Imagining Vibrant Rural-Mountain Futures: A Field-Tested Toolkit of 25 Co-Creative Methods

By Angela Moriggi, Laura Secco, Kelli Rose Pearson, and Epaminondas Christophilopoulos

With contributions from: Riccardo Da Re, Giulia Corradini, Matilda Todesco, Deborah Vedovetto, and Maria Tengö

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VERVE

CO-CREATIVE VISIONING PROCESSES
FOR TRANSFORMATIVE
SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

The VERVE Toolkit includes **25 creative, future-oriented methods** to spark dialogue, encourage critical thinking, deepen reflection, and build practical skills. These methods are organized into **five pathways**, each focusing on a **transformative lever** - a key area that promotes diversity, justice, and amplifies underrepresented voices when actively engaged. The levers here include youth, women, non-human beings and entities, biocultural diversity, and innovative practices. Together, the methods provide a fresh, hands-on approach to **collaborative knowledge creation**. Our ultimate goal is to support **sustainability transformations** in community-building, education, policy, and program design.

The methods in this Toolkit were designed and field-tested in the Italian Alps to address both the challenges and the untapped potential of **rural-mountain regions.** These areas, rich in biodiversity and often leaders in innovative solutions for regenerative development, face real hurdles, including isolation, limited institutional support, and socio-economic decline (Perpiña Castillo et al 2023). To inspire **hopeful futures, improve well-being,** and **regenerate natural resources**, lasting change requires partnering with **local communities**, respecting their lived experience, and using creative, engaging approaches that co-create deep knowledge and open new possibilities.

We hope this toolkit fuels your creativity, supports your work, and inspires new ideas and motivation!

**LIST OF PARTICIPATORY EVENTS
WHERE THE METHODS HAVE BEEN TESTED**

- Photovoice Lab in Belluno (IT) on 10/06 and on 24/06/2023;
- Workshop at the Centre for Place, Space, and Society of Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen (NL) on 20/02/2024;
- Visioning Lab in Seren del Grappa, Belluno (IT) on 5-6/04/2024;
- Workshop at the Summer School "Food and Innovation for Rural Transition: the Tuscany case" at University of Pisa, Garfagnana (IT) on 17-18/07/2024;
- Workshop with youth for public outreach purposes in Spert, Belluno (IT) on 22/07/2024;
- Festival "Cansiglio InVita" in Alpago, Belluno (IT) on 28-29/09/2024;
- Visioning Lab on gender and regeneration in Trichiana, Belluno (IT) on 16/10 and 23/10/2024;
- Lecture in the course "Sociology of the Environment and the Territory"at the University of Padova, Padova (IT) on 27/11/2024.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE TOOLKIT

5 Pathways: Each pathway focuses on a specific transformative lever.

25 Methods: Flexible tools that can be used individually or combined within or across pathways.

5 Field-Tested Workshop Designs: Ready-to-use plans for participatory events, based on experience in real-world applications.

24 Assembly Archetype Cards: Representing diverse human and non-human perspectives.

66 Rural Cards: Depicting current and future rural and mountain phenomena and practices.

24 Rural Conversation Starters: Postcards to spark dialogue on complex human-nature relationships and the future of rural-mountain areas.

Note: While the methods were developed for in-person use, most can be easily adapted for online formats.

KEY FEATURES OF THE TOOLKIT

- **Practical Orientation:** Provides step-by-step guidance and realistic timelines, validated through real-world application.

- **Holistic Approach:** Combines rational and creative methods to make activities more engaging and effective and to spark innovative thinking.

- **Sustainability and Regeneration Focus:** Addresses issues like human-nature relationships, resource management, and biodiversity conservation, especially in rural and mountain areas.

- **Inclusive and Equitable Framework:** Highlights and supports the voices of marginalized groups, including youth, women, and non-human perspectives.

- **Process Design Insight:** Provides clear advice for planning and evaluating events and engagements, and for making workshops more impactful.

- **Comprehensive Resources:** Includes a downloadable resource kit, informed by the latest research, to support the successful facilitation of workshops.

WHO CAN USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to support professionals from any field who are interested in participatory, inclusive, and future-focused processes. The methods work well with **multi-stakeholder groups, youth, local leaders, communities, traditional knowledge holders,** and **change agents** in general. It is useful for people:

- Working in sustainability, community development, or social innovation as researchers, practitioners, or project coordinators.

- Exploring participatory methods as a student, educator, or facilitator.

- Driving change as a policymaker, entrepreneur, or social justice advocate.

- Seeking tools to engage stakeholders, address complex issues, and promote inclusive, forward-thinking approaches.

VERVE
CO-CREATIVE VISIONING PROCESSES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

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THE PROJECT VERVE

VERVE is short for "*Co-creative visioning processes for transformative social innovation in rural areas*". It is a participatory action-research project, running from September 2022 until January 2025, engaging multi-sectoral and multi-level groups of stakeholders in rural-mountain areas, using future thinking, creative, and visual methods. It builds from transformative social innovation theories, and explores the innovative ways of thinking, framing, and doing that can support cultural shifts and paradigms' change, regarding complex sustainability issues and their solutions. The main project's aim was to explore and co-create regenerative visions for rural-mountain areas, questioning extractive development pathways and anthropocentric human-nature relations. VERVE also elicited visions of bio-culturally diverse and inclusive futures, in synergy with and empowering local initiatives and actors. The project targeted in particular youth, women, and local communities engaged in initiatives committed to socio-cultural innovation and regeneration of natural resources. VERVE's case study is Val Belluna, a rural-mountain area of Veneto region, in the Italian North-Eastern Alps. Our local partners comprised the Local Action Group (LAG) Prealpi e Dolomiti, a public-private partnership created by the EU LEADER program, and the G. Angelini Foundation, a local cultural and study center focusing on mountains.

1.2 GUIDING CONCEPTS

TOWARDS REGENERATION OF SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

A socio-ecological system is a complex and interconnected system where human society and the natural environment interact and influence each other. In today's world, it's not enough to simply reduce harm or use resources more efficiently. We need regenerative changes that **actively restore and replenish socio-ecological systems' resources** (Mang and Reed 2012, Buckton et al 2023). Achieving a future that is genuinely sustainable and regenerative calls for a **holistic approach** that:

- *Connects the dots:* Values the interdependence of human, animal, and environmental well-being.

- *Acknowledges the spatial context:* Recognizes that socio-ecological systems are embedded within specific geographical locations, from local to global scales.

- *Respects ancestral wisdom:* Draws on traditional knowledge and practices.

- *Learns from nature:* Emulates natural systems' resilience and efficiency.

- *Empowers communities:* Supports grassroots initiatives and local leadership.

- *Fosters collaboration:* Encourages interdisciplinary partnerships and knowledge sharing.

- *Nurtures innovation:* Builds upon existing solutions and inspires new ideas.

- *Educates and inspires:* Promotes awareness and understanding of regenerative practices.

- *Cultivates hope:* Overcomes negativity and embraces human potential to create and heal.

PRACTICES

REGENERATIVE (e.g. life enhancing)

PROTECTIVE (e.g. ecosystem restoration)

HARMLESS (e.g. climate neutral, sustainable)

RELATIVE IMPROVEMENT (e.g. green solutions)

HARMFUL (e.g. business as usual, conventional businesses)

SYMBIOTIC & CO-EVOLVING SYSTEMS

RESTORATIVE & INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

negative impacts on ecosystems

positive impacts on ecosystems

RECYCLING & COMSUMING SOCIETIES

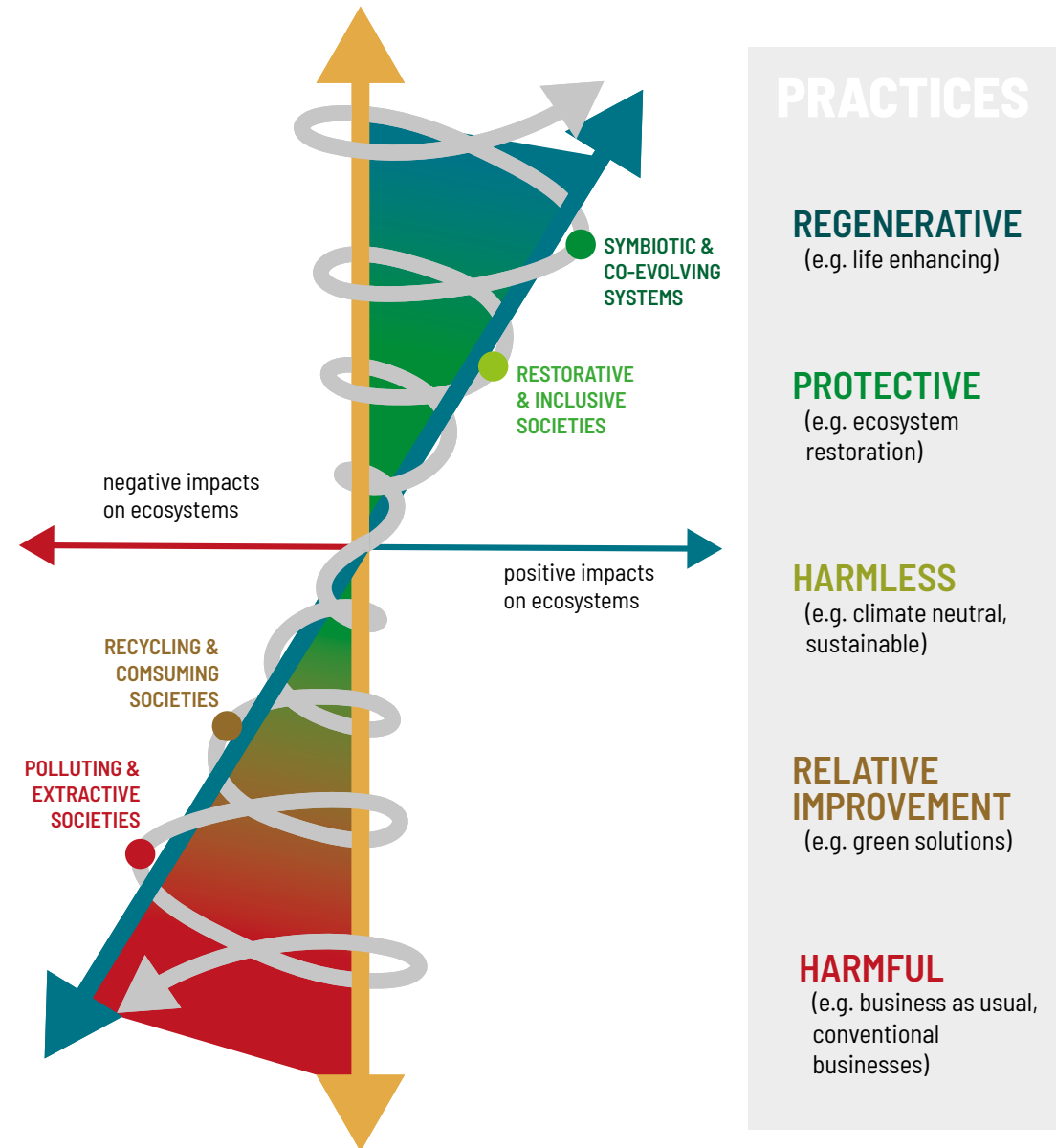POLLUTING & EXTRACTIVE SOCIETIES

Figure by the authors, adapted from Reed 2007 and Lemille 2021

FUTURES LITERACY

In this era of rapid global change and socio-ecological crisis, futures literacy has become an essential skill (UNESCO n.d.). Future-oriented methods are gaining traction both within academia and in broader contexts to promote sustainability (Cork et al 2023). These methods help **expand perspectives, challenge dominant narratives,** and **envision alternatives** to current systems, paving the way for just and resilient futures (Lazurko et al 2023; Ahvenharju et al 2018).

"The future exists only in our imagination" (Damhof 2022). By exploring diverse futures, we can identify potential challenges and opportunities, and develop strategies to mitigate or **navigate uncertainty** and unwanted consequences. Moreover, futures-thinking can help us to:

- *Develop Future Awareness:* While the future cannot be predicted, it can be anticipated. This involves understanding the broader context, recognizing the complex interplay of factors, and adapting to change accordingly.

- *Empower Individuals and Communities:* Equip people with tools to envision hopeful futures aligned with their values and aspirations, and connect these visions to concrete actions, turning passive observers into active change-makers;

- *Promote Collective Visioning:* Engage diverse stakeholders to co-create shared goals and aspirations for the future.

- *Decolonize the Future:* Challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized perspectives to embrace a more inclusive vision of what's possible.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL-MOUNTAIN AREAS

The VERVE Toolkit was created with a specific focus on **rural-mountain regions,** recognizing their unique characteristics, challenges, and potentials. These regions are rich in biodiversity and play a crucial role in regulating **vital ecosystems**-e.g. watersheds that supply clean water to surrounding areas and support healthy soils, and forests that help stabilize the climate, store carbon, and maintain atmospheric balance (Lavorel et al 2023). Despite their essential contributions to both ecological health and human well-being, these services are often undervalued and overlooked as fundamental economic assets. Beyond their ecological significance, many rural-mountain communities preserve **traditional knowledge** and **sustainable practices** that embody harmonious relationships between humans and nature, including animals (Wyss et al 2022).

Despite their importance, rural-mountain areas are frequently marginalized, seen as little more than scenic retreats for tourists or peripheral backdrops to urban centers. This narrow, **extractive perspective** has contributed to poorly designed policies that rely too heavily on mass tourism. The resulting overtourism has led to a negative loop of environmental degradation, weakened local economies, and increased socio-economic pressures on communities. Moreover, **structural challenges** such as depopulation, weak institutional support, and threats to biodiversity and cultural heritage exacerbate the struggles faced by these regions (Varotto 2020).

Yet, rural-mountain areas hold enormous potential to contribute solutions to some of today's most pressing global challenges, including climate change, resource scarcity, and social inequality. By building on traditional knowledge and supporting localized, **community-driven initiatives**, these regions can offer powerful models for sustainable futures and regenerative development. Resource management and governance based on local wisdom and **place-based approaches** can provide valuable insights into how humans can live in harmony with nature while strengthening **ecological resilience** and **cultural diversity**, and ensuring **long-term stewardship** and regeneration of natural resources. Realizing this potential requires working closely with local communities, amplifying **marginalized voices**, and encouraging innovative solutions that strengthen local capacity (Secco et al 2016).

Many of the methods in this toolkit seek to reframe clichéd and outdated perceptions of rural-mountain areas by offering practical, **future-oriented approaches** to address key structural issues. Overall, the Toolkit focuses on elevating existing regenerative practices, fostering collaboration across sectors, and building alliances that support sustainability transformations.

While designed and field-tested specifically in rural-mountain contexts, the methods in this toolkit are adaptable to other regions facing similar challenges.

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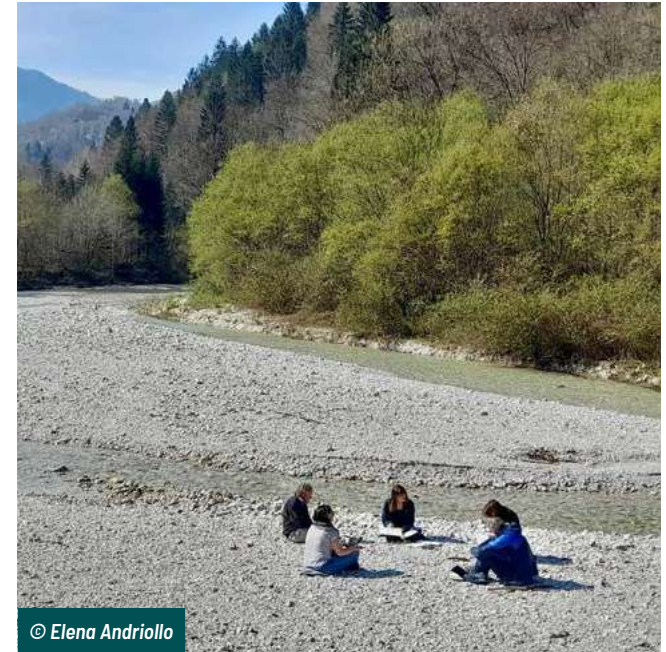
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SECTION 2 - FROM IDEATION TO ASSESSMENT

2.1 PROCESS IDEATION AND DESIGN

The success of any engagement process depends not just on the quality of individual methods, but on the **overall design and execution**. A well-designed process requires careful planning to ensure its **coherence, relevance, and effectiveness.**

Prior to any participatory activity, it is important to identify and deeply understand a series of key aspects.

The "**Design compass**" below is a framework for brainstorming the different components of any kind of gathering (e.g. a workshop, an event, a lecture), following a purpose-driven and needs-based approach. The "Design compass" draws inspiration from the Medicine Wheel tool (Biester and Mehlmann 2020) and from the work of Job Van Den Berg and Neza Krek[1].

The guiding questions below can be used to design any kind of participatory event:

- **PURPOSE**: What's the purpose of this participatory event? Why are we doing it? What outcomes do we want to achieve, both in terms of content and process? What knowledge do we wish to gather for specific goals (if any)?

- **CONTEXT**: What needs/gaps, threats & opportunities are we addressing? What assets energize the target system and sustain its vitality? What is the history and background of the place and community? What are the key resources? What is the institutional setting?

- **VISION**: What do we want the participants to walk away with? (in terms of knowledge, but also networks, experiences, transferable skills, relations, etc.)? What is our positioning, values, and normative orientation, and how do we wish to reflect them in the design?

- **HOST**: What skills & competencies (hard & soft, scientific & not) do we need to serve the purpose? Which ones do we bring and which ones have to be integrated?

1. https://www.nezakrek.com/

- **PARTICIPANTS**: Who should be involved (including human and non-human beings)? Who is essential to achieving the purpose? Who or what is currently invisible, marginalized, or in need of a voice? How can we ensure diversity and balanced participation?

- **PROGRAM**: What structure and elements should the program include? Which methods & tools are best suited to the context? What will resonate in this moment, with these specific participants (including non-human beings), in this particular place and for this specific purpose? How can the process be made relevant, effective, impactful, entertaining, engaging, and enriching?

- **RESOURCES**: What resources are needed? (e.g. experts, funds, equipment, materials, venue). Who on the team can contribute, and what tasks can/should be delegated? Should an external expert such as a trained facilitator, be brought in?

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2.2 PROCESS FLOWS AND STEPS

In this Toolkit, we draw inspiration from Theory U and Appreciative Inquiry as established facilitation frameworks to guide the structure of the engagement processes and its specific steps. Both Theory U and Appreciative Inquiry shift the focus from problem-solving to possibility-building, fostering collaboration to identify and realize desired future visions. Theory U pushes participants to suspend judgment, challenge internalized assumptions, and explore new perspectives, breaking free from habitual ways of thinking while connecting to core values and motivations (Scharmer, 2017). Appreciative Inquiry is an asset-based approach that leverages questions and dialogue to uncover and amplify the strengths and potentials within communities, organizations, or teams (Zandee and Cooperrider 2008). Besides Theory U and Appreciative Inquiry, the designs offered in this Toolkit draw from principles of transformative learning, design thinking, and systems thinking (Reason and Bradbury 2008).

Building on these frameworks supports us to design for coherence, helping prevent cognitive dissonance and disengagement. The figure below illustrates the basic elements and steps of the process flows, inspired by Theory U and Appreciative Inquiry.

CONVENE: The opening phase introduces the participatory event's topic, clarifies goals, and fosters a collaborative, inclusive, welcoming atmosphere.

EXPLORE: The "diverging" phase encourages participants to generate a wide range of ideas and perspectives, uncovering new possibilities and opening minds.

CONNECT: The reflective phase connects participants' personal motivations, beliefs, and sources of wisdom to the topic at hand.

ENVISION: The imagining phase envisions ideal futures, develops a sense of purpose and action.

PROTOTYPE: The "converging" phase details future scenarios, transitions from vision to objectives, and develops actionable plans.

HARVEST: The closing phase focuses on capturing key insights and identifying possible future commitments.

Dividing the process into phases helps identify the most effective methods and desired outcomes for each phase. The five pathways in this Toolkit follow this structure, though not all pathways go through every phase.
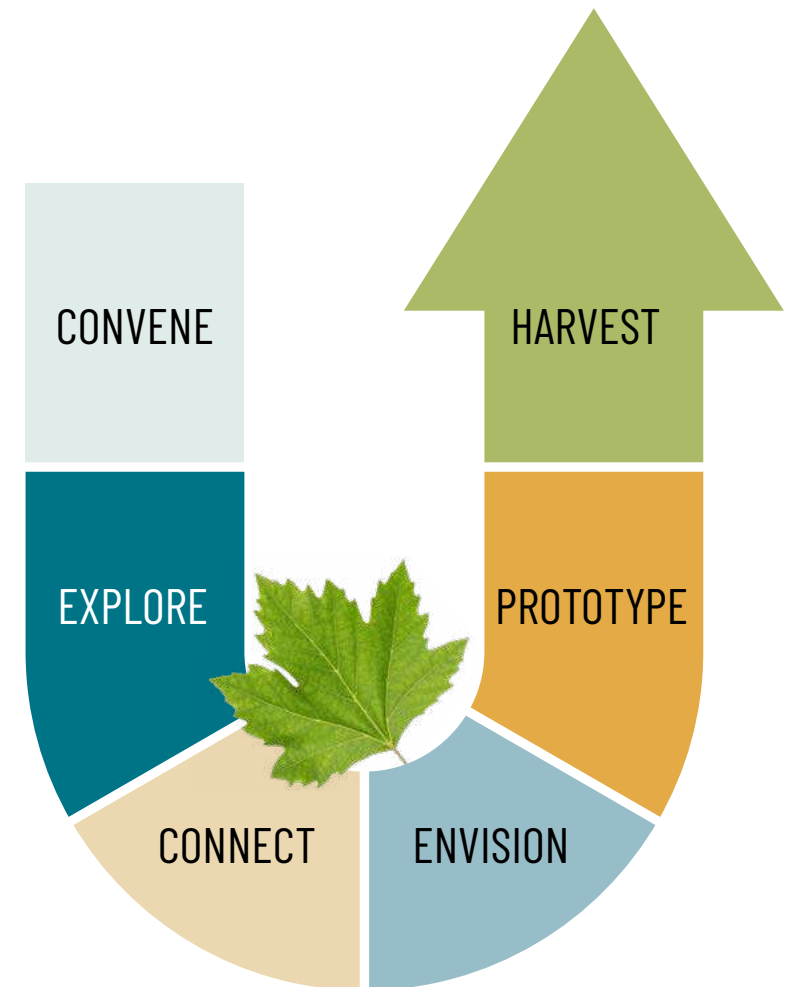
Design by Moriggi, drawing from Theory U

2.3 FUNDAMENTAL DESIGN ELEMENTS

Effective facilitation depends on a mix of essential tangible and intangible elements. Based on our experience with the VERVE Lab and on participant feedback, we identified the following components as crucial:

1. **Conviviality**: create a warm and informal atmosphere, keeping in mind that participants are, above all, human beings. Refreshments matter-aim for tasty, locally sourced and sustainably produced food and drinks when possible.

2. **Flexibility**: allow for movement and fluidity, between outside and inside, between the coffee & cookies spot and the group work, between spaces for sharing and spaces for privacy. For example, to enable young mothers' participation, you may encourage them to bring their children if needed, and make available an extra room, communicating with the plenary space, for possible breastfeeding or other personal needs.

3. **Grounded host**: stay present and grounded, make people feel safe and guided, share the overall structure and intentions. Trust the process, even when you feel overwhelmed by the "co-creative chaos".

4. **Active listening**: encourage participants to practice active listening throughout the session. You can invite participants to: go beyond simply hearing the words spoken, try to attune to the speaker's underlying thoughts and feelings; focus fully on the person speaking without pre-planning your response or reaction; make an effort to approach what is said with an open mind, free of judgment, aiming to genuinely understand.

5. **Silence**: explicitly welcome and make space for moments of silence whenever needed. Silence is generative, allows the generation of ideas and intuition, and the expression of body language.

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6. **Curiosity**: stay curious about the people involved and the topics and dynamics that emerge. Avoid being judgmental, paternalistic, or resorting to "facipulation." Use materials that spark curiosity and alternate collaborative and individual methods to keep energy and interest alive. Fun fact: curiosity and care share the same etymological roots!

7. **Reciprocity**: focus not only on what you aim to achieve as a host but also on what you can offer as a gesture of gratitude. Honor participants' time and effort with a thoughtful token, such as a nice pen and notebook upon arrival, an aesthetically pleasing setup, or a concise report shared after the session.

8. **Movable chairs**: you can manage without tables but immovable chairs are a dealbreaker! Visit the session venue ahead of time to ensure it meets the needs of the participatory event.

9. **Informed consent**: ensure that participants provide written consent for any photos, videos, or recordings to protect their privacy and, if necessary, for data processing and using purposes. Make sure the informed consent forms are compliant with the current data protection regulations. If needed for research purposes, provide also an ethical protocol approved by a scientific committee.

10. **Engaged team**: simple processes can be managed by two people. For more complex ones, aim to have three-four team members present, with clear roles and responsibilities. Why four? To facilitate group work, take notes, handle consent forms and attendance, document the workshop, prepare materials, manage the space, and assist with other tasks as needed (e.g. welcoming late participants).

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For a more comprehensive list of facilitation tips and techniques, please refer to Pearson et al. 2018 (pp. 9-14) and to Chambers 2002.

2.4 ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment plays a key role in:

- Consolidating learning.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of methods.
- Measuring participant satisfaction and engagement.
- Identifying potential short-and long-term impacts.
- Improving the design of future workshops.

Here are **three main evaluation methods** that were tested for this Toolkit:

1. The Learning Journey: a participatory technique to harvest participants' key turning points throughout the process;

2. Instant Poster Feedback: Anonymous, spontaneous individual input gathered directly on pre-prepared posters displayed on the wall at the event's conclusion;

3. Online Anonymous Survey: Conducted three months after the process to gather deeper insights.

THE LEARNING JOURNEY

This experiential method helps participants reflect on the participatory process, particularly when it spans multiple sessions. Creating a visual timeline, the facilitator highlights key moments and milestones. Participants are then invited to share their personal turning points and mark them on the timeline using symbolic objects.

INSTANT POSTER FEEDBACK

Participants provide anonymous and individual feedback at the end of the session using dedicated pre-prepared posters, which are hung on the wall in a remote corner or outside the room (to guarantee anonymity), where participants can express their opinions using colored sticky dots. This approach is quick, accessible, and often generates valuable insights for the project. In the VERVE project, we used posters to gather feedback on three aspects.

1. Overall Satisfaction: Participants rated their overall experience compared to their initial expectations.

2. Overall Appreciation: Participants rated their experience of the event based on its creative and participatory approach, as well as its perceived usefulness.

3. Method Effectiveness: Using different colored sticky dots, participants responded to each of the following prompts:

   • Which method(s) did you find most innovative?

   • Which method(s) did you find most engaging?

   • Which method(s) produced the most interesting results?
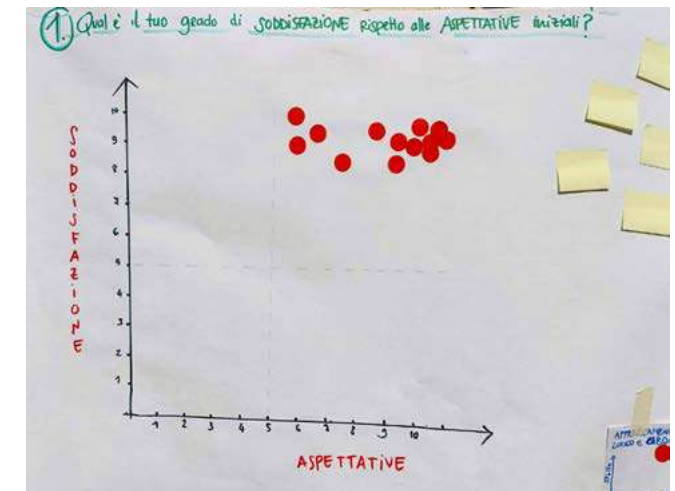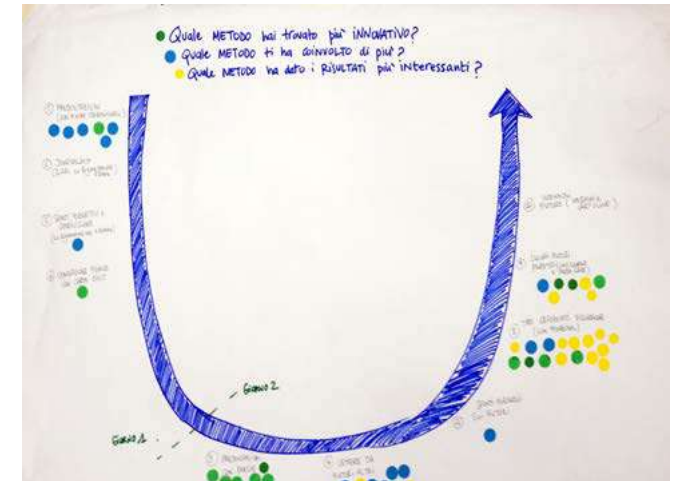
ONLINE SURVEY

An anonymous survey can offer additional insights into the effectiveness of the process. In VERVE, we distributed the survey 2-3 months after the participatory event, along with a summary report highlighting key outcomes.

The survey included around 15 questions, and required ca. 20 minutes of time to be filled in. It covered topics as:

- Participants' prior experience with co-creative processes;

- Overall evaluation of the participatory event;

- Key factors contributing to its success;

- Suggestions for improvement;

- Personal changes or impacts resulting from the participatory event;

- We also asked whether the participatory event had contributed to enhancing a series of personal competencies defined by the **Inner Development Goals (IDGs) Framework**. The Framework comprises 23 "transformational skills for sustainable development", clustered around five dimensions: Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating, Acting. Examples include self-awareness, critical thinking, trust, complexity awareness, optimism, and humility.

- A complete overview of these goals can be found here:

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SECTION 3 - PATHWAYS & METHODS

Pathway 1. **We Are the Future: Youth Perspectives on Rural-Mountain Futures**

GUIDING QUESTION	How do young people perceive the places where they live, and what do they want for rural-mountain areas in the future?
KEY OBJECTIVES	• Gather ideas, hopes, and visions of youth; • Paint a richer, more complex picture of rural-mountain areas moving beyond oversimplified stories; • Deepen young people's connection to and appreciation for their territory; • Build opportunities for connection and critical mass creation.
VERVE'S CASE	**What**: a three-hour workshop with a specific focus on youth; **Where**: Belluno province, Veneto region, Italy; **Who**: twenty-three participants (age range: 13-18 years old), living in the area.

FLOW

3 HOURS (INCL. 10 MIN BUFFER)

CONVENE
40 min

EXPLORE
90 min

HARVEST
40 min

1. THE STORIES' THREAD
Unleash imagination, resonance, empathy through stories; symbolically demonstrate the action of co-creating with the woollen thread.

2. GENERATIVE DIALOGUE with CONVERSATION STARTERS
Invite and uncover perceptions, opinions, and feelings about young people's connection to their place, their views on socio-ecological relationships, and their hopes for the future.

3. SHARING CIRCLE
Harvest key learnings in plenary.

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A way to unleash the power of storytelling, practice active listening, and embody the concept of "co-creativity". By creating a collective net, participants establish eye contact and create a sense of unity in diversity. The act of passing the yarn while naming others, prompts participants to recollect other people's names.	

DURATION

20 - 40 minutes (can vary depending on the number of participants)

MATERIALS & SETUP

- A woollen yarn (possibly made locally, with natural colors);
- Set up the space so that people can stand in a circle and see each other.

FLOW

- Ask participants to stand in a circle, and provide them with the following sharing prompts:

  "My name is…
  When I was a child/as an adult, my favourite story was/is…. because….
  I pass the yarn to… (name someone)"

- In VERVE's Lab, we used this method as a segway to the generative dialogue. At the end of the sharing, we used the metaphor of the thread to highlight the main ingredients of the following exercise.

INSPIRATION

- We experienced a variation of this method during the conference "Play, perform, learn, grow" (Greece, 2019). This method has been long used as an icebreaker in many settings.

- This method has been long used as an icebreaker in many settings. See for instance the video "Hall of icebreakers": **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnnV38PXZ-U**;

- For co-creativity see: Franklin 2021.

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Co-creativity, as used here, refers to the integration of "collaboration" – working with others – and "creativity", understood as "embodying a generative way of thinking and being, seeing and doing, arising from relational forms of knowledge practice"

(ref. Franklin 2021, p. 2).

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

This activity invites participants to reflect on young people's connection to their territory, their views on socio-ecological relations, and their future aspirations. Inspired by Scharmer's concept of "generative dialogue", it fosters deeper conversations that go beyond everyday small talk, sparking new insights and shared understanding that can lead to meaningful change.

Participants engage with "**VERVE Rural Conversation Starters**", a set of postcards created through the "Photovoice Lab". Each postcard, written by a young resident or enthusiast of a rural-mountain area, offers personal stories that enrich and complicate otherwise simplistic or abstract portrayals of rural life. These narratives explore themes such as interconnected socio-ecological relationships, sense of place, socio-economic change, resource management, and aspirations for a good life. By reflecting on and commenting on these postcards, participants are encouraged to critically engage, exchange ideas, and develop a richer understanding of rural socio-ecological dynamics.

DURATION

60 - 90 minutes (5' min for instructions, 5' min to create the groups, 10' min to read the postcards, 45' min for discussion)

MATERIALS & SETUP

- Arrange the space so that participants can convene in small groups, and sit comfortably looking at each other;
- Arrange the Conversation Starters (either on a table or on the ground) where the groups will be sitting. You can select around 10 postcards per group;
- Provide markers and papers to note down the main points that emerge through the dialogue (optional).

FLOW

- While in plenary, remind participants of the basic rules of active listening (see Intro section of this Toolkit);
- Explain the purpose of the exercise and of the generative dialogue. Explain that they will find a selection of postcards they can use as conversation starters for the dialogue. You can describe the dialogue as a five-step approach, guided by specific prompts;

© Sarah Sommavilla

FLOW

- Provide them with the questions for each step, possibly written in a paper that each group can take with them:
  1. *What strikes you about the pictures and stories? (e.g. what touches you, disturbs you, interrogates you..)*
  2. *What do they tell about? Which topics are represented? What is the context in which they are embedded, and the factors involved?*
  3. *What, if any, are the similarities amongst pictures? And what, if anything, makes them different? Are there any recurring themes? Are there any themes that appear more marginal? Is there anything that you feel was left behind in these stories?*
  4. *What do the stories tell you about young people's relations with their territory?*
  5. *Are there any thoughts that emerge in regards to your relation with your territory?*
- Form groups of 3-5 people, assigning people randomly to each group;
- Explain that once they join their group, they should follow these instructions:
  - *In case there is no guided facilitation for each group, identify one person to keep track of time and another person to take some notes (last one is optional);*
  - *Dedicate 5-10 minutes to look at the cards and read the texts. Then choose two cards per person;*
  - *Begin the conversation, following the questions in the order provided above.*

INSPIRATION

- For Theory U and generative dialogue, see Scharmer 2018;
- For Photo elicitation and Photovoice, see Kong et al. 2015.

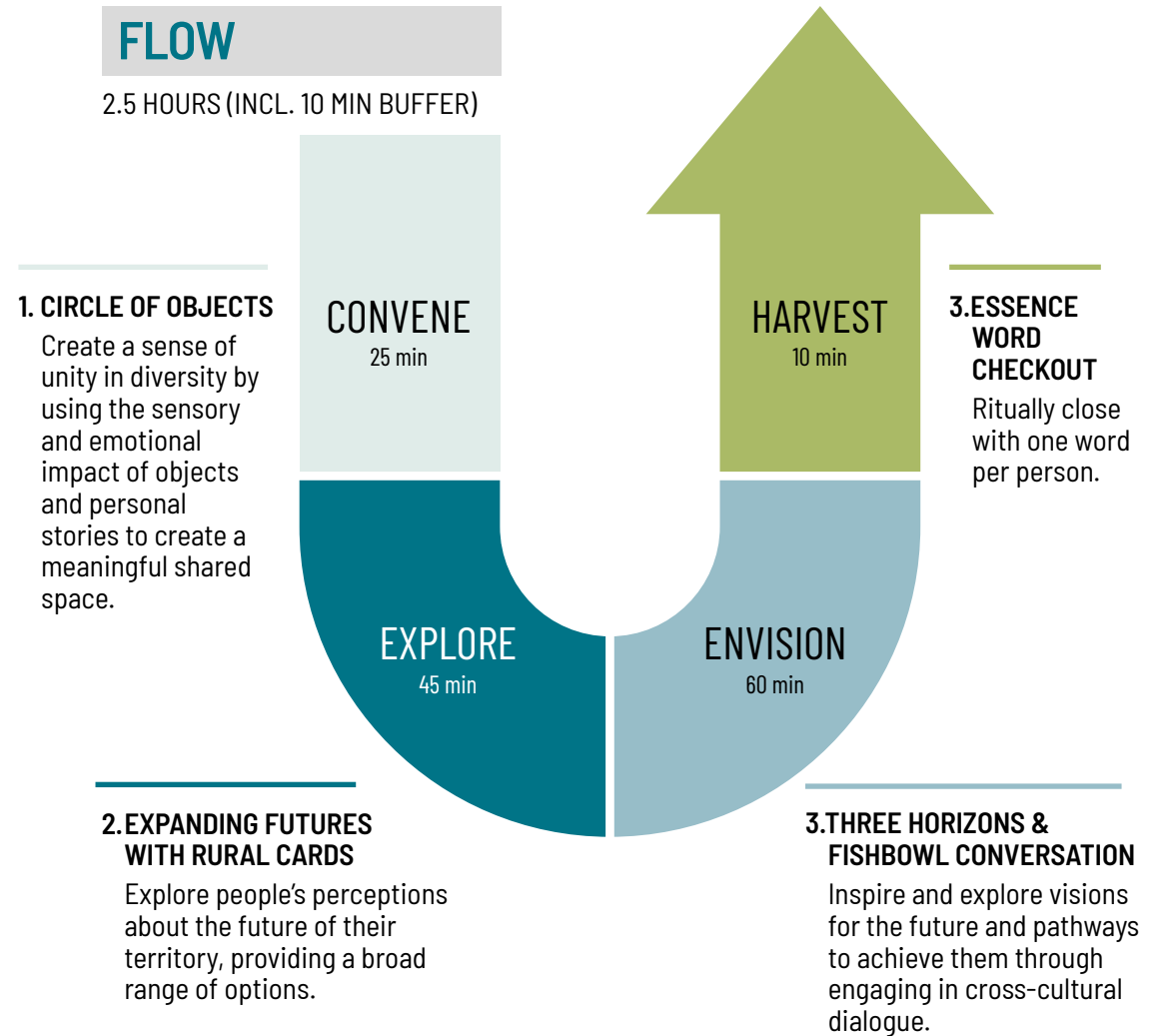To learn more about VERVE's Photovoice Lab, see:

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Method 3. **Sharing Circle**

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

A safe space for participants to express themselves and reflect on their experience; a way to gather ideas, feelings, and insights that came up during the generative dialogue. This practice helps create meaning and connection, while ensuring everyone's voice is heard without feeling rushed.

DURATION

20 - 40 minutes (depending on the number of participants, at least 2 minutes per participants)

MATERIALS & SETUP

- The room should be organized so that everyone can sit in a circle and see each other;
- A symbolic object (e.g. a wooden stick) can be placed in the middle of the room, so that whoever wants to speak can take it, and put it back in the centre when done sharing;
- Sticky notes and pens (optional).

FLOW

- Convene everyone in a circle and invite them to sit comfortably;
- Briefly summarize the work done during the workshop;
- Explain the purpose of the exercise and provide some prompts for sharing, such as:
  - *What is one meaningful thing you will share with your friends or colleagues after the workshop?*
  - *What would you like to see more of in future workshops?*
- Allow for a few minutes of silent reflection, or, alternatively, provide sticky notes and pens so that everyone can write down their thoughts;
- Invite whoever is ready to share their impressions;
- Make sure that everyone in the circle has had the chance to say something, if they want to;
- Thank everyone for the engagement and sharing.

INSPIRATION

- For a similar application of this method, see Re-imaginary method n. 26 Closing Circle, p. 55;
- For sharing circles used in forest bathing, see Clifford 2018 and **https://silvotherapy.co.uk/articles/sharing-circles**.

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Pathway 2. Expanding Horizons: Integrating Insider and Outsider Perspectives on Rural Mountain Futures and Innovation Pathways

GUIDING QUESTION	How can diverse innovative practices and development paradigms coexist and expand the range of possible futures?
KEY OBJECTIVES	• Deepen understanding and broaden perspectives on the trends, practices, and characteristics of specific rural-mountain areas; • Gather diverse views on the future of rural-mountain areas; • Facilitate dialogue between local and global perspectives, and multiple sectors, connecting insights from insiders and outsiders (with respect to the geographical area); • Highlight innovative practices and explore their potential role in shaping rural-mountain futures.
VERVE'S CASE	**What**: a three-hour dialogue involving multiple stakeholders, designed for educational purposes. It brought together students from an international summer school and local stakeholders. The Summer School, titled "Food and Innovation for Rural Transition: the Tuscany case" is organized by the University of Pisa and Laboratorio Sismondi; **Where**: Garfagnana, Tuscany region, Italy; **Who**: 30 participants, comprising 15 international MA students and 15 local and regional stakeholders from various sectors related to food systems (e.g. tourism, agriculture, forestry, local institutions, education).

FLOW

2.5 HOURS (INCL. 10 MIN BUFFER)

CONVENE 25 min

EXPLORE 45 min

ENVISION 60 min

HARVEST 10 min

1. CIRCLE OF OBJECTS
Create a sense of unity in diversity by using the sensory and emotional impact of objects and personal stories to create a meaningful shared space.

2.EXPANDING FUTURES WITH RURAL CARDS
Explore people's perceptions about the future of their territory, providing a broad range of options.

3.THREE HORIZONS & FISHBOWL CONVERSATION
Inspire and explore visions for the future and pathways to achieve them through engaging in cross-cultural dialogue.

3.ESSENCE WORD CHECKOUT
Ritually close with one word per person.

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A way for participants to introduce themselves in a deeply meaningful and empathic way. Objects carry stories, memories, and connections to specific places and events that others can relate to. This method spurs a sense of curiosity and respect for others, recognizing similarities and differences and setting a generative atmosphere from the start of any gathering.
🕐	**DURATION**	20 - 30 minutes (depending on the number of participants, 1' min per participant or 2' min if time allows)
🌿	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Arrange the room so that everyone can stand in a large circle, ensuring all participants can see each other; • Provide a few chairs for those who may need to sit; • Bring extra objects in case someone (or you as a facilitator!) forgets theirs.
⚙️	**FLOW**	• A few days prior to the event, ask participants to bring an object or a picture that *represents their work and/or their commitment for their territory*; • During the workshop, invite people to stand in a circle with their objects; • Ask participants to introduce themselves and the object that they brought, and, after sharing, to place it in the middle of the circle; • Have one person from the facilitation team start sharing, presenting their object and the thought connected to it to set the tone and pace of the exercise; • Allow each person to share when ready, without following a particular order ("pop-corn" style); • Practice active listening during the sharing and show appreciation for the stories shared; • Thank everyone for sharing after the circle is complete.
💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For a similar application, see the Re.imaginary method n. 1 "Circle of objects".

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION		A visual method used to elicit different perceptions on the future of rural-mountain areas and to expand understanding of the practices, phenomena, and trends shaping rural-mountain regions in Europe. **VERVE Rural Cards** consist of 66 images depicting current and emerging practices, such as telemedicine, nature-based wellness, community cooperatives, and trends, such as climate change. Paired with the Futures Cone, these Cards encourage imaginative thinking about what might be possible, probable, or impossible. They also spark conversations about emerging innovations as well as consolidated conventional practices and their potential in shaping the future of rural-mountain areas.
DURATION		25 - 45 minutes
MATERIALS & SETUP		• VERVE Rural Cards (see Supplementary Material n. 2 of this Toolkit); a poster of A1 dimensions with three concentric circle, each one titled: probable, possible, preposterous; • The cards and posters are best placed on big tables, with people standing around them; • A printed or digital version (shown on a PPT of the Futures Cone).

FLOW		• You can run the exercise in groups or in plenary. If in groups divide people - min. 4 max. 6 pp. per group. If in plenary, you can have up to 15 people around the table;
		• Briefly introduce the different dimensions of the Futures Cone that will be used during the exercise.
		• Place the card above the poster and ask people the following questions:
		Look at the images. Will these practices/phenomena remain (or become) dominant in the future?
		Yes, it's probable (likely to happen)
		Maybe, it's possible (might happen)
		No, it's preposterous (won't ever happen)
		Pick one card per answer and place it on the relevant circle of the poster. Try to think from a neutral perspective - not what you prefer to be probable or possible, but what you think might realistically happen based on the knowledge you have.
		• Once cards have been chosen and distributed on the poster, ask participants to share the reasoning behind their choices, and allow for a short discussion. It is important that everyone has the chance to explain the cards they chose;
		• Another round of questions can follow, if time allows:
		Now, please rearrange the cards based on your preferable future:
		What would you like to see as probable, as possible, and as preposterous?
		Are there any innovations you think might help realize your preferable futures? (optional)
		• Discuss key insights.
		To transition to the next Three Horizons exercise, invite each participant to select two cards, keeping the final goal in mind. In VERVE, the final goal was the "transformations of food systems in a specific rural-mountain socio-ecological context".
		   1. One card should represent a challenge or limitation in the current system that participants want to leave behind (Horizon 1).
		   2. The other card should represent an essential element for the future system participants aspire to create and want to carry forward (Horizon 3).
		Then place the two cards on the Three Horizons poster.

This method is inspired by the Futures Cone - a cone-shaped diagram, used to visually represent the variety of alternative (potential) futures. The first known visual was created by Hancock and Bezold in 1994.
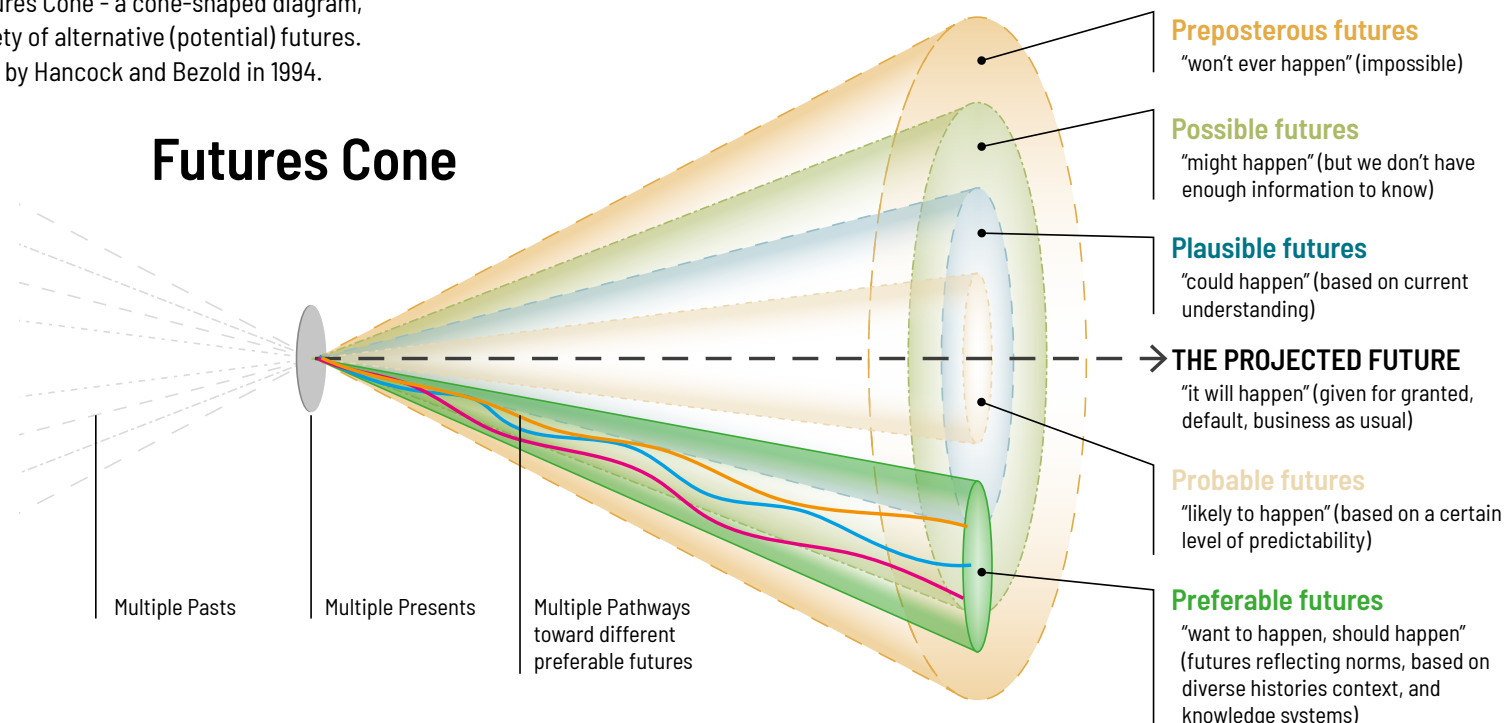
Futures Cone

Multiple Pasts

Multiple Presents

Multiple Pathways toward different preferable futures

Preposterous futures
"won't ever happen" (impossible)

Possible futures
"might happen" (but we don't have enough information to know)

Plausible futures
"could happen" (based on current understanding)

→ **THE PROJECTED FUTURE**
"it will happen" (given for granted, default, business as usual)

Probable futures
"likely to happen" (based on a certain level of predictability)

Preferable futures
"want to happen, should happen" (futures reflecting norms, based on diverse histories context, and knowledge systems)

Figure by the authors, adapted from Cork et al 2023

INSPIRATION
- For the most common known version of the Futures Cone, see Voros 2017;
- For a recent version of the Cone, see Christophilopoulos 2024;
- See also Chambers J. 2024.

Ruralization project and their set of cards of Rural Trends.

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Beyond their use with the Futures Cone, **VERVE Rural Cards** can be applied in many different ways.

Here's an example we tested for educational purposes: at the start of a lecture, use the cards as a warm-up exercise to gauge students' knowledge of rural-mountain trends, phenomena, and practices. Lay the cards out on a table and ask each student to pick three cards-looking only at the images, not the descriptions on the back. Two cards should represent trends they can describe and one should represent something unfamiliar to them. Have them share their choices, explain their reasoning and, if needed, provide additional information regarding the themes represented in the cards.

VERVE Rural Cards (Supplementary Materials n. 2)

Agricultural sector	Non-agricultural sectors	Governance & Society	Environmental phenomena	Services & Infrastructures
1. Artificial pollination	18. Eco/ slow/ green tourism	31. Collaborative forest management	45. Bark beetle outbreak	56. Community rural center
2. Precision agriculture	19. Heritage and cultural tourism	32. Intentional /green/ energy communities	46. Extreme weather events	57. Dams and dikes
3. Wood harvesting	20. Mass tourism	33. Protest movements	47. Big predators	58. University in the countryside
4. Vertical farming	21. Nature-based therapy and wellbeing	34. Cooperatives and partnerships	48. Wild fauna	59. Telecommunication infrastructures
5. Agroforestry	22. Forest-based education	35. Waste and overconsumption	49. Soil erosion and water scarcity	60. Tele health
6. Extensive herding	23. Animal-based therapy	36. Changing gender roles	50. Environmental pollution	61. Sustainable mobility
7. Intensive farming and mechanization	24. Rural craftmanship	37. Depopulation and aging population	51. Ecosystem degradation	62. Second homes and holiday homes
8. Intensive animal farming	25. Wild forest products	38. Active citizenship	52. Hydrogeological instability	63. Proximity services
9. Alternative food systems	26. Carbon sequestration	39. Circular economy	53. Biodiversity	64. Social housing
10. Short food supply chains	27. Hunting and fishing	40. Integration of immigrants	54. Glacier retreat	65. Infrastructuring, accessibility and connectedness
11. Social and educational agriculture	28. Mining	41. Remote working and digital entrepreneurship	55. Invasive alien species	66. Youth recreational activities
12. Biocultural diversity	29. Renewable energy on the countryside	42. Rural innovation hub		
13. Regenerative and organic agriculture	30. Water use	43. Smart villages		
14. Young farmers		44. Cultural festivals and events		
15. Genetically Modified Organisms				
16. Traditional land use				
17. Rural e-commerce				

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

The Three Horizons method offers a simple and intuitive framework for connecting current systems with future possibilities and identifying the visionary actions needed to move toward a shared desired future. It helps groups examine systemic patterns, determine which dominant patterns are outdated and should be left behind, envision the patterns that belong in a desired future, and explore how emerging trends can facilitate the transition from present to future systems. Combined with the Fishbowl Conversation, the Three Horizons framework enables a structured and focused dialogue, allowing all voices to be heard and diverse visions to emerge in a democratic way.

The Three Horizons (3H) are visually represented as a chart using the two axes-Time and Prevalence-to show how different ideas, practices, or systems are expected to evolve over time. Specifically, the three development paths (H1, H2, and H3) represent distinct trajectories:

H1 - Focuses on the current system, mapping its challenges and identifying features that are still needed but are likely to play a smaller role in the future;

H2 - Highlights emerging innovations, which may either challenge or support the current system and are relevant in the transition phase between present and future;

H3 - Encompasses both visions for the future and niche practices that currently demonstrate positive potential. These virtuous practices could evolve to become mainstream in a desired future.
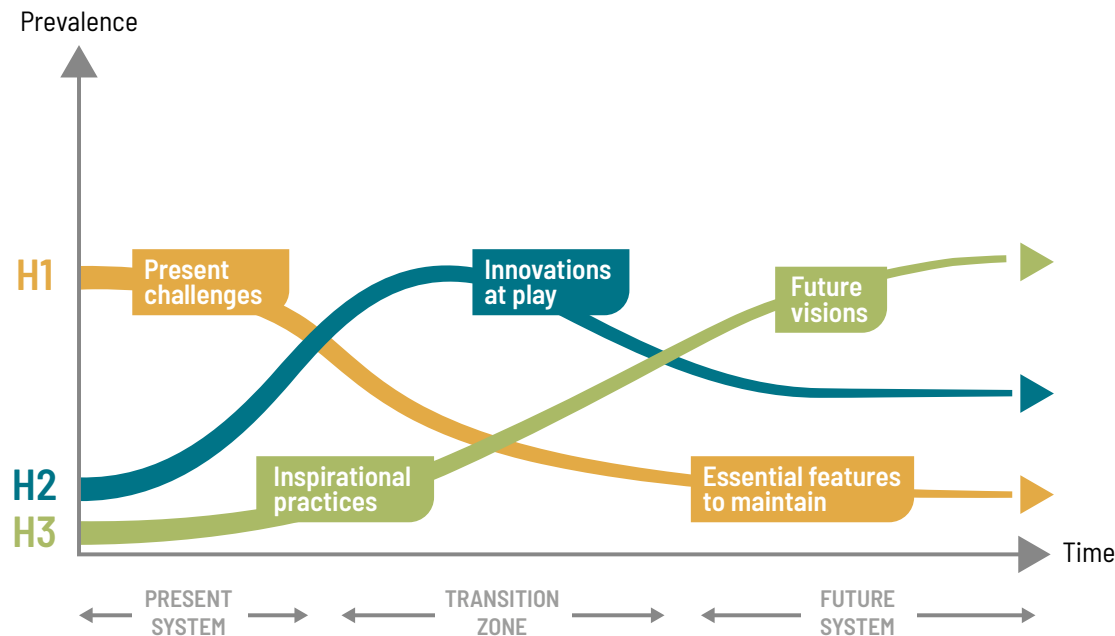
Figure by the authors, adapted from Sharpe et al 2016

🕐	**DURATION**	60 minutes
🌿	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Poster of A0 dimension (or bigger) with the 3H chart outlined; • Sticky notes or paper cuts; markers; VERVE Rural Cards. • For the Fishbowl Conversation, arrange chairs in two concentric circles. The number of chairs vary, but usually no more than 5-6 chairs for the inner circle. The remaining ones are placed outside the inner circle.
🔀	**FLOW**	• Introduce the basic rules of the 3H method and Fishbowl Conversation; • Summarize the themes represented by the "VERVE Rural Cards" chosen by the participants in the previous step, and placed on H1 and H3 trajectories; • Ask the audience to validate, enrich, and integrate this representation, following the rules of Fishbowl (see the relevant Box); • Remind them of the two main prompts. For instance, in VERVE, we specifically focused on food systems transformations: *What should be left behind from the current systems? What characteristics, now prevailing, are not fit for purpose anymore?* *What elements should be in the future system?* • Write down the thoughts shared by participants on separate sticky notes and cluster them as they emerge; • It is important that the conversation does not become too abstract and vague. Keep participants grounded in the context and scale at hand; • From time to time, highlight different perspectives, elements of greater consensus, and possible blindspots; • Summarize key contributions at the end of the dialogue.
💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For a quick explanation of 3H, see this video by the Doughnut Economics Action Lab: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5KfRQJqpPU**; • For an academic application of 3H, see Fazey et al. 2020; • For an explanation of fishbowl and other participatory techniques, see R. Chambers 2002.

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Fishbowl is a structured dialogue that allows for a dynamic and focused discussion. It is a highly democratic method that prevents dominant voices from taking over the conversation. Only the people sitting in the inner circle can speak. Once they are done conversing about the topic at hand, they should leave the chair and anybody from the outer circle can fill the empty seat. The rest listen attentively. In the "open fishbowl" version used in VERVE, one chair in the inner circle needs to be left empty at all times.

Method 4. **Essence Word Checkout**

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A way to concisely express a thought or feeling that participants take home from the workshop. A quick harvest that gives voice to everyone in the room and ritually ends the gathering.
🕐	**DURATION**	5 - 10 minutes (depending on the number of participants, 30" per participant)
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	Set up the room so that everyone can stand in a circle and see each other.
	FLOW	Ask everyone to share a key takeaway from the workshop using one word only.
💡	**INSPIRATION**	For applications of this method in forest bathing, see Clifford 2018.

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Pathway 3. From Seeds to Action: Biocultural Visions for the Future of Rural-Mountain areas

GUIDING QUESTION	How can biocultural diversity be an engine for the regeneration of a remote rural-mountain area?
KEY OBJECTIVES	• Catalyze emerging seeds of innovation to elicit future visions and action plans; • Create a space for dialogue and connection between insiders (residents of the area) and outsiders (residents of surrounding areas in the region); • Encourage fresh perspectives and challenge engrained ways of thinking, especially by learning from the wisdom of the non-human world; • Provide a structured avenue for dreams, values, and deep reflections to emerge.

| VERVE'S CASE | **What**: A one and a half day workshop for data collection and community development.
Where: A remote and depopulated valley in Mount Grappa (MAB UNESCO site), Veneto region.
Who: 15 participants from different public and private sectors, some residing in the area and some outsiders invested in the future of the place. All support biocultural diversity in more or less direct ways and from different perspectives. Specific practices include: regeneration of cultivated biodiversity; stewardship and farming of old seeds in experimental fields; integrated local supply chains of medicinal plants; restoration of traditional architecture and niche ecosystems; genetic conservation of chestnut trees; environmental education of local pathways and landscapes. |

Pathway 3. From Seeds to Action: Biocultural Visions for the Future of Rural-Mountain areas

1.5 DAYS

1. CIRCLE OF OBJECTS
Create an atmosphere of unity in diversity by bringing the sensorial power of objects and individual stories to the space.

2. HOPES & INTENTIONS
Allow participants to identify and share hopes and intentions for the workshop.

FORMATIVE PART
Provide key conceptual knowledge about futures literacy and on the main challenges and opportunities in the remote area.

3. FUTURES WHEEL & SEEDS OF GOOD ANTHROPOCENE
Explore the potential impacts that current good practices could bring for the future of the remote area.

DAY 1

CONVENE
30 min

EXPLORE
90 min

CONNECT
90 min

DAY 2

HARVEST
40 min

PROTOTYPE
180 min

ENVISION
180 min

4. SENSORY AWAKENING
Support participants as they reconnect with their bodies and with the surrounding environment.

5. WALKING REFLECTIONS
Foster individual reflection, and deep questioning, beyond the given-for-granted.

6. LETTERS FROM OTHER FUTURES
Give voice to utopian stories of the future and to marginalized voices to narrate their regenerative visions.

7. VISION TREE
Gather all the visions in one unique visual.

11. POSTCARD PROMISES
Close ritually sharing sources of gratitude and personal intentions for the future with the group.

10. HARVESTS & CONTRIBUTIONS
Have participants reflect on what they bring home and how they contributed.

9. BACKCASTING
Move from vision to goals and to concrete actions.

8. THREE HORIZONS & FISHBOWL CONVERSATION
Crystalize concrete actions, attitudes, and structures that could help realize future visions.

| PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION |
| DURATION |
| MATERIALS & SETUP |
| FLOW |
| INSPIRATION |

(SEE METHOD 1, PATHWAY 2 FOR FULL DESCRIPTION)

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⊚	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A visual method to uncover participants' hopes and intentions for the workshop, inviting them to be an active part of the process and shape its direction. A way to gain awareness of the group's goals and motivations, fostering a sense of collective purpose.
⏱	**DURATION**	10 - 20 minutes
❦	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Sticky notes of two different colours, four sticky notes per participant (two per colour); • Markers; • Poster of A1 dimensions, divided into two parts.
⟿	**FLOW**	• Provide each participant with the needed materials and ask them the following: *What are your hopes for the workshops? In other words, what do you hope to gain?* *What are your intentions? How do you wish to engage/contribute? What do you bring?* *Write down two intentions and two hopes. Each answer should be written on a separate sticky note, in capital letters and clear writing. Use different colours for the two clusters.* • Allow a few minutes for participants to write down their answers. Once they are done, they can place the sticky notes on a poster; • Ask everyone to stand up and silently read the contributions of others. Following comments or clarifying questions are encouraged.
⍟	**INSPIRATION**	• For warm-up methods and other techniques, see R. Chambers 2002.

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🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A brainstorming method to identify impacts and implications that a specific activity could have in the future. It is also a way to visualize the interconnections between elements within the system. It helps anticipate change, explore critical issues, and envision alternative developments beyond business as usual. Futures Wheel, invented in 1971 by Jerome Glenn, is a method similar to Mind Mapping and webbing, and is widely used by futurists, corporate planners, and public policy advisors globally to identify problems, opportunities, and strategies. In VERVE, we selected activities that can be considered Seeds of Good Anthropocene. The latter refers to practices, ways of living, and innovative ideas that are currently marginal or niche, but potentially beneficial in transforming the future towards socio-ecological regeneration. We explored the questions: *What if this activity (the Seed) became dominant in the future? What will be the impacts on the specific remote area?* Direct impacts are placed in the first ring of the wheel, and indirect impacts in the second ring. A third wave can also be discussed. In the visual image of the wheel, the first ring includes direct impacts, the second ring includes secondary ripple effects or waves of change. A third ring can also be added.
🕐	**DURATION**	60 minutes
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Sticky notes or cut-out papers (cm 8.5 x 8.5); markers; A1 posters; glue. (All these materials should be placed on separate tables, placed in a way that allows each group to discuss, without being disturbed by others); • Extra: Mega Trend cards (see Box 2); • Future Scenarios for three selected Seeds of Good Anthropocene; • It is best to work first on a table, and then stick the Wheels on walls. • N.B. hexagon-shaped sticky notes are hard to find!

⇄	**FLOW**	PRIOR TO THE LAB:
		• Come up with 3-4 Seeds of Good Anthropocene (examples of good practices) that matter for the specific rural-mountain areas;
		• Write a future scenario for each Seeds when they have become dominant, describing their future characteristics (see examples of scenarios at **p. 45**).
		DURING THE LAB:
		• Read the scenario for each Seed, and ask participants which Seed they would like to work on;
		• Based on that, form the groups, (4-5 people each), each group focusing on a specific wheel with a specific Seed;
		• When in groups, place the Seed in the middle of the Wheel. Ask participants to brainstorm direct impacts, and write their insights with sticky notes, creating a circle around the Seed. If time allows, a second circle can be added brainstorming indirect impacts;
		• To enrich the brainstorming, additional issues can be considered, such as:
		  – *effects on various aspects of sustainability: (S)ocial, (T)echnological, (E)conomic, (E)nvironmental, (P)olitical, and (V)alues, using the STEEP-V approach;*
		  – *enabling and disenabling factors and their influence on the possible impacts;*
		  – *Mega Trends, and their influence on potential impacts;*
		  – *other practices and phenomena, sourcing from "VERVE Rural Cards".*
		• Reconvene in plenary and observe the different wheels. Ask participants: *what do you notice? Are the approaches different or similar? In what ways? Cross-impacts may be found.*
		• Summarize the key points, to crystalize the main learnings gained.

IMPACTS are the marked effects or influences of something (e.g. an event, a phenomenon, a project, an action) on someone or something else. Impacts refer to all possible changes, intended or unintended, direct or indirect, positive or negative. They may occur over different timescales (but are typically observed in the medium and long term), affect different actors and be relevant at different scales (e.g. local or regional).

MEGATRENDS are the great driving forces that, through profound social, economic, institutional, demographic, environmental, and technological shifts, are reshaping and will continue to reshape global futures. The version used in this Toolkit was created and designed by Ispra with a specific focus on Europe (see link in the references).

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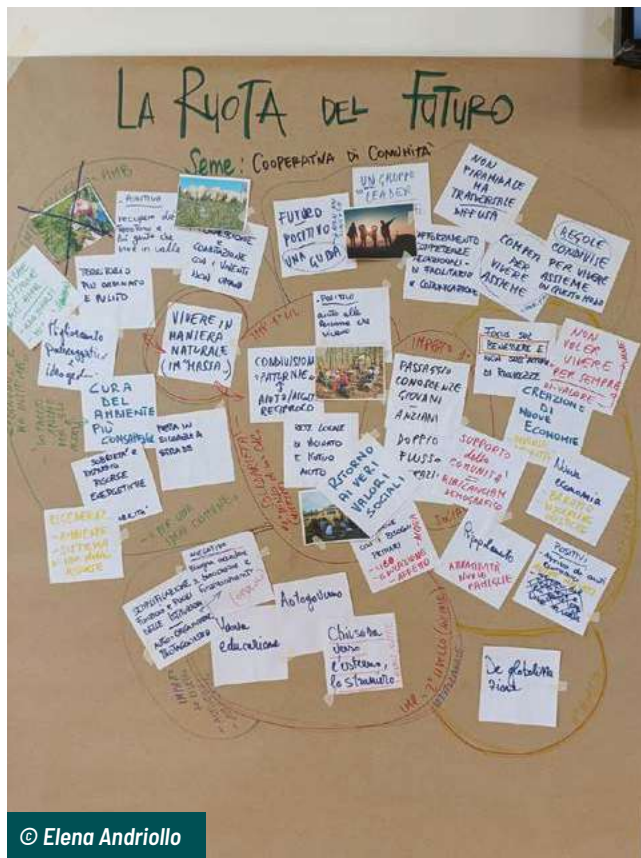
INSPIRATION

- For an application of the Futures Wheel and STEEP-V approach (in combination with the Three Horizons), see Hickert e al 2019;

- For an explanation of the Futures Wheel, see Glenn and Gordon (Ed.) 2009;

- For social innovation and impact evaluation, see Secco et al 2016.

For the Seeds of Good Anthropocene, see the project:

THE SCENARIO NARRATIVES of the Seeds of Good Anthropocene explored in the Futures Wheels

The scenarios listed here, utilized in VERVE Labs, were grounded in local realities. These scenarios were developed through a thorough data gathering process, including interviews with key informants, desk research, and in-depth analysis of the case study area. This ensured that the scenarios were directly relevant to the challenges and aspirations of the local community.

Seed 1 - AGRITOURISM

By 2040, the local agritourism model will have expanded and been replicated across many rural and mountainous areas in Italy. A network of organic agritourisms will emerge in sparsely populated valleys, collaborating with local organic producers dedicated to preserving ancient and unique plant varieties. These agritourisms will offer a wide range of seasonal products throughout the year, while prioritizing soil health and the care of both cultivated and marginal lands.

These agritourisms will function as multifunctional hubs, providing additional services such as educational and social farming activities. The network will emphasize sustainability through practices like green building (e.g., restoring traditional architecture), energy efficiency, and careful management of resources at risk, including water, marginal areas, wild flora and fauna, and plantations.

Educational offerings will go beyond seasonal activities like children's summer camps or adult training courses to include a year-round nursery or forest school, closely integrated with regional and national education systems. These schools will engage in projects designed both for and with local schools.

The restaurants will focus on authentic local specialties made from "zero-kilometer" ingredients, while also incorporating external culinary innovations and providing vegetarian and vegan options. Agritourisms will serve as havens of peace and well-being, as well as cultural hubs fostering creativity and connection.

These spaces will engage a range of professionals, such as nature guides offering activities like forest bathing, bioenergetics, or foraging and processing edible herbs; artisans restoring rural structures like dry stone walls and drainage channels; traditional medicine experts; and artists organizing events like fairs, traditional dances, and historical celebrations that honor spiritual and artisanal traditions.

Seed 2 - WIDESPREAD MUSEUM AND EXTENSIVE TRAIL NETWORK

By 2040, the region will become an open-air, widespread museum of sustainable environmental practices, where visitors can experience rural landscapes in balance with nature and learn how this balance is maintained and strengthened over time. This transformation will be supported by an expanded and well-maintained network of trails and cycle-pedestrian paths throughout Belluno and beyond, connecting to similar networks across Italy and Europe. The Valle di Seren, for instance, already offers over 60 km of trails with varying levels of difficulty.

These paths will exemplify sustainable and low-impact mobility, designed not only for leisure activities like walking and cycling but also for meeting daily transportation needs. The network will be separated from car traffic for safety, with physical barriers and sufficient width to accommodate both vehicles and other activities such as hiking.

The trails will be thoughtfully maintained and enhanced to highlight elements of the natural landscape as well as historical, artistic, archaeological, ethnographic, and artisanal features. Signage and wayfinding will be clear, and organized events and educational projects will promote slow tourism and encourage the rediscovery of the area. Visitors will have opportunities to engage with traditional and sustainable techniques for construction, agriculture, and resource management.

Examples include restoring dry stone walls, manual meadow mowing techniques, organic farming practices in experimental gardens, soil quality testing, traditional and innovative recipes to reduce food waste, forest care and cleaning methods, water conservation practices, and the use of natural materials. Schools will play an active role in storytelling projects, emphasizing the historical and social importance of communication routes through less-developed areas, which have historically driven the socio-economic development of entire regions.

Seed 3 - COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE

By 2040, community cooperatives will have become a leading model for economic activity in many inland areas. These cooperatives will operate as democratic business models, where citizens collectively manage goods and services-including cultural activities-primarily for the benefit of residents and newcomers drawn to the area's vibrant and innovative atmosphere. Subsidiarity, multifunctionality, and shared responsibility will form the foundation of these cooperatives.

The cooperatives will focus on promoting the region through territorial and tourist marketing, while enhancing the area's natural and cultural assets. They will integrate with energy communities by installing photovoltaic panels, adopting renewable energy sources, and using natural materials for green building renovations. Spaces will be created to raise awareness about efficient and sustainable resource use, such as a "water house," while small shops will open to sell local agri-food products, including ancient seeds, alongside artisanal goods. An information and tourist reception center will be established, alongside a cultural hub and community meeting space. In addition, the reopening of a nursery school and a primary school in the valley will strengthen the community, while shared equipment and consulting services will optimize skills and reduce costs.

The cooperatives will also support local restaurants, initiate school programs, and facilitate the distribution of products from local farms. They will take on a revitalized role in promoting the Pro Loco and collaborating with social and cultural associations already active in the area. Profits generated by the cooperatives will be reinvested to ensure the occupational stability of members and sustain the activities within the broader network. A portion of these profits will also be dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the territory, including caring for meadows and pastures, trails, traditional bio-buildings, festivals, and cultural events that celebrate the region's heritage.

Method 4. **Sensory Awakening**

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A practice to (re)awake participants' perceptions and awareness of their senses. It helps deepen and stimulate awareness of being "here and now". It involves actively engaging sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell to enhance our experience of the world and focus the attention on the present moment.
DURATION	10 - 20 minutes
MATERIALS & SETUP	• (optional) A bell - a gentle chime to mark the end of the moment. • If possible, guide participants to a quiet outdoor spot like a forest, stream, or park. Make sure they're dressed for the weather and can sit or stand comfortably.

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FLOW

Once you arrive at the spot (5-7 min), invite everyone to find a comfortable place to sit or stand in a relaxed position near you, close enough to hear your voice. Encourage them to take a few deep breaths to center themselves (2 min). Then, guide them through the following prompts:

1. Observing and Breathing (2 min): *"Observe everything around you, looking far and near. Take 3-4 deep belly breaths, expanding your abdomen like a balloon. With each inhale, imagine drawing in the energy of nature, and with each exhale, release any tension. Feel grounded and connected"*;
2. Listening (3 min): *"If you feel comfortable, close your eyes and focus on the sounds around you. First, listen for distant sounds* [pause], *then shift attention to closer sounds* [pause], *and finally, tune into internal sounds, like your heartbeat or breath"* [pause];
3. Touch and Sensation (3 min): *"Keeping your eyes closed, notice the contact of your clothes with your skin, and the connection between your body or feet and the ground. Touch the natural elements around you or your own skin, feeling the textures and sensations this contact provides. Notice how air and light touch your skin and closed eyes. Change your position slightly-perhaps moving a hand or turning your head-and observe how the sensations change"*;
4. Smells (2 min): *"Take a few deep breaths and bring your attention to the scents around you. Notice what each scent evokes and how it makes you feel. If you wish, pick something from the ground, smell your own skin, or imagine a favorite natural scent, like a flower"*;
5. Reopening the Eyes and Observation (2 min): *"Take some more deep breaths and, when you feel ready, gently open your eyes. Observe the world around you, paying attention to colors, patterns, and shapes, and notice if anything seems different"*;
6. Silence and Gratitude (1 min): *"Let us take a few more moments of silence to enjoy the experience. If you wish, silently express gratitude for this place that welcomed us and our practice today* [pause]. *Now, slowly move your body, reconnecting with the spot and the others. Let's go back to the venue for the next activity."*

(Note: The suggested timing for each phase is flexible and can be adjusted based on the circumstances. For instance, if there are many pleasant sounds in the environment, you may choose to extend the listening phase.)

INSPIRATION

For sensory awakening techniques in forest bathing, see Clifford 2018.

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

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A silent outdoor walk offers an opportunity for deep personal introspection with the natural environment, often sparking unexpected insights that enrich the reflection process.

In VERVE, this walk was designed to help participants reflect on two key themes: **blocking beliefs** and **marginalized groups**. During the walk, participants were encouraged to identify and write down:

a. A deeply held belief that personally hinders them, then reframe it into a constructive and proactive thought capable of opening new perspectives and fostering change. These insights were later incorporated into the Three Horizons chart.

b. Marginalized groups-both human and non-human-that may have been overlooked during the workshop discussions so far. This exercise aimed to highlight diverse perspectives, address power imbalances, and ensure these voices were integrated into subsequent workshop activities, starting with the Letters from Other Future exercise.

To enhance the experience, the walk was preceded by a sensory awakening activity (**p. 46** of this Toolkit). This practice helped participants connect more deeply with both their inner selves and the natural world, creating a foundation for meaningful reflection and (re)activating their capacity to pay attention to hidden or underused senses, such as intuition.

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DURATION	60 minutes

MATERIALS & SETUP	• Each participant receives a written set of questions on an individual sheet of paper, along with a pen to write down their answers; • The outdoor walk can be preceded by a sensory awakening moment, starting in a circle; • Prior to the workshop, make sure that people are equipped for the walk, with proper shoes and clothes, suitable for the season. If it is wet, you can suggest bringing with them something waterproof to sit on. You may also advise them to bring a watch to keep track of the time during the walk, and leave their phone and other digital distractions in the room. Alternatively, you can ask them not to walk too far from the venue, and use a call (e.g. whistle or bell) to bring them back at the end.

FLOW	• Explain the exercise and distribute the papers with the questions. Questions for the part a), about "blocking belief": *1. What deeply held belief is preventing you from changing, both personally and within your community?* *2. What new and constructive thought can you mobilize to move away from the blocking belief, to foster change and see things from a different perspective?*

FLOW

Questions for the part b), about "marginalized groups":

1. *Whose voices were missing from our discussion today?*
2. *What diverse perspectives, both human and non-human, should we incorporate to build a more regenerative future? Why?*

- Invite people to stay silent and respect other people' silence throughout the exercise;
- (optional) conduct the sensory awakening moment;
- Invite people to start walking in whatever direction they please, or sit or stand somewhere for the individual reflection;
- After 30 minutes, call them back in a gentle way (e.g. using a bell);
- Collect the papers with the answers, and ask them to share one word with the group, standing in a circle (see Method Essence Word Checkout, **p. 38**);
- The answers can be collected and summarized, and then fed into the following activities.

INSPIRATION

- For Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), see Inayatullah 1998;
- The "marginalized groups" part was inspired by the method "Inclusivity train" from the RECOMS Toolkit (**https://recoms.eu/method/inclusivity-train**), and by the Future cards by UN Global Pulse (**https://linktr.ee/futurescardsunglobalpulse**);
- The "blocking beliefs" part was inspired by a workshop run by Rouzbeh Tavakkoli (**www.rouzhehtavakkoli.com**) at the conference "Berlin Change Days goes Alpine 2022".

The "blocking belief" questions are inspired by the **Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)** method, which explores the present by examining the underlying causes that shaped it. This approach begins with the most visible elements and gradually dives deeper into hidden layers, ultimately uncovering the myths and narratives that influence our beliefs and values.

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🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A storytelling technique that helps connect with personal values and dreams, creating space for utopian visions-even those that feel impossible. It invites participants to imagine a regenerative future from the perspective of another being, human or non-human, moving beyond anthropocentric and ego-centric views.
🕐	**DURATION**	90 minutes
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Quality pens and pieces of paper for writing letters (one per participant); • Printed images of various beings (slightly more than the number of participants), ideally connected to the local ecosystem and relevant to their livelihoods and experiences. If you do not have time to retrieve and print the images, you can consider using the "**Assembly Archetype Cards**" provided as Supplementary Materials n.3 of this Toolkit (see Pathway 5, **p. 68-71**)

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	FLOW	• Introduce the exercise, its aims, and show the images of the beings;
		 • Ask each participant to choose one card, and take the writing materials. If more than one person wishes to select the same card, gently invite them to pick a different one;
		 • Provide the following prompts for the letter, written clearly on a flipchart or on a big screen. If possible, print a few written instructions, for those who prefer to write the letter outside:
		 Describe a place in the specific rural-mountain area in 2065 (40 years from now) from the perspective of a human or non-human being. Think in regenerative terms, imagining the best possible future for its species. Write to your present self, freely answering to these questions without any particular order:
		    - What do you see? What does the place look like?
		    - What activities and practices are there? Who is there?
		    - How do you feel? What makes you feel good?
		 • When providing the instructions, make sure participants understand that the content of the letters will be later shared with the group;
		 • Guide a short mindfulness moment (see **pp. 68-69** of this Toolkit), to allow people to reconnect with their breath, their bodies, and enter into the mindset of their new "character";
		 • (Optional) Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves as the new being;
		 • Have people find a quiet and comfortable place for writing their letter, and allow for at least 20 minutes (max 30) of writing;
		 • Once the time is finished, gently call them back (e.g. using a bell), divide participants into small groups (max 4 people per group), asking them to sit somewhere quiet and to read their letters out loud, while others practice active listening;
		 • (Optional) write down main keywords from the letters and use them as per instructions in the next method "Vision Tree".

💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For a similar application, see the Re.imaginary toolkit, Method n. 15. "Inviting more than human stakeholders", p. 38; • For making kin with non-humans, see Haraway 2016.

Method 7. **Vision Tree**

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A brainstorming method that can be used to gather insights across three clusters, inspired by the metaphor of the tree. In VERVE, we used it to cluster keywords from the Letters from Other Futures, where the roots represent resources, the trunk represents the actions and the crown/branches the emotions/sensations. It allows the group to visualize similarities and differences, and to capture the richness of participants' visions in a concise way.
🕐	**DURATION**	20 - 40 minutes
🔥	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Mini sticky notes (possibly of different colors for each clusters); markers; • Poster of A1 dimensions with a drawing of a tree.

⇄	**FLOW**	• During the reading of the Letters, write down the main keywords that emerge from the stories, one keyword per sticky note;
		• The keywords should capture the following elements narrated in the letters:
		  – *Emotions and sensations;*
		  – *Actions and practices;*
		  – *Resources (e.g. humans, animals, plants, things).*
		• Cluster the sticky notes on the Vision Tree. Place emotions on the branches, actions on the trunk, and resources on the roots;
		• Have people observe the Vision Tree in silence, to see what themes emerge and recur;
		• Allow for a few comments on the content emerged;
		• Refer back to these themes in the following steps of the participatory event.

💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For Vision Tree and Appreciative Inquiry with rural communities, see Ashford and Patkar 2001.

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If the Vision Tree is used as a pure brainstorming method (not as a follow-up to the Letters from Other Futures exercise as we did in VERVE), you can provide people with the following prompts:

In order to realize your desired future for the area:
1. *What outcomes do you wish to achieve? (branches with leaves and fruits)*
2. *What actions will you take towards that aim? (trunk);*
3. *What resources do you need, and can be mobilised? (roots)*

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

DURATION

MATERIALS & SETUP

FLOW

(SEE METHOD 3, PATHWAY 2 FOR FULL DESCRIPTION)

During VERVE's Visioning Lab in Seren del Grappa, the Three Horizons matrix was initially populated by the research team using insights gathered from the "Walking Reflections" activity at the end of the first day. Participants then refined and enriched this initial representation using the Fishbowl technique, allowing them to compare perspectives, build consensus, and identify shared priorities.

In this pathway, after we introduced the Three Horizons framework and the Fishbowl discussion rules, the research team presented a summary of the themes collected from participants and mapped onto the Three Horizons chart and on the Vision Tree. Participants were then invited to respond to the following questions:
Thinking of your desired regenerative futures for this rural-mountain area:
- *Is there something you want to modify or integrate of the summary we made?*
- *Is there a topic you find particularly important and want to elaborate on?*

The discussion naturally evolved from these starting points. Additional guiding questions posed during the process included:
- *What emerging innovations can help (or block) the transition towards your desired futures?*
- *What should we maintain of the current system in the future, but not as prevailing?*

When facilitating a future-focused discussion for a specific place, keep the following points in mind:
1. Stay Grounded in the Territory: Periodically remind participants to anchor their thoughts in the local context, avoiding overly abstract or generic ideas (e.g., "we need more young people in rural areas"). Encourage them to propose tangible, place-based actions that can feed into the next step of the process, such as Backcasting.
2. Encourage Nuance: Help participants avoid polarized views on key themes (e.g., the role of technology in past, present, and future systems). Use the trajectories of the Three Horizons matrix-Prevalence and Time-to guide participants in exploring a range of possibilities and perspectives.

To broaden the scope of the conversation and address overlooked issues, consider incorporating the Mega Trends cards and/or **VERVE Rural Cards**. These tools can bring attention to topics that might otherwise be missed and add depth to the discussion.

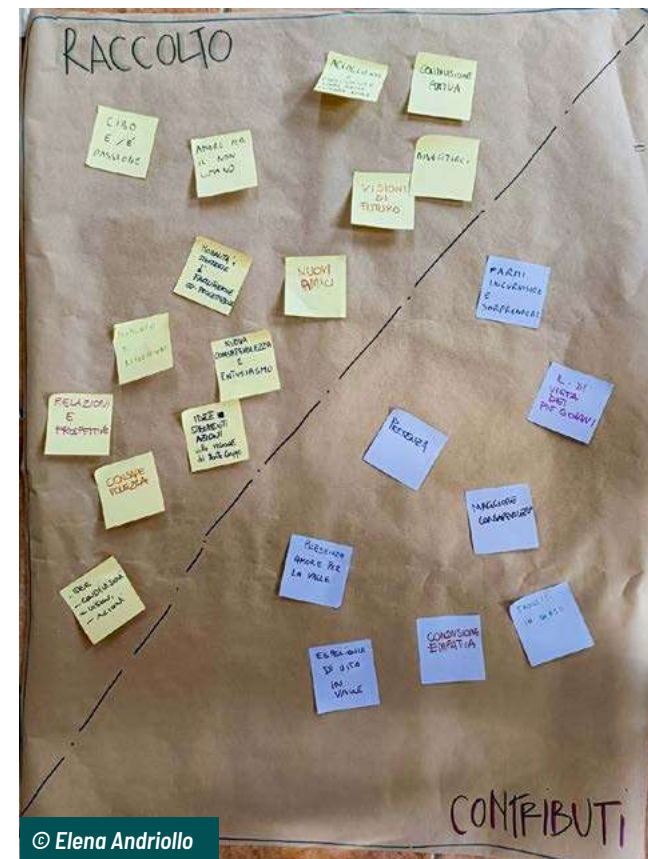|		
🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A strategic planning approach that starts with a vision of the future and works backward to define actionable steps. It links the imagined future to today's situation, following the chain of causality. Once a medium- or long-term goal has been identified, participants trace the steps necessary to achieve the goal. Backcasting is the conceptual inverse of foresight. When done collaboratively, this approach fosters a sense of ownership over both the vision, the actions, and the path to realizing it. Early backcasting exercises were performed by Elise Boulding.
🕐	**DURATION**	60 minutes
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Posters of A1 dimensions (one for each group); • Markers, pens, sticky notes; • Tables and chairs need to be arranged so that participants can work on their posters in groups.

	FLOW	• Explain the purpose of the exercise and ask a few volunteers to identify a vision they would like to develop into an action plan. In VERVE, the visions stem from the Three Horizons method;
		 • Create the groups based on the ideas proposed. Each participant can voluntarily join the preferred plan. We suggest having at least two and maximum five people per group;
		 You can provide participants with the following step-by-step instructions:
		   - *Translate the vision into a goal, and decide on a time frame for the goal to be achieved. The goal needs to be SMART to be actionable, that is to say: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant (for the context and participants), and Time-bound;*
		   - *Identify a set of actions needed to achieve the goal, in the long, medium, and short term;*
		   - *Brainstorm on the type of resources needed, both inside and outside the group involved in the event (and outside the area) to carry out the proposed actions. Resources can be of different nature, for example: material, financial, human, natural.*
		 • The passage from vision to SMART goal is not easy to achieve. We suggest facilitators to supervise each group, and support them in making a solid plan;
		 • Once the plans are completed, each group can present their backcasting poster to the rest of the group. Additional insights can be added to the plans, and synergies across plans can be found.

Figure by the authors, adapted from The Natural Step 2011

💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For early backcasting exercises, see Boulding and Russell 2000; • For applications of backcasting with rural stakeholders, see Sisto et al. 2018.

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A visual method used to synthesize key learnings from the workshop. This method can be used to revisit and reflect on the "Hopes & Intentions" () shared at the beginning.
🕐	**DURATION**	10 - 20 minutes
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Sticky notes of two different colours, up to five sticky notes per person per colour; • Markers; • Poster of A1 dimensions, divided into two parts: "Harvest" and "Contributions".

🔀	**FLOW**	• Provide each participant with the needed materials, and ask the following question:
		   – *What are your main takeaways from the workshop?*
		   – *In which ways do you feel you have contributed to the event?*
		• Remind everyone that each participant shall use one sticky note per thought (written in clear capital letters);
		• Allow a few minutes for participants to write down their answers. Once they are done, they can place the sticky notes on the poster;
		• Ask everyone to stand up and silently read others' sticky notes. Free comments or clarifying questions can follow.

💡	**INSPIRATION**	For harvesting methods and other techniques see R. Chambers. 2002.

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Method 11. **Postcard Promises**

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A ritualized way to bring the workshop to a close, allowing participants to collectively express gratitude and set intentions for the future. Postcards are sent to participants a few weeks later, serving as a reminder of the insights gained and commitments made during the session.
🕐	**DURATION**	10 - 20 minutes
🌿	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Nice postcards, possibly connected to the theme of the workshop or to the place; • Pens or markers; • Stamps for sending the postcards.

⤳	**FLOW**	• Gather participants in a circle and present a selection of postcards for them to freely choose from; Explain the rationale of the method and provide them with the following prompts:
		   "I am grateful for…
		   In the next few months, I want to… "
		• Encourage participants to be spontaneous and avoid overthinking. Remind them to write in the postcard their mailing address;
		• The method is most effective if everyone reads at least part of their postcards out loud.

💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For a similar application, see Re.imaginary method n. 29 "Learning & Commitment", p.59; • This method is also inspired by an activity run at the Transformations' conference 2017 in Dundee.

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In VERVE, we utilized Postcards generated by the local educational project **'Regenerate the Mountain' (Rigenera Montagna)**. These Postcards featured images of traditional regenerative practices, such as manual meadow mowing, practiced within the same area as the VERVE Lab. This project aimed to connect high school students with local elders who possess expertise in these traditional practices. Each Postcard included a QR code linking to a short story about the educational activity.

Pathway 4. Fostering Inclusive Rural-Mountain Futures from a Gender Perspective

GUIDING QUESTION	How can gender and feminist perspectives inform plural visions of the future of rural-mountain areas?
KEY OBJECTIVES	• Catalyze the energy of female change-makers committed to promoting social and ecological regeneration; • Provide a safe environment to voice womens' needs, aspirations, and challenges; • Gather visions of desirable futures that take into account a plurality of needs, especially of underrepresented groups (e.g. children, elderly, disabled, women victims of violence, non-humans). These special needs are directly linked to the interests and expertise of the participants involved; • Create an opportunity for connection and capacity-building.
VERVE'S CASE	**What**: a one and a half day workshop, for data collection and social change purposes. **Where**: Valbelluna, Belluno province, Italy. **Who**: 20 women operating in different sectors and areas of the province, including: gender advocacy, education, public administration, agriculture, nature wellbeing.

FLOW
1,5 DAYS

DAY 1

CONVENE
30 min

EXPLORE
150 min

HARVEST
30 min

1. CIRCLE OF INSPIRATION
Spark curiosity & connection through female changemakers' stories.

2.FROM REFLECTION TO CONNECTION WITH JOURNALING
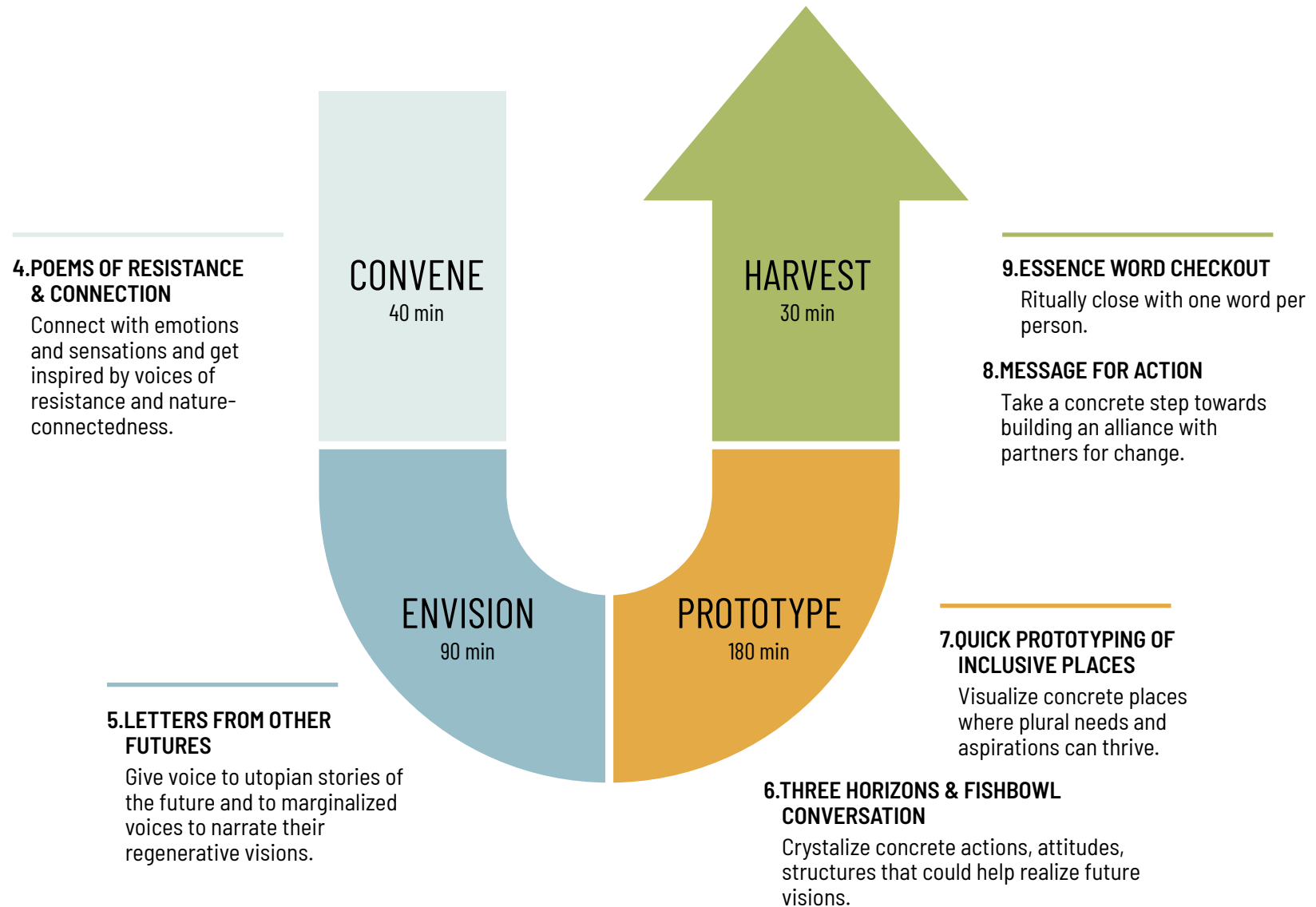Mobilize participants' explicit and tacit knowledge on complex issues, and create a safe space for sharing.

FORMATIVE PART & DISCUSSION
Provide key conceptual and empirical knowledge on the link between gender and regeneration.

3.INSPIRATIONAL CARDS
Invite lateral and intuitive thinking to crystalize key learnings from the session.

DAY 2

CONVENE
40 min

HARVEST
30 min

ENVISION
90 min

PROTOTYPE
180 min

4.POEMS OF RESISTANCE & CONNECTION

Connect with emotions and sensations and get inspired by voices of resistance and nature-connectedness.

5.LETTERS FROM OTHER FUTURES

Give voice to utopian stories of the future and to marginalized voices to narrate their regenerative visions.

9.ESSENCE WORD CHECKOUT

Ritually close with one word per person.

8.MESSAGE FOR ACTION

Take a concrete step towards building an alliance with partners for change.

7.QUICK PROTOTYPING OF INCLUSIVE PLACES

Visualize concrete places where plural needs and aspirations can thrive.

6.THREE HORIZONS & FISHBOWL CONVERSATION

Crystalize concrete actions, attitudes, structures that could help realize future visions.

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A way for participants to introduce themselves by sharing inspirational stories about women who have influenced their lives. This method highlights female changemakers, bringing attention to personal or public stories that are often overlooked, while revealing unique aspects of each participant. These stories spark curiosity, build empathy, and create a sense of connection and strength, reminding us of the strength and wisdom of those who came before us.
DURATION	30 - 40 minutes (depending on the number of participants, 2' per participant)
MATERIALS & SETUP	• Set up the room to be able to convene in a large enough circle where everyone can see others and to have an empty central space to position the objects.
FLOW	• A few days prior to the participatory event, request participants to bring a picture, a book, or an object that symbolizes a *female figure who inspires their commitment to the community and/or to the environment*; • During the event, invite participants to stand in a circle with their objects. Provide chairs for those who may need to sit; • Ask participants to introduce themselves and their inspirational figures and then to place their objects in the middle of the circle; • In order to set the tone and pace of the exercise, have one person from the facilitation team start; • Allow each person to share when ready, without following a particular order, in a "pop-corn" style; • Practice active listening during the sharing, and thank participants at the end.
INSPIRATION	• For a similar application, see Re.imaginary method n.1 "Circle of objects" and n.7 "Warm-up question"; • For female activism for social and ecological justice, see Shiva 1998.

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	This three-step method fosters the co-creation of knowledge by emphasizing lived experiences, personal reflection, and meaningful connection: (1) **Journaling**: Participants begin with individual introspection, using journaling to freely express their thoughts and ideas without fear of judgment. This step encourages personal clarity and unfiltered exploration. (2) **Small Group Sharing**: In small groups, participants share their reflections in a safe, supportive environment. This step strengthens bonds, deepens understanding, and creates a sense of community around shared and diverse perspectives. (3) **Plenary Discussion**: Finally, the group reconvenes in a plenary session to connect insights from individual and group reflections. This broader discussion ties together key ideas, offering a holistic perspective and fostering collective momentum on the topic.
	In VERVE, we used this method to explore the link between gender & socio-ecological regeneration in rural-mountain areas, prioritising participants' explicit and tacit knowledge, prior to providing data, facts, and scientific understandings on the topic.
DURATION	150 minutes
MATERIALS & SETUP	• Papers or notebooks. Before the event, notebooks can be placed on participants' chairs as a welcoming gift; • Pens and pencils; blue and red markers; sticky notes; poster of A0 dimensions; • A stopwatch, to keep track of time for each question; • (optional) A bell - a gentle chime to mark the transition between journaling prompts; • A flipchart or a ppt presentation that shows each journaling question (one question at the time). • For the set-up, make sure participants are sitting comfortably, better if in a circle, during the journaling phase, and the plenary discussion. During the small group sharing, the chairs can be turned around to create small clusters.

FLOW	• Remind participants of the rules of journaling:
	– *Write freely, letting your thoughts flow onto the page. Don't worry about punctuation or making sense. Just keep the pen moving. If you feel stuck, sketch or scribble, so that the pen stays on the page;*
	– *You have 4-5 minutes to respond to each question. When time is up, please put down your pen, even if you haven't finished writing.*
	• Read (and show) the first question, and allow 4-5 minutes for participants to answer. Then the second, and so on and so forth. Here are the questions we asked during VERVE's Lab:
	Drawing on your understanding and experience, if you were to consider socio-ecological regeneration from a gender and/or female perspective:
	    1. What words would you associate with it? What comes to mind?
	    2. How do you see it manifesting in concrete practices and actions?
	    3. How have you experienced regenerative practices first-hand in this area?
	    4. How would you envision socio-ecological regeneration in your ideal world?

FLOW

- When the time is up, ask participants to read their texts silently, and synthetize key insights, following these prompts:
  - *Use a red marker to circle the most important words in your writing;*
  - *Use a blue marker to circle the most surprising words in your writing.*
- After a few minutes, begin the sharing part. These instructions may help:
- Divide in groups of three or four. Each person takes turns sharing for five minutes while others actively listen. One person acts as a note-keeper, writing keywords on sticky notes. No interruptions or comments are allowed during the sharing time. Afterward, you may express gratitude.
- When group sharing is complete, gather the sticky notes and cluster them on a poster. This might take some time, so you may suggest to take a short break;
- Once the visual summary is complete, review the main themes and open the floor for plenary discussion. Possible prompts can be:
  - *What struck you about the conversations you had in small groups?*
  - *Do you think the journaling helped you gain insights and clarity around the link between gender and regeneration?*

INSPIRATION

- For journaling in Theory U, see: **https://www.u-school.org/journaling**;
- For the relation between gender and biocultural approaches, see Diaz-Reviriego et al. 2024.

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Method 3. **Inspirational Cards**

🎯	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	A ritual to bring the session to a close, helping participants crystalize important takeaways and share collective wisdom. The use of cards encourages lateral and intuitive thinking, moving beyond the limitations of logic-based reasoning, to uncover fresh and serendipitous insights.
🕐	**DURATION**	10 - 20 minutes
🍃	**MATERIALS & SETUP**	• Cards with creative images (e.g. from the board game Dixit or the card deck Moodboard); • Set up the room so that participants can stand in a circle and see each other.
⇄	**FLOW**	• Spread the cards on the ground or on a table, in the middle of the participants' circle and ask: *What is one valuable lesson or inspiring thought that you take with you from today's experience? Use one card to spark your reflection. Share your insights in one word or short sentence.* • Invite participants, one by one, to select a card, show it to the group, and share their insights in a single word or short sentence; • The rest of the group practices active listening as each person shares. At the end, thank everyone for sharing.
💡	**INSPIRATION**	• For a similar application, see Method "Online harvest with Dixit cards", Re.imaginary toolkit, online version; • Dixit cards: **https://www.libellud.com/en/our-games/dixit/** • Moodboard cards: **https://kaleidosgames.com/en/moodboard-eng/**

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A way to connect with one's inner world through the emotional, experiential, and sensory narratives expressed in selected poems. In VERVE, these poems focus on themes of social justice, ecological awareness, self-determination, all shared from women's perspectives. They celebrate the voices of diverse women, across cultures and time who used poetry as a means for self-discovery and social change.	

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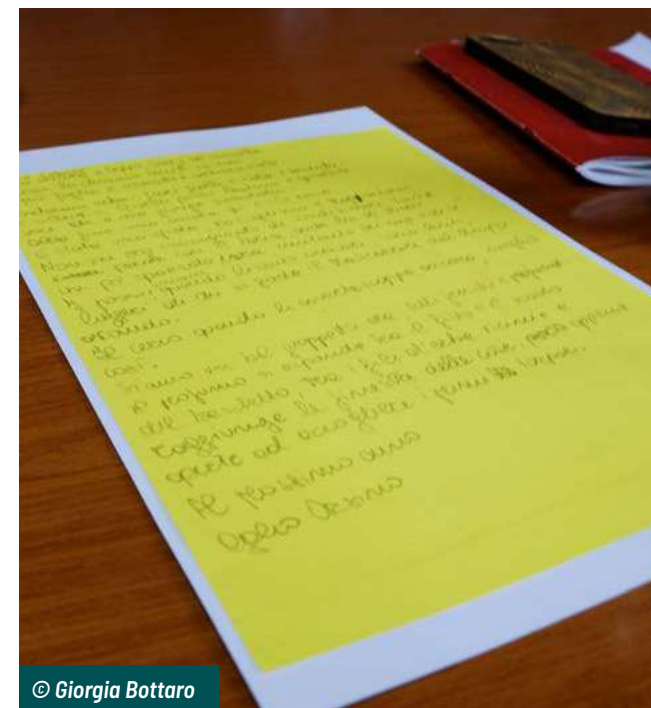|	
DURATION	30 - 40 minutes (can vary depending on the number of participants)
MATERIALS & SETUP	• Poems printed in individual sheets, rolled up with a string. The text should be written in a language accessible to all participants; • A poster of A1 dimensions positioned on the ground, in the middle of the participants' circle; • Strings of paper of dimensions 7x50 cm; • Coloured small pieces of papers or hexagon-shaped sticky notes; • Markers.

FLOW	• Before the participatory event, print 10 to 20 inspirational poems written by female authors (at least one for each participant);
	• Roll up the poems, and place them on the ground, so that participants can pick a poem in a random fashion;
	• Provide participants with the following prompts;
	  – *Randomly pick a poem, roll it open, and read it silently;*
	  – *Choose a verse and write it in the paper provided;*
	  – *Write down one emotion and one sensation connected to the poem in the coloured sticky notes;*
	• One by one, participants say their name and the name of the poem. As they read what they wrote, they place all of the papers on the common poster on the ground;
	• After a complete round of sharing, thank participants, and ask if anyone wishes to add anything or comment on how they felt through the activity;
	• In order to avoid bias, during the VERVE Labs, we didn't reveal the authors' names until after the sharing sessions.

INSPIRATION	• This method is inspired by the work of Fern Smith (**http://www.emergence-uk.org/**) and Susanne Moser (**http://www.susannemoser.com/**); • For women's poetry as feminism activism see LaFollette K. 2018.

In VERVE, we selected a number of poems from Italian and foreign authors, making sure a decolonial perspective was included. All poems were translated into Italian.

Here is the list of poems and authors we drew from: "Sleeping in the forest" and "Wild geese" by Mary Oliver; "Praise the rain" and "There was a time" by Joy Harjo; "Bloom -is result" by Emily Dickinson; "Still I rise" by Maya Angelou; "Grandmas and bees" by Hollie McNish; "Mollerò gli ormeggi" by Virginia Woolf; "Fluvial" by Helen Moore; "I charge thee, flower" by Clarissa Munger Badger; "Achiltibuie" by Nan Sheperd; "I am vertical" by Sylvia Plath; "Io scientificamente mi domando" by Patrizia Cavalli; "Prati" and "Precoce autunno" by Antonia Pozzi; "Ma lo sentite il dolore profondo dell'umanità" by Rahma Nur; "Conchiglia" and "Vento" and "Erbette del marciapiede" by Alessandra Berardi Arrigoni; "In attesa" and "Il seme" by Mariangela Gualtieri; "Dunque c'è la luce" and "Pane del bosco" by Chandra Livia Candiani.

Method 5. **Letters from Other Futures**

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

DURATION

MATERIALS & SETUP

FLOW

(SEE METHOD 6, PATHWAY 3 FOR FULL DESCRIPTION)

In VERVE, we used this method with minor variations than the version in Pathway 3.

- We pre-selected cards featuring various ecosystems and landscape elements that were recognizable and relatable to participants. Similarly, we chose human figures that aligned with the specific interests and commitments of the women involved in the Lab;
- We did not focus on a given place in the territory, but asked participants to imagine the future of a place they know personally, possibly within the area of Valbelluna, i.e. where the workshop took place.


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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

DURATION

MATERIALS & SETUP

FLOW

(SEE METHOD 3, PATHWAY 2 FOR FULL DESCRIPTION)

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During VERVE's Visioning Lab with women, the Three Horizons framework was initially populated by the research team using insights from participant's contributions during the "Journaling" activity on the first day. Participants then used the Fishbowl technique to enrich and refine these ideas, comparing perspectives and identifying areas of consensus. This process not only highlighted the different visions of the future but also uncovered shared themes and priorities, setting the stage for the Lab's final phase.

In this version, after introducing the Three Horizons framework and Fishbowl discussion rules, the research team presented a summary of themes previously gathered and mapped onto the Three Horizons. Participants were invited to validate or challenge this summary. The following guiding questions were then posed:

Thinking of a regenerative future for your rural-mountain area, that recognizes plural needs and aspirations, and that takes into account both social and ecological justice:

1. *What characteristics should the future systems have? You may think of the following dimensions (at both individual and collective levels):*
   - *structural conditions & interventions (e.g. laws, regulations, etc.)*
   - *concrete practices*
   - *discourses and narratives*
   - *ways of doing*
   - *ways of thinking and belief systems*
2. *What should be left behind from the current systems? What characteristics, now prevailing, are hindering change?*
3. *What personal strategies do you implement today, in your everyday life, to move towards your desired future?*

The discussion naturally evolved from these prompts.

Throughout the exercise, from time to time it is helpful to remind participants to stay grounded in the specific context of the territory and the topic at hand, avoiding overly abstract or generic statements (e.g., "we need to stop gender discrimination in workplaces"). Additionally, gently encouraging participants to include ecological aspects in their reflections can help balance discussions, as the focus tends to remain in the social dimensions.

Method 7. **Quick Prototyping of Inclusive Places**

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A method to visually imagine and build a small-scale prototype of the physical features of a future place that accommodates the needs and aspirations of diverse groups, both human and non-human. By using materials that encourage creative expression and intuitive thinking, this approach taps into the "silent knowledge" held in our hands. When engaged, this hands-on process can lead to unexpected and meaningful insights.
DURATION	60 - 90 minutes
MATERIALS & SETUP	• Pre-cut images for collage, from different types of magazines (e.g. art, food, culture, politics, etc.); • Clay/play dough (we suggest DIY, with a simple recipe of "salt dough". For 2-3 people, ingredients and proportions are: 1 cup of fine salt, 2 cups of all purpose flour, 1 cup of lukewarm water. You can adjust the quantities based on the number of participants); • Materials of different shapes (possibly natural, and not plastic-made, but make sure not to destroy wild flora): little stones, beans, pasta pieces, yarn, strings, buttons, pipe cleaners; • Large papers (e.g. A1 posters) or cardboards for the base of the prototype; • Organize the materials neatly in small boxes, so that they can be easy to access and aesthetically inspiring.
FLOW	• Explain the purpose of the exercise and ask a few volunteers to name an existing or archetypical place they would like to reimagine for the future; • Form groups around the proposed ideas, letting participants choose the group/idea they feel most excited to contribute to. Make sure there are at least two and maximum five people per group; • During VERVE's Lab the following prompt was given: *"Think of a place you care about that isn't currently inclusive of different human needs or ecological perspectives. Imagine how it could be improved to meet diverse needs and aspirations, and create a quick prototype of your vision where everyone and nature can thrive."* • Encourage all group members to start creating as they discuss their project, allowing insights and intuition to emerge through the hands, rather than relying solely on rational thinking; • Provide at least 45 minutes for group work. Towards the end of the time, ask people to give a concise title to their prototype; • Place the prototypes in the centre of the space so that everyone can see them; • Convene around the prototype and allow a few minutes per group to describe their creations; • If time allows, invite participants to share their insights and perspectives on others' prototypes.
INSPIRATION	• For a similar application, see Re.imaginary methods n. 19 "Maquette" and n.18 "Collage".

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Method 8. **Message for Action**

PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A tangible way to encourage participants to take action is by inviting them to reach out to a specific person or group with whom they want to collaborate toward shared visions. This is done by writing a personalized message on a card, expressing their intention to connect and work together. Writing the message serves as both a practical step and a symbolic gesture, allowing participants to articulate their intentions and commit to fostering collaboration. This method is inspired by transformative learning theory, which emphasizes reflection and action. By externalizing thoughts into a written form, participants move closer to acting on their intentions.	

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DURATION	10 - 15 minutes
MATERIALS & SETUP	• Nice cards and envelopes (it is a nice touch if they are decorated with nature motifs and/or made of recycled or eco-labelled paper); • Pens; extra papers for drafts; • Instructions on a flipchart or screen.

FLOW	• Explain the purpose of the exercise and hand out the materials;
	• Provide the following prompts:
	  – *Is there something concrete you could do, as of today, to realize an aspect of your vision for the future?*
	  – *Is there someone or some group that could help you achieve this?*
	  – *Write a message to this person or group, explaining your intention and including a specific "ask".*
	  – *Take the card with you and give it or send it to this person in the next few days.*

INSPIRATION	• For transformative learning theory, see Mezirow 1997.

- PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION
- DURATION
- MATERIALS & SETUP
- FLOW
- INSPIRATION

(SEE METHOD 4, PATHWAY 2 FOR FULL DESCRIPTION)

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Pathway 5. Learning from Nature: Human and Non-Human Visions for Healthy Socio-Ecological Systems

GUIDING QUESTION	**How can we learn from the wisdom of the forest and other rural-mountain ecosystems to understand and deepen the interrelated dimensions of socio-ecological health?**
KEY OBJECTIVES	• Translate abstract concepts (e.g. interdependence between humans and non-humans, socio-ecological wellbeing, regeneration) into felt experiences; • Give voice to non-humans and their perceptions of a specific ecosystem; • Foster empathy and compassion for other species; • Increase awareness of rural-mountain areas complexity and fragility; • Improve communication and trust.
VERVE'S CASE	**What**: a creative workshop open to the public, following a scientific seminar, held during the 2nd edition of the Festival "Cansiglio InVita" (Sept. 2024); **Where**: Cansiglio Forest, Belluno province, Italy; **Who**: 20 people, including ca. 10 invited experts (speakers of the seminar), and ca.10 people from the audience, who joined voluntarily.

FLOW

180 MINUTES (INCL. 10 MIN BUFFER)

INTRO
Explain the history of the technique and the objectives of the dialogue.

CONVENE
10 min

HARVEST
40 min

4. DISTILLING INSIGHTS
Harvest key learnings from the experience.

CONNECT
30 min

ENVISION
90 min

1. GUIDED MINDFULNESS
Invite people to connect to a human or non-human archetype, engaging the senses and the imagination.

2. ASSEMBLY OF LIVING BEINGS & LIFE SYSTEMS
Give voice to people's perceptions in their "new being"; explore their needs and visions for the future wellbeing of their species and of the ecosystem.

	PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION	A method to re-establish a connection with one's inner wisdom and physical self, while embodying a human or non-human character. The prompts encourage participants to experience sensations and movements as their chosen character, facilitating a deeper immersion into the impersonation process.

The character is chosen from the "**VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards**" set (see the next method).

	DURATION	20 - 30 minutes

	MATERIALS & SETUP	

- Download and print the VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards (Supplementary Materials n. 3 of this Toolkit). Attach a woollen thread to each, so that people can wear them around their neck;
- Arrange the cards neatly on the ground, so that everyone can see them;
- Based on the number of participants and the focus of the session, you can make an a-priori selection of the cards. In VERVE, for instance, we only provided four cards representing human beings, to invite participants to mostly take the perspective of non-human animals or elements;
- Organize the chairs into a circle, making sure everyone can see each other and feel safe and comfortable. If the surrounding environment (and weather) are suitable for a mindfulness practice, consider conducting this exercise outdoors;
- (optional) A bell - a gentle chime to mark the end of the mindfulness moment;

	FLOW	

To guide the mindfulness activity, you can follow these steps and prompts:

1. Exploring the Cards (Preparation Phase - 5 min): "*Explore the archetype cards without choosing one. Take your time, allowing curiosity and intuition to guide your observations*";
2. Selecting and Displaying an Archetype: "*Choose a card that resonates with you. Hang the card around your neck (with the woollen thread), so that everyone can see the archetypes selected*";
3. Embodying the Archetype: "*Take a comfortable position-sitting or standing as you prefer. Adjust your posture, stretch, or move your body to feel at ease. Take deep belly breaths, inflating your abdomen like a balloon, and close your eyes when ready*".

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FLOW

"Focus on the sensations of your new being":

- Start with the surface of the body: *"What is the surface of your body like? Are you warm or cold?*
- *Explore the physical structure: "Do you have a skeleton? How big are you? Are you wider than you are tall?"*
- Shift attention to the environment: *"Where are you? Are you on the ground, underground, floating, or flying?"*
- Reflect on sensory perception: *"What kind of sensory organs do you have? How do you perceive the world-through hearing, seeing, smelling, or feeling? Which sense is most important to you? What sounds do you hear, if any?"*
- Engaging with the Environment and Others: *"What features of your surroundings are most relevant? What other beings or objects are taller or smaller than you?" Who are your neighbors or co-inhabitants? Do you live within another being, or does another live within you? Who are your allies, friends, or enemies? What concerns or scares you about others around you? Who might you form an alliance with?"*
- Movement and Sound: *"As you breathe deeply, begin to feel your body's shape and how it moves in its ideal environment. Let your body move naturally-wriggling, curling, stretching, or turning toward the sun. Move around the space in a way that feels true to your being. Use your imagination if needed. What sounds does your body make? Explore any vocalizations or movements that feel authentic to your archetype".*
- Returning to Stillness: *"Come back to stillness and silence. Take a few final deep breaths, reconnecting with your physical body. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes".*

By the end of this activity, participants will have embodied their chosen archetype, gaining insights into their new "being" and its relationship to the surrounding environment and other beings.

INSPIRATION

- For a similar application, see the Method "More than human live action roleplay", from the Collective imagination practices Toolkit: **https://www.collectiveimagination.tools/**
- For mindfulness in nature, see Cornell 2014.

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PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION

This method encourages participants to move beyond anthropocentric perspectives by fostering empathy and compassion for all living beings as well as non living natural elements. It inspires a deeper appreciation of other species (and individual members within them) and components of ecosystems such as soil and water, their contributions to ecosystem health, and the challenges they face due to human activity. Through embodied and playful learning, the method helps participants navigate complexity, fostering a more personal understanding of the reciprocal interconnectedness between animal, environmental, and human well-being.

Additionally, it supports building trust, enhancing communication, and strengthening a sense of community among participants. By leveling power dynamics and co-creating knowledge in a democratic and inclusive way, the method creates a space for meaningful collaboration.

The method is inspired by the Council of All Beings, designed by Joanna Macy and John Seed.

The process is guided by "**VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards**"-a set of 24 cards, created ad-hoc, featuring eight humans, eight animals, and eight environmental elements typical of rural-mountain ecosystems. Each card combines scientific accuracy with engaging storytelling, highlighting the unique contributions of these beings and elements to socio-ecological health and resilience.

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DURATION

60 - 90 minutes

MATERIALS & SETUP

- Write prompts for the two rounds clearly on a projected monitor or on a big poster;
- Maintain the set-up of the previous method, with chairs organized in a semicircle so that everyone can see each other;
- As a facilitator, position yourself in front of the semicircle, maintaining a grounded and attentive presence to guide the participants. Use your body language and movement to moderate the conversation subtly - move closer to someone who is overly talkative to gently signal balance, encourage eye contact and gestures to invite quieter participants to share. Let your body intelligence communicate without speaking, creating an inclusive and dynamic atmosphere.

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FLOW

- Explain participants that the dialogue is ready to start, with them speaking and acting from the perspective of the new being;
- Remind participants the basic rules of active listening (see section 2 of this Toolkit for suggestions);
- Introduce the first round of discussion, asking each character to briefly introduce their new being, following these prompts:
  - *Who are you? What does the world look like from the perspective of your being?*
  - *Is there an important issue for the species or environmental element you embody that you wish to bring to the attention of this assembly?*
- After everyone has introduced themselves, start another round of discussion, using this prompt:
  - *What can this assembly concretely do to sustain your wellbeing?*
- The conversation can last for about an hour;
- Invite everyone to ritually end the session, by asking participants to close their eyes and return to their normal selves.

INSPIRATION

- For a theoretical explanation of the Council of All Beings, see Seed and Macy 1988;
- For practical insights about the Council of All Beings, see Work that reconnects: **https://workthatreconnects.org/**;
- For similar applications, see Method n.15, p.38 "Inviting non-human stakeholders" and Method n.20, p. 45 "More-than-human intervision", from the Re.imaginary Toolkit;
- See also The Council of Care by de la Rosa and Ressiore Campodorio 2024.

|	**PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION**	Harvest the most relevant and interesting things people learned from the Assembly of Living Beings and Life Systems. Assess the effectiveness of the dialogue through a qualitative and collective discussion.
	DURATION	30 - 40 minutes
	MATERIALS & SETUP	• Keep the same setting as for the dialogue, with the participants sitting in a semicircle; • You can invite individuals who observed the dialogue, even if they did not actively participate, to join the circle. Their perspectives as listeners can provide valuable insights. Facilitators and team members are also welcome to sit in the circle.

	FLOW	• Provide the following prompts to encourage open discussion, ensuring that no single voice dominates while giving everyone the opportunity to share their thoughts:
		  - *How was the experience for you?*
		  - *How did you feel during the exercise?*
		  - *How challenging or easy was it to embody the character you chose?*
		  - *What new insights emerged as the character you embodied?*
		  - *What surprised you the most?*
		  - *What additional understanding did you gain about the interconnectedness of humans, non-human beings, and other elements of the ecosystem?*
		• Conclude by thanking everyone for sharing their perspectives.

	INSPIRATION	• This method is inspired by The Council of Care by Gabriela de la Rosa and Adriana Ressiore Campodorio: **https://www.geos-project.org/projects/the-council-of-care**

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Supplementary Materials

VERVE Rural Conversation Starters

DOWNLOAD
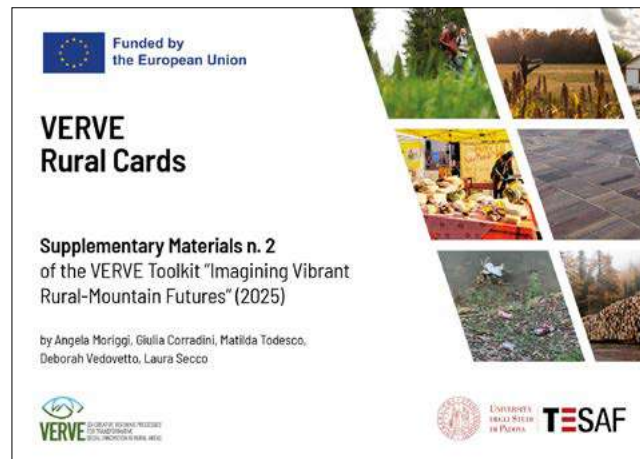
VERVE Rural Cards

DOWNLOAD
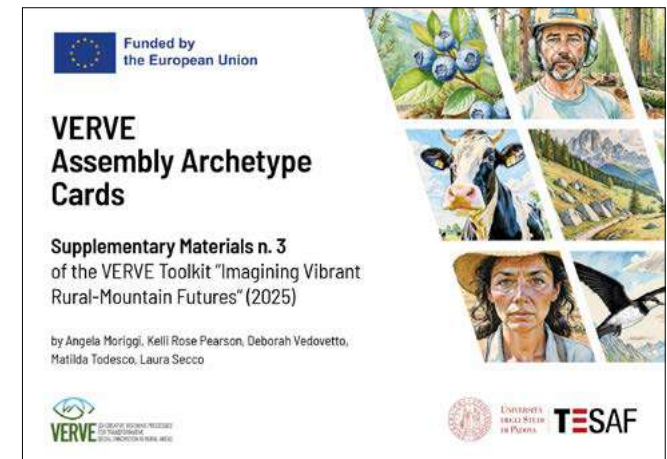
VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards

DOWNLOAD

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SECTION 5 - BIOGRAPHIES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Laura (PhD in Land Use and Economics, MSc in Forest Sciences) is an Associate Professor at TESAF Dept., and Vice-Coordinator of the LERH Doctoral School at the University of Padova. Her research focuses on forest policy, social innovation, participatory approaches, human-nature relations, and forest-based care. She contributed to numerous research projects (e.g., SIMRA, RESONATE, OptFORESTS, Green4C), and is a co-founder of the spin-off Etifor srl. Laura (co-)authored over 220 publications and is Assistant Editor of the peer-reviewed journal Conservation Letters. She has developed several online courses, including two MOOCs on Social Innovation in Rural Areas and Gender Equality in Forestry. Prior to joining academia, Laura worked as a forest certification consultant for 10 years, co-founding FSC-Italy. Recently, she has also become a certified Forest Bathing Guide.

Angela Moriggi

Angela is a social scientist working for transdisciplinary sustainability projects since 2013, with a particular focus on social innovation and change in rural-mountain areas. She is Principal Investigator of the Marie Curie Project VERVE at the Dept. of Land, Environment, Agriculture, and Forestry (TESAF) of the University of Padova. The red thread in her work is the design, use, and evaluation of participatory and co-creative methods and facilitation approaches. She is co-founder of Re.imaginary, an online database of creative methods and co-author of the children book 'Once Upon the Future: Everyday Adventures that Change the World'. She obtained her PhD from Wageningen University, with a study on Green Care practices in Finland.

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Epaminondas Christophilopoulos

Epaminondas is the chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Futures Research, hosted at FORTH and executive President of MOMus Museums. He is an Onassis Foundation Fellow and holds a PhD in Strategic Foresight, while his academic profile also includes studies in Physics (BSc), Environment (MSc) and International Relations. He has been working in the field of futures research since 2010, designing and implementing a variety of projects while he has served as the Chief Scientific Officer for Foresight in the Prime Minister's Office. He is planning committee member of the Millennium Project and member of ESIR, a high-level expert group that provides evidence-based policy advice to the European Commission on how to develop a forward-looking and transformative research and innovation policy.

Kelli Rose Pearson

Kelli is co-founder of the Re.imaginary Group which supports sustainability leadership through creative methods, storytelling, communication, facilitation, and stakeholder engagement. She also works as the Director of Sustainability for the Economic Transformations Group (ETG), a regional development consultancy. She has experience supporting sustainable food systems, urban development planning, sustainable regional tourism initiatives, and green supply chain management. She has created an open source online course "Ambiguous Utopias" on the role of speculative methods for imagining positive futures. Finally, she is a science-based fiction author focusing on "re-story-ing" our imaginations with visions for a regenerative future. Her collaborative project for middle graders, Once Upon the Future: Everyday Adventures that Change the World, combines sustainability science with magical realism and provides supporting materials for educators.

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOS

Riccardo Da Re

Riccardo is the Good Vibe, Facilitation & Culture Manager of Etifor srl, a spin-off of the University of Padua, for which he mainly deals with Stakeholder engagement in participatory processes on several Italian and European projects. Graduated in Statistical, Demographic and Social Sciences, he holds a PhD in Management Engineering and Estimate in Territorial Economics, and a Master in Facilitation.

His contribution to this Toolkit: Riccardo contributed to the design of several VERVE Labs, particularly relevant to Pathway 1, 3, and 4. He also served as a co-facilitator for the VERVE Visioning Lab in Seren del Grappa.

Giulia Corradini

Giulia Corradini is a Post-Doctoral Researcher at TESAF Dept., University of Padova. She is also a forestry consultant, specializing in rural development and ecosystem services. She has experience in project management and course development. Alongside her research, Giulia is a passionate photographer, and organizes photographic workshops and seminars. She holds a PhD in Forest Policy and Economics and an MSc in Forest and Environmental Sciences.

Her contribution to the toolkit: Giulia co-created the VERVE Rural Cards, capturing most of the images for the collection. She also contributed to the VERVE Photovoice Labs, bringing her expertise in photography and natural resource management (relevant to Pathway 1 and to the Rural Conversation Starters).

Matilda Todesco

Matilda is a Research Fellow at the TESAF Dept., holding a Master's degree in Forestry and Environmental Science from the University of Padova. She is currently involved in the AGRITECH project, funded by NextGenerationEU, where she is developing and implementing protocols for assessing ecosystem services associated with agronomic and forest management practices.

Her contribution to the Toolkit: Matilda co-created the images of VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards, curated the graphic design and editing of the VERVE Rural Cards and of the VERVE Rural Conversation Starters.

Deborah Vedovetto

Deborah is a Master's student in Forest conservation and governance and Research Fellow at TESAF Dept., University of Padova. She is actively involved in the European project RESONATE, specifically contributing to the development of a Resilience Hub in Padova city to foster cooperation among stakeholders in the urban green care sector.

Her contribution to this Toolkit: Deborah co-created the texts of VERVE Assembly Archetype Cards and supported the editing of the other Supplementary Materials.

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Maria Tengö is a principal researcher in Sustainability Science at the Stockholm Resilience Centre and holds the Nature College Special Chair in Human–Nature Relationships in the Anthropocene at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, Wageningen University and Research (WUR) in the Netherlands. She is also a senior advisor at SwedBio. Maria's work focuses on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems using a social-ecological systems approach.

Her contribution to the Toolkit: Maria provided feedback during the ideation phase of the VERVE Visioning Labs, particularly regarding Pathway 3, and the overall structure and rationale of the Toolkit.

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