Toolkit for post-growth educators

Learnings from
the Post-Growth Learning Lab



NAZEMI

NEROST

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Why this toolkit?

This toolkit is a result of the project Post-growth Learning Lab, in which we organized a training course for post-growth educators. We wanted to create something practical that non-formal educators can pick up, adapt, and use in their own work, whether in workshops, youth groups, community initiatives, or adult learning. Inside, you will find:

- **Post-growth and non-formal education**: how the two fit together, and why education matters in imagining futures beyond growth.
- **Transformative education**: what it means, and what it asks of us as educators.
- **Educator competencies:** which competencies we think matter most for this work, and how we developed them during the training.
- **Reflection on the training:** its goals, its structure, and the participants' feedback.
- **The most effective methods:** three methods that worked best.

We don't see this toolkit as a finished recipe. It is an invitation to experiment, adapt, and make the methods your own.

So enjoy it, share it with your colleagues and networks, and let us know how it goes. We would love to hear what worked, what didn't, and what you've created along the way.









Post-growth and non-formal education

What is post-growth?

We are living through a convergence of crises: climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, deepening inequality, political polarization, declining democracy, and geopolitical and financial instability. These are not separate problems. They are interconnected consequences of an economic system built on perpetual growth, capital accumulation, and the intensive extraction of natural and human resources.

Economic growth has long been treated as an unquestionable goal, yet a growing number of sustainability researchers argue that solving environmental problems requires moving beyond it. In one survey, 77% of sustainability experts called for post-growth strategies in high-income countries (Koskimäki, 2023).

Post-growth is a vision of a society and economy that no longer depends on constant growth and that meets everyone's needs within planetary boundaries. Its key values are quality of life, care, sufficiency, and equality. Degrowth is the path toward it: a deliberate reduction of excessive production and consumption, primarily in the Global North, combined with greater social justice and democratic control of the economy.

The transition unfolds on three connected levels: biophysical (reducing material and energy use), systemic (new institutions, policies, and fairer redistribution), and cultural (rethinking what we consider a good life, success, and progress).We don't need to invent a new world from scratch. Alternatives already exist, and our task is to connect and strengthen them. Because these questions concern everyone, non-formal education has a vital role: it creates space to examine the causes of today's crises, imagine alternatives, and take part in shaping the future.

Combining post-growth and non-formal education

Post-growth thinking is gaining momentum in research and policy, yet it is still largely missing from both formal and non-formal education. Youth work often focuses on individual solutions or active citizenship. It rarely asks about the structural causes of crises or the role of a growth-driven economy.

At the same time, educators told us they struggle to handle the complexity of today's crises, to make academic knowledge accessible, and to hold the emotional weight of topics like climate anxiety.

This is why we wanted to bring post-growth into non-formal education. Its participatory, experiential methods are well suited to complex and sensitive topics. Alongside the content, we focused on competencies such as systems thinking, futures literacy, facilitation, and emotional resilience. Our has been to turn cutting-edge research into practical tools that help educators and young people imagine and shape sustainable futures.

Transformative education

What is transformative education?

We live in a time of interconnected crises, and education cannot stay neutral. It shapes how we understand the world, what we consider possible, and how we act. Yet much of education still treats sustainability as a "bolt-on" topic, or adapts the system without questioning it. At NaZemi, we believe that optimizing is no longer enough.

Transformative education helps learners question and change how they see the world. It builds critical and systems thinking, challenges dominant assumptions, and asks who benefits and whose voices are missing. It is participatory and holistic, engaging emotions and bodies as well as intellect. It also expands imagination and leads to collective, strategic action.

For us, it is not only about preparing people to navigate the world as it is. It is about equipping them to change it. That is why we experiment with education that transforms our relationships with ourselves, others, and the planet.

5 principles of transformative education

1. **Regenerative** - We believe that the role of education in today's world is to heal, repair, regenerate, and bring new meaning. Education must open new questions and serve new purposes. We explore the underlying assumptions that are at the heart of our way of learning.

2. **Transformative** - We believe that students can become the subject o, education. They can transform themselves through learning.

3. **Relational** - We believe that learning takes place in relationships, and so does change, both locally and globally. The feedback from others is important. It is difficult to know how our actions affect other people unless they tell us.

4. **Holistic** - Our approach is based on the Head – Heart – Hands concept. We believe that comprehensive learning must always be holistic – it means engaging the mind, emotions and body.

5. **Collective** - We do not have a patent to the truth. Our approach is based on partnership where everyone's experience is valued, we learn from each other and support each other in the process of empowerment. We create time and space for the participants and the contribution they bring to the programme. We offer specific tools that they can use in other collectives.

Competencies of transformative educators

Transformative education asks more of educators than delivering content. It requires competencies that help us guide learners through complex, uncertain, and often emotional topics. At NaZemi, we build on more than 20 years of experience in global education and on projects such as Futuropolis, the Post-Growth Academy, and the Post-Growth Summer Schools.

The following list of nine competencies helps us orient ourselves. It does not describe a checklist to complete, but a compass for our practice. It covers developing critical consciousness, acting dialogically and democratically, engaging the whole person, reflecting on power relations, systems thinking, imagining futures, and leading toward meaningful action. For each competency, you will find the core idea, reflective questions, and indicators to help you notice it in your own facilitation. We use it to plan our workshops, reflect on our work, and keep growing as educators, and we hope it will serve you in the same way.

1. Develops Critical Consciousness (including their own)

We shape culture — and culture shapes us.

1. **Supports the development of critical consciousness,** which enables people to broadly connect their individual experiences with social issues, and specific problems with wider societal systems. A critically conscious person links the personal and social spheres—whether they are studying a topic or acting upon it.

2. **Strengthens learners' awareness of their own power** to transform concrete situations, existing structures, and culture through their actions—both individually and collectively—and to shape relationships in ways that reflect their own values.

3. **Recognizes power dynamics and their own position** within them, noticing who has the power to shape culture and who does not.

4. **Pays attention to situations that learners experience** as limiting, as well as learners' naïve thinking (e.g. "there's no point," "this won't work," / "everything's fine," "it'll solve itself"). These limiting situations and naïve views are treated as subjects for inquiry—highlighting that things are not fixed or immutable, but are shaped by human forces and can therefore be changed.

2. Acts Dialogically and Democratically

The educator and learners are equal partners in the learning process, forming a learning community.

1. **Creates a trusting and safe environment** for mutual sharing, where all participants become more fully human together (humanization). Dialogue is always a relationship between people — not between subjects and objects.

2. **Expands the boundaries of what can be co-decided with learners** — including content, learning formats, and assessment methods.

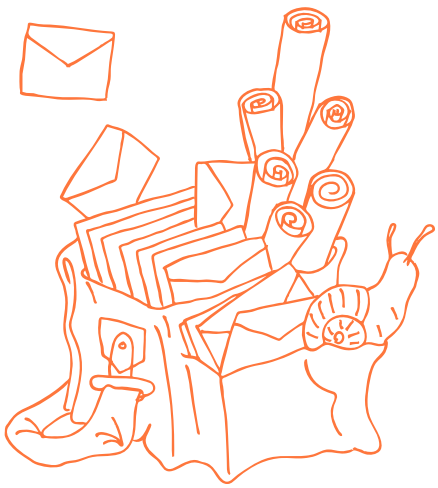
3. **Develops democratic structures and processes** in the classroom that consider both individual and collective needs.

4. **Facilitates and stimulates discussion among learners:** Guides the flow of dialogue, supports learners in expanding their thinking, encourages paraphrasing, summarizing, distinguishing between reactions and new contributions, asks questions that deepen and advance the discussion, avoids quick or premature answers.

5. **Formulates questions** that invite higher-order thinking (e.g. analysis, synthesis, reflection).

6. **Cultivates active listening** as a vital part of dialogue and intentionally develops this skill among learners.

7. **Recognizes the limits** of one's own experience and remains open and attentive to the experiences of others.



3. Engages the Whole Person in Learning

We learn not only with our minds — but also with our bodies and emotions.

1. **Engages the whole human being in the learning process** — mind, body, emotions, and even dreams.

2. **Creates space for reflecting on emotions and feelings** in connection to the topics being explored. Also reflects on their own emotions and feelings.

3. **Treats emotions as valuable information,** noticing them and acknowledging their presence — yet does not avoid opening up topics that are important, even if they may provoke discomfort or controversy.

4. **Recognizes the value of humor, passion, curiosity, intuition, and indignation** as emotional dimensions of learning.

5. **Appreciates the role of emotions** and uses them as a gateway into dialogue about what truly matters to learners.

4. Connects Learning Topics to the Lives of Learners

Learners' experiences and culture as the gateway into the learning process.

1. **Shows genuine interest in learners**, their cultural backgrounds, and social circumstances.

2. **Builds learning on the lived experiences of learners**, as well as their social, economic, political, and environmental contexts.

3. **Connects big societal, current and academic topics** with themes and issues from learners' everyday lives.

4. **Presents topics as problems to be explored** — inviting curiosity, inquiry, and investigation.



5. Reflects on Power Relations

Power within the group is made visible, reflected upon, and fluidly shared.

1. **Explores power dynamics** and the distribution of power, both within the group and in broader society.
2. **Investigates the root causes of inequality,** both in the world and in the learners' surroundings.
3. **Shares power and responsibility in the learning process with learners** — knows when to step back and supports learners in taking responsibility for their own learning.
4. **Ensures space for all voices, especially those that are often unheard** — both within the classroom and in the selection of topics.
5. **Centers the experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups** when engaging with learning content.
6. **Is aware of their own social position and privilege,** and uses that awareness in service of the collective and shared emancipation.
7. **Supports learners in transforming resistance into constructive feedback** and in building positive, respectful relationships with one another.

6. Develops perception and an understanding of the bigger picture

Seeing the whole forest rather than just one tree

1. **Tries to understand the 'big picture'.** Focuses on the forest rather than on the details of any one of its trees.

2. **Promotes an awareness of the interconnectedness** between people, and between people and nature.

3. **Finds joy in being responsible for the wider metabolic system.**



7. Develops Habits of Systems and Critical Thinking

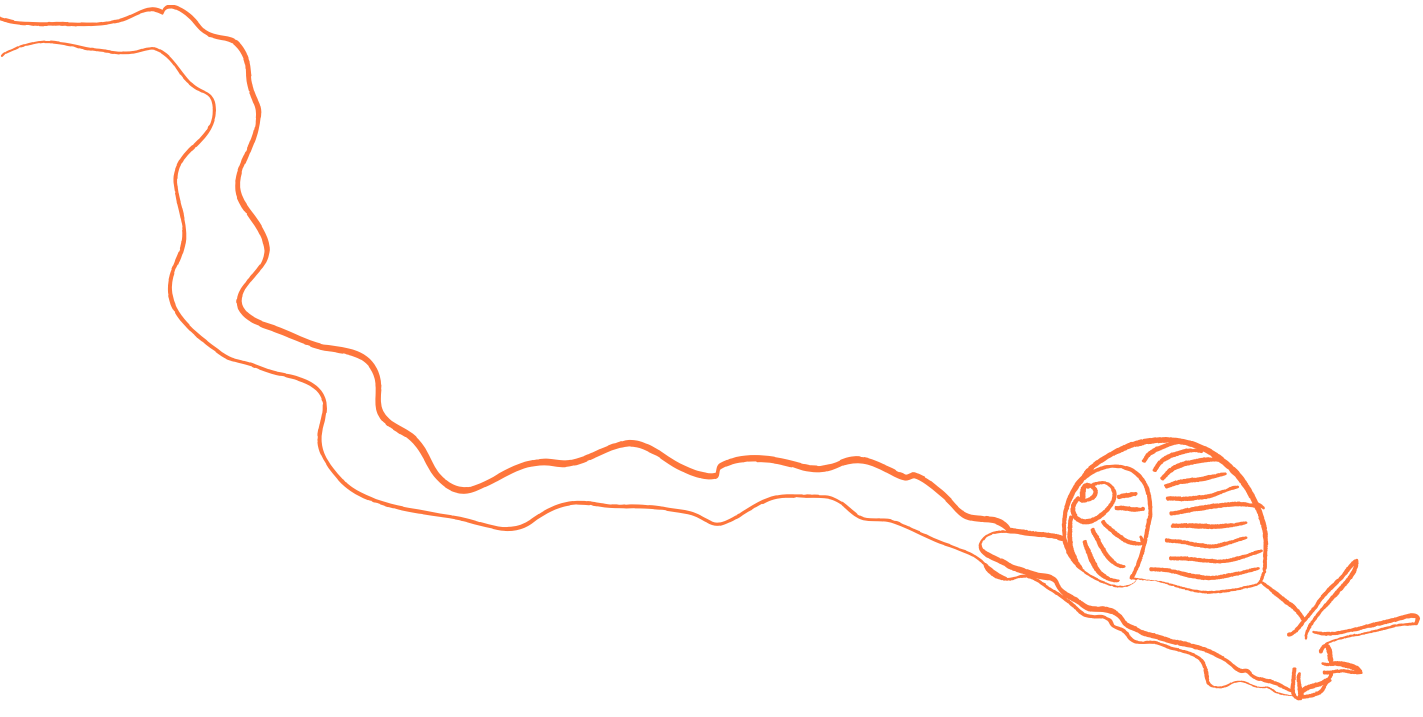
Everything is connected, and everything has its causes — we learn to seek them out, see them clearly, and understand them.

1. **Connects individual experiences to broader systems**, and guides learners to explore the systemic dimensions behind those experiences.
2. **Asks critical questions** that lead to systems thinking and analysis of power relations.
3. **Supports opinions with arguments,** and encourages learners to do the same.
4. **Recognizes how their own position and beliefs influence** how they interpret the past, perceive the present, and imagine the future.
5. **Uncovers and examines assumptions** — both their own and those of others — that shape opinions and beliefs.
6. **Shifts perspectives and listens to others** in order to deepen understanding.
7. **Is open to evolving and reshaping their own views** in light of new insights or arguments.
8. **Recognizes the complex and cyclical nature of problems**, seeing causes and effects as interconnected
9. **Observes system changes** (in individuals, classrooms, communities, ecosystems) over a longer time span, and is able to identify and articulate system patterns and behavioral trends.
10. **Resists the temptations of quick and simplistic conclusions.**

8. Strengthens the Ability to Imagine and Envision Futures

Without imagination, no meaningful change is possible.

1. **Seeks ways to spark imagination** and supports learners in overcoming internal barriers (such as “inner critics” or “inner police”).
2. **Creates an open and safe space for imagination,** avoiding judgment and evaluation.
3. **Develops learners’ ability to envision a more just future**, where people care for the needs of all.
4. **Encourages the creation of shared visions within the group.**
5. **Seeks out and brings in perspectives “from beyond the hill”** — examples of communities, societies, or parallel systems that operate based on different worldviews and relational models.



9. Leads Toward Meaningful Action and Reflection

Without reflection, there is no learning. Without action, there is no change.

1. **Supports the formulation of both individual and shared intentions,** helping learners define the direction and goals they want to pursue. Encourages a desire to engage in change and take action.

2. **Facilitates the planning, implementation, and reflection of actions,** while transferring as much responsibility as possible to the learners.

3. **Leads reflection on actions taken** — asking thoughtful questions and creating an environment where learners can formulate their own learning insights.

4. **Helps both the group and individuals act without a sense of superiority,** and to avoid reproducing patterns of privilege and oppression through their actions.

Training course “The Post-growth Learning Lab”

The main activity of the Post-growth Learning Lab was a training course for youth workers that combined post-growth topics with methods of non-formal education. It took place from 26 April to 5 May in Předklášteří, near Brno in the Czech Republic. Over ten days, we gathered 25 youth workers and non-formal educators from six countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Estonia, and Slovakia.

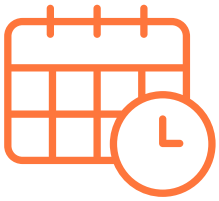
We set five goals for the training:

- **Post-growth knowledge:** to understand key post-growth theories and concepts, and to apply insights from current literature in educational practice.
- **Systems thinking:** to analyze connections between global issues and evaluate tools such as the Iceberg Model and Leverage Points.
- **Futures literacy:** to create future scenarios and use techniques such as backcasting and scenario planning with young people.
- **Facilitation:** to guide discussions on challenging topics, address power imbalances, and ease tensions.
- **Emotional safe spaces:** to understand the role of emotions in conversations about climate anxiety, and to create spaces for emotional expression using Nonviolent Communication and Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects.

Beyond the learning goals, we had two further aims. The first was to build a community. As one of the first initiatives to connect educators interested in post-growth and transformative education, we wanted to create a space to exchange ideas and collaborate, and to form bonds that last beyond the project. The second was to strengthen local youth work. Participants returned to their organizations with new insights and tools, and planned an internal activity to share what they had learned with their colleagues.



Programme Structure



Our gathering was designed as an interplay between **experiencing post-growth workshops and methodologies**, and **reflecting on their practical implications for our educational practice**. In the first part of the Post-Growth Learning Lab, we explored post-growth in greater depth - its critiques, visions, and strategies for transformation - while reflecting on the methodologies used. In the second half, the focus shifted toward next steps, including how to apply and further develop these approaches in practice.

Transformative solutions

We explored **the critique of the growth economy** and growth ideology, focusing on their hegemonic nature and the ways these ideas are internalized in our thinking and everyday practices.
Sessions also introduced:

- **core theses of post-growth approaches**
- concrete transformative pathways, particularly how **ownership and work** can be restructured to better serve people and the planet.

Theories of change

During sessions we took a deeper look at **strategies for social transformation** toward post-growth futures, including how post-growth policies can interact with building alternatives and people power.
This block explored **systems thinking** and key concepts from different theories of change. It worked with tools that support thinking about complex systems and challenges such as:

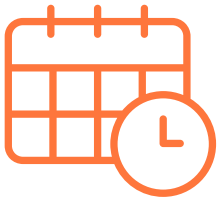
- the systems thinking iceberg
- leverage points

Skills for transformation

To create different future, we require new set of skills that are not taught in the growth centered society and education. The blocks Skills for Transformation strengthened our ability to drive change and included:

- the basics of political strands of **non-violent communication**
- the principles of **self-managment** for effective working in teams, movements, or organizations.
- **organising** (inspired by labour and tenant movements)
- **facilitation** the ability to weave togetherness across differences

These skills are particularly useful for non-formal educators and provide a space to discuss which skills and competencies need to be deepened to support and embody social transformation toward post-growth futures.



Methodological reflections

To get the most out of the program as educators and youth workers, we **dedicated time to reflect on our own learning** as well as on **how the methods and approaches used can be applied in our practice**.

Methodology Mapping: We exchanged and documented concrete tools, exercises, and methods used in post-growth transformative education. These sessions encouraged critical reflection on what works, what could be improved, and how to adapt methods to different contexts, helping to build a shared pool of practical approaches for future use.

Non-Formal & Community Life

We believe that some of the most important learning happens outside of structured sessions. This is why we dedicated significant space for:

- **Unstructured social time, informal discussions, walks, and long dinners.**
- **Collective physical work at NaNebi** (in the garden, orchard, or helping with daily tasks).
- **Nature-based reflection** and grounded presence in a setting that inspires reconnection.

We hope that NaNebi itself—with its community-run, degrowth-inspired spirit—was both a venue and a teacher.

Feedback from participants



“This training might be one of the deepest on post growth in Europe. The real benefit compare to many ressources is that Nazemi tackles degrowth at every level of social organisation, from the policies to inner life, passing through relational dynamics.“

Gael, Germany



“The program offers a powerful combination of practical methods, inspiring content, and deep reflection. You gain tools, approaches, and confidence that you can directly apply in your own work as an educator. At the same time, it provides a supportive space to explore important topics such as post-growth, sustainability, and the critique of current systems in a way that feels both grounded and empowering.

What makes this experience particularly special is the environment of openness and trust. People share deeply, often beyond what they have shared before, which creates a strong sense of connection and mutual learning. It is a living example of what transformative and constructive education can look like. Overall, it is an experience that stays with you — and one that is absolutely worth taking the time to be part of.”

Leni, Czech Republic



“Incredibly enriching course. It has made me grow on so many fronts in parallel: as a facilitator, a workshop developer, a member of a collective, a strategist, and a thinker. It's helped me re-understand the relevance of the work I do and inspired me to strategically re-direct my energy to where I think I can make an impact. I'm very thankful for the opportunity.”

Bobbi, Netherlands

Examples of effective workshop formats

In the following pages, we present three popular workshops from the training course. The Systems Thinking Iceberg methodology is introduced at the beginning of the program to deepen participants' systems thinking skills and provide a foundation for subsequent modules. Strategies of Transformation is introduced in the middle, offering a framework for conceptualizing civil engagement and social change. Finally, Post-Growth Entrepreneurship bridges the gap between visions and strategies by illustrating alternative, post-growth-aligned business models.

The Systems Thinking Iceberg
This methodology offers a practical tool for analyzing complex problems on multiple levels — from visible events and trends to the deeper structures and mental models that shape them. In the context of post-growth education, it helps participants understand not only the concrete manifestations of the growth economy, but also the assumptions on which it is built (such as belief in endless growth, productivity, or competition). It also enables participants to identify the institutions and structures that support or depend on growth. We often use this methodology at the beginning of educational processes because it helps establish a shared language and common framework for thinking about problems. It is useful not only for analysis, but also for identifying leverage points for systemic intervention.

Strategies of Transformation
This methodology focuses on different approaches to social change and offers a framework for comparing and combining them. It introduces approaches such as institutional reform, building alternatives, or bottom-up pressure, and demonstrates how these strategies can function independently as well as in synergy with one another. Through this process, participants can better understand the different pathways of change and locate themselves within them. The methodology supports strategic thinking and helps bridge the gap between vision and concrete action.

Post-Growth Entrepreneurship
Dependence on growth manifests not only at the level of states, but also in the everyday functioning of companies and organizations. This methodology therefore approaches business through five key dimensions that shape its impact on society and the environment. It helps participants understand how firms are structurally organized and how this organization shapes their behavior. The methodology works particularly well in combination with The Systems Thinking Iceberg, because it connects concrete organizational practices with deeper structures and values.

Workshop 1

Systems thinking Iceberg

This activity introduces participants to one of the tools of system thinking using a complex real-life example. It offers a group training session of mastering the tool.

Duration:	60 minutes (1 hour)
Number of participants:	unlimited
Tools:	writing papers for participants, writing supplies, flipchart markers and flipchart paper
Tags:	system thinking tool
Topic:	system thinking, analysis
Program objectives:	Participants: • understand the iceberg model (events → patterns → structures → mental models) and becomes able to apply it to specific problems (personal and social), • perceives that different solutions (for example degrowth ones) target different levels of systems, • understands the role of mental models and preconceptions in society.

Program Implementation

Introductory framing:

When we look at the problems around us—whether personal or societal—we usually see only what's on the surface: a specific situation that has occurred. And we often tend to react to it quickly. Today, however, we're going to try a slightly different approach.

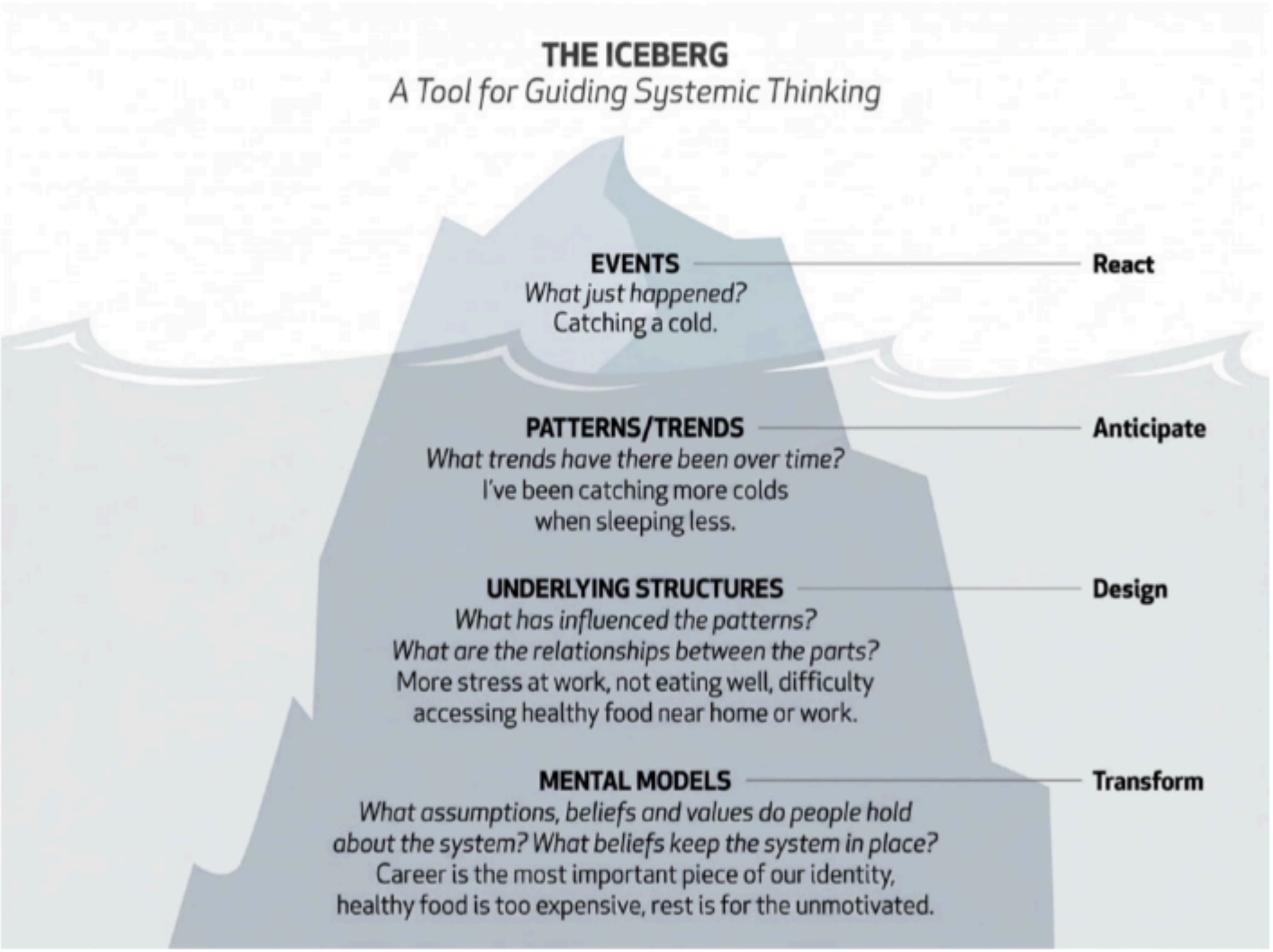
Let's introduce a tool—the system iceberg model—that will help us look at problems with more depth. Not just at what is happening, but why it is happening and what factors influence it.

The iceberg will help us perceive connections, relationships between things, and recurring patterns, rather than isolated individual events.

You may be familiar with the iceberg metaphor—only a small part is visible above the surface, while most of it is hidden beneath. And it is precisely that hidden part that actually determines how the iceberg moves. We can view the problems around us in a similar way. What we see on the surface is only a fraction of the whole. And if we want to truly understand or change something, we need to look beneath the surface as well.

Introducing the iceberg model (10 minutes)

Before the workshop begins, we need to draw the iceberg on the flipchart and, ideally, reveal it level by level (for example, by peeling back masking tape from the bottom so that only the first layer of the glacier is visible: Events). As we explain each level, we'll supplement our explanation with a specific example that illustrates the theory—for instance, someone catching a cold.



1. The level of events (what can be seen on the surface)

The level of events is what is visible at first glance—a specific situation that has occurred. It is what we usually respond to most quickly and naturally. We often address problems at this level immediately, but we tend to address their symptoms rather than their causes.

Example: I've caught the flu. I have a fever and a cough, so I'm staying home.
Response: I'll take some medicine, see a doctor, and try to get better as soon as possible.

2. The level of patterns (what is recurring)

When we look deeper, we begin to notice recurring patterns. It's no longer about a single event, but about the fact that similar situations happen over and over again. This level of analysis helps us identify trends and better predict what might happen.

Example: I realize that I don't get sick just once in a while.

- I get sick almost every winter.
- I often get sick after a period of high stress.
- I tend to get sick when I don't get enough sleep for a long time.

Suddenly, it's not just "one case of the flu," but a recurring pattern.

3. The level of structures (what the patterns emerge from)

At this level, we ask: What causes these patterns? The answer lies in structures—that is, the conditions, rules, environments, and settings of the system in which we operate. These are often not immediately apparent but they have a profound impact on our behavior.

Example: The following factors may be contributing to my recurring illnesses:

- a high-pressure work environment with little time for rest
- a culture of "working even when tired or sick"
- long commutes → little time to recover
- limited access to quality food (due to time or financial constraints)
- systemic issues (e.g., inadequate sick leave benefits)

So it is not just about individual failure, but about how the system around me is set up.

4. The level of mental models (deep preconceptions)

Deepest of all are our mental models—our beliefs, values, and ideas about how the world works. We often aren't even aware of these assumptions, but they shape both our thought processes and our behavior.

Example: The following beliefs may underlie the structures mentioned above:

- "Performance is more important than health."
- "Rest is a sign of weakness or laziness."
- "I have to be productive all the time."
- "I can't afford to slow down."
- "Health is solely my own responsibility."

These mental models lead us to create an environment that wears us down over time—and this eventually takes a toll on our health.

Here, we can examine the assumptions that different actors hold about various matters. For example, what assumptions do I have about myself (e.g., "performance is more important than health"), but also, for instance, what assumptions does my boss have when creating a work

environment with high pressure to perform and little room for rest ("people give their best when they're at the end of their rope"), etc.

Group exercise: The iceberg of homelessness (10 minutes)

Now that we have an idea of how the iceberg model works, let's try applying it to a slightly more complex example. Imagine you're walking through your city and, near the train station, you see a person in ragged clothes carrying plastic bags. You assume that this person is homeless.

This time, I won't be introducing the individual levels myself—let's try it together.

2. The level of patterns (what is recurring)

Let's start by looking at the broader context in time and space:

- Is the number of homeless people increasing or decreasing?
- Where are they most commonly spending time (train stations, city centers, parks)?
- At what time of year (e.g., are they more visible in winter due to outreach services)?
- What is the gender distribution (e.g., are there more men than women)?
- What are typical life trajectories (e.g., people after leaving institutions, after losing a job, after a divorce)?

3. The level of structures (what the patterns emerge from)

We must ask: What in the system causes these patterns to exist?

- lack of affordable housing due to rising rents
- shortage of social housing
- low wages and job insecurity
- lack of or fragmented social and health services
- the structure of the social welfare system (eligibility requirements for benefits, bureaucracy, and the rules and regulations of shelters)

We can see that homelessness is not just an individual problem, but the result of broader societal structures.

4. The level of mental models (deep preconceptions)

What beliefs and values do uphold these structures?

- "Everyone is the architect of their own fortune."
- "Poverty is the result of personal failure."
- "Homeless people have only themselves to blame."
- "Providing aid would only spoil people or demotivate them."
- "The housing market should not be regulated."
- "Inequality is natural and inevitable."

These preconceptions, assumptions and beliefs influence how we shape policies, institutions, and everyday behavior.

Facilitator's tip 1: This level is often the most difficult and sometimes also confusing for participants because it is very abstract. It is therefore helpful not to ask a general question like, " *What are mental models?*, but **relate them to specific structures that we have already identified**. You can proceed as follows:

- Highlight one specific structure.
- Then ask: What assumptions or beliefs shape this structure?

Examples:

Structure: Shortage of social housing

→ mental models:

- "The government shouldn't own housing; it's inefficient."
- "The market will handle this better than the public sector."
- "Everyone must earn individually to pay for their own housing."

Structure: rising rents

→ mental models:

- "Housing is an investment opportunity."
- "Profit maximization is legitimate even in the housing market."
- "Housing is not a right, but a commodity."

Point out to the group: *Always try to look for the mental model behind a specific structure, not in general. And make sure there is a logical connection between them.*

Facilitator's tip 2: Important acknowledgments for working with the iceberg model

It is worth noting that in this exercise, we are trying to form hypotheses. This means we are speculating about the patterns, structures and mental models that might underlie a given phenomenon but our conclusions aren't necessarily accurate or complete. Our interpretations may be influenced by our own experiences or perspectives.

If we truly want to intervene with the systems based on such an analysis, it is important to verify these assumptions:

talk to people who are part of the system

- e.g., homeless people, social service workers

draw on data and research

- how much social housing is available
- whether the number of homeless people is increasing or decreasing
- how housing prices are changing
- what are the main causes of homelessness

You may conclude with this formulation: *The iceberg helps us ask better questions and see the bigger picture—but it isn't the whole truth. It is a starting point for reflection that is worth testing further in practice.*

Individual work and sharing: The participant's iceberg (20 minutes)

Now it is your turn to try this out for yourselves using your own examples. Over the next ten minutes, choose a problem from your own experience and try to create an “iceberg” for it. It could be something from your personal life, from society, or a topic you deal with at work or through your activism.It is essential that your "tip of the iceberg" be a specific and observable situation.

- No: “capitalism,” “climate crisis,” “inequality”
- Yes: “My rent went up by 20%,” “The company laid off employees,” “They closed the social services office in our town”

If you start out too broadly, it will be more difficult for you to identify specific patterns, structures, and mental models.

Assignment:

- Choose a specific event.
- Try to break it down into the different levels of the iceberg.
- Look for connections between them.

Finally, ask yourself: Which level of the iceberg did my solution so far address?

Sharing in pairs (10 minutes)

When you see that the participants are almost finished with their icebergs, ask them to pair up and share their icebergs with their partners:

- How did you approach the problem?
- What did you write down at each level?
- Listen to one another and:
  - If you have a different perspective, share it.
  - You can help each other add further layers or connections.

During this sharing session, the tutor walks around and listens in on the pairs at random or steps in to clarify any points of confusion.

Sharing in the group

Conclude the activity by a shared reflection of the following questions.

- What did you learn from the iceberg exercise? What new insights did it provide?
- What was difficult about the iceberg exercise, and what did you find easy?
- In what situations would you use the iceberg model again?

Workshop 2

Strategies of Transformation

This methodology offers participants a cognitive map for thinking about systemic change in a post-growth context. It shows that a profound transformation of the economy does not arise from a single strategy, but rather from a combination of different approaches - building alternatives, advocating for non-reformist reforms, and building movements. These strategies can reinforce one another, but they can also create tension. The methodology helps us understand why it is not enough to simply create examples of good practice; we must also work with power and political institutions if we want to bring about change on a larger scale. At the same time, it raises the question of how to overcome conflicts between individual strategies and, instead of competing, seek meaningful combinations of them. The personal level is also an important component: participants have the opportunity to relate the individual strategies to themselves, realize which ones resonate most with them, and identify where they can play a role in the ecosystem of systemic change.

Duration:	90 minutes (1 hour and 30 minutes)
Number of participants:	8-30 participants
Tools:	projector, computer, flipchart paper, markers, downloaded presentation
Tags:	group work, strategy
Topic:	building utopias, reforms that aren't really reforms, confrontational movements

Program objectives:

- **Understanding different strategies for systemic change:** Participants will gain a basic understanding of how to think about changing the economic system - what approaches exist, how they differ, and what their advantages and limitations are.
- **Analyze the relationships between strategies:** Participants will be able to describe how individual strategies can reinforce one another (synergies) or undermine one another (risks), and identify these tensions using specific examples.
- **Relate the strategy to your own role:** Participants reflect on which strategies resonate with them personally, what appeals to them, and where they can leverage their strengths within the ecosystem of systemic change.

Program implementation

Introductory Context:

If we want to strive for a more profound transformation of the economic system, it makes sense to look at how people have attempted to bring about change in the past—and what we can learn from their strategies today. Various movements that have responded to injustice, exploitation, or environmental crises have employed different approaches to achieving change. Within the post-growth movement, the debate on strategies draws primarily on the work of sociologist Erik Olin Wright. Based on historical experience, he distinguishes three basic types of strategies for systemic change. We will now briefly introduce these strategies so that we can work with them further.

Strategies for systemic change - ↗ Presentation (15 minutes):

1. Building alternatives (nowtopias, from the English “interstitial strategy”)

This strategy involves creating alternative institutions and practices today - “in the cracks of the system.” These are what are known as “real utopias”: existing or emerging forms of organization that operate on principles different from those of the dominant economy - such as co-operation, solidarity, or democracy. The goal is not to wait for the system to change, but to begin putting it into practice here and now.

Examples:

- cooperatives
- community energy
- food initiatives (community-supported agriculture)
- shared and commons-based projects

This strategy draws heavily on the anarchist tradition—it emphasizes change from below and outside the state.

2. Non-reformists reforms (symbiotic strategies)

This strategy seeks to bring about change through existing institutions, particularly through the state and public policies. However, these are not ordinary reforms that merely "fix" the system, but rather ones that gradually undermine its logic of growth and open up space for deeper transformation. The goal is to use existing structures to bring about change that will bring us closer to a world where everyone's needs are met within planetary boundaries.

Examples:

- reducing working hours
- strengthening public services
- regulating corporations
- decommodification policies (e.g., affordable housing)

This strategy uses the state as an instrument of change.

3. Ruptural Strategy (Building Movements and Conflict)

This strategy relies on collective action and direct pressure on power structures. It is the most confrontational and directly challenges the interests of those in power. It challenges the legitimacy of the current system and seeks to shift the social consensus. Without this pressure, fundamental changes often do not occur.

Examples:

- protest movements (e.g., the climate movement)
- workers' strikes
- direct actions against corporations or institutions

This strategy brings the group into open conflict with the state or economic powers.

After the presentation, ask the participants if they have any questions and allow time for them to be answered.

Which strategy is the most effective? (10 minutes):

Then ask the participants to stand up. Write the names of the three strategies on pieces of paper and arrange them in a triangle around the room.

Explain to the group that they should position themselves according to which strategy they find most relevant and effective for today. Based on this, the group will split into three groups - it is not possible to stand "somewhere in between"; everyone must now choose one strategy. In smaller groups, they will then have 8 minutes to discuss why they think their strategy is the best and what advantages it has over the others. If there are more than 5 people in the group, it is advisable to divide it into smaller subgroups so that everyone has a chance to participate.

Questions for discussion:

- *Why did I choose this particular strategy?*

- *In what ways do I think it's better than the others?*

Identifying synergies and risks (25 minutes)

Preparing the flipcharts before the activity: Prepare a matrix to be filled in on the flipchart. The matrix has three rows and three columns. In the top left corner, the strategy of the given group is written, and next to it are the names of two other strategies to which they relate.

The rows have the following headings:

- Potential synergies
- Potential risks

Flipchart for the group: Building alternatives (nowtopias)

Building alternatives	Non-reformists reforms	Building protest movements
Potential synergies		
Potential risks		

Flipchart for the group: Non-reformists reforms

Non-reformists reforms	Building protest movements	Building alternatives
Potential synergies		
Potential risks		

Flipchart for the group: Building protest movements (people power)

Building protest movements	Building alternatives	Non-reformists reforms
Potential synergies		
Potential risks		

The goal is to form groups of 4–5 people and give each group a flipchart with the strategy they identified as the most effective. If there are more participants for a particular strategy (e.g., around 10), divide them into two smaller groups and give each its own flipchart. Smaller groups will allow everyone to participate in the discussion.

Group assignment: *Consider how the other two types of strategies can support your own strategy - that is, where synergies might arise between them. At the same time, identify ways in which they might pose a threat or present a risk to you. Do not discuss the general pros and cons of individual strategies. Instead, always view the given strategies from the perspective of your own. You have 20 minutes for the discussion. Write down the individual synergies and risks in a way that is understandable to others who are not in your group.*

For example: if we are an "utopia-building" group, we ask:

- *In what ways can the strategy of confrontational movements be useful to us?*

- *In what ways, on the other hand, might it pose a threat or a risk to us?*

In this way, we analyze the relationships between strategies, not the strategies themselves.

Also remind participants to use concrete examples as much as possible. For example: Imagine I'm setting up an energy cooperative - how might a climate movement that blocks fossil fuel infrastructure be useful to me? A discussion based on specific situations is more productive, more applicable, and easier for others to understand. If you stay on a very abstract level, it's harder for some people to engage, and the debate tends to be less lively.

Ask the group to choose one person to present the findings at the end (about 3 minutes).

✓ **Facilitator's tip:** As they work, walk around among the groups and make sure they are really focusing on the relationships between the strategies (synergies and risks), not just on the general pros and cons of each strategy.

Group presentations (15 minutes):

Before the presentations, remind the participants to always illustrate general principles with specific examples. It is much easier for the audience to understand and more interesting when statements are grounded in real-world examples.

Example:

- **General statement:** Building a movement can polarize society and prevent certain reforms from being implemented.
- **To give a concrete example:** Building a movement can polarize society and hinder the implementation of certain reforms—for example, when the climate movement blocks fossil fuel infrastructure or organizes radical protests against mining, it can provoke a strong backlash from parts of the public and political actors. They may then reject even more moderate measures, such as regulating energy companies or supporting renewable energy sources, because they perceive them as part of an "overly radical agenda."

Each group has about 3 minutes for their presentation. Afterward, the other groups will have a chance to ask any questions they may have.

Reflection (20 minutes)

Activity overview

- What insights did you gain about the strategies of change during the discussions and presentations?
- Which strategy do you think is the best? (The objective here is to demonstrate that all strategies are necessary—although their significance may vary depending on the context. For instance, during periods of relative stability, building alternatives might be the most logical approach, while in times of crisis, applying pressure through movements and pushing for non-reformist reforms is often more effective.)
- Did any controversial issues or disagreements arise?

- Do you now view some strategies differently than you did at the beginning?

Generalization

- Which of these strategies do you think is most lacking in the Czech Republic?
- What strategies make sense to adopt, for example, during an energy crisis (or other current situation)?

Reflection through individual writing

- Where do I see my role in these transformation strategies?

First, let the participants answer individually through a short writing exercise. Afterwards, they can share in pairs, and optionally with the whole group, what they are taking away from the activity.

Workshop 3

Post-Growth Entrepreneurship

What does the transition to a post-growth economy mean for businesses? How must companies transform themselves so that they no longer support the logic of constant growth, but instead contribute to a socially just and environmentally sustainable economy? During the workshop, participants will learn about the five key dimensions of so-called "deep design" in business—that is, how a company's relationship to profit, ownership structure, decision-making processes, scope of operations, and size shape its behavior and impacts on the world. Participants will then apply these dimensions to the analysis of specific companies and collectively reflect on what an ideal post-growth enterprise looks like.

Duration:	90 minutes (1 hr 30 min)
Number of participants:	8–30
Tools:	flipchart / projector, writing materials, company names on slips of paper
Tags:	criticism, vision, systems thinking
Topic:	post-growth entrepreneurship, ownership structure, relationship to profit, decision-making
Program objectives:	Participants will: • **describe what constitutes a company's "deep design"** and explain how factors such as the relationship to profit, ownership, or decision-making influence the functioning of a given company, • **explain how structure influences corporate behavior** and use examples to illustrate why the social impact of companies is not just about individual decisions, but primarily about institutional settings, • **identify the key characteristics of post-growth enterprises** (such as limiting the extraction of financial value, focusing on needs rather than profit maximization, democratic governance, or community roots)

Introductory framing:

When discussing the transition to a post-growth economic system, the question often arises: what does "post-growth" mean for business and specific companies? Isn't "post-growth business" an oxymoron? During this workshop, we will examine the fundamental aspects of businesses and what makes them capitalist or post-capitalist/post-growth alternatives.

Brainstorming (10 minutes)

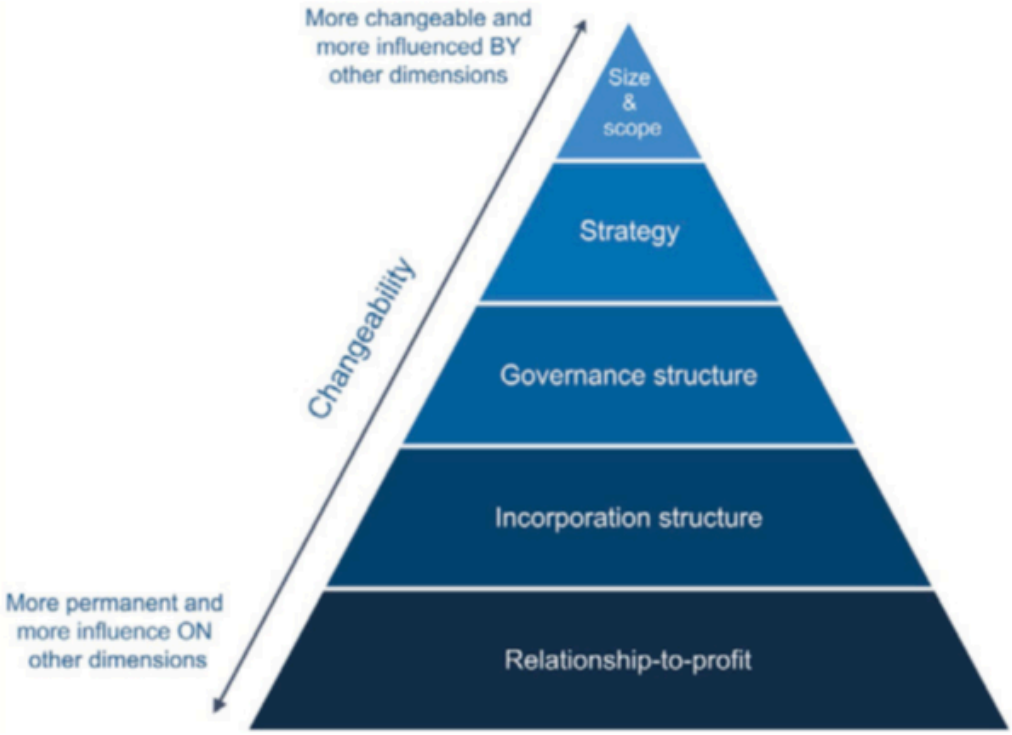
When I say "post-growth business," what aspects or characteristics come to mind right away?

We'll collect answers on a flipchart regarding the term "post-growth entrepreneurship" (common answers: it should have a small ecological footprint and an environmentally friendly approach; it shouldn't be solely profit-driven; it should be small-scale and connected to the local community, etc.).

Presentation of the Pyramid of Key Business Dimensions (10 minutes)

Next, present the pyramid of the five dimensions of business developed by institutional and environmental economist Jennifer Hinton (2021) in "Five Key Dimensions of Post-Growth Business: Putting the Pieces Together*. Introduce each level of the pyramid, starting from the bottom: begin with the relationship to profit and work your way up. Provide specific, ideally contrasting, examples for each level so that participants gain a deep understanding of these categories. This understanding is key to the next activity.

You can present using a projector, or you can also draw the pyramid on a flipchart.



When discussing the pyramid, it is important to note:

- this "deep design" of a business has a major impact on how that company behaves in the world—for example: if you are a corporation, you are forced to increase profits every year,
- the lower down the pyramid we are, the greater the influence these levels have on other levels of the business, but they are also more resistant to change—for example, the relationship to profit often influences the choice of legal form or specific strategies (e.g., choosing cheap but harmful production processes, etc.),
- efforts to make companies more sustainable, such as Corporate Social Responsibility or ESG, most often focus on lower leverage points without questioning these approaches or mentioning the importance of higher leverage points for change, such as the relationship to profit, legal form, or decision-making mechanisms within a given company,
- it is also crucial to explain exactly what profit means, because many people have different ideas about what profit entails (see Infobox 1 for more details).

Group Work and Deep Design Analysis of Companies (25 minutes)

Divide the group into 6 groups (ideally 3–4 people per group). If your overall group is smaller, you can work with fewer companies so that there are at least three participants in each group. Then ask the groups to draw the name of a company from a slip of paper. They should draw a pyramid on a flipchart and immediately write down what they find out about the company in the levels that most apply. Over the next 20 minutes, each group's goal is to analyze the selected company in terms of the five business dimensions introduced earlier.

- What is the company's relationship to profit?
- What is the company's legal form? Who owns this company?
- Who manages it? What are its decision-making mechanisms?
- How does the company behave? What does it do? (supply chain selection, environmental policies, ethics)
- How big is the company? Where does it operate?

In addition to these 5 dimensions, also consider this question:

- How does what the company does differ from what it says about itself?

The selection of companies for analysis is up to the facilitator, but it should reflect the local conditions of the area where the activity takes place. It is better to highlight local examples so that participants can relate to them, including the impact these companies have in their own country. It is also crucial to select companies that demonstrate diversity in the five-dimensional analysis:

- reflecting different relationships to profit—from companies aiming to maximize their profits, to profitable companies striving to be responsible, to entirely non-profit companies, such as Radically Open Security
- publicly traded companies, privately owned companies, municipal or state-owned companies, cooperatives, and steward-owned companies

List of some of the visionary and inspiring companies:

- Radically Open Security

- Patagonia
- Zeiss Foundation
- Mietshäuser Syndikat
- Som energia
- Glass Cymru

Joint Presentation (20 minutes)

Each group will present its company and its analysis of the five dimensions to the others. Each group will have approximately three minutes. If a group makes a mistake or fails to share key information about the companies, the instructor will ask follow-up questions or clarify and supplement the key aspects as needed.

Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes)

How Structure Influences Corporate Behavior

Begin by reflecting on what participants observed during their analysis of individual companies. Possible questions:

- *How do the deeper layers of a company influence its behavior? Provide specific examples based on the presentations by each group.*
- *Can you give an example from the analyzed companies where the structure almost forces the company to behave in a certain way?*

The goal of this section is for participants to see that, for example, attitudes toward profit, ownership, or decision-making structures significantly influence the strategies companies choose.

Ownership and Legal Structure

Next, focus on the issue of ownership and legal structures of businesses. Possible questions:

- *Does any particular type of ownership or legal structure provide companies with better conditions for acting in the public interest?*
- *Have any forms of ownership been mentioned here that you hadn't heard of before? If so, how do you understand them now?*

The goal of this section is to broaden participants' understanding that there is a wider spectrum of ownership models than just traditional private companies.

The Limits of "Better" Institutional Forms

Finally, it is worth addressing the fact that even "better" institutional arrangements do not automatically guarantee desirable corporate behavior. Possible questions:

- Some companies may have a "better" structure than others. But does that automatically mean they also behave better in the real world?
- For example, if a company is partially state-owned or publicly owned—does that necessarily mean it serves the public interest? (e.g., ČEZ)

The goal of this section is for participants to realize that institutional structures do not guarantee a certain type of behavior, but rather set conditions and incentives that can either encourage or discourage certain types of behavior.

Closing Reflection (10 min)

Ask the group some questions to ponder, let them reflect in silence for a moment, and invite a few participants to share their thoughts:

- *How do you view companies and their social impact after this workshop?*
- *What new insights have you gained?*

Lead organizer of the project

NaZemi is a Czech organization working towards a world where everyone's needs are met within planetary boundaries. We focus on education, economic transformation, and facilitation. We promote degrowth, critical global education, and self-managed organizational models rooted in cooperation, sufficiency, and care.

Find more at nazemi.cz

Nerůst ("degrowth") is a team at **NaZemi** that co-creates the organization. We systematically spread and cultivate discussion about degrowth in the Czech Republic. This team is also the main organizer of this project. If you find our work meaningful, please consider supporting our activities.

Find more at nerust.cz

Partner organizations

Partner organizations in this project are:

- Klíma ťa potrebuje (Slovakia)
- Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie (Germany)
- Tasaarengu Eesti (Degrowth Estonia) (Estonia)
- Institut za političku ekologiju (IPE) (Croatia)
- Echo Collective (formerly Degrowth in Action) (Spain)
- Shift Slow (Austria)
- OtherWise Wageningen (the Netherlands)

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