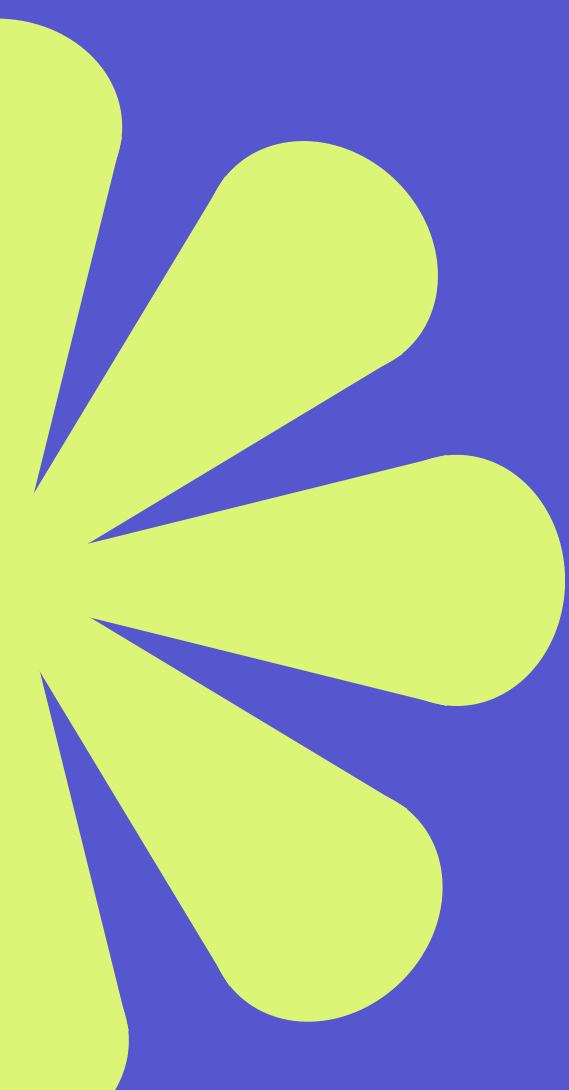
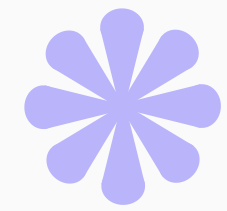


***The Solution Tool: A Participatory
Framework for Collective Action***



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Introduction & Purpose

The Solution Tool is a **practical and participatory instrument designed to turn a shared problem into concrete and context-sensitive responses**. It aims to support groups, schools, NGOs, and youth spaces in moving from reflection to action, helping participants co-create realistic pathways toward change at both individual and collective levels.

It can be used as a **standalone tool or in combination with the Consultation Tool**, with which it shares a common

participatory and youth-centered approach.

The tool follows a hybrid methodology that combines structured inquiry with participatory, non-formal learning methods. It promotes evidence-informed, action-oriented, and care-centered processes that emphasize collective reflection, cooperation, and creativity. Rather than offering policy prescriptions, the Solution Tool focuses on developing feasible, locally grounded next steps.

Inspired by the **Japanese concept of Ikigai** — the convergence of what we love, what we're good at, what the world needs, and what can sustain us

— we developed a tool to move from personal purpose to collective problem-solving, particularly in the context of climate and gender justice. The Solution Tool keeps the symbolic structure of a cross with four quadrants, just like the Ikigai map, but shifts the center from personal purpose to a shared problem identified by the group. Around this core issue, participants reflect and act through four entry points:

- **Find Out More** – Deepen understanding through data, prior knowledge, and different scales.
- **Act Directly** – Identify feasible individual or collective actions.
- **Understand** via Peer Cooperation – Co-create creative or emotional responses through mutual support.

- **Transform** – Reconnect with personal skills, local initiatives, and the power of bottom-up change.

This tool invites participants to **translate care into action**, weaving together the reflective nature of *Ikigai* with the urgency of concrete responses to social and ecological crises.

Designed to be **modular and adaptable**, the Solution Tool can be applied in long-term educational programs or short, intensive sessions —both in-person and online. Its simple, inclusive, and gender-neutral language allows for easy translation and use across different cultural and

national contexts.

Through this framework, the Solution Tool fosters essential **21st-century skills** such as critical thinking, collaboration, agency, creativity, and the ability to manage uncertainty. It supports young people and facilitators in developing not only concrete responses to social or environmental challenges but also the resilience and confidence needed to act meaningfully within complex realities.

Method overview

Methodological Approaches

For groups following a program or studies over one or more semesters, this manual can serve as a methodological plan for long-term work. Each of the four sections can be addressed over several weeks and be the subject of serious collaborative work.

The objective in this case is not only to familiarize the groups with the types of responses that can be developed to an identified problem,

but also to learn how to coordinate and find solutions or modes of collective action on a local, yet relevant, scale. Groups of students, members of an association, a youth center, etc., are the most appropriate recipients of this collective work; whether they are coordinated by a facilitator or, conversely, brought together independently among peers. For ad hoc groups whose members are not in regular contact, a two-hour workshop can provide an opportunity to explore various possible courses of action and select one for further study and discussion. In this case, depending on the problem at hand and the participants' profiles, the facilitator may orient the workshop toward a more theoretical session or

an artistic and creative one.

Finally, this program can be used for individual activities: most of the activities can be carried out independently, and some of them offer opportunities to identify contacts or organizations to join collective actions.

Find out more

This section is primarily based on documentary research and analysis of the results of this research. At the very beginning of the workshop, the first step is to clearly formulate the central problem around which the entire discussion will be structured, as well as the types of answers we hope to obtain by the end of the workshop.

It is important to list the fields and disciplines concerned and determine which one(s) will be explored.

Gathering keywords and concepts related to the central problem allows us to better determine the scope of the documentary research.

Then, depending on the time available and the number of participants, databases, articles, specialized works, scientific works, etc. can be explored by sharing the areas and questions to be addressed.

By bringing together the results of this research and prior knowledge, participants can prepare "mind maps", trees or other graphic forms, and/or prepare maps or post- they to organize to reflect together and

structure the assembled elements.

Since the data collected is very numerous, they can also proceed using the "think-pair-share" technique.

This step is therefore based on the collaborative learning method, where participants create content together and where the facilitator has more of a coordinator's role.

Act directly

In this section, participants are invited to identify ways to act to move toward some sort of solution to the central problem. The chosen actions can be implemented on several levels: individual or collective, personal or professional. The advantage of experiential learning is that the

It theoretical data and information gathered in the previous section can be directly put into practice, and the learning takes place informally.

This allows participants to mobilize a number of relational and social skills that young people are not accustomed to exploring in a school or everyday context. This type of experiential learning can also be useful in professional endeavors, as it allows them to reconcile various constraints, act according to their values, build knowledge networks, and gain self-confidence.

Transform

“Transform” is the section that relies

most heavily on the "project-based learning" methodology.

This section will be most useful if concrete or direct solutions do not exist for the central problem, or if solutions on an individual or local scale cannot be easily implemented. In this case, participants are required to formulate new objectives and find areas of action that are sometimes far removed from those of the initial problem. Unlike the previous stages, where participants worked around a given problem, here, it is up to them to develop a new problem (or reformulate the original) and find some form of solution or response, possibly a creative one. In this configuration, the facilitator must

ensure that participants contribute equally, or that everyone finds a complementary approach to ensure balanced group work.

creating mind maps.

Understand

This section indirectly prepares participants to practice resilience and autonomy. Through the ideas conveyed, participants can mobilize the "bigger picture mindset," the ability to understand broader contexts, remain active and effective, and manage uncertainties. This section emphasizes informal, discussion-based learning. To better structure the session, activities promoting collective brainstorming can be proposed, as well as visualization methods, such as

The template

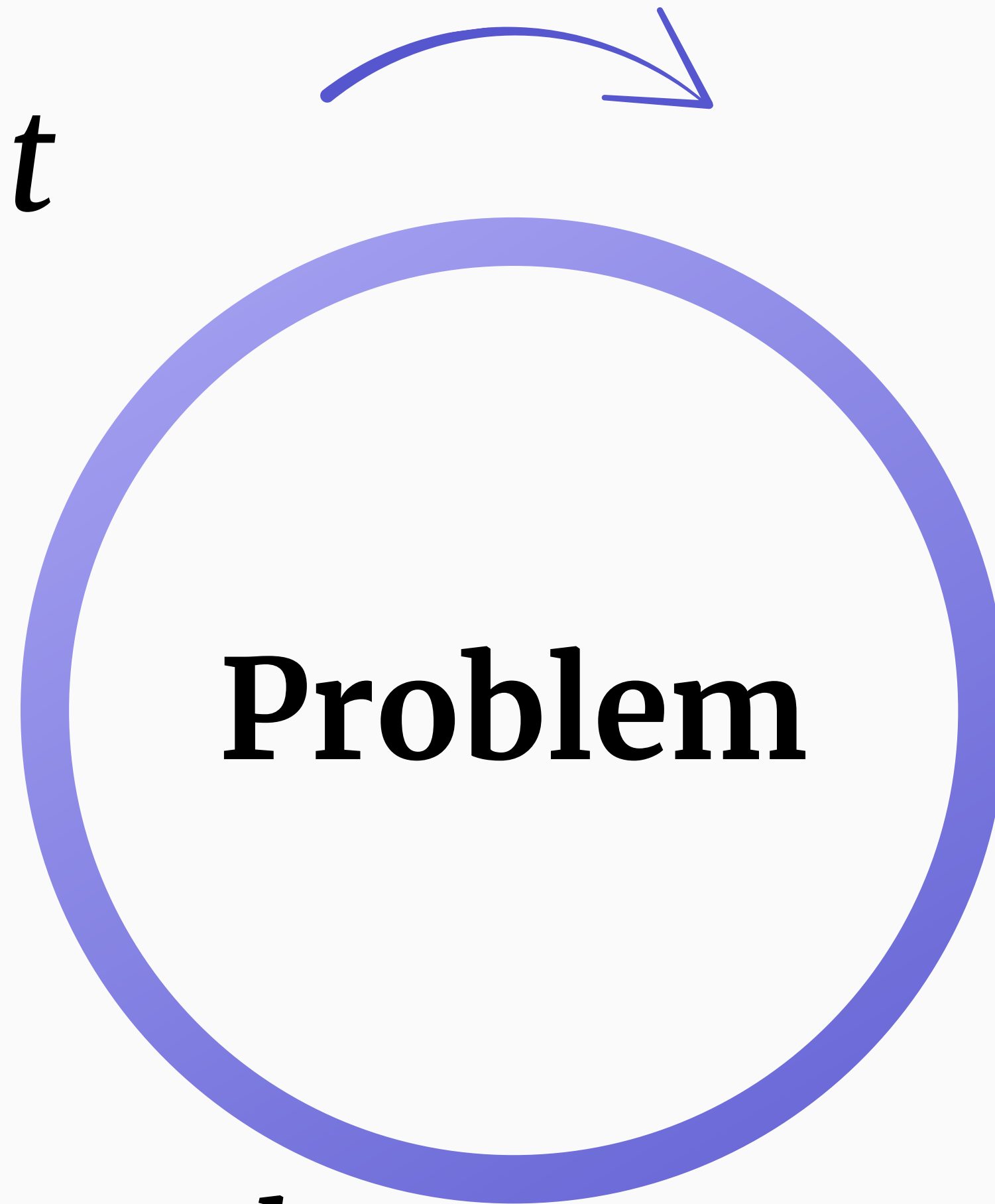
*find out
more*

*act
directly*

Problem

understand

transform



Find out more

- 1 Acquire information and rely on scientific, official and objective data**
Using reliable data, statistics and calculators is an essential starting point for developing a good strategy.
- 2 Compare and seek inspiration from existing solutions in other regions or fields**
Even if direct importation of ideas and approaches is not generally feasible, it is important to be able to draw on a set of examples and best practices that have already proved their worth.
- 3 Identify experts and reference institutions in the field**
Even if our approach is essentially citizen-based and local, using innovations and scientific results allows us to move faster and consolidate our position.
- 4 Examining the issue at different scales**
What is a global solution may not work locally, and vice versa – understanding the individual, collective and global scales helps us to choose the most appropriate response.

Act directly

- 1 Join an existing movement, association or community**
If you want to take action, there are a wide variety of forms of activism, such as joining an existing movement, taking symbolic action, boycotting a product, etc.
- 2 Initiate an individual or collective action**
- 3 Make one-off or long-term interventions**
- 4 Make a change, even a small one, in your daily practice.**

Transform

- 1 Seek to alleviate negative feelings through action**
Anxiety, loss of motivation and guilt are feelings often evoked in relation to climate-related issues, and it's not easy to find a direct solution or remove the cause of these feelings. In such cases, transforming negative feelings into an action that indirectly addresses the cause can help alleviate them.
- 2 Invent creative solutions, such as activism**
You don't have to be an artist to come up with a creative or artistically inspired response to a real problem.
- 3 Transfer the action to an area where impact and improvement are possible.**
When it is not possible to act directly (either because the cause of the malaise is too vast or diffuse, or because it is impossible to provide any solution on an individual scale), transposing the desire to act or the search for a solution to a neighbouring area can be a way of mitigating the negative impacts of the original problem.
- 4 Seek out interlocutors who share the same goals and values**
- 5 Seek out a specialist ear if necessary.**

Understand

- 1 The legitimacy and importance of bottom-up initiatives**
Understand that local and individual initiatives can be particularly effective, and that they need to be maintained at this level to ensure their longevity and usefulness.
- 2 The attitude of taking local actions rather than waiting for global solutions**
See notion “partner State”
- 3 Not being able to measure the short-term impact of our actions**
Accept the idea that we need to take a series of measures whose long-term impact is impossible to predict or evaluate, but which are likely to contribute to a positive outcome.

Preparing a session

The solution tool can be used as its own or combined with the consultation tool.

Selecting the topic

Using the solution tool as its own can be based on preselected themes or participants can be invited to select a theme from some options. Selecting can be done by voting or through discussion in groups. Depending on the total number of participants each group can have the same or different thematics and they can switch the

discussion to the next theme approximately after 45 minutes. The timing and depth of the activity can be adjusted to suit different needs, whether conducted in-person or online.

Combining the solution tool with the consultation tool connects and continues the discussion with young people from the climate concerns they have raised themselves or their wishes to deepen their own role to ideas for resolving these issues.

Working together

The solution tool works in groups (suggestion 2-5 people) or individually if the dialogue is guided by the facilitator and note taker. The questions are organised in four

categories around the selected thematics. However, rather than strictly following the order of each question the facilitator can guide discussion based on the comments of the participants. Parallel switching between different thematics is not suggested but themes can be discussed one by one.

A3 paper and post-it notes or similar can be used in taking notes. The solution tool is also adaptable to an online form where the facilitator can document discussion. Participants can also add notes themselves and in larger groups this is even advised.

The facilitator fosters a sense of teamwork among participants,

promoting cooperation and collective problem-solving. This helps the group identify common goals and work together to achieve them. The facilitator can adapt with the group dynamics and specific needs of the participants.

Using the solution tool

The participants can explore four main areas. First, in the "Find out more" quadrant, they can consider questions such as what they already know, which data or examples should be checked, and what changes are occurring on local, regional, or global scales.

In the "Act directly" quadrant, they can discuss which actions can be

initiated this week, identify who is already active in their community, and consider which everyday practices could be changed.

The "Transform via peer cooperation" quadrant encourages participants to think about who they can team up with, what small collective or creative actions they could try, and how they can support each other in their efforts.

Lastly, in the "Understand" quadrant, participants can reflect on what skills or interests they bring to the table, what skills they need to develop next, and how they can ensure they remain resourced over time.

The facilitator keeps track of time to

ensure that the agenda is followed and that all topics are covered within the allotted timeframe. They may adjust the pace of the discussion as needed.

Venue and safe space

The solution tool can be used in quiet environments. The rooms that are suitable for group work are recommended. The papers can be laid on the table or put on the flip chart or wall. If the session uses the online version of the quadrant, at least the note-taker needs a laptop. The online chart can also be projected online for everyone to see.

It is important to ensure accessibility and inclusivity by using gender-

neutral and straightforward language, establishing safe space norms, and addressing consent and privacy before and after the session.

The facilitator's responsibility is to make sure that everyone is able to say something if they are willing. For more reserved people offering individual chance to contribute with post-it note additions can be suggested as an option.

Concrete application of the Solution tool

Description of the activity

Step 1 – Introduction (10 min)

The facilitator recalls the outcomes from the previous workshop and introduces the metaphor of the mycelium as a living network of care and connection. Using one or two images of fungal roots or underground networks,

the facilitator explains that each participant represents a node in a shared ecosystem where small gestures sustain collective life. This metaphor is connected to the themes of gender, work, and sustainability explored in the previous session. Suggested introduction: “Just as mycelium connects trees and allows them to exchange nutrients, our actions, thoughts, and care practices also form invisible connections. What happens in one area of life affects all others. Today, we’ll map those connections and imagine how we can turn personal values into collective actions.”

To create a common focus, the facilitator proposes a shared “problem spore” such as gendered work

precarity, eco-anxiety, or care overload, and writes it clearly on a flipchart or board visible to everyone.

Step 2 – Individual reflection (15 min)

Each participant receives an A3 Mycelium Solution Map divided into four areas representing different levels of engagement: “Find Out More”, “Act Directly”, “Transform via Peer Cooperation”, and “Empowerment”.

Participants reflect on the chosen problem spore and respond to guiding questions using words, colors, or drawings.

Find Out More: What do I still need to learn about this issue?

Act Directly: What can I do now in my everyday life or context?

Transform via Peer Cooperation: Who can I collaborate with to make change possible?

Empowerment: What strengths or resources do I already have that could support others?

Examples of responses might include: “I need to understand how gender roles shape environmental jobs”, “I can start a conversation in my school about care work”, “I could team up with local artists”, or “I’m good at storytelling and communication”. The facilitator reminds participants that this is a reflective and creative process, not a test, and invites them to work quietly.

Calming background music can help create a focused atmosphere.

Step 3 – Gallery walk (10 min)

Participants place their completed maps on tables or walls. In silence, they walk around and look at one another’s ideas. They use colored dots or sticky notes to mark the maps or words that they find inspiring or relevant. The facilitator invites them to observe emerging patterns such as recurring words, themes, or feelings that appear across different maps.

Step 4 – Collective weaving (20 min)

The facilitator identifies the maps that have received the most dots or comments and invites participants

who share similar topics to form small groups of two to four people.

Each group designs one concrete micro-action that links their personal purpose to collective change.

Examples of outcomes include creating a short awareness video or zine about invisible care work, planning a community action such as a clean-up or care-sharing day, or introducing a regular peer support ritual within their organization.

Groups may also use yarn or string to connect their maps on the wall or floor, forming a visible “network of care” where each thread represents collaboration or shared intention.

Suggested prompt: “Each thread you

add represents a relationship or action that can grow beyond this space. Our work becomes visible when we link it together.”

Step 5 – Closing circle (5 min)

The facilitator distributes a small reflection sheet called “Seed of Commitment”. Each participant writes one concrete action they feel ready to commit to after the workshop, such as “I will talk to my colleagues about fairer task distribution” or “I will volunteer once a month for a community garden”. Participants are then invited to share one word aloud that describes how they feel at the end of the session. The facilitator collects or photographs the sheets for documentation and

evaluation.

Closing words: “Each seed of commitment is part of a larger root system that we build together. Even small gestures can sustain transformation when connected to others.”

Implementation & adaptation

Solution tool - skills

Mobilising skills and knowledge
Developing resilience in the face of changes brought about by the green transition, adapting to professional conditions and constraints in a context of economic restraint, and navigating the diversity of digital resources to obtain reliable information in the age of artificial intelligence require significant new skills on the part of younger generations. However, numerous studies show that a large number of

students graduating from academic programmes do not acquire the critical thinking or complex reasoning skills that are essential for meeting the challenges mentioned above. On the other hand, it is not enough to integrate the learning of these skills into school and academic education, as critical thinking and complex reasoning require regular training and, according to some research, transferring these skills from one field of application to another also requires additional training.

Based on these findings, the workshops that use our 'Solution tool' have a dual objective: one, more obvious, is to research and possibly find a solution to the problem at hand.

In addition, the underlying ultimate objective is more didactic in nature: to develop dispositions, mobilise capacities and test attitudes in order to learn how to seek solutions in a complex situation, where one is required to deal with contradictory pieces of information, respond to numerous constraints and manage uncertainty about the effectiveness of the results. This workshop models a learning process for understanding and analysing a situation and trying to move towards possible solutions.

Studies show that learning and skills development require a number of firmly acquired basic skills. Thus, even for activities designed using a non-formal educational approach and for a non-school session, the adaptation of our

workshop and the selection of activities must first take into account the participants' level of basic skills.

It is also important to note that learning and developing cognitive, social, emotional and other skills is not limited to formal or school learning situations, but takes place in a variety of social contexts. Therefore, the implementation of a variety of non-formal learning mechanisms facilitates and reinforces the acquisition and transfer of new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, if the workshop setting allows, the formation of heterogeneous groups should be encouraged, and the involvement of a specialist or

professional can also be very stimulating. Working in pairs, semi-autonomous or fully autonomous groups must be supplemented by some form of supervision; before moving on to the next stage, evaluating the results of the previous stage helps to consolidate learning at the metacognitive level.

Find out more

The various skills related to critical thinking play a central role in the initial phase of reflection and in the process of searching for possible solutions to the identified problem.

The 'Find out more' unit relies mainly on data and information gathered from documentary research. In this phase, participants are asked to select the

information they consider relevant to the central problem identified. Throughout this process, they sort documents according to their reliability, evaluate arguments, question the conditions under which the elements were produced, accept or reject evidence, etc. However, these operations require them to mobilise skills such as being able to focus on a given subject, being aware of their own biases, favouring rational evidence over subjective elements, viewing unreliable information with suspicion, managing a large number of elements and structuring them for a specific purpose. All these skills, mobilised to varying degrees, are part of critical thinking. Similarly, in the next stage, which involves identifying

solutions that already exist in other fields or regions in relation to the central problem, inductive and deductive reasoning are skills that are used during the investigations.

Next comes the stage of gathering prior knowledge and new information following the search for various information related to the central problem of the workshop. The clarity and complexity of the results of this research will depend on the ability of the groups or participants to systematise disparate knowledge and information, to prioritise it, evaluate it and organise it according to robust arguments. These activities, and ultimately these skills, all fall within the domain of critical thinking.

As for choosing the appropriate response

to the main problem, it is primarily analytical skills that are called upon: it is necessary to reconcile theoretical knowledge with empirical experience and to anticipate the impacts of a decision.

Beyond the skills involved in critical thinking, throughout this session, the group is required to use a range of social and cognitive skills in order to share their research findings, argue their choices, listen to each other, find compromises and develop possible solutions together. These steps are all essential for successful and effective collaborative work.

ACT DIRECTLY

This session focuses on the concrete

steps that participants can explore and take in order to find a solution to the central problem in the matrix. Through the activities and approaches proposed, this section models the skills related to agency, in other words, being able to think, initiate actions and act with the aim of contributing to individual and collective well-being. Acquiring, practising and developing these skills is a long process; the activities in this session work on several levels in this regard. From a methodological point of view, developing solutions through co-creation is the most effective approach for learning or maintaining agency skills. From the point of view of applying knowledge and skills, the proposed avenues include direct practical application of initiative and action.

If a participant chooses to join a movement or association whose field of action seems to correspond to the values and objectives determined during the workshop, a series of relational skills can be mobilised that are not always easily separated from certain cognitive or meta-cognitive skills. Demonstrating open-mindedness, expressing a desire to collaborate and work as part of a team, learning to build interpersonal relationships, remaining focused and motivated, adapting to existing structures, taking on responsibilities, etc. are all skills that enable the objectives set in this session of the "Solution tool" to be achieved, and which can be mobilised and valued in a longer-term career path.

Another aspect of the indirect and informal learning process that can be implemented following this workshop also concerns a group of skills, namely systematicity. Being able to bring about change, even minimal change, in one's daily practice requires a sense of organisation, the ability to prioritise and make responsible decisions. These elements all demonstrate a certain aptitude for critical thinking. Similarly, being able to develop actionable responses to overcome concerns demonstrates a great sense of adaptability and the ability to overcome difficulties by transforming them into appropriate actions and practices.

TRANSFORM

Of the four sections of the "Solution tool", this section probably requires the most diverse inputs: the activities proposed cannot do without the knowledge previously gathered, they call on skills that are not often practised during school, and they also rely on attitudes that require a certain amount of learning or practice.

In the "Transform" section, the activities seek to address the identified problem(s) indirectly. When a direct or simple solution is not possible, or when participants wish to develop more complex responses, these activities provide them with avenues to explore.

This "transformation" stage is organised around the concept of

creativity. It is very important not to restrict creativity to the arts and artistic creation, but rather to understand it as part of a range of skills that apply to a wide variety of fields. The creative approach can thus be specific to scientific research, entrepreneurship, mathematics, etc. On the other hand, creativity is proving to be a key skill in a world facing increasingly complex challenges, such as the green transition. The complexity of these challenges goes hand in hand with uncertainty: the different ways of managing problems, the lack of relevant solutions, the lack of willingness to coordinate, etc. can lead to a state of permanent stress. In this process, creativity can also become a useful skill for proposing unexpected avenues, or for approaching uncertainty with detachment

and humour.

The activities proposed in this "Transform" section therefore aim to exploit the participants' divergent thinking skills and invite them to approach a problem with flexibility and originality and to consider several possible solutions in situations that seem complex and immutable.

Another aspect of the approaches proposed questions the attitudes that enable difficulties to be overcome when a direct solution is not possible. For example, when the knowledge acquired proves insufficient, staying motivated, not giving up and maintaining curiosity are attitudes that can enable a community or group of people to continue moving forward.

UNDERSTAND

In this part of our matrix, participants are invited to reflect on the issue in an ambivalent context: learning to accept the idea that even if we are not certain of the outcome of our actions, or even if their impact is not measurable at present, it is important to find a form of action towards the green transition. Similarly, even if global solutions, supported by administrative, legislative, economic and other powers, sometimes yield spectacular results, it is important to recognise the relevance and effectiveness of non-institutional and/or local initiatives and to highlight them.

In order to develop approaches that allow us to adhere to such ideas, inquisitiveness

seems to be paramount among the skills grouped under the category of critical thinking. For it is intellectual curiosity that drives us to learn even when the application or practical use of knowledge is not immediately obvious.

Open-mindedness, and in particular the ability to tolerate differing opinions and interests, also appears to be key to finding solutions and ensuring the effectiveness of collective action. Conversely, operations that do not take into account the multiple needs and challenges of all actors in the green transition around a given issue are doomed to reduced effectiveness.

The final point in this section concerns accepting the idea that we cannot measure the short-term impacts of our actions and that we must persevere with ecological initiatives even if the relevance of our efforts and the results cannot be guaranteed from the outset. Familiarising ourselves with this phenomenon is one of the most important challenges of the entire "Solution tool". This is because it is not just a matter of learning to remain active in a situation that exceeds our current capabilities. It also allows us to develop or practise a skill that will become increasingly valuable, namely the ability to manage uncertainty. In an era where machines and software are tending to replace human labour in many areas, this skill remains a domain where humans are proving to be much more effective and

irreplaceable than artificial intelligence. Human beings are able to adapt to change with varying degrees of success and make relevant decisions despite the ambiguity of a situation, whereas AI – for the time being – systematically fails if the objectives or contexts change in a situation. These abilities, which cannot be replaced by machines, are therefore worth cultivating, as they will be increasingly in demand during the green transition and the socio-economic changes that will be closely linked to it.

The activities and approaches proposed in the "Solution tool" draw on a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not

systematically acquired or practised during the various stages of schooling. The aim here is to highlight the sometimes overlooked resources of participants so that they can be exploited in other circumstances as well.

Conclusion & replication

The Solution Tool enables structured, comparable, and context-sensitive insights that translate into feasible next steps for action.

y combining analytical and participatory methods, it helps groups and facilitators navigate complex issues—such as climate change, gender inequality, and community resilience—through collective

reasoning and creativity. Building upon the shared reflections of the Consultation Tool, it offers a natural continuation: while the Consultation Tool gathers and structures concerns, perceptions, and data from young people, the Solution Tool turns these insights into collaborative strategies and actions. Together, they form a coherent methodology that moves from listening to acting, from identifying issues to co-creating solutions.

Developed through cross-country collaboration among partners in Finland, France, and Italy, the Solution Tool reflects a process of co-production and shared learning. Each context contributed distinct experiences and priorities, allowing

the tool to remain flexible and responsive to diverse territorial, social, and cultural realities. This adaptability ensures that the tool can be used in different environments—from schools and youth centers to NGOs and community projects—while maintaining a common structure that facilitates comparison and synthesis across countries.

Throughout its implementation, the Solution Tool mobilized a wide range of skills and competencies essential for the green and social transition:

- Critical thinking and evidence-based inquiry;
- Agency and initiative-taking;
- Collaborative creativity and emotional intelligence;

- Resilience and the capacity to act amid uncertainty.
- These skills not only support individual growth but also strengthen collective capacities for problem-solving, empathy, and mutual care—elements crucial to building sustainable communities.

To further expand the impact of this tool, future iterations may integrate multimedia components (such as videos, infographics, and artistic documentation) that illustrate how groups use the template in practice. The addition of a case study, co-created by all partner countries, will help exemplify the tool's potential by showing how a shared transnational

challenge—such as climate anxiety or gendered labor precarity—can generate locally distinct yet interconnected solutions.

Ultimately, the Solution Tool provides a framework for transforming shared concerns into meaningful action. It invites facilitators and participants to engage critically, creatively, and compassionately with the challenges of their time.

This tool is available for replication and adaptation by any organization, school, or collective interested in fostering participatory learning and social innovation. It is conceived not as a fixed product, but as a living resource—open to reinterpretation, translation, and re-use across diverse communities and contexts. By weaving together reflection,

cooperation, and action, the Solution Tool continues the spirit of ROOT: cultivating youth agency, relational care, and shared imagination for more just and resilient futures.

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Lehtonen
<https://soundcloud.com/univaasa/oivalluksia-jakso-5-ihmettelya-ilmastonmuutoksesta>