities still held large populations, completely separated between the fortified residential areas of the elite and popular neighbourhoods with serious coexistence issues related to access to food, energy and housing of local communities. In rural areas, this situation was the same, although less intense. In this context, local mafias employed the working classes by offering labour on their properties and controlled access to resources. Usually, these local chiefs and the army controlled the access and conservation of nature-protected zones: nature settlements with restricted access converted into recreational areas for the elites (not only national but also international). Lastly, there were the sacrificial zones: areas containing the most polluting industries, which had to relocate and were more deregulated. These zones were similar to the old planned industrial communities built near strategic activities such as mining, energy production and industries.



Progressive Green New Deal

‘Work hard towards being the first climate-neutral continent’. This was the slogan of the Green New Deal, the roadmap accepted by the EU and each of its member states. This deal has driven the political action to manage the consequences of the socioecological crisis with mixed success. After decades of excessive consumerism and neoliberalism, ecology has been placed at the backbone of public policy. Planning, legislative progress, and active cooperation with social organisations have been key strategies for navigating through difficult decades while maintaining social order.

In the mid-twenties, a combination of factors made this change possible: the pandemic, supply chain disruptions, the cost-of-living crisis, severe droughts and forest

fires driven by climate change, legal actions against large corporations and governments, and the mobilisation of younger generations. All this shook public opinion and implied the appearance of new political parties advocating for a fair and democratic ecological transition. With the influence of these renovating institutional parties, green parties throughout Europe came into power. They promoted extensive changes in public policies. They embraced an ambitious plan to reduce emissions and launched a bold initiative to redistribute wealth.

Guided by the principle of ‘leaving no one behind,’ the Green New Deal fostered broad political and social consensus. It allocated significant resources to support a fair ecological transition and designed long-term initiatives to safeguard the most vulnerable populations from its impacts. This long-term planning was paired with a massive communication effort, which helped shape a positive public mood towards these policies. Change arrived at all levels of government, European, national and local. Joint work between social actors and governments to control and deploy these policies became widespread. This process meant that in wealthy regions such as the EU, existing democratic systems were strengthened.

Globally, international institutions were reinforced as multilateral negotiation spaces and binding, and ambitious treaties were signed. These deals included, among others, mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth and global justice; funds for natural disasters and the most affected communities of the climate emergency; and a migration plan for climate refugees. These agreements also outlined guarantees for the continuous flow of energy and critical resources to northern countries, further solidifying the unequal dynamics of North-South relations.

During this period, investment in renewable sources and green technologies grew exponentially in European countries. The EU spearheaded the so-called ‘race for climate intelligence,’ combining significant reductions in carbon emissions and fossil fuel dependency with substantial investments aimed at adapting to the impacts of global warming and regenerating ecosystems. Welfare was no longer measured only in terms of GDP. Other indicators related to mental and physical health, education and the state of ecosystems gained relevance.

Public policies were implemented to ensure the basic supply of water, food, energy, and transport, establishing vital minimums and consumption maximums. These policies were combined with progressive green taxes so those who spent more had to pay more. The work week was shortened, and policies for the redistribution of work were put in place to ensure employment for all. At the same time, a comprehensive transformation of the production sector was underway.

Socially, a political and social narrative won popularity, appreciating green and public elements as the only way of facing the ‘turbulent twenties’. Despite this consensus, there was a sense of isolation and social apathy, which led to tensions with grassroots

movements, especially among youth, who called for greater political participation and a more communal approach to managing public spaces.

Geographically and demographically, a plan was executed to tidily reduce the population of the great metropolis towards medium-sized and compact cities.



Corporate Green New Deal

‘Save the GDP and save the planet’ is the statement that guided the European Green New Deal during the twenties. This statement illustrated the reckless drive of the capitalist economy, which turned the urgent need to address the ecological crisis into mere market opportunities. The great 2030 Agenda promoted by the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals, fell into oblivion like many other similar proposals. The attempt to balance economic growth with the planet’s biophysical limits, coupled with the inertia of capitalist societies, meant that the major social and environmental challenges of the era were only partially addressed.

During the ‘new twenties,’ the pandemic gave place to all-out consumption between the elites and the not-yet-precarious middle class of the global north. Green elements were still in style and grew thanks to capital investment, in an economic logic rather than focus on real social change. The most obvious example of the time was the obsession with electric cars and the electrification of energy consumption independently of limiting demand. Investment in technology and digitisation primarily benefited the technologically advanced, green lifestyles of the upper classes. The rising costs of raw materials and energy, however, made these solutions inaccessible to most people. Among the elites, self-sufficient bunkers boomed as a place to take refuge in case of catastrophes.

Economic growth and market stability became a central element of public debate about the future, dictating political proposals and relevant international treaties. ‘We won’t stop growing’ said the corporate leaders in a context in which big business multiplied by far the GDP of several countries. This granted them decisive power over weakened, socially discredited governments, particularly in controlling the flow of resources to consumer societies. As a result, land hoarding and inequality both between and within countries grew.

The economic boom promised by corporations created moments of false hope, exploiting the nostalgia of millions who longed to return to their former lives, while simultaneously fuelling a sense of widespread impotence and frustration. This situation, together with the psychological impact of the environmental crisis, boosted social apathy and depression. The approach to tackling the problem made the cure worse than the disease: self-help messages and treatments proliferated, driven by the individual aspirations of the elites, and were amplified by the massive, unchecked use of the metaverse – an unbounded world – and psychoactive medications. In the background, despite the worsening of the ecological crisis, the more urban lifestyles triumphed, causing a wider gap between the urban context and the rural areas.

Mental health problems and new diseases, the advance of tropical ones such as dengue or malaria in places where they had disappeared or never existed; cardiovascular and breathing conditions related to pollution; accidents and flooding due to sea level rise; the effects of famine from droughts... All these issues deteriorated the quality of life of large parts of the population.

Population movements within Europe followed a northern trend, escaping the more extreme climate conditions. This generated political upheaval. This was how green, fortified and highly technological urban bubbles emerged in the northern parts of the continent. These areas were addressed to the upper classes, which fed on resources from authoritarian countries, strengthening a neocolonialist order grounded on military intervention to ensure the flow of resources. This underscored the large population displacements (between countries and within) from deteriorated zones to poor and precarious zones surrounding and sustaining the green bubbles, conforming socioeconomic borders.

6.b. Description of 2 scenarios for strategic planning

Author: adaptation by Rubèn Suriñach based on the work of Conchi Piñeiro and José Luís Fernández Casadevante 'Kois'.

DESIRABLE SCENARIO: LIVING BETTER WITH LESS

'Living better with less' was the slogan through which ecologist movements started sharing their vision for the future at the beginning of the new millennium. At first, these ideas and countercultural practices became very popular amongst youth movements for environmental and climate justice. As the twenties progressed, issues such as supply shortages of basic products, the rising cost of living, severe droughts and forest fires caused by climate change, court rulings against corporations and governments, youth demonstrations, and other factors transformed what had once been a minority perspective into a new collective common sense.

This cultural shift did not occur spontaneously. Grassroots movements led the charge, promoting people's self-organisation and strengthening communities to confront the social and economic challenges arising from the ecological crisis. Thus, unions, feminist groups, neighbourhood councils, antiracist groups, housing unions, defence of public services movements, and the social and solidarity economy started working together, town by town, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, preparing citizens. This movement, with a focal point in rural areas, unchained massive civil disobedience acts that reached the cities. This wave of mobilisations launched an expansion of new popular institutions, such as water defence committees and local assemblies for socioecological transition.

All this shook public opinion and implied the appearance of new political parties advocating for a fair and democratic ecological transition. With the influence of these renovating institutional parties, green parties throughout Europe came into power. These promoted extensive changes in public policies and accepted an ambitious reduction in emissions, launching a courageous process of wealth distribution in Europe.

In several European countries, National Green New Deals were approved. Guided by the principle of 'leaving no one behind,' these political statements fostered broad social consensus around a fair ecological transition. It allocated significant resources and designed long-term initiatives to safeguard the most vulnerable populations from its impacts. This long-term planning was paired with a massive communication effort, which helped shape a positive public mood towards these policies. It was the start of an exciting process in which the socioecological transition drove a plurality of demands related to federalism, feminism, antiracism, LGTBIQ rights, etc. Leveraging enthusiasm and social protagonism, a strong process of political decentralisation, economic relocalisation and ecological restoration took place.

In politics, representative democracy was combined with institutional creativity, which led to the development of participatory and direct democracy mechanisms. The increase in self-government dynamics allowed for focalising policies towards building resilience, decarbonisation and the rise of local sovereignty. Change arrived at all levels of government, European and local. Joint work between social actors and governments to control and deploy these policies became widespread.

Under the constant threat of financial markets, the economy evolved towards a postcapitalist system, with a predominance of solidarity and transformative economies and public provisioning in some strategic sectors. The market economy — strongly regulated — continued having a role when acquiring certain non-basic goods and services. This system reduced the dependency on financial markets and removed several spheres of life from the market. The relevance of economic sectors from rural areas caused the population's return to the countryside and medium-sized cities. This meant the population in cities shrank.

After decades of excessive consumerism and neoliberalism, ecology has been placed at the backbone of public policy. Planning, legislative progress, decentralisation and active cooperation between the administration and social organisations have been key strategies for navigating through difficult decades while maintaining social order.

NONDESIRABLE SCENARIO: OUR LIFESTYLE IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

‘Save the GDP and save the planet’ is the statement that guided the European Green New Deal during the twenties. This statement illustrated the reckless drive of the capitalist socioeconomic model, which turned the urgent need to address the ecological crisis into mere market opportunities. The attempt to balance economic growth with the planet’s limits, coupled with the inertia of capitalist societies, meant that the major social and environmental challenges of the era were only partially addressed, causing disastrous social consequences.

Throughout the ‘new twenties,’ the Great Social Divide began. The aftermath of the pandemic gave place to all-out consumption between the elites and the not-yet-precarious middle class of the global north. Green elements were still in style and grew thanks to capital investment, in an economic logic rather than transformative. The most obvious example of the time was the obsession with electric cars and the electrification of energy consumption independently of limiting demand.

The other side of the ‘roaring twenties’ was the great economic and social instability driven by the energy crisis and the worsening effects of climate change: restrictions on water consumption, electricity shortages, and disruptions in the supply of goods became the norm. With the rise in prices, investing in technology and digitisation primarily benefited the technologically green lifestyles of the upper class, while the rest had more and more problems accessing basic goods. One of the main symptoms of the time was the proliferation among the elite of self-sufficient bunkers as a place to take refuge in case of catastrophes.

Keeping everything under control became the central element of public debate. All political proposals and international deals aligned with this idea. In economics, the power of global corporations was strengthened, with their GDP far surpassing that of many countries. This weakened the multilateral political and economic governance mechanisms and the cohesion of transnational actors such as the EU. In most of the countries, an alliance between large corporations and political powers enabled the State’s apparatus to serve a two-tiered economy: one for the elite and another for the rest of the population. Like this, an ‘assisted capitalism’ was maintained, which accumulated power and wealth for the elite while profiting from the precarious and increasingly unprotected labour of the poorer classes.

To face the growing social unrest, borders were strengthened, and police and the army were given increased power to maintain order. This implied a rise in nationalism. People also began grouping around less plural, and strongly discriminatory and morally conservative ways of thought. Borders were used to protect wealthy countries and regions from the influx of millions of people fleeing areas of the world which had become uninhabitable and sacked of resources to ensure the flow of goods towards consumer societies. The new ‘national spirit’ meant that, despite the vast economic disparities between the majority of the population and the elite, the conflict erupted within the working class, with minorities being scapegoated.

Added to this culture of fear, were social apathy and depressive states caused by widespread impotence and frustration. To tackle the problem, there was massive and unchecked use of the metaverse, – an unbounded world – and psychoactive medication, in addition to hiperindividualistic and ‘morally correct’ messages, based on the aspirational lifestyle of the rich.

Population movements within Europe followed a northern trend, escaping the more extreme climate conditions. This was how green, fortified and highly technological urban bubbles emerged in the countries with major climate stability. Despite migration towards rural areas, cities still hold large populations, completely separated between the fortified residential areas of the elite and popular neighbourhoods with serious coexistence issues related to the control of access to food, energy and housing of local communities.

In rural areas, this situation was the same, although less intense. In this context, local mafias employed the working classes by offering labour on their properties and controlled access to resources. Usually, these local chiefs and the army controlled the access and conservation of nature-protected zones: nature settlements with restricted access converted into recreational areas for the elites.

Lastly, there were the sacrificial zones: areas containing the most polluting industries, which had to relocate and were more deregulated. These zones were similar to the old planned industrial communities built near strategic activities such as mining, energy production and industries.

6.c. Practical sheet for scenarios through drivers

1. Workshop presentation. Welcome and goals. *Time: 15 min*

Acknowledgements. Present the day’s programme, the team and the participants. Briefly explain the objectives of the initiative and those of the organisers.

We recommend handing out labels so everyone can write their name. You may include a simple presentation game or technique for participants to meet if they do not know each other. Make sure it is adequate for the context.

2. Introduction to future scenarios and account of the probable context. *Time: 15 min*

We explain the workshop's background, which corresponds to the 'Highly probable for 2030-2050' mentioned in section 2.

Clarify the methodology.

3. Divide into groups. *Time: 1 hour - 1h 15 min*

Work in small groups, each centred on one of the possible scenarios to adapt it to the local context. Progressive GND, Ecofascism, Corporate GND, Degrowth.

- The trainer of each group briefly introduces the work. Remember, we will be building future scenarios for that specific territory in 2045, drawing on existing stories at a Spanish-European level. Each group will work on one of the scenarios, four in total. We need to craft a story describing what life is like in the specific territory in 2045 within this scenario and outline the journey from 2024 to this situation. Along the way, we can include key milestones as the story develops. Brief presentation of the group members (names and origin).
- Reading of the brief narrative of the corresponding scenario. Participants read aloud the paragraphs or individually (each group can choose).
- We invite them to share their first impressions of the scenario. They can include pictures, scenes, reflections or ideas on what is happening in this scenario in that territory during this period. As trainers, we must be aware that the stories we create can have a strong emotional impact. Therefore, we should recognise participants' responses and, when necessary, acknowledge these emotions. We can give participants a moment to process, and gently frame the situation by stating that while we may not be able to address it immediately, it is important to honour and raise awareness of these feelings. During the closing, we can revisit these emotions and discuss how to handle them moving forward. It can be done in a round or by speaking as you wish. Everyone has to say something, even short, to support an environment of participation.
- After an initial round of sharing impressions or images that have come to mind, we begin focusing on the mentioned topics. Make sure all points collected on the flip chart are addressed (use the flip chart as a visual support). One person from the group can volunteer to write down what is being discussed, though others are welcome to contribute by writing or drawing as well. As trainers, we must take brief notes to support the process. The goal is to create a story set in 2045, focusing on what's happening at that time regarding the central topics chosen. We can adapt these themes depending on the context.

We encourage participants to differentiate between rural and urban areas if they perceive any distinctions. In the event of dissent or divergence in the scenario, we can explore different territorial scales (for example, this may be happening in one area, while something else could be occurring in another), temporal milestones (perhaps the situation was one way initially, but changed over time), or social actors in the scenario (as there can be multiple ways to engage with the scenario). This approach helps us capture the nuances of any divergences. However, we must create only one cohesive scenario, not multiple within the same quadrant of the axis.

- Leave the final 10-15 minutes to brainstorm a name for the scenario (if we wish to change the current one to something more local or evocative), create between three and five 2045 headlines that reflect what's happening, and determine who will present the story and headlines.
- Close this part thanking all interventions.

4. Pause

A self-managed break can be incorporated during group work (allowing a brief pause within the small group discussions), or a scheduled break can be taken between the scenario construction and the sharing session.

5. Sharing of the work group results. Time: 30 min

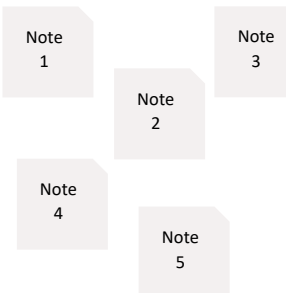
Presentation of local scenarios developed by the groups. Each group has five minutes to share the headlines and the story. We go scenario by scenario.

6. Lunch break or end of the first workshop session

7. Drafting of proposals for socioecological transition. Time: 1 hour.

Work on developing strategies to promote desirable scenarios and avoid undesirable ones.

- Each trainer will work with a topic (food, energy, community fabric, or employment). They will synthesise the ideas gathered on their respective topics within each scenario while collecting any points that may have been missed due to time constraints. At least one participant from each scenario will be present in each topic. The group will then quickly review and categorise the aspects discussed as desirable, undesirable, or having mixed trends. These will be marked with green (desirable), red (undesirable), or amber (mixed).
- Next, the group will generate ideas on moving from the present towards the desirable future and consider strategies to avoid the undesirable aspects. We can group these proposals into strategies which include various measures. A good option is using sticky notes because they can be grouped together. We can imagine the following diagram:

| Food | | |
|---|---|--|
| Present aspects with which we can connect these proposes (the seeds of the future) | Proposals on sticky notes which configure strategies | Future aspects (marked as desirable, undesirable or mixed) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Present aspect 1 ■ Present aspect 2 ■ Present aspect 3 ... |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Future aspect 1 ■ Future aspect 2 ■ Future aspect 3 ... |

8. Presentation of proposals. *Time: 45 min or 1h*

Strategy prioritisation and decision-making, if possible.

- A couple of participants take notes like this afterwards they will only have to place colour stickers. Besides the proposals by topics, write down general reflections on how to adapt to different scenarios and what role we want to play in the socioecological transition.

9. Workshop close.

6.d. Chronicle of the Great Transition: A hopepunk story

Author: Rubèn Suriñach

With love and remembrance, from 2045

I am writing to you with the hope that someday, you will read this letter. Because if there's something I've never lost, that is hope. I don't know what the world will look like when you read it, but just in case, if the ups and downs of history turn obscure, I want to share with you the bumpy road we had to take to arrive at the year 2045. Take it as an exercise in love and remembrance about the Great Transition.

We fought desperately for a better future, and today, at last, in many parts of the world, we live in a new, fair society that sees neoliberal globalisation as a nightmare, with its remnants gradually fading away. We don't live in a perfect world. Utopia isn't a stable system. But, at least, our current system isn't a daily source of suffering and death, as was capitalism.

Seen with perspective, I'm not sure if the ecological crisis was bad or actually was the lever to accelerate the changes we needed. I wouldn't say it was a good thing, either. The twenties were catastrophic... It was the first time we realised no one would escape climate change; there was no feasible refuge, no matter how much the elites had tried to fortify our old continent. That death and suffering we turned our backs to for years and years became so glaring within our borders that we could no longer look somewhere else.

Deadly heat waves, electricity supply cuts, disruption of food supplies, chronic droughts, ruinous floods... The planet was saying high and clear that the party was over. Because what we lived during those 300 years of industrial capitalism was a miraculous parenthesis, an energy-fuelled party no longer feasible.

In addition, in the midst of all that suffering, the upper classes' reaction was so poor that people got really mad. It all began with politicians, but mainly with those who pulled the strings behind the scenes: large corporations and the shadowy figures in suits who managed them. Their interests were so obvious... After all, it was harder and harder to hide: with each new disaster, a new public contract was agreed upon, which favoured corporations, be it for electricity, rebuilding, emergency food supplies... No matter what it was, it always ended up in the usual hands. Between negligence when attending to the real needs of citizens and their outrageous profits, they were quickly in the spotlight of people's anger. It was no longer useful to divert attention to immigrants or nationalism: people had a clear idea of the culprits. And we took to the streets, erupted in rage and created a true socioecological revolution.

In parallel, more quietly and undetected by the radar of the powerful, another extraordinary thing happened: while we expressed our anger towards the powerful, the ones below started looking each other in the eyes again, and we finally saw each other as equals. From those terrible social fractures caused by the ecological crisis, we created plaits of solidarity and support networks sweeping mistrust and fear from neighbourhoods; and we finally reconciled with the intuition some of us had: when things go wrong, hope and solidarity shine brighter than individualism.

In this context, political change swiftly arrived. At first, through high taxes to corporate profit and the elites. Along the way, we nationalised – or collectivised, if you prefer – large portions of the accumulated assets, after so many years of looting. This marked a milestone because we were finally able to cover everyone's basic needs.

But our goal wasn't only to guarantee basic rights. We also wanted to set limits. Here we had to be careful because warning people they had to consume less in moments of scarcity, wasn't too sensible. Therefore, what proved essential was targeting those who had more. The price of oil and gas helped a lot because, at this point, life was out of reach. Oh boy, did we find the ideal context to tackle the great debate of our time. And we hit luxury. With everything. By now, we could begin talking about climate

luxuries. The message was clear: limit the maximum to guarantee the minimum. Like this, the images of celebrities flying in private jets or enjoying themselves in lush green gardens with extravagant swimming pools became intolerable. This lifestyle was no longer an aspiration for the majority but a luxury for a few. It was no longer acceptable. Only then were we able to introduce consumption limits into parliamentary debate when most of the population became aware that the lifestyle of the rich was simply infeasible.

Like this, we progressed, triumph after triumph, until we approved the Social Green Deal. This deal, under the slogan ‘leaving no one behind’ allowed pushing the widespread social consensus created to the governmental institutions. We finally committed the majority of resources to tackle the transition comprehensively. Energy decentralisation, rural repopulation, food sovereignty, the expansion of the rail network, a reduction in car use, shorter working hours and work redistribution, strengthening healthcare and care systems, tourist degrowth, and economic diversification in essential sectors—all these were gradually achieved, driven by a committed civil society determined to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Like this, in the midst of the turbulences caused by the ecological crisis, we dismantled the old order to create a new, undertaking a 180-degree turn compared to what we had during the terrible decade of the twenties.

