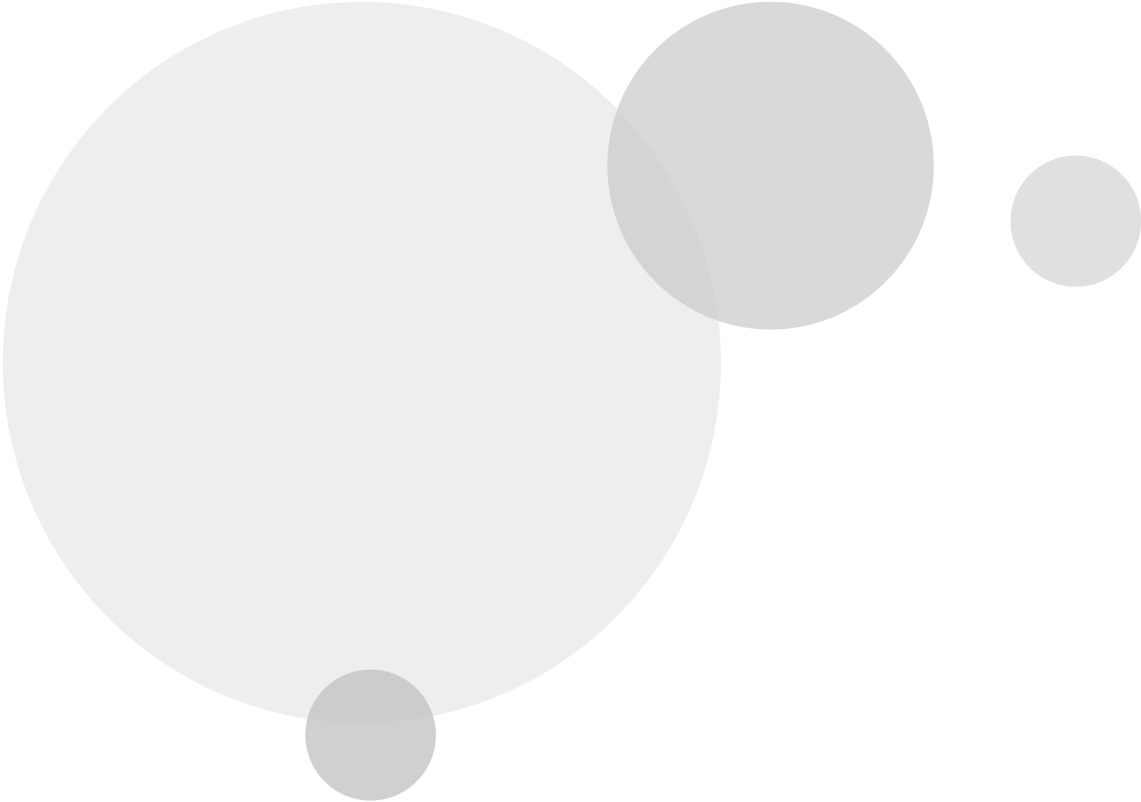




Linking Issues, Learning and Action: A Systems Thinking Approach



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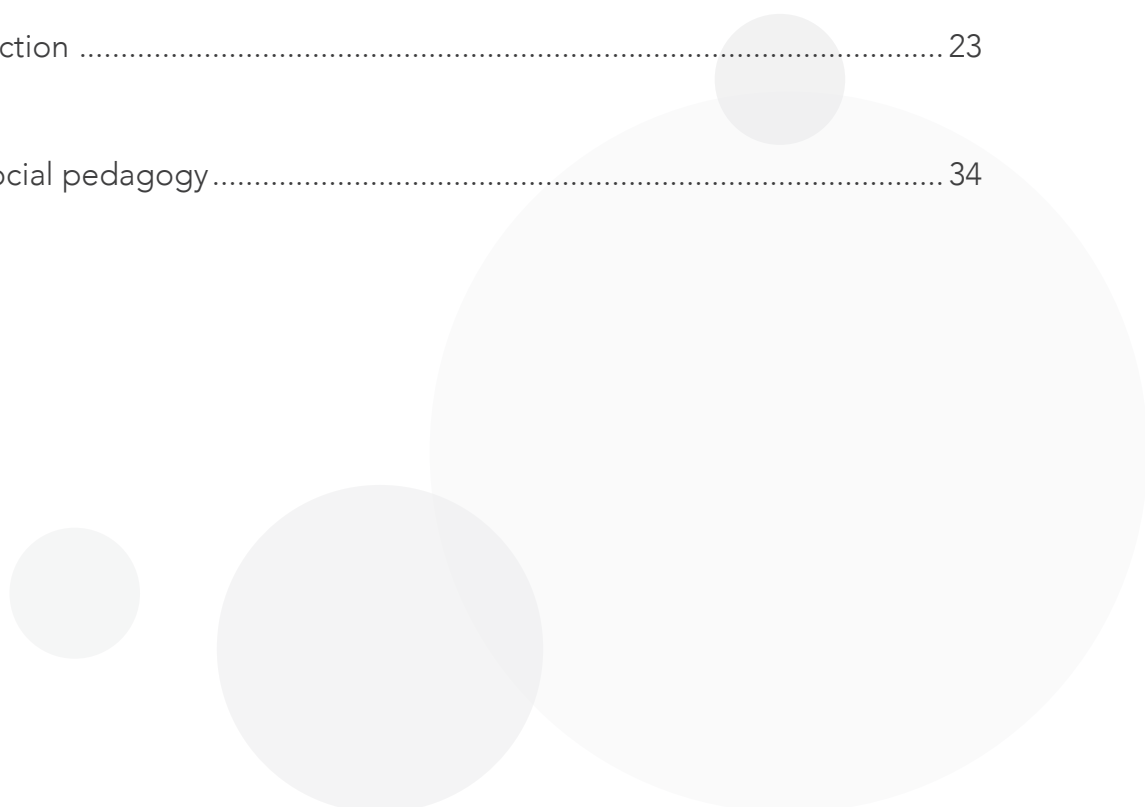
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Foreword

Over the years, many adult educators have turned to systems theory as a means to overcome fragmentation by creating more integrated adult education systems that respond effectively to the needs of societies and communities across various countries and regions. One of the foremost thinkers in this area was Harbans Bhola, whose contributions to the conceptualisation and practical application of systems theory in adult education remain highly influential today.

<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-622004/adult-education-and-poverty-reduction/adult-education-for-poverty-reduction-political-economy-analysis-from-a-systems-theory-perspective>

Adult educators have increasingly embraced *systems thinking and practice* as a tool to develop a more holistic and integrated understanding of our complex realities - the world we inhabit and our role in transforming it. For many, especially those engaged in social pedagogy and popular education, *systems thinking* is deeply embedded in their praxis - an approach rooted in participation and action - aimed at shaping a world free from domination, subordination and oppression.

A renewed emphasis on *systems thinking and practice* in adult education remains vital for educators engaging with issues at macro, meso and micro levels of society. As the world grapples with the often-cited polycrisis, including climate change and the ecological crisis, and the just transition, *systems thinking* is gaining momentum as a useful lens for adult educators. In a paper, https://www.mojaafrica.net/uploads/Journal-of-Adult-Education_Ivor-Baatjes.pdf on adult education in Africa, I suggest that *systems thinking and practice* can play a key role in helping adult educators develop a more holistic and integrated understanding of the interconnections between the pressing challenges faced by communities and societies. These challenges include, but are not limited to, food insecurity and hunger; access to water and energy; illness and health disparities; housing; inequality; poverty; and unemployment.

Adult and community educators often find their work naturally intersecting with *systems thinking and practice*. Community education, in particular, emphasises learning initiatives and programmes that take place both within and beyond formal educational institutions, aiming to respond directly to the needs and interests of local communities. *Systems thinking* offers a valuable framework for making sense of the complex dynamics between these issues and for designing educational initiatives that effectively address them. By integrating *systems thinking and practice* into community education, we can foster more comprehensive, adaptive and sustainable learning programmes - ones that truly reflect and support the diverse realities of adult learners, while contributing meaningfully to community and societal development.

Linking Issues, Learning and Action: A Systems Thinking Approach has been thoughtfully developed as a resource for adult educators, particularly those working within community learning centres and grassroots educational spaces across Africa. Its core purpose is to support educators in shifting from fragmented approaches to more holistic ways of understanding and responding to the complex realities their communities face. Rather than isolating social, environmental and economic challenges, this approach encourages viewing them as interconnected parts of a larger system.

Linking Issues, Learning and Action: A Systems Thinking Approach explores a broad range of critical and timely issues - such as climate change, food security and hunger, health, social inequality, and the just transition - not as separate themes, but as interrelated components that influence and shape one another. Each issue is presented with the intention of prompting deeper reflection and dialogue, encouraging educators and learners alike to explore how these issues intersect in everyday life. For example, climate change is not just an environmental issue; it has far-reaching impacts on access to food and clean water, displacement and migration, housing stability, public health and social cohesion. Similarly, a conversation about health cannot be fully understood without considering living conditions, nutrition, education and access to services - all of which are influenced by systemic and structural factors.

By presenting these themes as part of a dynamic system, the booklet encourages educators to use *systems thinking* as a practical framework in their teaching. This helps learners make sense of the world in more comprehensive and meaningful ways. It also allows education to become more responsive to the lived experiences of adult learners, connecting learning to real-world action and change. Ultimately, the resource serves as both a guide and an invitation - for educators to embrace complexity, foster critical awareness and to co-create a learning environment where adults are free to reflect on, engage with and transform the systems that shape their lives.

As you engage with this text, and as you deepen and enrich it through your own experiences and reflections, we encourage a participatory and co-learning approach that is grounded in shared inquiry, dialogue and action. This process is not just about absorbing information, but about building learning spaces that reflect core principles and values essential for transformative adult and community education. These include: (i) A vision of a just and sustainable world, where social, economic and ecological systems work in harmony to support the well-being of all people and the planet. (ii) A commitment to social and environmental justice, recognising the interconnectedness of struggles and the importance of addressing systemic inequalities and environmental degradation together. (iii) The importance of building critical consciousness and collective action for change - encouraging learners to question dominant narratives, reflect on their lived realities and work collaboratively to transform unjust systems. (iv) An emphasis on mutuality and the co-construction of knowledge, where all participants - educators and learners alike - are seen as active contributors to the learning process, drawing from both personal experience and collective wisdom. (v) A foundation built on values of equality, respect, dignity, trust, mutuality and reciprocity - creating learning spaces that are inclusive, affirming and grounded in genuine human connection. (vi) An openness to different ways of knowing, including indigenous knowledge systems, experiential learning, emotional intelligence, spiritual perspectives, and artistic expression - recognising that knowledge is diverse, dynamic and deeply contextual.

By embracing the values mentioned above in your reading, discussions and practice, the text becomes a living document - shaped by your insights, responsive to your context and aligned with a broader movement for equity, justice and sustainable futures.

Ivor Baatjes
Executive Director, The Canon Collins Trust

A study circle group is meeting



Place: Somewhere in Africa [Note: The place is not specific as it is meant to be applicable to anywhere in Africa; the same goes for not giving the participants names (but rather differentiating people with colours) - the non-specificity is to signify that the issues are common to many. Also each session is a snapshot, as opposed to a full session. Introductions, ice-breakers, wrap-ups, etc. have not been included. The sessions serve not to offer 'solutions' but to pose questions, share examples and offer some ideas/thoughts/perspectives]

When: A month ago

SESSION ONE

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
The Second Coming
William Butler Yeats, 1919*

This session looks at the issues, concerns, problems and struggles 'ordinary' people experience on a daily basis. It explores the why question - why is this happening and why is the world as it is? The session begins to connect the everyday local struggles with what is happening in the world, with the 'bigger picture' - the polycrisis.

Session's Facilitator: Hello all and welcome back to our study circle.

Today we will be discussing the daily issues, concerns, problems and struggles we experience. Let's start our session by reading this:

7 August 2023

A debt collector looking for repayment of a loan found the bodies of a Butterworth woman and her three children at their home on Sunday morning. It is understood that she had poisoned her small children by mixing the last food in the house with rat poison. Her teenage daughter died after she was stabbed in the throat. The mother then hanged herself. Family members said the woman was deeply in debt and the family had been starving for weeks.

Desperate Eastern Cape Mom Kills Starving Children And Hangs Herself

Estelle Ellis & Hoseya Jubase

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-08-07-desperate-eastern-cape-mom-kills-starving-children-and-hangs-herself/>

Study Circle Participant: Oh no no no.

Participant: I heard about this, it is a tragedy.

Participant: My heart is saddened by this.

Participant: A mother so desperate, she felt the only way to save her children was to kill them.

Facilitator: Let's share some experiences of our own lives. What issues are we dealing with as a community or communities?

Participant: Let's start with what the mother who felt so completely helpless and hopeless was dealing with - hunger. In 2025, with enough food in the world to feed everyone, we are dealing with hunger. Neighbours help each other when and if we can, but it gets more difficult as more and more people face lives without any form of income.

Participant: We have hunger in 2025 because there is very little to no income; no income is because there is so much unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment. Even when people are educated, a significant number of particularly young people remain unemployed.

Participant: Or underemployed. Workers find themselves in precarious forms of work with no fixed income, no days off and no social protection.

Participant: I know many youths whose lives revolve around an endless search for money, and all of them have become substance users.

Participant: And sometimes there's aggression, sometimes violence.

Participant: While I do not condone the use of drugs or aggression or violence, I understand why people turn to drugs. This could be the only way they feel they can cope with their daily struggles, disappointment, pain and suffering.

Participant: Yes, mental health issues are on the rise and people are not being given adequate care.

Participant: And also for physical illnesses. Many of my family members have gone to the clinic, been given painkillers by a nurse for whatever is wrong with them, and then sent home. Some have not got better.

Participant: Painkillers - the 'treat-all drug'!

Participant: My neighbour is a nurse and sometimes that is all the clinic has available to give patients. It saddens her but there is not much she can do. Sometimes there's not even water at the clinic.

Participant: A family member of ours is a small-scale farmer and there has been no rainfall in her area for months and months.

Participant: I recently came across these prayers:



The heavens are closed, and no rain nourishes the farms because the people have sinned against you. Oh! Lord, we pray in your name to turn your flock away from sin. We praise and pray that our Lord in heaven, you will forgive your servants and grant us rain, Oh Lord. Amen

May God open the heavens and let His mercy rain down our fields and mountains. We pray that you send rain to those impacted by water shortages and drought-stricken areas. We also pray that you may grant us wisdom to share whatever water is available with equity and charity. Let us be good stewards and custodians of this precious gift as we await rainfall. Amen
(Prayers from Tuko)

Facilitator: Let's take a moment to reflect on these prayers. What do you think about them?

Participant: Of course praying for rain is absolutely fine but we need to understand *why* there is an increasing need to pray for rain. What is going on? Why are the heavens closed? Why is there no rain?

Participant: And why did my sister recently lose her house in floods? The rain would not stop in her area.

Participant: It's climate change.

Participant: What is this 'climate change' thing that people keep talking about?

Participant: Climate change is the reason we are experiencing extreme weather across the planet, more frequently and more intensely than ever before: record-breaking heat waves on land and in the ocean, drenching rains, prolonged droughts, wildfires and severe floods.

Participant: But why is there climate change? Where did it come from?

Participant: So-called 'modern' humans have tried to control nature. Humans think they own it, they show it no respect, and do with it what they want. They exert their control by, amongst other, burning coal, overfishing, overgrazing, moving organisms around the world which then become alien and negatively affect the local biodiversity. Humans have caused deforestation, soil erosion, water, air and plastic pollution. Messing with the Earth has affected the weather.

Participant: I'd like to say that it's not all humans. Most people in the Global South (like us) have been victims of this, not perpetrators.

Participant: I agree. Mother Earth is being destroyed by those who hold economic and political power. They have tossed our past aside, abandoned how we used to live as part of nature, in peace. Now we have a broken relationship with the Earth.

Participant: What you describe is what happens in a capitalist system - turning whatever you can find into a 'business opportunity' no matter the cost. It's about generating a profit.

Participant: I'd like to add that it is also a patriarchal system; it has been mostly men who have done this. Women, especially materially poor women of colour, are mostly the ones who suffer the terrible effects of both systems. Here is a quote by Mahamuda Rahman, former communication officer at Cordaid:

We all suffer from these oppressive systems of injustice in our own ways. But because they feed on differences and vulnerabilities, not all humans suffer equally.

Participant: We don't all suffer equally, agreed. And we sometimes think that our struggles, problems and issues are ours alone. While mine may be a lack of water or too much water, yours may be a shortage of housing or access to decent housing, and yours may be to do with food insecurity and hunger, and yours may be to do with gender-based violence, or we may be experiencing a number of problems concurrently. Whatever the issue, we need to acknowledge that none of them are isolated - they are all connected to each other. They all form part of a bigger whole. It is important to *link* the struggles, problems and issues.

Participant: Yes, we are experiencing interlocking crises.

Participant: We are living in a deep multi-dimensional crisis.

Participant: A polycrisis!



Dear Reader

What do you think of what you have read above? Do you have anything to add? If so, please do so here...

Will you be able to use anything you learned as part of your teaching/facilitating/activist work? If yes, what and how?

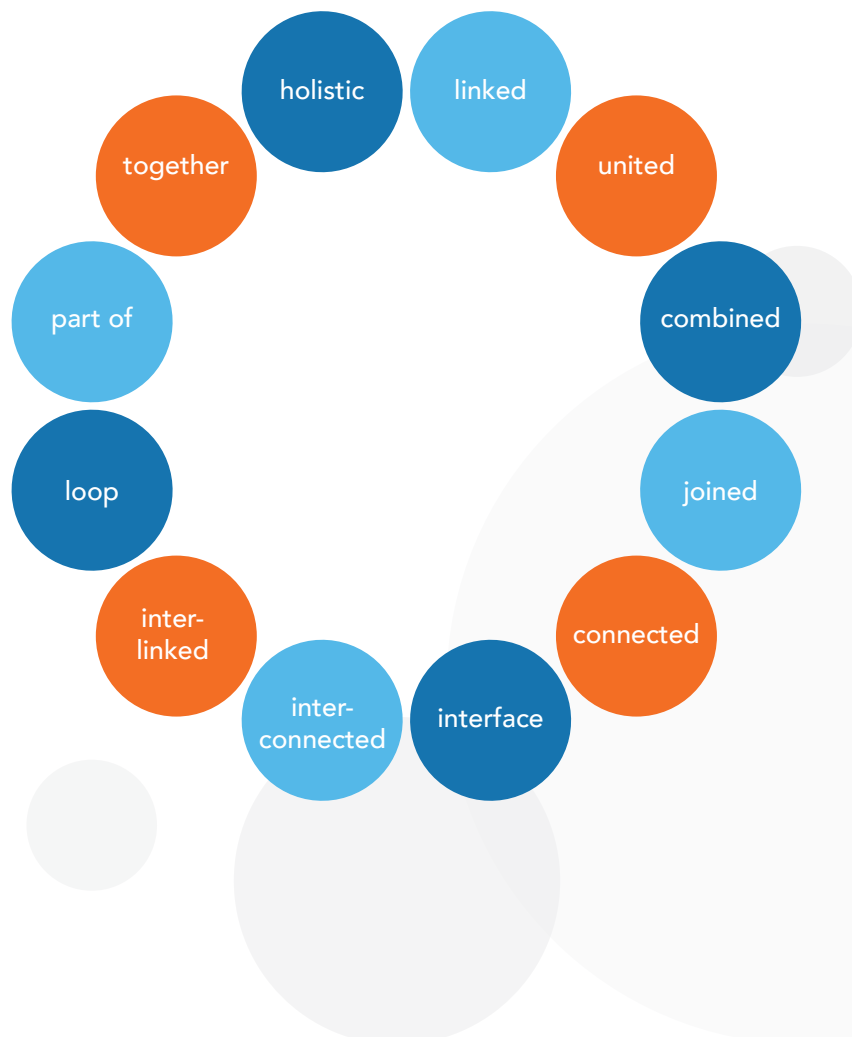
Study circle group meeting**Place:** Somewhere in Africa**When:** Three weeks ago

SESSION TWO

The focus of this session is on systems. It looks at the importance of interrelated parts of a whole functioning in harmony. It also looks at what happens if the system breaks down if not cared for properly and if harmed. It also briefly explores *thinking in systems*. Session One looked at issues, concerns, problems and struggles as being connected to one another; this session starts to look at *what to do about* the issues, concerns, problems and struggles in a collective way (more in Session Four).

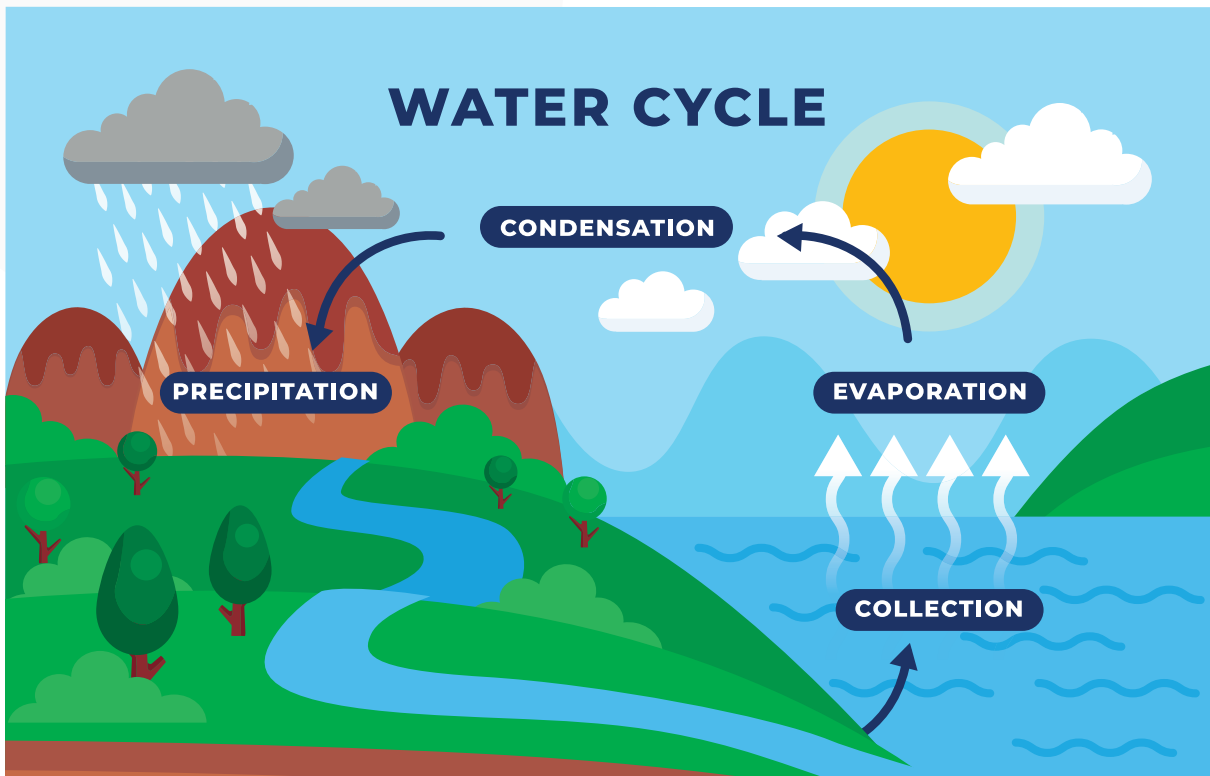
Session's Facilitator: Last session, we spoke about how issues, concerns, problems and struggles are interconnected. Would anyone like to share their reflections on this?

Study Circle Participant: Yes, I reflected on it by creating this:

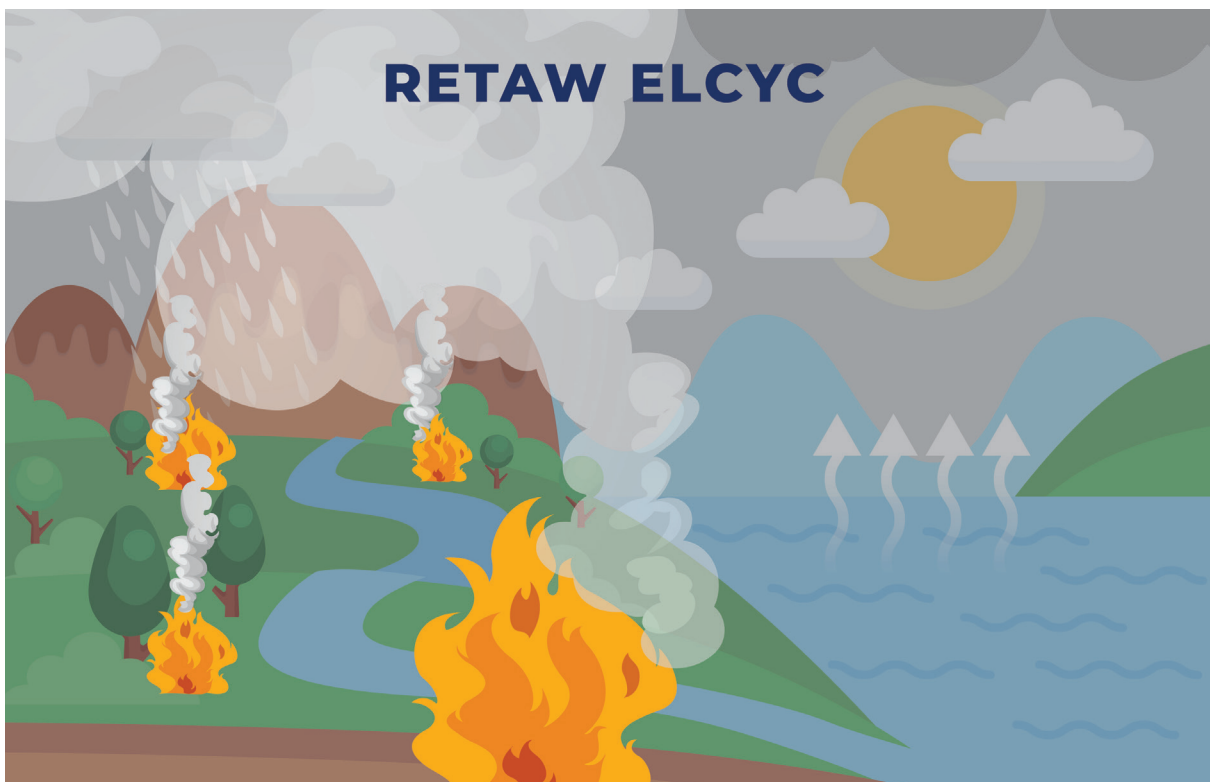


The session got me thinking about *systems* - how things work together or should work together, but because of human intervention, many do not. Many of these systems are broken.

Participant: The balance has been undone. Let's look at the water system as an example. Humans have made huge alterations to the Earth's water cycle and it has started to break down. The water cycle should look like this:



It looks like this:



Facilitator: Water is life. It is essential for plants, animals and humans. The water cycle, a system with its interrelated parts, should function, but does not. Why not?

Participant: Tragically we have vastly manipulated the water cycle at an unprecedented rate and scale. These human-made alterations are now taking us towards breaking point. Many things are breaking or have already broken in the name of 'progress', 'modernity' and 'development'.

Participant: Yes, many people think that water, indeed nature, is infinite. That every time we need water, it will simply be there.

- A new report from the Global Commission on the Economics of Water lays out the dire situation, stating that demand could outstrip supply by 40 percent by the end of the decade.
- This situation is a direct outcome of human activity and climate change - a warming world means more moisture in the atmosphere, destroyed forests mean less transpiration, and mismanaged water subsidies lead to tons of waste.

Scientists Say Our Water Cycle Has Started Breaking Down

Darren Orf, 21 October 2024

<https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a62642208/water-cycle-malfunction/>

Facilitator: Thank-you for sharing that. Let's continue talking about systems - those broken and those not. Systems are all around us. What are some other examples?

Participant: Well, there are natural systems, like ecosystems. There's the solar system. The body's organ system.

Participant: And human created ones, such as a transport system, an IT system, a monetary system.

Participant: There are many! A system is something with many interrelated parts and a system works because everything in the particular system functions in harmony because the system is respected, cared for and kept intact. But, as with the example of the water cycle breaking, systems can break down if not cared for properly, if they are harmed.

Facilitator: Bearing in mind what X has said, let's look at this quote and then respond to the question that follows:



Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder.

Professor Wangari Maathai (social, environmental and political activist who founded the Green Belt Movement, upon winning the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 2004)

Why does Professor Maathai say we need 'a shift in our thinking'?

Participant: Professor Maathai states that we need to think about the world and how we engage with, and in it, in a different way.

Participant: ...In a different way to what has become the dominant view.

Participant: We should 'think in systems' that support ecological, social and economic well-being.

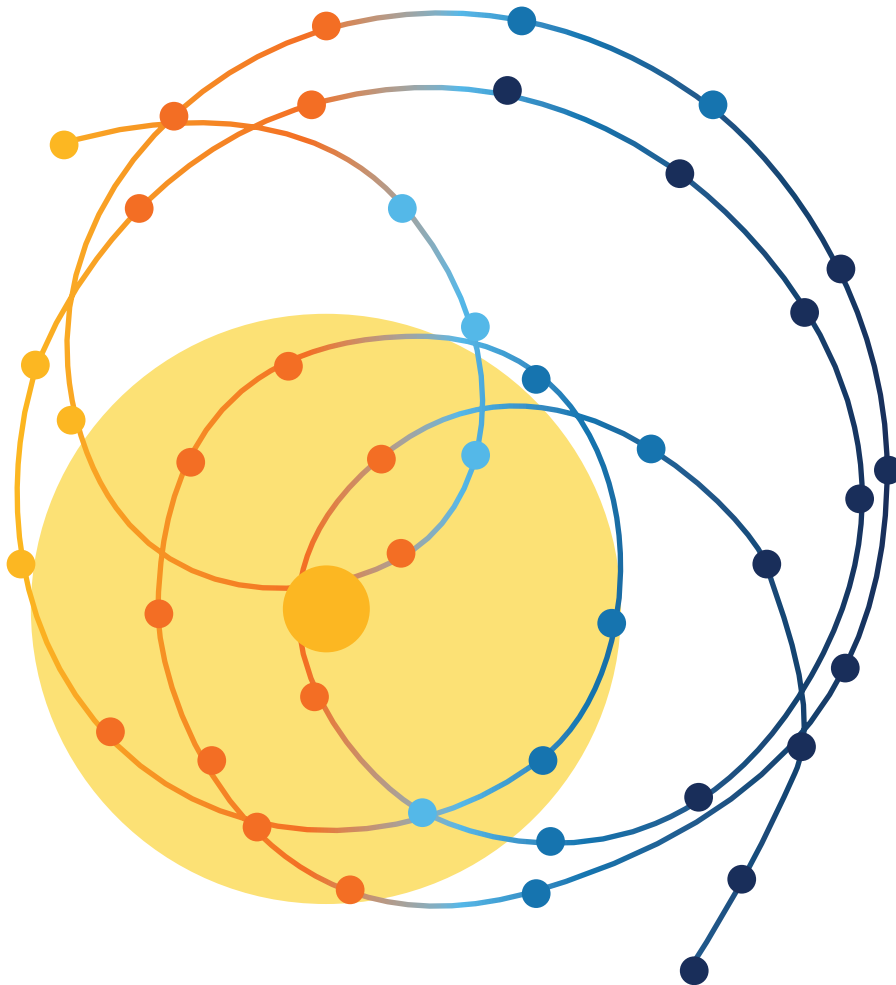
Facilitator: Please explain that a bit more...

Participant: The late Donella Hager 'Dana' Meadows was a pioneer in systems thinking. Her posthumous primer **Thinking in Systems** states:

Hunger, poverty, environmental degradation, economic instability, unemployment, chronic disease, drug addiction, and war, for example, persist in spite of the analytical ability and technical brilliance that have been directed toward eradicating them. No one deliberately creates those problems, no one wants them to persist, but they persist nonetheless. That is because they are intrinsically systems problems - undesirable behaviors characteristic of the system structure that produce them. They will yield only as we reclaim our intuition, stop casting blame, see the system as the source of its own problems, and find the courage and wisdom to restructure it.

We should not think about fixing or 'solving' things in isolation or with a one-dimensional strategy. We must not think narrowly, but rather see and understand things (issues, concerns, problems and struggles) as part of something much bigger.

Participant: Yes, we need to connect the dots!



Participant: Just as our struggles are connected, so should working together be connected - cooperatively, collaboratively, in solidarity - in order to fix our broken world. I'd like to share an example of a broken ecosystem that got restored:

A Rewilding Triumph: Wolves Help To Reverse Yellowstone Degradation

Cassidy Randall, 25 January 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/25/yellowstone-wolf-project-25th-anniversary>

In 1995 wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone, America's first national park and an ecosystem dangerously out of whack owing to the extirpation of its top predator.

This monumental undertaking marked the first deliberate attempt to return a top-level carnivore to a large ecosystem. Now scientists are celebrating the gray wolves' successful return from the brink of extinction as one of the greatest rewilding stories the world has ever seen.

The need for restoration was glaring. In the 70 years of the wolves' absence, the entire Yellowstone ecosystem had fallen out of balance. Coyotes ran rampant, and the elk population exploded, overgrazing willows and aspens. Without those trees, songbirds began to decline, beavers could no longer build their dams and riverbanks started to erode. Without beaver dams and the shade from trees and other plants, water temperatures were too high for cold-water fish.

In 1995, in collaboration with Canadian agencies, 14 wolves were captured in Jasper national park and brought to Yellowstone.

Scientists always knew that as the top predator, wolves were the missing piece in this ecosystem. But they were astonished at how quickly their return stimulated a transformation. The elk and deer populations started responding immediately. Within about 10 years, willows rebounded. In 20, the aspen began flourishing. Riverbanks stabilized. Songbirds returned as did beavers, eagles, foxes and badgers. "And those are just the things we have the time and funding to study," said Doug Smith (senior wildlife biologist of the Yellowstone Wolf Project who was hired by the National Park Service (NPS) to head the reintroduction in the 1990s). "There are probably myriad other effects just waiting to be discovered."

It's our conscience, our reminder that we're responsible for maintaining a healthy planet now and in the future.

Jamie Rappaport Clark, President and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife

You can watch a video of the above here (*How Wolves Change Rivers*, Sustainable Human):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q&t=272s>

And you can read *The Flower of Transformation* by Ashish Kothari (23 March 2022) here:

<https://www.localfutures.org/the-flower-of-transformation/>

Dear Reader

What do you think of what you have read above? Do you have anything to add? If so, please do so here...

Will you be able to use anything you learned as part of your teaching/facilitating/activist work? If yes, what and how?

Study circle group meeting**Place:** Somewhere in Africa**When:** Two weeks ago

SESSION THREE

This session is about the Just Transition, where the term comes from, what it is (looking at various understandings of the term) and who will benefit from it.

Session's Facilitator: Has anyone heard of the Just Transition?

Study Circle Participant: I have.

Participant: So have I.

Participant: I haven't.

Participant: I also haven't.

Facilitator: Who would like to share with us what it is?

Participant: Because of the impact and effects of climate change, things like fossil fuels, carbon-intensive industries and other unsustainable and polluting practices need to be phased out and replaced with safer options, such as renewable energy - that protect people and the planet. The Just Transition is to do with softening job losses in unsafe sectors such as coal, crude oil and natural gas.

Participant: You mention fossil fuels and renewable energy - so did the Just Transition emerge in response to the climate crisis?

Participant: No, even though many people associate its origins with the climate crisis.

The Just Transition is widely recognised as a mainstream climate-policy term which gained momentum following the Climate Change Conference (COP24), held in 2018 in Katowice, Poland. At COP24, heads of state adopted the *Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration*, which sent a crucial message that workers will not be sacrificed in an effort to cut emissions and mitigate climate change, and that the low-carbon economy will be fair and inclusive.

https://climatestrategies.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Implementing-Just-Transition-after-COP24_FINAL.pdf

The origin of the term Just Transition goes back further than 2018. At the end of the session, you can read about its origin (see further below).

Facilitator: Thank-you. Let's continue discussing...anyone else want to add/ask?

Participant: What about those of us who are already unemployed? Many people have no electricity! Access to electricity is high on our list as is the issue of unemployment, hunger, access to land, the shortage of housing and so on.

Participant: But there is a direct link between climate change and hunger - food insecurity; between climate change and people being forced to migrate which will lead to land issues, housing issues, etc.

Participant: I agree. We are already experiencing climate change and its effects and affects, even if it hasn't been accepted as a tangible 'thing' and a matter of extreme urgency by the majority of people.

Participant: My brother is a mine worker and there is talk that many workers will lose their jobs during this so-called Just Transition. Many workers are opposed to the Just Transition. We must always ask: Just for whom? We are tired of being told something will benefit us, only to find it doesn't.

Participant: You are right, however my understanding of the Just Transition is that during the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, workers and communities will *not* suffer job losses and/or declining economic activity. Central to the concept of a Just Transition is the protection of workers' rights and livelihoods. This includes supporting workers in industries that may be phased out or transformed by providing retraining, education, job placement assistance and income support.

Here is an extract from an interview with Tebogo Lesabe, Legislative Researcher for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM):

Amandla!: *What does NUM mean by a just transition?*

Tebogo Lesabe: The NUM believes that it has to do with a fair, inclusive shift towards a low-carbon economy that prioritises workers' livelihoods, particularly in the mining and energy sector. It entails securing jobs and re-skilling opportunities and fair wages, social support and a strong community infrastructure. In a policy conference discussion paper, the NUM identified four pillars that were central to what it defines as a just transition, loosely based on the International Labour Organisation's *Decent Work Agenda*. They are social dialogue, social protection, rights at work, and employment protection and creation.

Just Transition Requires Social Dialogue And Protection

Amandla Collective, 25 November 2024

<https://www.amandla.org.za/just-transition-requires-social-dialogue-and-protection/>

Participant: Let's talk about 'mining and energy' for a bit. I'd like to share this cartoon and a brief extract from **The Energy Issue: From Colonial Modernity To Decolonising Alternatives (Weaving Alternatives #15: A Periodical Of The Global Tapestry Of Alternatives)**, December 2024:



Greenwashing 101. Calculating The Electric Car's "green-ness"

S. Belmann, The Hindu, 28 March 2016

It is no surprise then that energy has become a key driver of landscape transformation worldwide, reshaping spatial and temporal dimensions across various geographies. Capitalism's relentless pursuit of perpetual economic growth, coupled with an increasing demand for energy, has turned attention toward 'new' extractive frontiers as the era of cheap energy - characterized by abundant, easily accessible fossil fuels - draws to a close. This shift signals a threshold marked by a need to sustain our high-energy modernity with less abundant energy sources (i.e. moving from fossil fuels to 'renewable energy'). At the same time, billionaires are promoting visions of colonizing Mars or the Moon, raising questions about whether ("green") capitalism can survive or even transcend Earth's planetary limits, while activists and NGOs continue to advocate for a somewhat empty formulation of a 'just energy transition' that often translates into a re-formulation of the old colonial notion that was already embedded in the development enterprise: a perpetual 'need' for energy that remains unquestionable¹ as the debate centers on alternative forms of rather than alternatives to the energy and this hegemonic and corporate-led form of transition.

1. As explained by Ivan Illich in his contribution to the book "The Development Dictionary". See: Illich, I. (2010). 'Needs' in Sachs, W. (Ed.) The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power. (pp:95-110). New York: Zed Books.

<https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/newsletters:15:index>

Session's Facilitator: Thank-you for those words (and cartoon) of caution. There are also other thought-provoking viewpoints such as Chris Smaje's Energy Transition: The End Of An Idea

<https://chrissmaje.com/2025/04/energy-transition-the-end-of-an-idea/>

And here is a video called La Energía De Los Pueblos (The Energy Of The People) (La Sandía Digital). It has English subtitles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXIA-2S_uAs

Participant: So, is the Just Transition *just* about energy? What about other sectors?

Participant: What I understand about it is that the Just Transition will be a *broad* transition. The just energy transition is a core part of a wider transformation of society premised on the reimagining of the type of world we want to live in.

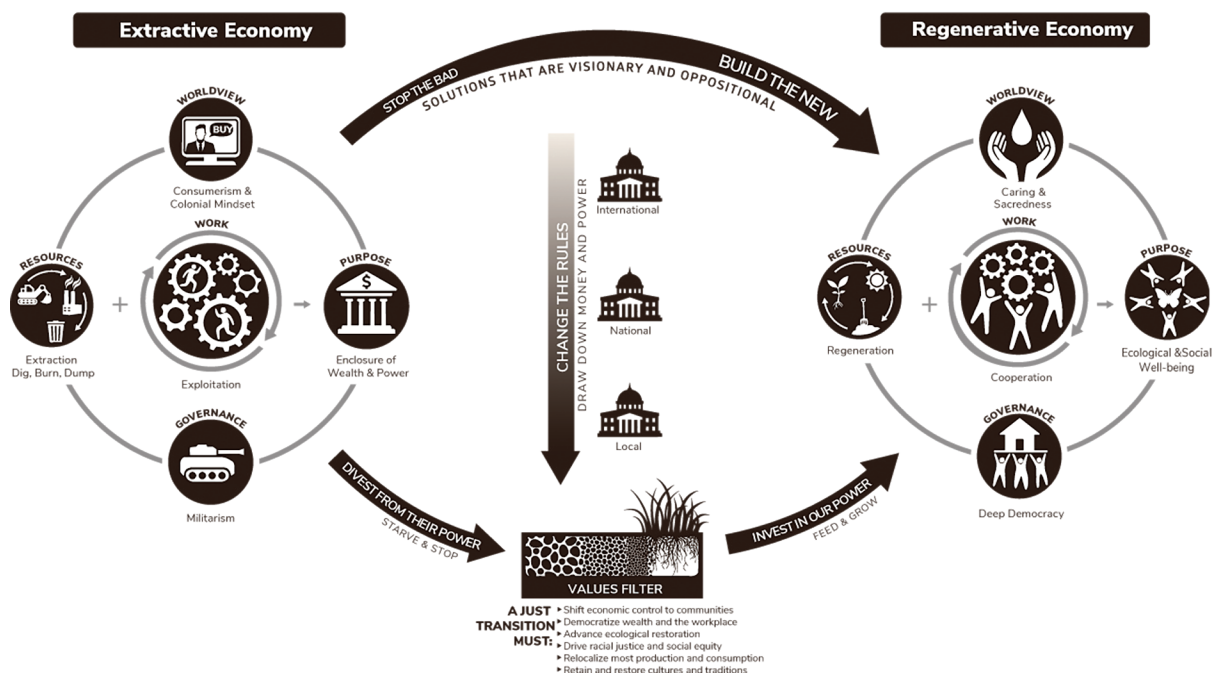
Here are a few important points about the Just Transition:

A Just Transition must

1. lead to a caring rights-based economy centred on human and planetary well-being
2. be economy-wide and result in low carbon and climate resilient economy
3. allow for the transformation of ownership, distribution and access to resources
4. be democratic, empowering and context-specific
5. address power using an intersectional feminist lens
6. demand restorative justice in order to be transformative

<https://www.iej.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/IEJ-JustTransition-PP-Aug2022.pdf>

Participant: Yes, a Just Transition will have principles, processes and practices to remodel and remake our world - a world that prioritises the materially poor and marginalised, non-human beings and the planet. It must be an equitable transformation that prioritises social justice.



Climate Justice Alliance, under [Creative Commons Licence](#), NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Participant: Very importantly, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to a Just Transition. Policies and programmes need to be designed in line with country-specific conditions - globally we are all at different stages of 'development' and we need to consider our various different economies, levels of poverty, potential inequalities, amongst other.

The following comes from the Life After Coal (Impilo Ngaphandle Kwamalahle) campaign:

From 24 to 26 November 2020 the three organisations comprising the Life After Coal campaign, Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg), the Centre for Environmental Rights and groundWork, met virtually to develop a shared Open Agenda on the Just Transition, taking as their starting point the Open Agenda for a Just Transition developed at the National Coal Exchange in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, in July 2019. We chose to frame it as an agenda because it consists of actions that we argue need to be taken to ensure a Just Transition. Some of these actions are core to our work, some actions we will work with others, and some actions we will support. The agenda is open as we invite allies to join with us, debate and further refine this agenda. This will be done on the basis of shared principles: inclusivity, solidarity, open democratic debate and decision making, and class, race, gender and environmental justice.

We call for a Just Transition

We call for a Just Transition from coal and other fossil fuels, to a society based on clean, just and renewable energy, and social justice. We demand:

1. A new, sustainable energy system to replace the current system based on dirty fossil fuels that only serves the elite;
2. The end of financing for coal and other fossil fuel investments, including gas;
3. The rehabilitation of land and water ruined by coal mining and burning;
4. Concerted efforts to prepare for and deal with the impacts of climate change;
5. A new health system that works for the health of all;
6. Transport and communication systems that are inclusive and enable all to take part in public debates and decision making;
7. Food sovereignty and food security for all;
8. Local service delivery, and an undertaking to use open democracy and self-provision to achieve it;
9. A new economic system in which economic decision making starts by asking what the needs of people are, and how to fulfil them, rather than to have an economy that serves profit;
10. A society rooted in gender justice;
11. Special attention to youth and their future; and
12. Open democracy as the basis for decision making.

<https://lifeaftercoal.org.za/about/just-transition/open-agenda>

The origin of the Just Transition

In the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. labour movement fought to bridge labour, occupational health, and environmental justice issues. Labour activists wanted protections offered to displaced workers when toxic polluting industries were closed. The call for just transition arose then, and as the North American public grew increasingly concerned over the health and environmental impacts of hazardous industries. It also coincided with the wave of deindustrialization that swept through heavy manufacturing industries in the North American Rust Belt, leaving abandoned industrial facilities and toxic pollution in its wake.

That swell of deindustrialization in North America was widely characterized by unjust transitions - a collective trauma that lingers in the minds of workers. The calls for just transitions, led by workers and strengthened by coalitions, were based on an understanding that labour, environmental, health, and social-justice issues are closely entwined. They were also based on the understanding that it was in workers' best interests to transition away from toxic, environmentally destructive industries, and that workers expected financial compensation, retraining, and social support through the transition.

In the United States, Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union proposed a "Superfund for Workers," which would compensate and retrain those who moved out of environmentally hazardous jobs. It's widely believed that Mazzocchi was the first to use the term just transition, and this superfund was meant to parallel the U.S. Superfund Act of 1980 - national legislation to tax corporations to clean up hazardous waste sites across the country.

The Superfund for Workers never came to fruition. Instead, polluting chemical and petrochemical industries fought for their survival, swiftly launching public campaigns denying that their products were harmful. They fought relentlessly to delay and subvert environmental and health regulations - a practice which continues to this day. Meanwhile, alliances between labour and environmental activists gradually dissipated, both in the U.S. and internationally, as employers in polluting industries resorted to "job blackmail," forcing workers to choose between their jobs and their health. Problems of toxic exposures within polluting industries continued, but proactive calls for just transition diminished. In international trade union debates, it was only in response to increasing concerns about climate change that the concept of just transition resurfaced.

<https://ourtimes.ca/article/the-labour-movement-origins-of-just-transition>

Dear Reader

What do you think of what you have read above? Do you have anything to add? If so, please do so here...

Will you be able to use anything you learned as part of your teaching/facilitating/activist work? If yes, what and how?

Study circle group meeting**Place:** Somewhere in Africa**When:** One week ago

SESSION FOUR

Action is the focus of this session. It looks at examples from around the world of what people, groupings and communities are doing in order to save themselves, future generations and the Earth, and to make the world a better place. They centre life (human and non-human) and value and respect cooperation, congeniality and the importance of the commons. They show us what a reimagined life - that is equitable, fair and just for all - could look like.

Session's Facilitator: Let's begin by reading these quotes as we discuss action today:

The motivation from which I began the journey to the future was born from my conviction that paradigm shifts, if achieved, occur at the base of society, rippling outwards in concentric circles towards their societal environments. Motivating experiences can open people's eyes to their surroundings, sow hope that change is possible and show that it is up to each person to live in greater coherence between their convictions and their daily life: from their consumption, their food, their mobility, their travels, their economic rationality and others.

Almanac Of The Future: Bet On A Future With A Future
Jorge Krekeler, 8 August 2024

The future will be made by the hands of farmers, visionaries and those who put their prayers in Mother Earth. That's the story we are unfolding.

Winona LaDuke (activist, environmentalist, economist, politician & writer)

Let's share some examples of what Krekeler and LaDuke write about above.

Study Circle Participant: I'd like to start with food. Look at these posters about gardening:



AnAwkwardOtter



Black Lodge Press



fabfeminist

Participant: Why is gardening an act of rebellion and resistance?

Participant: In order to respond to that question, I'd like to present a comparison between the current dominant food system (for profit) and an alternative food system - for people and planet:

Commercial industrialised globalised food system

- For profit ('financialisation of food').
- Heavily reliant on chemical inputs, such as pesticides and fertilisers. It depletes the soil. If soil is not good, food will not be good.
- Exploitation of human and non-human beings. Example, farmers are not paid fairly. Farm labourers are paid very little while working long hours.
A 2021 report claimed that food manufacturing workers have a 60% higher rate of occupational injury and illness than workers in other industries.
<https://qleanair.com/food-production-worker-safety-statistics-and-solutions/>
- Many animals are kept in cramped cages, forced to reproduce, and slaughtered in cruel ways. Example, it is estimated that more than 60 percent of the world's eggs are produced in industrial systems, mostly using barren battery cages. Each battery cage generally houses up to 10 birds. The average space allowance per bird in a typical battery cage is less than the size of an A4 sheet of paper, and the height is just enough to allow the hen to stand. The cages usually have a sloping wire mesh floor and are kept in rows stacked in several tiers. Each shed typically houses tens of thousands of hens this way, and the largest sheds can contain more than a hundred thousand birds. Typically these buildings are artificially lit and ventilated. Caged hens may usually never experience natural light or fresh air and do not leave their cages until they are taken to slaughter.
<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm-animals/chickens/egg-laying-hens/>
- Food is mass-produced for as little money as possible. Because of the scale of production, synthetic additives and preservatives to stabilise the food for the long periods of time between production, distribution and consumption are required. These negatively affect health and contribute to diet-related disease.
- Poore and Nemecek (2018) estimate that the food system was responsible for one-quarter (26%) of **global emissions**. Crippa et al (2021) estimate a higher share: one-third (34%) of emissions.
- Around 80% of all deforestation makes way for agricultural practices (such as monoculture crops like corn and wheat) and palm oil plantations.

- Overgrazing on land often leaves fields lacking in resources, making it difficult for plants to grow and the land to regenerate naturally.
- Deforestation contributes to mass biodiversity* and animal loss worldwide. It negatively impacts local communities and can change weather patterns.

*The UN Environment Programme has reported that the global food industry is the biggest driver of biodiversity loss worldwide.

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/our-global-food-system-primary-driver-biodiversity-loss>

- In addition to livestock (such as cows) being well-known for methane emissions, many food producers export their produce around the world and the transport there-of contributes to emissions, as does the storing of foods in supermarket refrigeration systems.
- Food waste also contributes to emissions. Not only does plastic waste make up 80% of all marine pollution (<https://oceanliteracy.unesco.org/plastic-pollution-ocean/>), plastic packaging also poses a risk to public health.
- The food industry's reliance on water is unsustainable.
- Limited legal protections mean land grabs are common and indigenous land destroyed to make way for industrial agricultural practices.

The sound of hydraulic rock breakers at work, hacking great chunks from the face of some of the oldest mountains in the world, can be heard echoing down the Mqwayiza Valley in Eswatini.

For over a year now, Michael Lee Enterprises (registered in Eswatini), a company with the same name as its Taiwanese owner, has been mining green chert from outcrops within Malolotja Nature Reserve.

The cryptocrystalline quartz is sent to a sorting site above the Nkomazi River, loaded into shipping containers and trucked to a railway dry port in Matsapha, the kingdom's primary industrial town. According to the truck drivers, the green chert is then railed to Maputo in Mozambique, where it is exported.

People living nearby, environmentalists and some tourism industry players are asking how mining was allowed at all in Malolotja, a protected nature reserve.

The mining is taking place in the depths of the Makhonjwa Mountains, part of the Barberton Greenstone Belt and designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site of Outstanding Universal Value in neighbouring South Africa. At around 3.5-billion years old, these are the oldest mountains on the planet. They offer insights into the formation of Earth's crust, the growth of continents, and the evolution of early life.

<https://groundup.org.za/article/mining-causing-irreversible-damage-to-crucial-eswatini-nature-reserve/>

Local (or community) food system

- For people and the planet; not for profit.
- Production, distribution and consumption happen in a small geographic space (so the carbon footprint is smaller), as opposed to processes happening on a large, often global scale as with the dominant food system.
- A regenerative, sustainable food system based on agroecological practices - the farming *works with nature*. A balance between plants, animals, people and the environment.
- Food can foster a *connection* with nature. It can re-initiate us into a deep and profound relationship with the natural world and all that sustains us.

Food sovereignty is an affirmation of who we are as indigenous peoples and a way, one of the most surefooted ways, to restore our relationship with the world around us.

Winona LaDuke



Illustration by Joséphine Billeter for SWISSAID, www.swissaid.ch
Used with permission



KopieCreative

Participant: I have come across a number of groupings across the world working in alternative food systems. Here are a few examples:

PUN PUN **Center for Self Reliance**

Pun Pun is a small organic farm, seed saving center, and sustainable living and learning center. We strive to find more ways to live a more self reliant lifestyle by growing organic food, building our own natural homes, and experimenting with low tech appropriate technologies. We seek to bring back the tradition of seed saving amongst farmers and growers by collecting, propagating, and exchanging indigenous and rare varieties. We seek to live simply and continue to learn.

We believe in learning by doing and that there is not only one way of doing things. We don't believe in experts, but in learning together by sharing our collective experience. We have seen that through opening the door for further exploration, new developments can occur. "Mistakes" are simply opportunities for more learning. This means that we spend more time working and experimenting with techniques, rather than discussing them in a classroom. We also keep time open for discussion and questions as needed. Since we are in Thailand we teach based on a tropical climate that can be adapted to be used elsewhere.

<http://www.punpunthailand.org>

Here is a short video about Pun Pun (by Coyote and Saint) - who they are and what they do:

<https://vimeo.com/86604343>

OMA MAA

Towards flourishing life

Oma Maa wants to work towards a world where people live within planetary boundaries by building together a sustainable, meaningful future in which, in addition to humans, the entire spectrum of species flourishes

Oma Maa's vision, Plan of Action 2021-2025



Osuuskunta Tuusula Oma Maa - 'Our Land' cooperative - in Tuusula (30km from Helsinki), was founded in 2009 and is building an all-year-round ecological community process around *Good Agriculture*. Agriculture for Oma Maa refers to the caring, cultivation and development of the land to fulfill the community's needs in food, as well as (in the future) other basic needs such as energy in order to make good, ecological life possible.

Oma Maa's process around Good Agriculture aims for **systemic change** in society. Oma Maa wants to bring to the forefront that by changing our basic needs systems - meaning by changing the production, distribution, and consumption of our basic needs such as food and energy - we can develop pathways towards more socially, ecologically better, and healthier communities both locally and globally.

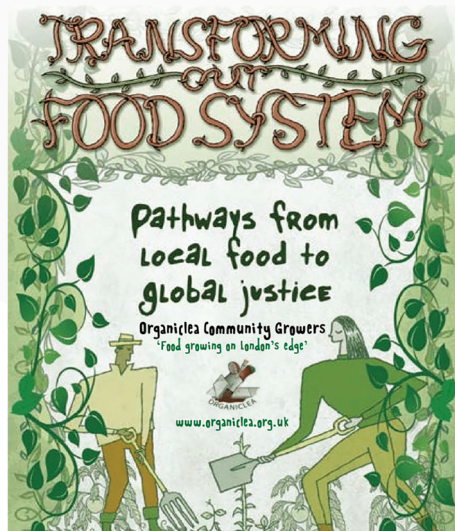
Important here is that this systemic change in society is to be rooted in *people's processes* around their daily needs and is not to be captured nor left to financial profit-seeking markets, for they will not deliver the desired change.

<https://www.omamaa.fi>

Participant: I recently read about this food cooperative:

ORGANICLEA

A **workers' cooperative** growing food on London's edge in the Lea Valley



OrganicLea is a workers' co-operative. This is a form of business organisation where the activities are managed by the workers directly, without the need for separate managers, owners, or bosses. OrganicLea is a not-for-profit enterprise: if there is any surplus it is reinvested within OrganicLea, or in support of other co-ops or not-for-profit organisations with similar aims.

We want to see a world based on equality and co-operation, where people can take control over all aspects of their lives. Taking collective control over our own work is a starting point... we aim to reduce reliance on exploitative structures and build a secure base from which to challenge injustice and encourage others to do so.

Our Vision

Our vision is of a socially and environmentally just food system where the means of production and distribution, including access to land, seed and water are controlled not by markets or corporations but by the people themselves. We are working to create just production and trading systems that provide a fair income to food producers and guarantee the rights of communities to access healthy and nutritious food produced using ecologically sound and sustainable methods, a food system existing in a wider context of social justice.

Mission Statement

We produce and distribute food and plants locally, and inspire and support others to do the same. With a workers' co-operative at our core, we bring people together to take action towards a more just and sustainable society.

<https://www.organiclea.org.uk>

Participant: What about Africa? What examples are there from here?

Participant: Here are two:

BETTER WORLD CAMEROON (BWC)

Based on indigenous knowledge, BWC is a non-profit dedicated to developing sustainable agricultural strategies at the local level in order to alleviate the food crisis and extreme poverty. BWC promotes food sovereignty and landscape regeneration through permaculture and ecovillage design practices. Its work is about rebuilding the economy and transitioning to a better world through permaculture, community living and the use of African wisdom and local values. BWC is creating a social movement that will help end youth unemployment, empower women and improve sustainable development in Africa.

In 2012 in the region of Bafut, Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage was born. It was BWC's first demonstration site, a place where the principles for a sustainable culture could be implemented and made visible to all. It is part of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN).

Here is a short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILqaTJocFDw>
Joshua Konkankoh's Ecovillage Mission (Global Shakers)

<https://betterworld-cameroon.com/>

COMMUNITIES FOR FISHERIES LIBERIA

"Together we are strong". The motto of over 600 women participating in Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) in Liberia under the Environmental Justice Foundation's (EJF) Communities for Fisheries project.

In Liberia, fisheries are a life support system for coastal communities. Although female fishmongers play a huge role within the sector, historically, their voices have been excluded from managing this vital resource. EJF has established VSLAs in an effort to change this. These village-level money-saving groups have united female fishmongers across Liberia, allowing groups of women to pool their savings and take out loans to support their fisheries businesses. Crucially, these groups are more than a financial tool. They have provided a platform for political and social engagement and have driven female participation with Collaborative Management Associations (CMA) along the coast. "Together we are strong" follows the election runs of three women in Liberia as they campaign for leadership positions in the Buchanan CMA. Shoulder to shoulder with their fellow VSLA members, these women are speaking up, determined to have a say in how the resources that underpin their livelihoods are managed.

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) is an international NGO working to defend our shared natural environment and human rights.

<https://ejfoundation.org>

Watch this video - Together We Are Strong: Liberia's Fishmongers Building Fairer Fisheries (EJF):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSJ8nePz6Ww>

Participant: And what about urban areas? We don't all live on or near farms or the sea or rivers.

Participant: Here is an urban example:

MUD (MANCHESTER URBAN DIGGERS CIC)

Sam, Jo and Mike founded Manchester Urban Diggers CIC in 2019 after creating Platt Fields Market Garden in 2017. The MUD team make beautiful gardens in urban spaces, where people grow, cook and eat delicious, healthy food together. These gardens are hubs for thriving, connected communities, havens for nature, and visions of a fair and sustainable alternative way to supply the food we need to be part of a fairer food system.

To us, a fairer food system treats people and nature with respect and care. Our priority will always be caring for and respecting the planet (that includes people!). We believe a fairer food system encompasses three intrinsically linked areas [greater wellbeing; healthy environment; strong communities] that combined, equate to Food Sovereignty.

<https://www.wearemud.org/>

Facilitator: Thank-you for those inspiring food examples. Can anyone share other examples?

Participant: Here are some energy examples:

POWERING AFRICA WITH AFRICAN HANDS

Inspiring examples of energy access solutions and the need for dedicated funding to improve African lives and livelihoods were discussed at a COP27 event, organised by Ashden as part of the Power Up coalition.

The group of over 50 coalition members are campaigning on the international stage for greater climate adaptation funding from the Global North to finance affordable, renewable, energy access for those threatened by the climate crisis.

The audience heard from the panel of experts on how sustainable energy is a key adaptation tool for marginalised communities experiencing high levels of energy poverty.

Affordable, clean energy has a vital role to play in securing a better future and improving agriculture, education, healthcare and economic resilience for the 600 million African people without access to electricity.

The panel discussion under the heading 'Power Up: A Global Coalition Fighting for Climate Justice and Adaptation', moderated by Ashden CEO Harriet Lamb, took place on Adaptation and Agriculture Day at the international climate conference.

Panelist Innocent Tshilombo, is founder of 2022 Ashden Awards winner Kakuma Ventures which supplies solar-powered and affordable internet access as well as training in computing and solar engineering skills. He told the audience and those watching online that many of the 200,000 displaced people living in the Kenyan refugee camp were forced to flee their homes due to climate related events, such as drought.

They face several challenges at the camp, including access to energy to power up devices so they can use digital services to improve their lives through access to education and employment opportunities.

Innocent Tshilombo said: "COP27 must provide a platform for the under-represented. Those living in refugee camps and the many disenfranchised shouldn't be excluded from the solutions. We need to design policies of inclusive finance to facilitate the development of energy access systems that meet the needs of the people, break the cycle of dependency and can be upscaled."

Eugene Nforngwa, of the Nairobi-based Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, (PACJA), said that those most vulnerable to climate change are the least capable of coping with the stresses.

He told the audience how access to energy can bring a range of improvements to livelihoods from lighting, cooling and heating homes as well as increased earning potential.

He said: "Those working in subsistence agriculture lose 60-70 percent of their harvest because of a lack of cool storage facilities but access to energy can change that completely."

<https://ashden.org/news/powering-up-africa-for-a-brighter-future/>

Watch this video: Powering Africa With African Hands (Ashden)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P8Em74AmiU>

Facilitator: In Session Three we read a brief extract from *The Energy Issue: From Colonial Modernity To Decolonising Alternatives (Weaving Alternatives #15: A Periodical Of The Global Tapestry Of Alternatives)*.

Here is an extract from one of the examples in that newsletter:

Dialogue Of Knowledge: Yolchikawkayeknemilis “Energy For And From Good Living”

Pablo Fernandez

“Lighting the fire in an energy-saving stove is to care deeply for it, to keep it in a special place.”
- Doña Martha, 2023, community researcher and sentipensante (one who feels and thinks).

Over the past four years (2021-2024), I had the fortune of participating in a research and advocacy project in the northeastern mountains of Puebla, Mexico, led by the Fundación Tosepan A.C. and funded by the National Strategic Program (PRONACE) on Energy and Climate Change of CONAHCYT. This process transformed my understanding of collective work, dialogue of knowledge, and the building of community-based solutions.

The project “Energy for the Yeknemilis (Good Living) of the Northeastern Sierra of Puebla” arose in response to the need to protect the territory against destructive megaprojects, such as open-pit mining and the imposition of hydroelectric plants, which would fragment the land (Tlali, 2014) and violate the Territorial Ordinance Program of Cuetzalan (CUPREDER, 2010). From the start, the project questioned the traditional research approach that views communities as objects of study without the capacity to offer solutions. Instead, a participatory analysis was applied, where the residents identified their own energy needs and proposed solutions based on their worldview and knowledge. This was facilitated through participatory methodologies (Durstun and Miranda, 2002), such as workshops grounded in action research and popular education, fostering a collective and dynamic learning experience in which all voices were heard.

You can read more about it (and other examples) here:

https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/newsletters:15:dialogue_of_knowledge

Participant: Let’s not forget about land and housing.

Facilitator: Absolutely **X**, would you like to share something with us?

Participant: Yes, I'd like to share this from Brazil:

TERMO TERRITORIAL COLETIVO (TTC)

The Collective Land Trust (CLT) is an internationally recognized model that seeks to guarantee access to housing and the permanence of communities in their territory. Based on an arrangement that combines collective and individual interests, it also strengthens communities and stimulates local development, led by residents.

The Collective Land Trust project, developed by CatComm in partnership with several public agencies, private institutions, universities and community leaders, is inspired by the *Community Land Trust* model, which has existed for several decades and is present in several countries around the world. It is a model with the potential to offer greater land security and community strengthening for informal settlements.

This model of local organization allows residents to hold individual title to their homes while maintaining a legal entity - created and managed by residents - that owns the land. This legal entity cannot sell the land and must manage it in a manner that ensures affordable housing in perpetuity. The model provides the highest level of land security possible, allowing for collective development of the territory while preserving the individual right of residents to sell, rent, or pledge their homes as collateral.

<https://www.termoterritorialcoletivo.org/>

You can learn more about TTC in this video (TTC/CLT (Termo Territorial Coletivo/Community Land Trust), RioOnWatchTV):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-lvmDPtNZc>

Participant: What about the Solidarity Economy? Isn't it a good example of an alternative?

Participant: Yes, I have something to share about the SE:

Solidarity economy (SE) is an organizing framework for those who wish to create a systemic commitment to and practice of interdependence and collective liberation in the economic activities that meet our material needs. Solidarity economy rests on our shared values: cooperation, democracy, social and racial justice, environmental sustainability, and mutualism. Interdependence and respect are central.

Solidarity economies are *transformative* - they redistribute power and resources to those who have been most harmed by white supremacy, settler colonialism, patriarchy, ableism, and capitalism - and meet an immediate material need for a community. They are not symbolic, but actually deliver the housing, food, education, culture, and other needs humans require to thrive. They challenge the power of systems based on individualism, profit, and private property.

Solidarity economies emerge from *movements* and integrate the three common strategies for social change: personal transformation, building alternative institutions, and challenging dominant institutions. Building solidarity economy movements requires building networks, federations, and coalitions that align with SE principles and practices. This is where we become truly powerful.

None of these models, tools, or activities on their own constitutes a 'solidarity economy.' That only develops when we work together as a movement, when SE organizers and communities build relationships and work in alignment with each other.

"...to recognize and honor the responsibility that we have to forge our own ideas about SE. SE is an open process, an invitation. The concept does not arise from a single political tradition or body of ideas. Its very nature and definition are in continual development, discussed and debated among its advocates. Seeking to "make the road by walking" rather than to push a closed or finalized ideology, SE is a "movement of movements" continually seeking connections and possibilities while holding on to the transformative commitment of shared values."

- Ethan Miller, SE: Key Concepts and Issues

<https://solidarityeconomyprinciples.org/what-do-we-mean-by-solidarity-economy/>

Facilitator: That is a great way to end this session, many thanks.

Some of the examples we discussed today and other examples can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ7Qtrndfok>

(The Power Of Local, Local Futures)

This film on the Vikalp Sangam (Confluence of Alternatives, India) process* includes some of the events of the process, such as confluences, documentation, outreach, collaborations, artwork and more:

<https://youtu.be/miBOtccdR0g?si=Xo9YPaRLVs1A6iS7>

((Vikalp Sangam film)

* Vikalp Sangam is an evolving process that started in 2014, emerging out of a search for grounded alternatives to the current model of 'development' that is built on ecological destruction and rising inequalities.

Dear Reader

What do you think of what you have read above? Do you have anything to add? If so, please do so here...

Will you be able to use anything you learned as part of your teaching/facilitating/activist work? If yes, what and how?

Study circle group meeting**Place:** Somewhere in Africa**When:** One day ago

SESSION FIVE

This session reflects on *what* was learned so far, *how* it was learned and, most importantly, *why*. What will participants do with the learning?

Session's Facilitator: Let's take a moment to talk about our learning over the past few weeks and going forward. The what, how and why...

Study Circle Participant: The things that we have learned and continue to learn are things that impact us and many communities on a daily basis. We are learning about life - the issues, concerns, problems and struggles 'ordinary' people, like us, experience.

Participant: For me what stood out the most was connecting the dots. There is a connection between different people's and communities' issues and problems, and a connection between what to do (the action part) about the issues and problems.

Participant: In our sessions, we have been learning *together*, there is not one 'expert'.

Participant: Yes, we have been sharing, discussing, listening to others.

Participant: In a cooperative way.

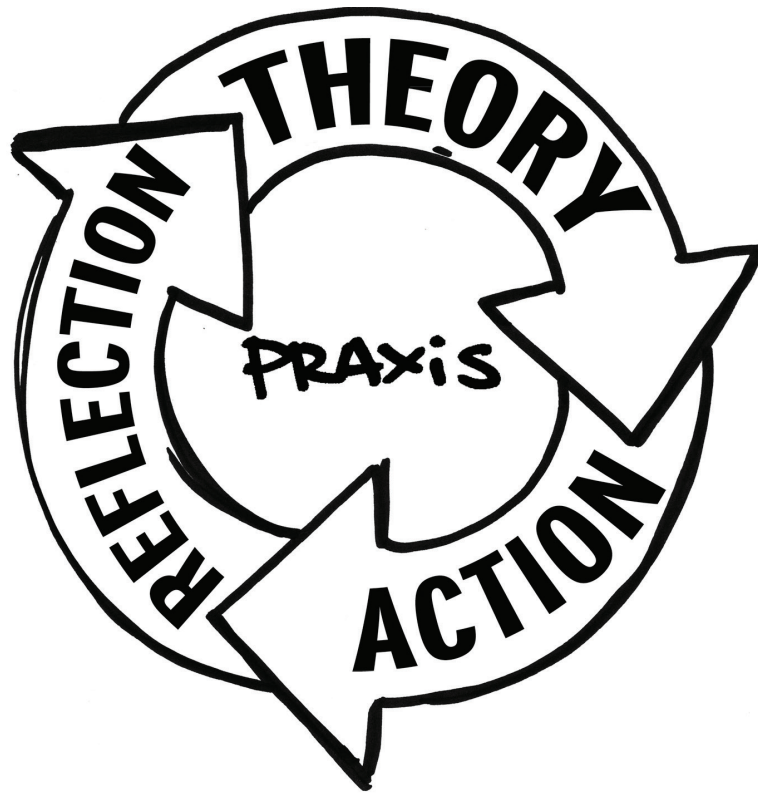
Participant: And the sessions have also been about action...what to *do*. We have been learning together for action!

Participant: *Social pedagogy* is generally understood as pedagogy (the theory and practice of learning) that responds to social issues in society.

Participant: We have been thinking about our learning and our action.

Participant: Yes, we have *reflected*, like we are doing now.

Participant: In his famous book, ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed***, Paulo Freire described the term *praxis* as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'.



The Praxis Wheel. Art by Joshua Kahn Russell

Facilitator: Reflection is very important. The experiential learning cycle that we associate with Kolb (1984) is about thinking deeply and in detail about our experiences. By reflecting on our experiences, we learn. This is what being reflective means.

Participant: Schön's theory (reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action) (1991) describes two types of reflection - one during and one after an activity or event. A reflective educator, for example, thinks carefully about their work while they do it (reflect-in-action) and afterwards (reflect-on-action).

Facilitator: Thank-you for that. Let's all think about what we will do with what we have learned.

Participant: And remember that our small actions are not nothing, as captured in this quote and discussed in our study circle:

We can begin by doing small things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously.

Grace Lee Boggs (activist, community leader, author)



Dear Reader

What did you learn from this study circle?

What action have you taken/can you take?

What did you like about the sessions and why? What did you not like and why?

Any other suggestions or comments?

See you next week...

Remember

from *She Had Some Horses* by Joy Harjo, 1983

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people
are you.

Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.

[illegible]

Contact Information

DVV International

Country Office – South Africa

9 Scott Road, Observatory, Cape Town, South Africa, 7925

Telephone: 00 27 21 447 4828/98

Fax: 00 27 21 447 4828

Email: f.hunter@dvv-international.co.za

Website: www.dvv-international.co.za