

DECOMPOSING RESOURCE - HUNGRY PATTERNS



This method helps to break down habitual patterns of action, critically assess resource consumption and the meaningfulness of one's activities and then transform them into a new, empowering "compost". If the aim is a regenerative future, then we need to ask what to do, why and how, in order to uncover core patterns of our behaviour. It is worth considering what shapes our habits and what happens if we stop doing something, do less, or do it differently. The method offers positive and resilient ways of doing at the personal, community and societal levels.

To break down existing resource-hungry patterns of action that feed the current crisis, current practices need to be critically assessed and nudged towards regeneration. Much of our thinking and behaviour is a legacy of the industrial age. The notion of surplus has developed in the midst of apparent abundance. In nature there is no such thing as waste, and our ancestors, who lived in close connection with nature, knew everything had to be used to its full extent. It is worth reflecting on what we actually need to live a good life, what our habits are based on and what would happen if we had less. Does consumerism make us happy or is it a substitute for an unfulfilled psychological need?¹

Numerous alternative solutions are being offered in response to the current crises – solutions that offer hope through practical action,² that redefine indicators of a good life, and aim for degrowth,³ social equality, community and biodiversity. By reflecting on the lives of our ancestors and the reasons behind their practices, we can bring their wisdom into the present and reassess the value of certain traditions. For example, hand stitching and darning are slow processes, whose value should not only be measured by the number of garments repaired but also by the resources that have been left unused by not being engaged in fast practices.⁴

It is in everyday practices that we see the potential to break patterns. An activist can also operate in the peripheries, noticing local actions and interactions, alongside larger-scale solutions. Positive activism does not mean acting against something, but rather for something or someone, and includes educational activities, proactive and creative strategies, and dialogue. See also the method card "Gardeners' Dialogue".⁵

¹ Ryan, Richard M. & Deci, Edward L. 2000. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being, *American Psychologist*, 55 (2000), lk 68-78
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68> (vaadatud 19.09.2024).

² Technology professor Steven J. Jackson has stressed that hope lies in practical actions. Jackson Steven J., 2014. *Rethinking Repair. – Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot. The MIT Press.

³ Also see Degrowth Estonia (Tasaarengu Eesti) – an advocacy organisation promoting post-growth life in Estonia <https://tasaarengu.info/about-us/> (accessed 02.09.2025)

⁴ For more on non-production see the article written with co-authors Kubinyi, Eva Liisa; Konovalov, Marta; Remm, Jane; Rääk, Kadri Liis 2024. A Dialogue on the Possibility of Non-Production. *Leida*, 5/2024.
<https://leida.artun.ee/en/issues/stubborn-compromises-in-production/a-dialogue-on-the-possibility-of-non-production>

⁵ See examples at <https://beautifultrouble.org/>

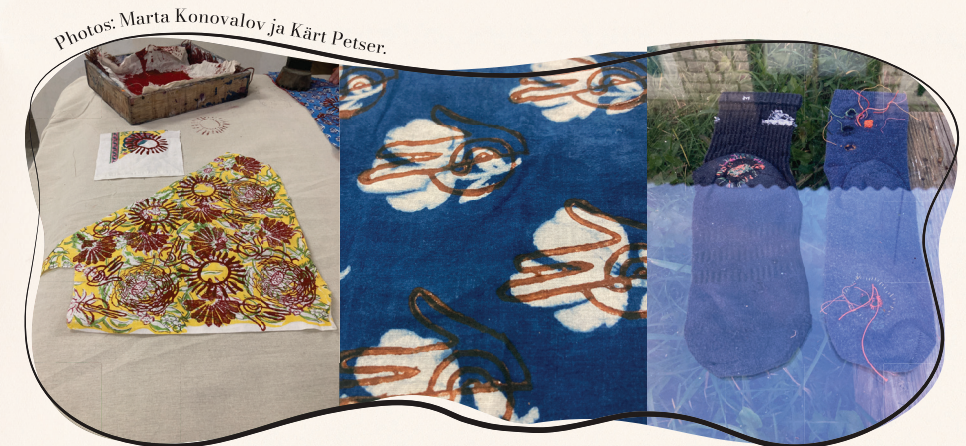
Exercises

- Ask yourself, your family, colleagues and students what their resource-hungry patterns of action are. What resources do these use? What would you be willing to give up?⁶ Imagine the positive impact this would have.
- Walk to work or school and notice the impact of this choice. Think about what knowledge your family gains and what are the benefits of growing vegetables in your garden or herbs on your windowsill.
- Analyse the resource cost of your food in terms of its impact on the planet, and when growing your own food think about the nutrients, but also about the well-spent time. Think about how the lessons learned from gardening can be applied to other areas of your life.
- If you have forgotten a skill, like darning the heel of a sock, invite others to help you revive the skill and the mindset that comes with it.
- Invite the people that inspire you and organise a communal cooking event using local ingredients that have been grown following principles of biodiversity or rescued food. Discuss growing food, eating it and food waste.
- Be an activist – be enterprising – be an initiator – be creative! Choose an activist strategy that suits you – environmental activism, professional activism, protest, craftivism, design activism or even silent activism. Be authentic and take note that your message would be reflected in your actions. Initiate meetings and opportunities for co-creation. Don't measure the effect of the meeting at the time but think about how it might carry into the future.

⁶ The question is inspired by Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham's "Exercise for less", through which the positive aspects of doing less have emerged, such as work of a different nature and more time for direct interaction with others. Fletcher, Kate & Tham, Mathilda 2019. *Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan*. JJ Charitable Trust, London.
<https://katefletcher.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Earth-Logic-plan-FINAL.pdf>, pp. 1–65.



Organising creative community events can be seen as breaking patterns of resource-hungry behaviour. For example making horse-felted wool for the Stork's nest installation as a part of the Tartu 2024 European Capital of Culture project "Route Diverse". Using self-primed canvases and homemade paints and brushes helps me appreciate the resources required for painting and discover alternative possibilities. Jane Remm, "Garden Diary", 2024.



When making clothes from ends of fabric rolls, the patterned fabrics can pose a challenge in production if the pattern is protected by copyright. In a literal attempt to change patterns, Marta Konovalov experiments by block printing over existing ones, so new patterns appear and merge with the old ones. Similarly, new visual patterns occur in hand-darned garments and by dyeing over stains. Thus, habits and patterns of behaviour also break down – unused fabrics do not become waste, and through welcoming change, clothes can continue to be worn and appreciated.