

**IMAGINING A WORLD  
WITHOUT MINING**  
WORKSHOP FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



## INTRODUCTION

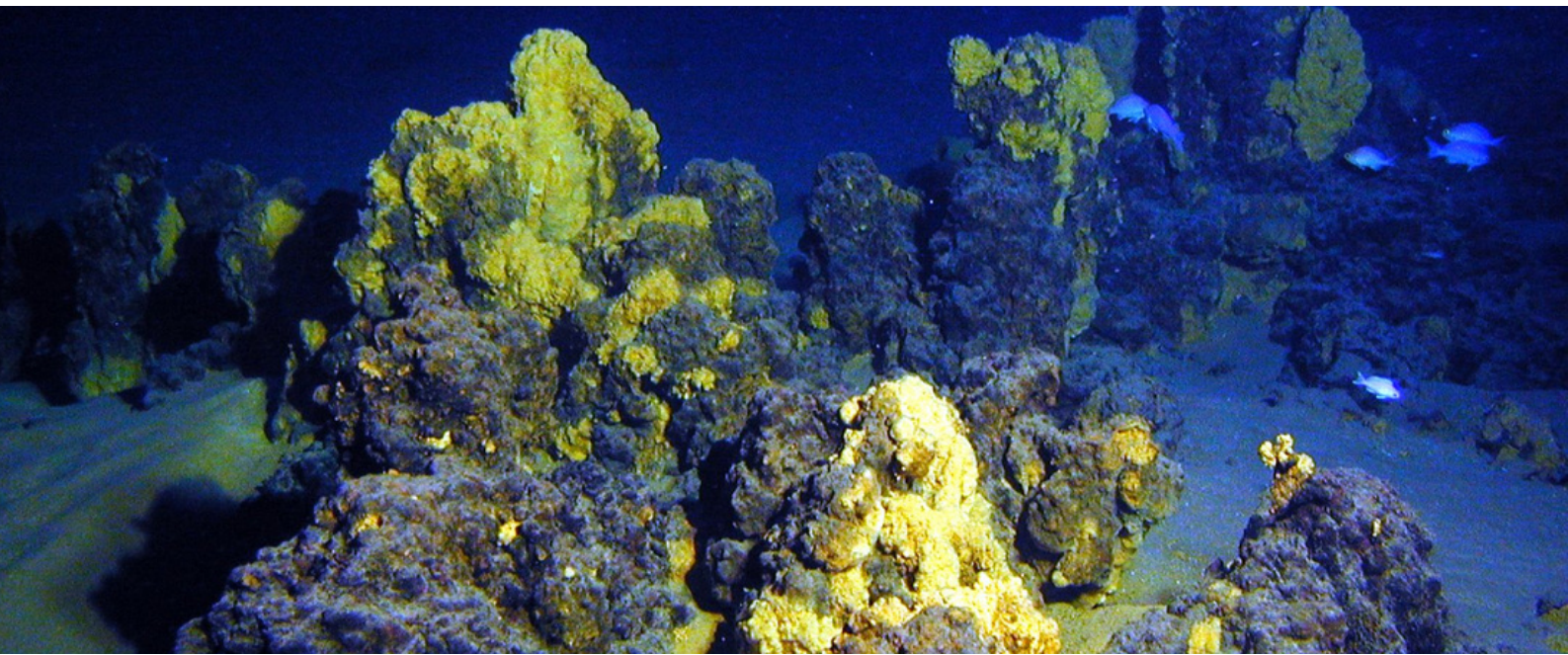
In 2021 Seas At Risk published “Breaking free from mining: A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining – on land and in the deep sea”, an evidence-based literary exercise to help bring about system change at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century.

The publication included an “Imagining a world without mining” workshop template. This activity is based on an original workshop conceived in the 1980s by Elise Boulding (1920–2010) to imagine a nonviolent world.

Boulding, a sociologist and peace activist, realised how many peace activists were unable to imagine a world without wars or armies, and asked, “How could we work to bring

about something we cannot even see in our imaginations?”

Similarly, today ordinary citizens, activists in many fields and policy makers often find it hard break out of the mindset which holds that only solutions based on mining and the previously existing growth ideology could bring about change.



The workshop incorporates the views of futurist Fred Polak, who argued that positive images of the future are instrumental if movements and citizens are to guide their actions in the present toward preferred futures. This tool is of particular importance for those striving for complex social or political change, often hampered by dystopian and pessimistic views of the future.

The methodology of the workshop is detailed in the Warren Ziegler's workbook "A Mindbook for imagining/inventing a world without weapons" (1987). Several adaptations of this workshop have been developed addressing a number of themes. Seas At Risk has developed the first to address a world without mining and less resource use. This facilitator's guide is intended to provide further detail to help those interested in organizing and conducting their own workshops.

## LENGTH & SETTING

This workshop should ideally be developed at some length, preferably over a weekend and with at least two sessions of

several hours each. It can be condensed to a shorter format of approximately four hours, although this is not the best option. Snacks, meals and drinks need to be planned as breaks can be important to further expand creative exchanges.

Ideally, participants should have read the "Breaking free from mining: A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining – on land and in the deep sea" publication in advance. Alternatively, a presentation summarizing some of the main ideas in the document can be offered by the facilitator or another speaker.

It is highly recommended that the workshop be conducted in person and in an outdoor setting, or combine outdoors and indoors for different steps of the process. A facilitator or group of facilitators should have prepared the workshop format in advance to guide participants through its steps (as described in the following sections).



## WORKSHOP STEPS

### **1** Listing our hopes for a future without mining

The facilitator/s present the activity with a brief introduction to the importance of views of the future (Fred Polak, Elise Boulding, Futures, etc.), and how positive images of preferred futures can help guide our actions in the present, as a compass to mark the way ahead. Participants can be invited to reflect on the views of the future that are usually found on today's futuristic entertainment films, series or novels, usually portraying dystopian images that are hardly encouraging in terms of driving our action today.

Participants are then asked to express their own personal hopes (three or four) they have for a future society three decades from the present (in 205\_) where resource consumption has been greatly reduced. These must be positive and optimistic hopes in the form of sociocultural, institutional or technological achievements that, based on each participant's knowledge, they would wish to see achieved in the world 30 years from now.

Once participants have completed their lists they will be asked to share out loud some of the items, either as a whole group exercise or in small groups. After hearing the hopes from others, participants are invited to re-read their own lists and make changes or additions.

## 2

### Exercising imagination through memories of the past

Before entering a world 30 years from now, participants are asked to “flex their imaging muscles” by closing their eyes and, in silence, remembering a positive, personal memory from the past, one they enjoy reliving. It can be any memory, from their recent past, from their childhood or any other moment.

Participants are asked to focus is on details such as sights, sounds, smells, etc., taking notes of what they re-experience. A few volunteers (or all participants) are the invited to share their memories with the whole group, or in pairs. If in a whole group, the facilitator can ask questions to those sharing their memories regarding particular details, like asking to describe the clothes they were wearing or the taste or smell of a particular food or place.

Remembering images of the past brings participants into the “imagining mode” needed to move into the future in the next step, as we will be using the same “imagination muscles”.

*SAR “Imagining” workshop in Spain.  
Outdoor settings can stimulate creativity.*



### 3

## Leap into the future, 30 years ahead

The facilitator helps participants leap the barrier separating present-present from a future-present where/when a world without mining is a reality. The facilitator may, for example, ask them to close their eyes and drift over a nearby landmark to the future. It is important to stick to the remembering mode participants have just experienced, but now focused on a moment in the future. Our own memories and experiences, past and present, will help us (and condition the way we) project our imagination into a world 30 years from now.

This is an exploratory trip (20-30 minutes if time allows) where participants are expected to record their observations, interview (imaginary) inhabitants of the world 30 years from now, and take notes or sketches, as ethnographers or sociologists in a field study. It is important to emphasize that the world they are moving to is one where their hopes for the future, as listed in the first part of the activity, have been fully realized. Participants are not necessarily expected to be in the same place where the exercise is taking place. As they leap in time, they can also leap in space, and visit a different location or country, or indeed many different ones.

Participants are not asked to explain or analyse what they see and find, but only to explore and record. They must be proactive in looking for elements that show how their listed hopes have been met. What kind of means of transport are being used and what are they made of? How do people communicate over long distances? Do they travel? What happened to old mining sites? How long do products last? Are they repaired? What energies are used? What kind of governance exists? How are conflicts managed? What do human communities look like? How do people live? And what about the environment? Questions will depend on each participant's list of hopes. Reading "Breaking free from mining: A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining" before the workshop may help open up participant's minds to new ideas and potentials.



## Sharing visions of the future

Participants are expected to share their observations with the group that may ask questions and seek clarification. Explaining each participant's vision with the group helps us understand their vision while question can reveal important details, as with the questions made when participants were re-experiencing their memories from the past. These new aspects should also be noted as the discussion takes place among the group as a whole or in smaller groups. It is important to listen to each participant. Questions may be asked, but these should only address clarifications, and not question or undermine the images of each participant which should always be respected.

Present tense must be used to refer to the future-present, as we are still 30 years into the future! Past tense should be used to refer to the present-present in which the workshop is being conducted. Initially, many participants will tend to use future tense, but the facilitator should intervene to point out the correct tense. This will help us remain in the future during the next steps of the exercise.

## 5 Mapping a world without mining

In small groups, participants are expected to construct a more analytical description of the society/world they have observed (i.e., institutional/social arrangements, economy, material culture, time-use, technology, etc.), negotiating contrasting or conflicting imagery that may emerge among participants.

If the previous exercise was conducted in small groups, the same groups can be preserved for this new activity. Alternatively, if the previous exercise has been done with all participants in plenary, the facilitator/s may create groups based on what images each participant has presented. Some participants may have more techno-optimistic or state-centric visions, while others may lean more toward simplicity or community governance. The exercise may run more smoothly if participants with more aligned visions are grouped together.

*SAR “Imagining” workshop in Brussels.  
Diagrams are presented to the whole group.*





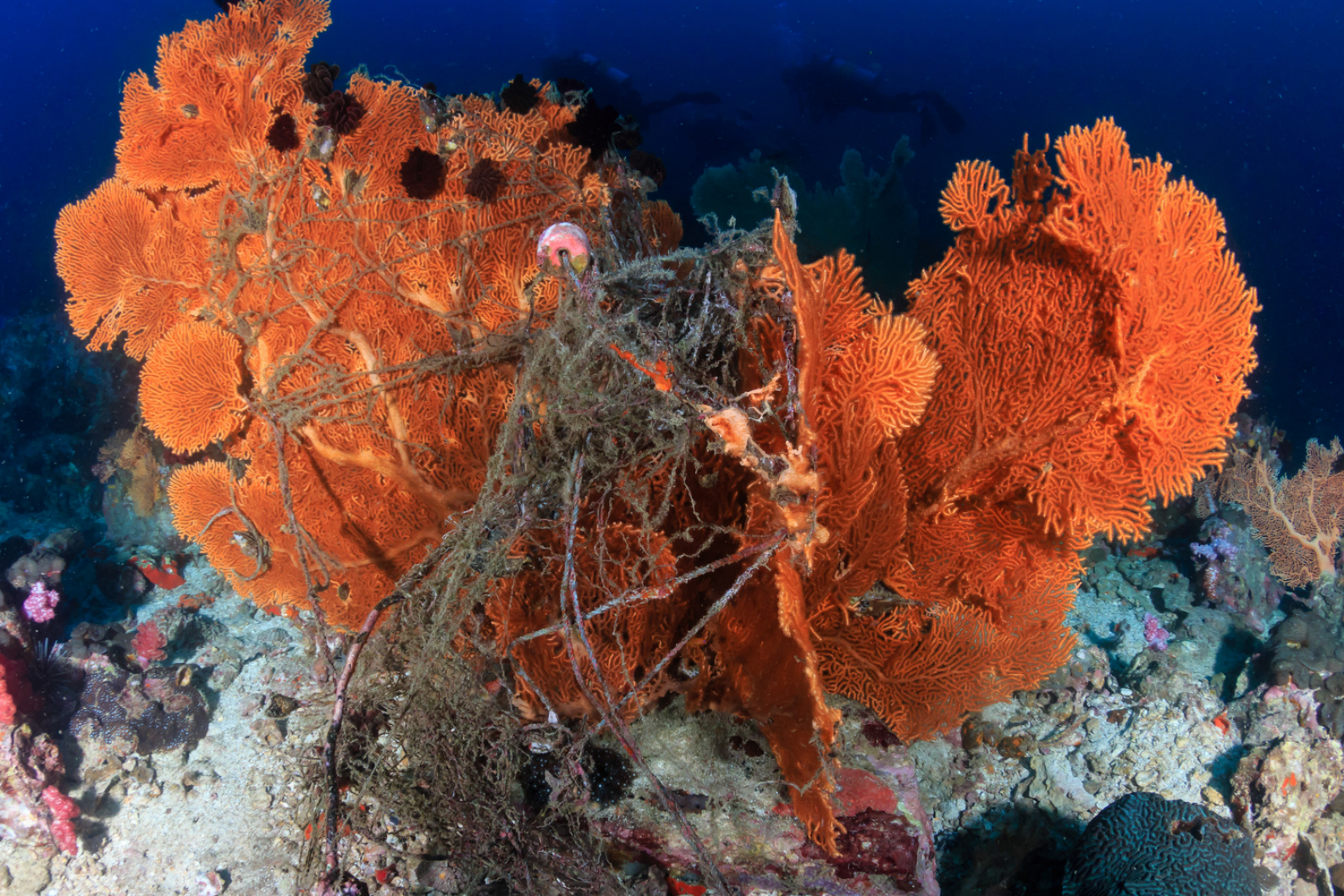
Participants are invited to draw pictures, diagrams or other representations. It is important that materials are prepared in advance, including large sheets, crayons and pens, as well as adequate space to place the sheets. Descriptions are to be based on the common vision that each group negotiates using each participant's initial list of hopes and images of the future. Groups should go back to the same questions posed in the previous exercise, regarding areas such as transport, energy, governance, work, housing, etc., with a focus of material use. These critical areas can be discussed in local terms, but groups should also zoom out to understand the broader world picture.

If time is not a limiting factor, this exercise can be divided in two steps: first, participants can construct their analytical descriptions individually or reflecting in pairs to help each other build a coherent worldview, that is then shared with the broader group. After this, groups would be convened to negotiate and produce a common image, as mentioned above.

In either case, after groups have completed their diagrams, these are presented to the whole group. The group may again ask questions and seek clarifications or discuss particular issues, but always respecting other participant's images of the future.

## **Remembering history**

Standing in the future-present society, where a post-mining world thrives, participants are asked to remember in the same small groups what had happened over the previous years and decades, leading to successful change. A ladder or Gantt chart can be used, starting from the most recent events from the future-present stand point to the moment the workshop was carried out 30 years ago. Participants should note key events, stepping stones, with particular focus on the



use of raw materials, consumption patterns and overarching policies shifted in time. The recollections will again come using your “imagining muscles”, generating a meaningful history. The ladders or charts should start in the future-present year, and go back setting key ‘historical’ events every 5 years or so, until reaching the present-present time of the workshop.

The history of change will be presented to the larger group, always using past tense to explain what “happened”, and will be open to questions and debate. In often happens that some groups tend to set catastrophic events as catalysts for change. In other occasions, it is some miracle technological breakthrough that brings about change. These images have often much to do with dominant cultural patterns that present either dystopian or techno-utopian visions of the future, but can be problematic in terms of empowering the group with a sense of agency in next steps.

## **7** Action plans in the present

Back in the workshop's 2020 present, each individual participant (or alternatively, if the setting allows, small groups) will prepare a short-term action plan to catalyse change toward the experienced future reality based on the pictured future and remembered history. The plan should be realistic in what the individual/small group is actually ready to commit to do to bring about a world without mining. It should include concrete actions with description of how they are to be implemented, with what allies, expected results, etc.

The format and contents action plans can be open or can follow a template offered by the facilitator/s. Such a template can include, for example, the following sections:

**-Where do I intend to focus my action?**

**-Goals for the next 3 to 6 months** (What can I do in the immediate future to start moving towards preferred futures? Participants may combine already planned actions, integrating them into a broader outlook, or conceive new actions.)

**-Organization/s** (How can the organization/s I'm part of be mobilized for action towards preferred futures? This is a good moment for participants from different organizations to have a chance to share among each other what they can envision as doing.)

**-Who are my allies?** (What other organizations or networks can be involved? If different organization and networks are present, this can help them start working together.)

**-How will I affect decision makers?**

**-What will keep me going in spite of the difficulties and setbacks?**

If times allow, participants should elaborate a first draft as part of the session, and share it with the group. If the activity is done in several sessions (for example, within an organization or community), this can be the second or last session. Participants can also be asked to complete the action plans after the workshop on their own time and share them with the whole group by a certain date.

As a closing, participants should be strongly encouraged to actively engage in making such action plans reality, either individually or in collaborations.

## MORE INFORMATION



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Seas At Risk gratefully acknowledges EU funding support.