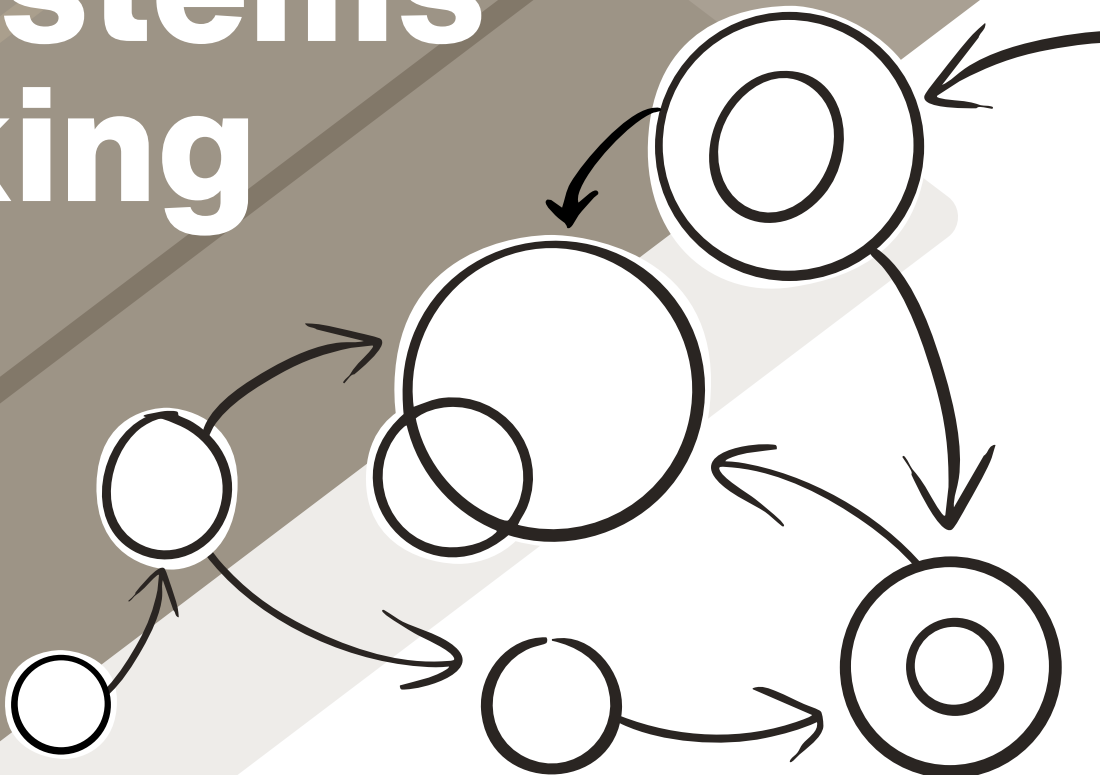


An introduction to systems thinking

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This interactive workshop is an introduction to understanding systems thinking and the interactions between different policies. It is great for widening the perspective of climate/ poverty/ inequality practitioners and activists into systems thinking, embracing the systems lens to enrich their own advocacy work.

The target audience is participants with a basis of knowledge on the sustainability transition; however, the prompts can be adapted to other audiences.

Suggested running time: 1.5 hours

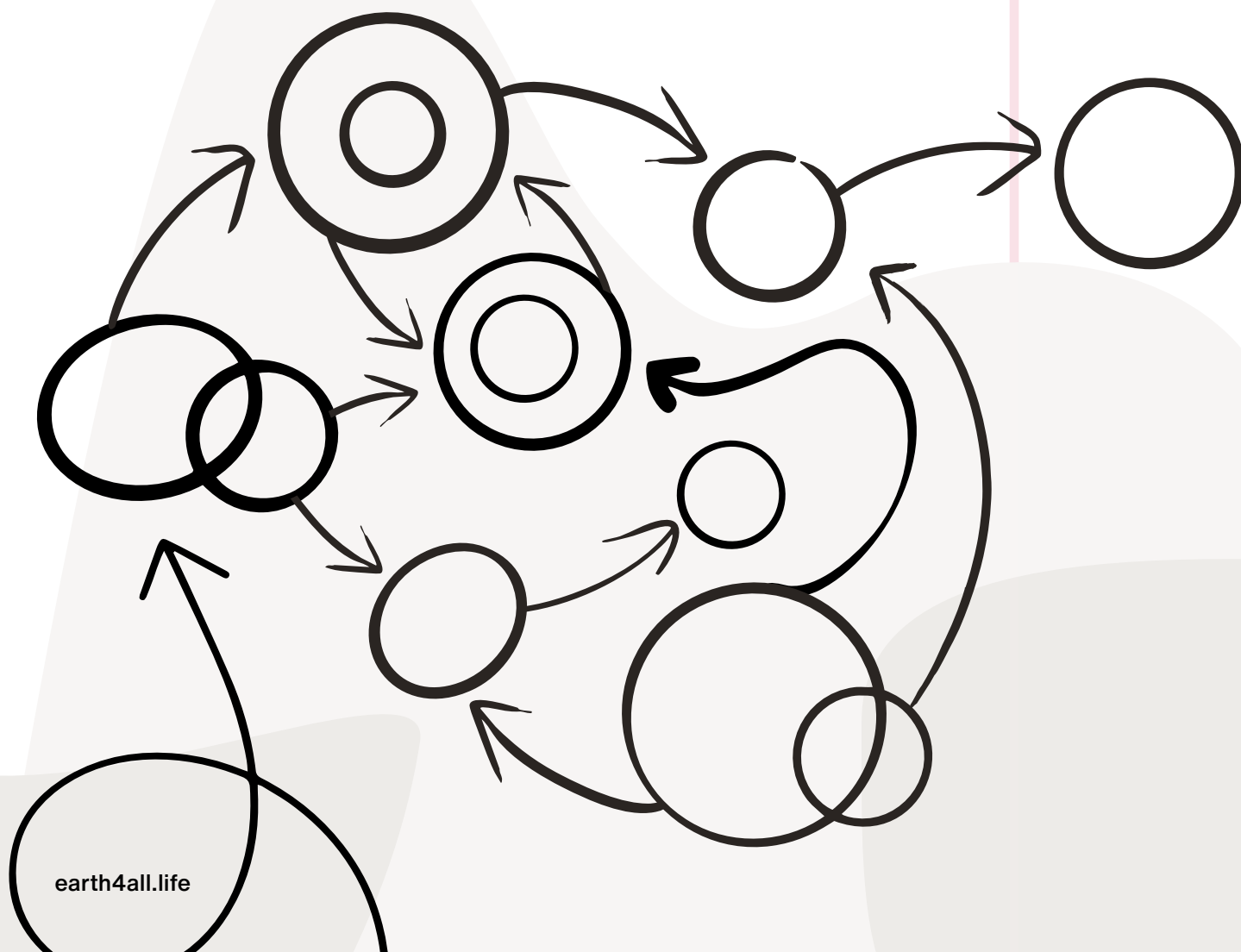
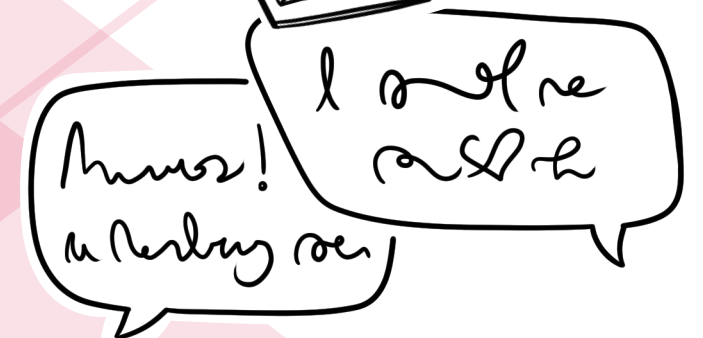
About Earth4All

Earth4All is guided by clear principles:

1. We can achieve wellbeing for all within the limits of our planet.
2. The crises we face are interwoven and need to be approached with a systems thinking perspective. For example, we cannot solve the climate crisis without also tackling the poverty and inequality crises, and vice versa.
3. Solutions must work for the majority, and they must be seen as fair and just or they will risk rejection.

Transforming our economic system requires widespread support. To achieve this, we encourage citizens from all walks of life to engage in discussions about transformative ideas. Together, we can jumpstart the transformation of our economic system to one that puts wellbeing above growth.

Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity presents the science and the new economic thinking that guide a set of recommendations for policymakers. *Five extraordinary turnarounds* relating to poverty, inequality, gender empowerment, food and energy are needed to build societal cohesion and improve the wellbeing of people on Earth within the boundaries of the planet.



Welcome to the Systems Thinking for Policymaking workshop

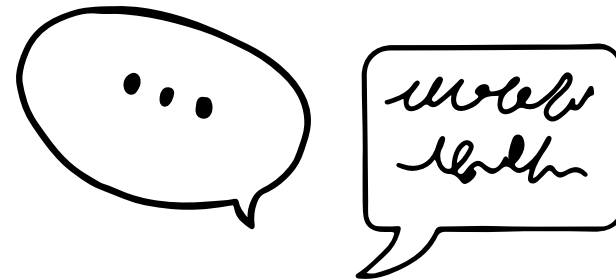
Science shows it is possible to achieve wellbeing for all within planetary boundaries... but the redesigning of economic and social policies to get there is the task of politics.

So how can we drive a major transformation?

Systems thinking - a branch of science whose tools help us understand complexity, feedback loops, tipping points and exponential impacts - shows that due to the interrelationships between all elements of the system, certain policy actions can have cascading effects on the system as a whole.

This workshop focuses on understanding these interrelationships to visualise and understand the system in which the economy, the society and ecology interact.

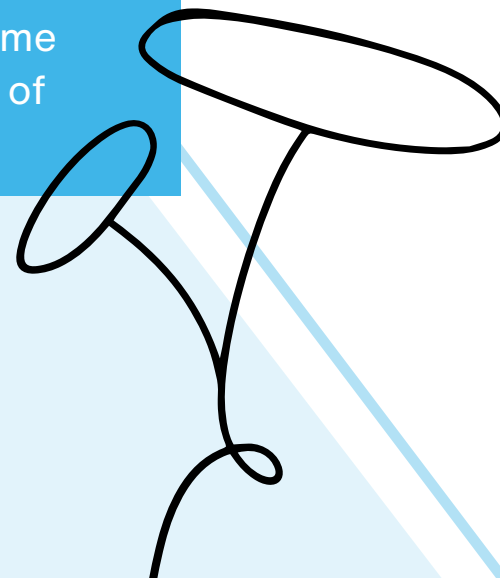
We will explore policies through a systems lens to understand how everything is connected, and gain awareness of the unintended consequences this can create for policymaking.



Recommended target audience: 15+

Individuals with basic knowledge or interest in current governance issues. A theme (food, energy, etc) can be integrated to the scope of the workshop to align with the interest of the group.

This workshop also requires a facilitator with knowledge of the governance landscape of the theme of the workshop and of systems thinking.



Before the workshop

For general tips on how to plan and promote your event inspired by Earth4All, check out our [Guide to Organising Events](#).

Make sure you have all the items at hand and have read the health and safety tips.

Next, download the facilitation guide to your computer or print it out.

Finally, set up the space by grouping tables together to obtain a large surface in the middle of the room, big enough that all your participants can gather around it. A circle or square of tables with space in the middle is preferable.

If you have more than 25 participants, split them into groups and create separate groupings of tables in opposite corners of the room. Ensure there is at least one facilitator per group. The different groups can reunite after the first part of the workshop.

For this workshop, you will need (per group):

- ▷ Post-it notes
- ▷ A ball of yarn
- ▷ A flipboard + paper + markers

Health and Safety note: safely handling the yarn

When working with yarn, it's essential to handle the string safely to prevent injuries and discomfort. Here are some tips to keep your fingers safe and maintain good blood circulation:

- ▷ Use scissors to cut string or yarn, never try to pull it apart. Pulling can cause friction burns or cuts.
- ▷ When wrapping string or yarn around your fingers, avoid wrapping it too tightly. Tight wraps can cut into the skin or restrict blood flow, leading to numbness or even bruising.
- ▷ If you notice any redness, tingling, or numbness in your fingers, immediately loosen the yarn or string and rest your hands. These symptoms indicate restricted blood flow, which can lead to injury if ignored.



00h00 - 00h05 Welcome the participants and show the [Earth4All introduction video](#)

00h05 - 00h10 [Show video](#): A short introduction to systems thinking in policymaking

Part 1: Systems thinking in the food* system

**you may run Part 1 with any other theme your group is interested in: gender equity, energy, democracy, etc. For the sake of example, this section is about food.*

(If you have over 25 participants, this part should be convened in separate groups)

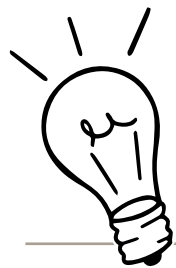
00h10 - 00h20 Mapping the systems - brainstorming

On a flipchart, get participants to brainstorm words related to the food system. You can guide the participants with the following prompts:

- ▶ **Who is active in the food system?** (possible answers could be: consumers, farmers, corporations, government, EU, lobbies, supermarkets, etc.)
- ▶ **How do they impact or are they impacted by the food system?** (possible answers could be: prices, taxes, incentives, water, salaries, crops, meat, weather, demand, speculation, transport)

Write each brainstormed word on the flipchart. Because the workshop does not need too much granularity, you as the facilitator can group words that have the same function in the system – for instance you can group ‘ministry for food and agriculture’ together with ‘government’, or ‘rainwater’ with ‘weather’.

Once you have at least the same number of words as you have participants in your group, it is time to allocate each word to a person. To do this, ask every participant to ‘claim’ one word, on a first-claimed-first-get basis, and ask them to write it on a post-it note and stick it to their clothes. If there is an important word left when every participant has a word, the facilitator should get it. It’s okay if there are words left from the brainstorm, you don’t have to use them all.



0h20 - 0h35 Mapping the systems – interconnections

Bring all participants around the tables, each clearly labeled with one post-it note. You will now start to map the dynamics existing between all of the stakeholders and system elements that you identified on post-it notes, using the yarn string.

As the facilitator, you start: hold the end of the yarn, and toss it to another participant, stating one of the connections you have to the post-it note they bear. For instance, if you are “government”, you can toss the yarn to “transport” by saying “governments can regulate the transportation of food to incentivise importation or local food production”; to “lobbies” by saying that “governments can be influenced by lobbies”; or to “public” by saying that “the public holds governments accountable for their policy decisions” or “the policies adopted by the government impact the price and the quality of the food products”. The participants who received the yarn will keep hold of the string and toss the rest of the ball of yarn to another participant, once again stating a correlation between their own and their receiver’s post-it notes.

There is a degree of freedom to the connections that the participants can highlight when tossing. If you notice that a participant struggles to find a connection for their concept, or that some concepts are not being tossed to by participants, try:

- ▶ Establishing the connection between your own concept and theirs when you get the ball of yarn
- ▶ Gently suggesting to a struggling participant a few connections so they can pick one that they understand.

Let participants discuss, give their opinions and ask for clarifications. Ideally, let other participants respond to the requests for clarification, only step in if needed.



0h35 - 0h40

Mapping the systems: debrief

After 15 minutes, or once the pace is getting slower, you can move on to the debrief phase of this first part of the workshop. Ask everyone to keep hold for now of the multiple strands of yarn they are holding. Here are the key points to debrief from this exercise:

1. Everything in a system is connected. You now simulated the food system, but the same applies to the energy system, etc.
2. This has implications for policymaking: one cannot pass a policy and hope that only this policy is being impacted, as everything else in the system shifts when a policy is implemented. Policies will have intended but also unintended consequences.
You can demonstrate this by stepping away from the circle while still holding your strings – the other participants will be pulled along with you.
3. It is important to note that these unintended consequences can be invisible, especially if the people they affect are minorities, or communities traditionally excluded from political arenas or media visibility. When thinking about policies, it is everyone’s role to detect the unintended consequences, so policies can be adjusted or safety nets be implemented, to truly leave no one behind.

00h40 - 00h45 **Part 2: Systems thinking for policymaking**

A break with a mission

Instruct your participants to think about one interesting policy in their country and to write it on the whiteboard/ flipchart during the break.

Policies can be varied: speed limitation on highways, incentives for consumption of non-animal protein, ban on flights if their alternative by train is under 4 hours long, ...

00h45 - 00h55 **Making interest-based groups**

Help participants arrange themselves into groups of 3 to 6 participants around a policy, and give each group flipboard paper and markers.

00h55 - 01h00 Replicate the process of brainstorming from Part 1: based on each group's policy, let participants brainstorm all the variables that they believe are connected to their policies. You can provide the same prompts as in part 1, for example up on a slide deck if you have a projector, or on a flipchart.

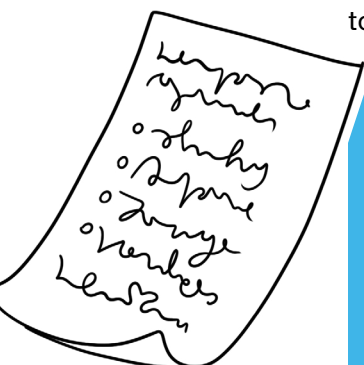
01h00 - 01h07 Replicate the process of visualising the relationships between the different variables, this time using a marker on the flip board paper, drawing arrows.

01h07 - 01h20 Once each group is familiar with their own system and each other, give them 2 points of discussions:



1. What is a good point to intervene in your system to make a desirable change? What would be a good policy? (Note: No need to define what constitutes a "good" policy, let them debate within their group based on their own perspectives and value systems). Have the participants write it on their sheet.
2. What are possible unintended consequences of this policy? Are there any groups (women, minorities, non-humans etc) "left behind", whose experience of the policy may be negative? How can we adapt the policy to reflect their experiences?

01h20 - 01h30 Let the groups take turns in stating 1) their system, 2) their policy and 3) how they chose to respond to the unintended consequences of their policy. You can end the session by presenting the different ways to engage with Earth4All, or bring in any call to action of your own.



After the event

If you run an Earth4All-themed event, we would love to hear about it! Please tag us on social media, or send us your photos with a few quotes from your participants to info@earth4all.life. Don't forget to use the hashtag [#Earth4All](https://twitter.com/Earth4All) on social media.