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TABLE

Tomorrow on the table

The politics and economics of food system transformation

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COVER PHOTO BY

Veronica White, UnSplash

TABLE helps people navigate the evidence, values and visions shaping global debates about the future of sustainable food systems. Both scientific evidence and our personal biases play roles in these crucial conversations: TABLE provides clarity on where, how and why we disagree in order to support inclusive dialogue and drive much-needed action.

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1. The workshop

This is an exciting moment for economic and political ideas. The challenges of the climate and biodiversity crises have generated a wealth of new thinking and of old ideas made new. Across the political and economic spectrums, the agenda for the future economic organisation of human societies has opened up with new possibilities, with different actors advocating for different pathways. While free-market thinking and a capitalist, profit-driven, growth economy remain the norm, some committed to this perspective recognize the need to adapt and transform. Others question the idea that economic growth is inherently good for human societies, and argue that approaches such as degrowth, post-growth, or steady-state economic thinking are necessary to align human societies with the limits of the Earth's ecosystems. Cutting across these positions are those who argue for more robust values-led or mission-led governance and associated policies. At the same time, traditional political divides between left and right have blurred, leaving less certainty about political futures but allowing more opportunities for change. Investors, philanthropic organisations, and research funders support projects which align with their ideologies and associated theories of change, shaping avenues for transformation.

Yet, in most of these imaginative future-oriented political discussions, there is a striking element missing: a concerted attention to the food system, from production through to processing, distribution, and consumption. This is an oversight that needs addressing. Food provisioning is a basic aspect of human flourishing and survival, and is deeply implicated in the challenges of living within planetary boundaries. Food systems are the primary drivers of biodiversity loss, the contributors of up to a third of greenhouse gas emissions, and the sources of nitrogen and phosphorus loading in the earth's biogeochemical cycles. While many food systems thinkers are already exploring pathways for a better food future, they too are constrained by the boundaries of their disciplinary expertise. There is a need for strengthened connections between those working for change in the food system and those thinking about new economic and political futures.

The work described here represents a small first step in making these connections. This first section describes our purpose and goals behind this workshop and the methodology we used to develop and facilitate it.

A workshop participant organises sticky notes. Photo by Jacquelyn Turner

Methods: how did we do it?

On 2nd and 3rd October 2024, TABLE, in partnership with Healthy Food Healthy Planet and additional support from the Wellcome Trust, held a workshop which brought together a diverse range of stakeholders working across the food system to explore how they envisaged a better food future and the system transformations needed to get there. The participants included non-governmental and civil society organisations, policymakers, philanthropists, community leaders, and academics drawn from diverse disciplines. Together, over the course of the workshop, they discussed, developed, and refined different visions for the future of the food system. Through creatively engaging activities and panellist vision sessions, TABLE encouraged participants to delve beyond surface visioning activities to also scrutinise the values underlying them, the mechanisms and theories of change which underpinned them, and the political and economic approaches needed to progress them.

This workshop brought together academics (23%) with people working in finance (10%), non-governmental organisations (27%), philanthropy (4%), the food system supply chain (8%), and policy (13%). TABLE team members also joined in discussions, making up the remaining 15%.

We used methods rooted in **futures thinking** and **visioning** to foster discussions about the future of food, and prompted participants to collaboratively create new positive visions that explicitly consider the values underlying them and the economic and political approaches needed for change.

Both approaches are core to TABLE's work. Futures thinking uses a suite of interdisciplinary methods to explore and critically consider scenarios that are *possible*, *plausible*, *probable*, or *preferable* to address specific problems (including those in the food system). These approaches work on the understanding that the future is not only unpredictable and uncertain, but likely to be as diverse, complex, and contradictory as the past and the present. Inclusivity and participatory methods are key components of these approaches, as well as using narrative development (or storytelling) as a tool for developing visions and bringing them to life.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

TABLE structured the workshop around three idea 'seeds' for possible visions of the future of food, derived from team members' long-standing engagement with food systems discourse and knowledge of literature in the field. We describe these visions in more detail in Section 2 of this report, but, in brief, they are:

1. Market-led vision: This is founded in a belief in the transformative potential of the market to leverage a future food system that is healthy for both people and the planet and is socially conscious;

2. State-led vision: This a future in which the state leverages its power to restructure the food system with the goal of feeding people rather than producing profit, defining food as a democratic right rather than a commodity; and

3. Bottom-up vision: A vision which emphasises the transformative positive potential of building trust-based human relationships and connections at multiple scales, of the value of practical experiential knowledge, and of the need for decentralised production and provisioning systems. When combined, these elements can foster a future food system that works in harmony to create food that is healthy for both people and planet, accessible to everyone, and founded on fair livelihoods.

Having defined the initial seeds of these three visions internally, TABLE identified potential speakers working in relevant fields who we believed would be able to speak to and advocate for them. Three or four panellists were invited to one of three pre-workshop discussions, organised by vision cluster, to co-define each vision, discuss the workshop's goals, and explore some of the questions we wanted them to address through their workshop presentations. Through these conversations, we added nuance, depth, and specificity to these visions. We then gave each speaker a brief for the workshop itself: to advocate for and describe their specific version of these visions based on their own values and experience in their fields. Professional artist Roberta Aita attended these discussions with the aim of visualising the futures impressionistically, to tap into people's emotions and sense of possibility rather than producing literal representations. Roberta's initial sketches went through three rounds of feedback and refinement with TABLE team members, and final versions were printed and displayed at the workshop as input and inspiration for workshop discussions (see Figures 4, 5, & 6).

We purposely asked speakers to develop the three presented seed visions rather than come up with their own ideas for visions, even though this led to more extreme versions of the visions which did not necessarily reflect and capture the nuances, contradictions and complexities of any one person's views. Our rationale for this is that these more extreme versions represent the different poles of vision 'axes' we see in debates about the future of food. As such, we believe they are a useful structural tool for several reasons: first, the lack of nuance and complexity in the visions makes them easier to communicate and understand; second, the values for each vision are apparent, clearly defined and thus easy for participants to identify and discuss; third, more extreme and distinct visions are more provoking for participants, which helps reveal to them their own internal reactions and thus better understand their own personal values and how they relate to the vision; and, finally, the greater differences between the visions provide clear structure for the discussion and makes it easier to identify the visions' strengths, weaknesses, synergies, and tensions. Our hypothesis was that this approach enables participants to 'learn by doing' and discover for themselves that future solutions are more complex and nuanced than they might expect.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The workshop was held in-person at the Oxford Martin School at the University of Oxford over the course of two days, and included a networking dinner on the first night to help participants develop their relationships and build more trust. We held six sessions in total, including: a welcome and introductory session on Day 1; three vision sessions spread out over the two days which included both panellist presentations and group discussions; and closing and reflection sessions at the end of each day. All participants were also asked to complete a virtual quiz about their own values, beliefs, and preferred vision both before and after the workshop as a way for us to see if changes in perspectives occurred as part of the workshop impact. Interested readers can take a version of the quiz here.

A group session at the workshop in October 2024. Photo by Jacquelyn Turner

Each of the three vision sessions followed the same format (see Figure 3). First, panellists gave individual presentations advocating their version of the overall vision, while detailing their diagnosis of underlying food system problems, their proposed

solutions, their interpretation of what growth means to them, and their personal values that underpin all of these. There was a short break, during which participants wrote down their reflections on the presentations, and then they reconvened into table groups. To encourage diversity and novel thinking, participants were asked to sit in groups with people who had different fruit or vegetable stickers on their nametags; each fruit or vegetable represented a specific type of stakeholder which remained unnamed to participants.

Figure 1. Virtual poll example answer

Discussion sessions began with silent reflection time for participants to consider their own values and thoughts about the vision in response to the panellist presentations. TABLE provided everyone with structured prompts to help guide this reflection time, as many participants were unfamiliar with or unused to thinking in this very deliberate way about values in their professional lives. To regroup and frame the discussion, participants wrapped up their reflections by taking part in an interactive anonymous poll where they provided up to three one-word responses to each of two questions: “What values lie at the heart of this vision?” and “What would we see around us if this vision were to come to pass?” (see Figure 1). The live results of the poll were projected on a screen and briefly summarised by a TABLE team member before participants moved on to group work.

A workshop participant writes down reflections on a provided worksheet. Photo by Jacquelyn Turner

Figure 2. Vision wall example

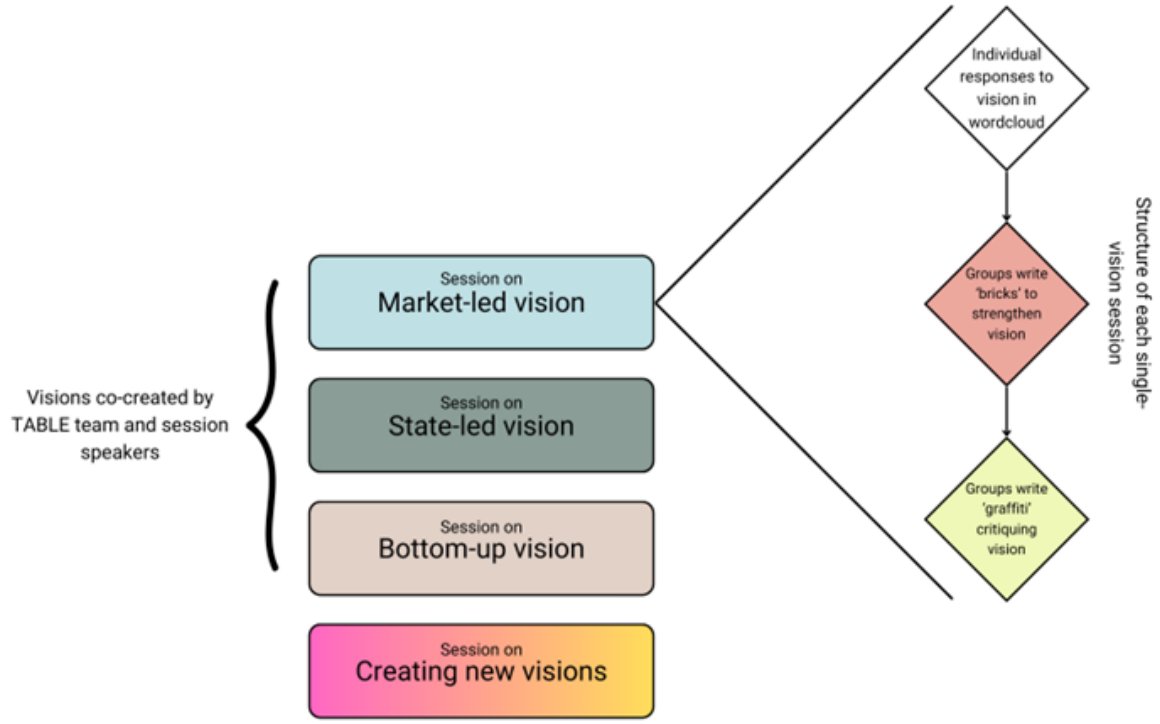
Discussion sessions began with strengthening the vision. For this, participants were asked not to critique, but to develop the vision that had been presented by building the best case for it and considering how it could be improved without compromising its core values. The point of this exercise was to try and counter the natural tendency to criticise positions that are different from one's own before giving a fair hearing to the arguments, and without recognising what may be the very positive motivations that 'opponents' might have. In other words, we were trying to encourage people to think sympathetically and empathetically about other ways of thinking and other points of view. Groups recorded key 'strengthening' points on notecard 'bricks' which were then collected and used to build three separate vision 'walls' that were displayed throughout the workshop (see Figure 2).

Next, we asked each group to 'stress-test' the vision by identifying its obstacles, unintended consequences, neglected values, and conflicts with evidence. While this activity came more easily to participants, we still challenged them to frame their critiques in a constructive way with the aim of identifying gaps, blind spots, and inconsistencies rather than tearing down or weakening the vision overall. Participants recorded key points from this section on sticky-note 'graffiti' cards which were then added to the relevant vision wall as forms of feedback (see Figure 2). Finally, each vision session ended with whole-group reports which began with one table group then opened up to the rest of the room to contribute new points.

NEW VISION GENERATION

In the final session of the workshop on Day 2, participants worked in groups to develop new visions for future food systems based on the learning from the three vision sessions. We asked the panellists to work together as one group, while all other participants could select their own groups. We asked each table to develop a narrative for their own unique vision for a better food future, providing structured prompts to help focus discussions and designating specific amounts of time (10-15 minutes) for each one before moving on to the next. The prompts encouraged thinking about: key values; key actor groups; key roles for different actor groups (especially market, state and local communities); how each vision interacted with the physical world; and how to realise the vision (pathways to achievement). Participants had 80 minutes to develop their visions before sharing them with the whole group in story format.

Figure 3. Vision creation process



2. Three visions for the future of food

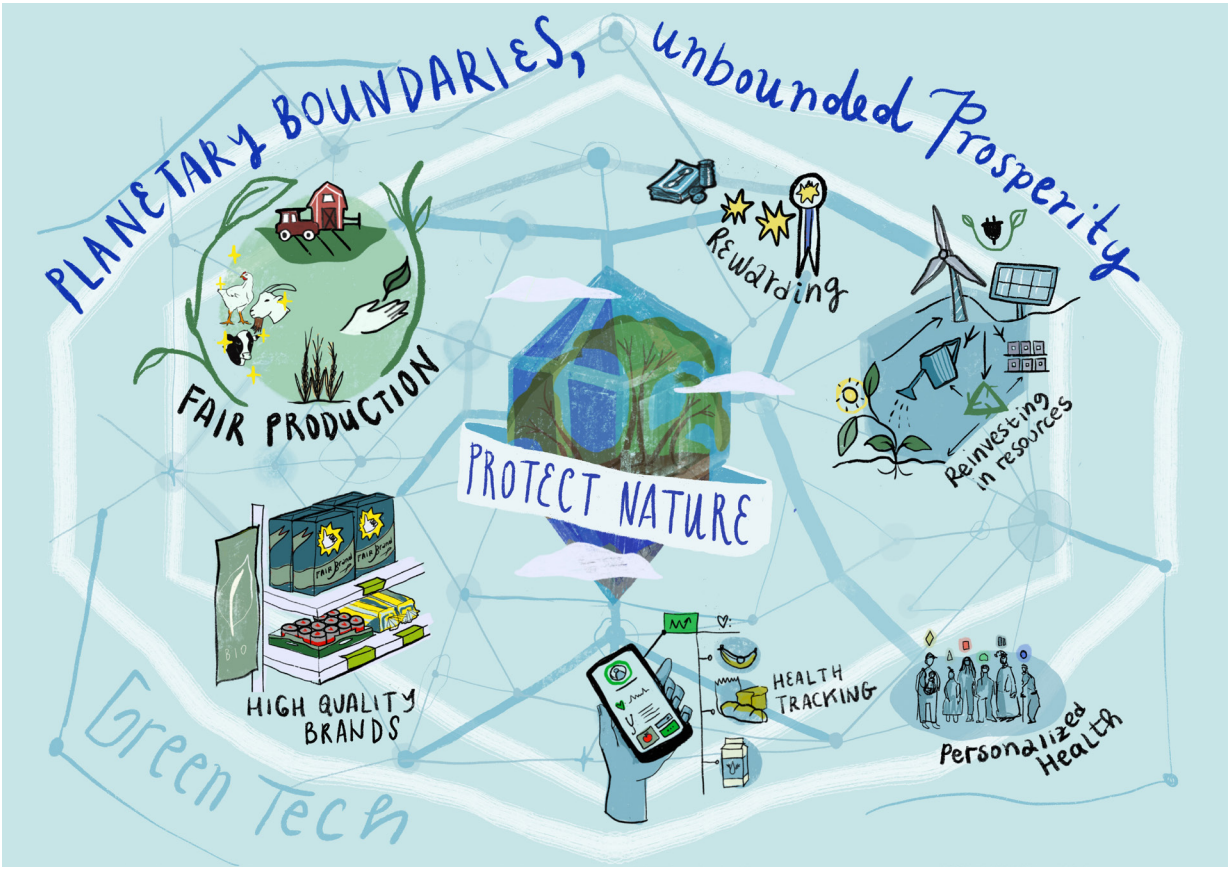
This section provides a more detailed overview of the three visions that provided the structure for the workshop.

The visions were based on TABLE's: experiences of engaging with food systems stakeholders; on the (often implicit) strands of thought discernible in the food systems literature; and from the ideas apparent in the design, focus, and goals of research funding and philanthropic bodies. We asked all speakers to consider questions of growth (what is it; how should your vision reframe it, if at all) as a cross-cutting theme when presenting. Here, we describe the evolution of these visions from TABLE team members' interpretation to panellists' presented versions, as well as participants' responses to them.

Market-led vision

The market-led narrative emphasised that a cleaner, greener market is, and should be, the driving mechanism for food system change. During the pre-workshop discussion, panellists – including an independent sustainability consultant, venture capitalists and a think tank analyst – developed a vision which capitalises on the transformative potential of the market to leverage a future food system that is socially conscious and healthy for both people and planet. Such a system has: economic diversity and resiliency; more equitably distributed power, economic risks, and rewards; and more consideration of animal welfare. While efficiency was a key element of their vision, panellists expanded its definition to better account for planetary boundaries and to internalise negative social and environmental costs of the current food system. Their version of efficiency also rewards and values businesses based on how they regenerate nature and accounts for local contexts by scaling up independent technologies and solutions that work for specific communities. As noted, the economic market itself plays a critical role in shaping this positive future, having been repurposed to incentivise circularity and regenerative principles. Figure 4 provides the graphic visualisation for this vision, as created by artist Roberta Aita in response to the pre-workshop discussions.

Figure 4. Market-led visualisation



By Roberta Aita

OVERVIEW: WHAT IS IT?

While all agreed that the market is a vital and driving mechanism for transforming food systems, panellists' still developed their own variations of this vision. Chloë Payne, an Investment Principal at Ponderosa Ventures, was the first to present. She diagnosed the underlying problems as a combination of multiple connected challenges: negative externalities (such as environmental and health costs) are unaccounted for in current prices for food and healthcare; some large international

corporations are extractive, and people lack sufficient protections. To meet these challenges, she advocated for a food system transition which takes a "whole systems approach" to change. She described how, by using this approach, her vision recognises and celebrates the complexity and diversity of the global food system, which is composed of thousands of very messy, interconnected, smaller, and more local systems that are each unique and have their own challenges. The best way to address these differences is through investment in local-scale solutions – both social and technological in nature – and by encouraging a diversity of complementary solutions. Where appropriate, these solutions should be scaled up (expanding to a larger scale) and out (replicating the solutions elsewhere), but scaling is not appropriate or feasible in all contexts. In some cases, larger scale innovations with a broader reach for system transitions such as regenerative agriculture should also be financed and supported. The most important facet of this version of the market-led vision is the fact that one solution does not work for all contexts because local context matters. Community initiatives and incentives should be supported and funded, then scaled up and out where possible, especially for those "core technologies and solutions[1]" which cut across all geographies and areas. For this speaker, growth, as an integral part of the venture capitalist business model, is a positive because this type of investment in new technologies would not be possible without it. Ultimately, this version claims that we have only have one solution powerful enough to solve the climate crisis at the scale we need in the time available: the hand of the market, which will drive solutions and new, innovative technologies, cheaper and better than those we currently have. Growth and innovation - now decoupled from some negative environmental impacts - are its "engines".

A second version of the market-led vision, presented by Antony Yousefian of The First Thirty Ventures, diagnosed the underlying problem as a mathematical oversimplification of food system consequences. In monetary economic terms, output (or yield) is determined by values, genetics, environment and management, while the negative consequences for nature and sickness are not accounted for. Current systems are therefore value extractive – meaning they take more than they provide or build – rather than regenerative as well as inexpensive and inefficient. As a solution, then, he proposed a fundamental rewiring of economic supply chains within which GEM (genetics, environment and management) are optimised to work *with* nature and yield is measured in terms of *regenerative* output which incorporates and accounts for the environmental and health consequences. Economic growth in this version is understood as a normative good, with the system structured so that growth is redistributed based on value and sustainable function. For example, for every additional £1 generated in the system, the same amount should be redistributed through education in schools, the provision of nutritional training for doctors, or the subsidising of 'nature-positive' food.

A third and final version of the market-led vision was presented by Peter Elwin, an independent sustainability consultant. He framed food system challenges within the context of unsustainable economic growth, arguing that such growth cannot be sustained with our finite resources. With this perspective, his version of the market-led vision also diagnoses the underlying problem of food systems as a lack of accounting of externalities for both nature and health. He noted that the market economy inherently drives concentration in terms of power (oligopolies), products, profit, and risk (which is driven upstream to favour retailers and exploit producers). To address these issues, the food system needs a radically transformed economy which enables a food future that is efficient, resilient (achieved through diversity) and equitable (in terms of distribution of risk and food). Growth is redefined as "sustainable growth" or "growth in a different direction." This involves "shrinkage" of undesirable outcomes (e.g. financialisation of food by prioritising profit over planet and people - including the exploitation of workers and consumers, pollution, waste and the loss of nature,) and growth of positive outcomes (e.g. welfare, healthy food, food security, diversity, equitable distribution of power and risk).

1 All quoted text in this section is taken directly from panellist presentations and/ or pre-workshop discussions.

FEEDBACK: WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK OF THIS VISION?

Overall, attendees of this workshop tended to be quite critical of market-led visions, which may be a reflection on the mix of people who attended. Half of them worked either in non-governmental organisations or in academia, entities which are often more critical of capitalism and the market more generally. Even so, some recognized that market-led solutions have the advantage of being more popular politically and more practical to implement quickly. Others expressed distrust in economic market actors or admitted to bias against market solutions (see Box 1). Some participants described a lack of clarity around actor accountability and responsibility for unintended consequences, or wanted more detailed information on how to "put nature on the balance sheet", how to consider and take account of power disparities, and how to practically implement market solution ideas (e.g. who will pay for internalising externalities?). Others advocated for a more radical transformation away from the status quo, with a reimagining of the narratives, paradigms or worldviews which frame the existing market economy.

Despite this more critical outlook, participants also offered constructive suggestions for strengthening the market-led vision. Their ideas included: emphasising democracy and democratic rights to help rebalance unequal power in the food system; being more inclusive of excluded voices such as small producers; and recognising the power of money as an influential and driving force for change for everyone, regardless of party politics. The most common suggestion was for the state to take a more active role, working in conjunction with the market, through stricter 'guardrails' or a more robust regulatory framework, to level the playing field for powerful actors (such as the food industry) and collaboratively drive change toward a better food future. This point is discussed in more detail within the state-led vision.

BOX 1. PARTICIPANT QUOTES FOR MARKET-LED VISION

"The market can't be trusted."

"The market creates the metrics and cannot be trusted"

"How locked in are we to a worldview that given the urgency of the challenges the market is the best way to solve!"

"We have a strong bias against markets"

"The strength and vocality of criticism against the market-led view has been interesting to see play out"

"Easiest to sell tweaking the status quo – govts leave the system to the market"

"Money is a motivator + enabler (whatever your political affiliation)"

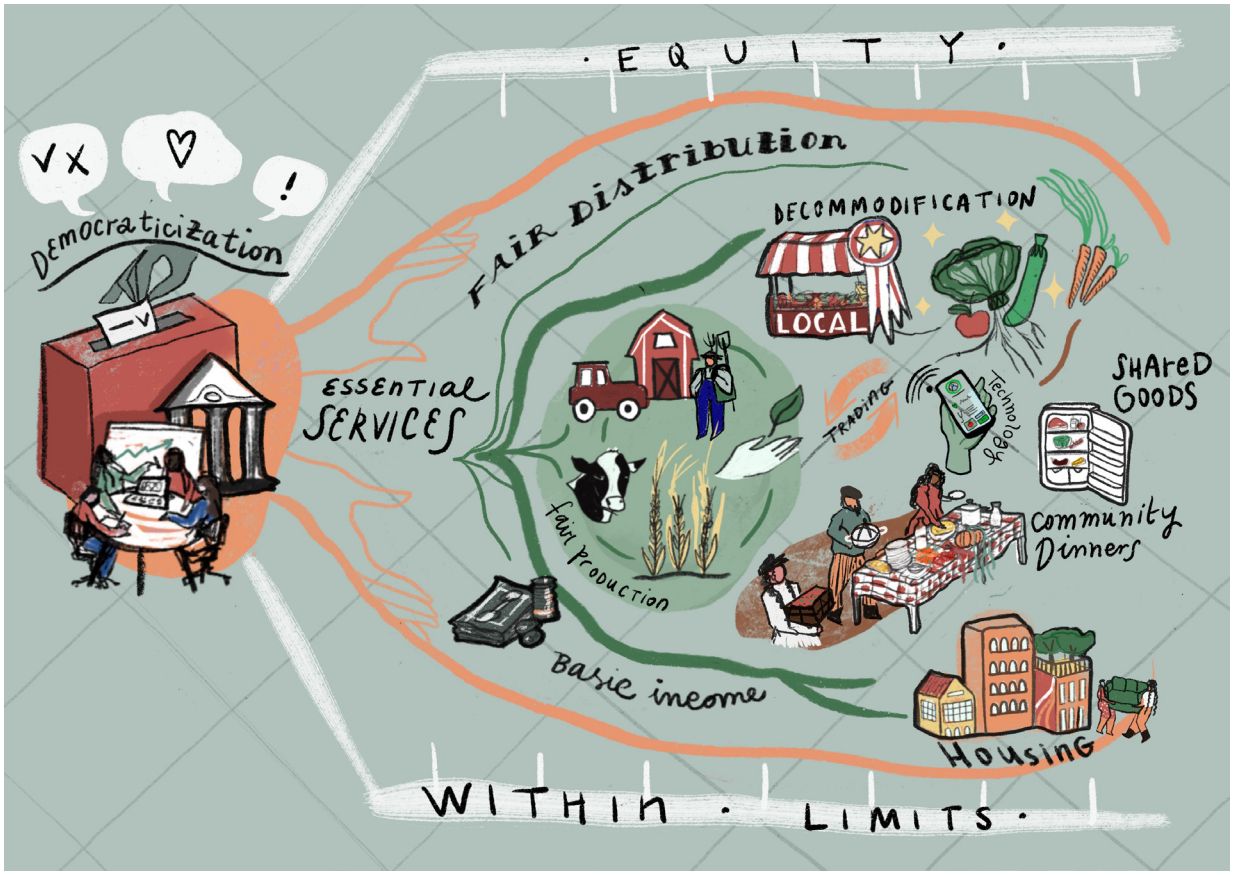
"Let's use the tools we have --> our problems are urgent"

"Path of least resistance. Fits into current paradigm."

State-led vision

The state-led vision was rooted in the narrative that a strong state and associated regulatory framework are necessary to drive food system change. Panellists for this vision included an academic working in international development, and founders of a campaign advocating for a basic income for farmers. Pre-workshop discussions resulted in a vision which described a future food system where the state leverages its power to restructure the food system with the goal of feeding people rather than producing profit, with food defined as a right rather than a commodity, and which centres democratic rather than market led decision making. The panellists envision greater nationalisation of essential services, including a basic income for farmers, greater social security nets to prevent people from falling into poverty and a 'national food service' which more equitably distributes food and connects consumers to producers. They take the position that a capitalist market is unreliable and untameable, and as such we need a fundamentally different system in which the state innovates to achieve social and environmental goals; in which success is defined as the reduction of inequalities; where greater connections are fostered between people, nature and food production; and where individuals and communities are empowered, enabled and encouraged to participate in democratic processes. The graphic visualisation for the state-led vision is provided in Figure 5.

Figure 5. State-led visualisation



By Roberta Aita

OVERVIEW: WHAT IS IT?

The first presentation for the state-led vision was given by two food activists and campaigners, Jo Poulton and Cleo Goodman. Their presentation focused on their campaign for a 'Basic Income' for farmers: regular, direct, cash payments made to individual farmers, farm workers and other food producers on an unconditional basis that would create an income floor for those in the agricultural sector. They also described their interpretation of the broader context and driving factors behind

their version of this vision. In their diagnosis of the problem, complex underlying drivers (e.g. climate change, the capitalist market economy, lower rates of new farm workers, high entry barriers to new farmers, mental health challenges in rural areas, and the damaging social and environmental consequences of the current system) have resulted in negative outcomes for the food system, and for food producers in particular. Their version of a state-led food future hinged on the need for "social innovation" which prioritises the basic needs of individuals (e.g. income, food safety, etc.). In this vision, "basic needs are met by default" and there are: "responsive and democratic systems of decision making, a labour market built for the collective good and a more equitable distribution of resources throughout the supply chain". They advocated for greater regulation of the private (economic) market and of supermarkets alongside an ambitious and well-resourced national food strategy. They also argued for the creation of a "national food service" as part of a democratic right-to-food, which would provide essential food to those who cannot access or afford it. These measures would be framed within the context of a national land use framework which prioritises planetary boundaries and establishes supportive and incentivising structures for sustainable agriculture. They argued that we need to redefine and reclaim growth as referring to"growing the good," wherein good is taken to mean community well-being, sustainable practices, economic resilience, and local economies. This was a point of view that they shared, in fact, with at least one of the speakers for the market vision.

The second version of the state-led vision was presented by academic and international relations and development Professor Ben Selwyn. He believed the underlying problem of food systems was capitalism. Capitalism, he argued, has reduced food to a commodity, a product that can be bought and sold at a profit as part of the market economy. He argued that the supposedly 'free' markets of a capitalist economy do not in practice exist because the power held by market actors is unequal and the benefits unjustly distributed. In the case of the food system, he pointed to agroindustry as one sector with too much power, while consumers and producers hold too little. Decommodification, defined as "the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation", was his answer to this challenge. Within this vision, decommodification would be brought to life by building on existing ideas; for example: human rights frameworks; a "national food service", described as a form of state-supported, free-at-point-of-use food provision; and creation and scaling (both up and out) of community restaurants which are community owned, publicly subsidised and serve healthy, nutritious and sustainable food at an affordable price. Rather than redefining growth, this version quite explicitly advocated for *de*-growth. More than enough food is already being produced to meet consumption needs, even with population growth, but is currently distributed inefficiently and unequally - we therefore need to shift away from the perspective that we need to produce more food to feed more people, and instead focus on more equitable distribution of the existing resources.

FEEDBACK: WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK OF THIS VISION?

Participants responded overall more positively to the state-led vision than to market-led. One participant noted that they had "a lot more sympathy for the state vision then [sic] the market one," and indeed the discussion session overran into the breaktime, because of this general enthusiasm. The whole-group discussion for this vision was especially enthusiastic. After critiques of the vision were voiced, centring on the risk of state overreach, one civil servant re-framed the discussion by making a distinction between a state-*facilitated* versus a state-*controlled* vision for future food. Within the state-*facilitated* framing, policymakers and state actors develop a regulatory framework which establishes boundaries within which market actors can operate. These boundaries might include minimum food safety requirements, mandatory reporting, or the provision of basic incomes for everyone or for certain groups of people. These "guardrail measures" are intended to even the

playing field between powerful actors and adjust power dynamics so as to be more equitable across the supply chain. He noted that this approach stands in contrast to a state-*controlled* framing, within which state actors more directly dictate how the food system would function and what people would eat. The idea for a state-*facilitated* vision was highly popular among participants (see Box 2) and their enthusiasm was reflected in discussions and feedback throughout the remainder of the workshop. Participants also requested the opportunity for further discussion and details about the policymaking element of the state vision and wanted more information about how the State could work in partnership with market and grassroots actors to drive change. This reflects an ongoing tension in the workshop design between the utility of focusing on distinct and ideologically simple visions versus more closely exploring the overlaps and interactions between them.

BOX 2. PARTICIPANT QUOTES FOR STATE-LED VISION

"State is already leading but not in a good way"

"Good session but I think session two was missing a presentation by a speaker with experience of state-led policy making to frame discussion"

"Confusion on state role; Caution is needed involving the state"

"State-led vision lacked a way to really address [environmental] degradation food systems is currently driving (which I think can be worked in but wanted more on it!)"

"Thinking about state-led versus state-controlled very helpful in persuasion"

"State visions more socialist than expected. State-enabled/ state-led guardrails seems a more fruitful space."

"Need a mission-led approach from government with appropriate levels of investment + legislation to support bottom-up change"

Bottom-up vision

In the third and final vision, food system change is dependent on bottom-up, community-led, collective action. Panellists for this bottom-up vision included a member of a local food partnership and leaders of community activist and civil society organisations. In the pre-workshop discussion, they articulated a food system that works in harmony to create good food that is healthy for people and the planet, and that is founded on the principles of fairness and accessibility. This vision relies on the nurturing of trust-based positive human relationships, and connections throughout the food supply chain and across stakeholder groups. The diverse, multi-scale and multi-level system they envisioned emphasises the need for flourishing within limits (planetary boundaries, financial limits, seasonality) and for distributing power rather than maintaining corporate control. State intervention in the market is necessary for this power redistribution (by reducing corporate control). Such intervention can also be used to incentivise circularity, provide financial stability and regulate food actors effectively. The outcome is good food that people can trust. Figure 6 provides the graphic visualisation of this vision.

Figure 6. Bottom-up visualisation

By Roberta Aita

OVERVIEW: WHAT IS IT?

The first presentation was given by Fiona Steel from Good Food Oxfordshire, which itself is part of the Sustainable Food Places Network. She identified four "problems" in her version of the bottom-up vision, some of which were also identified in market-led and state-led visions. These include: food is treated as a commodity (also noted in the state-led vision); there is a lack of 'true-cost accounting', or consideration of externalised negative health and planetary outcomes, (also noted in the market-led vision); the food environment (what food is made available, accessible, affordable and appealing) is harmful; and people have lost their connection to food. Her response to this vision was also articulated in Good Food Oxford's local food policy: a future in which "everyone in [the community]

can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need everyday." The features of this system are: less food waste, a more sustainable food economy rooted in local businesses, more engagement by community members with local food, more effective food governance and strategy across multiple scales, more locally produced sustainable food, and the prioritisation of food justice. Growth is defined in terms of community wealth building, to be achieved by developing the local economy through investment in and support for local businesses, while also paying fair wages to workers.

A second version of the bottom-up vision was presented by Pete Ritchie, Executive Director of Nourish Scotland and sustainable food campaigner. In his view, the current food system and approach to food policy is "wonky" and not suited to what should be its primary purpose: feeding people well. This version of the bottom-up vision called for a more radical shift of the existing food paradigm away from the capitalist and neoliberal values which frame today's economy and approach to policy. He envisions a community-led or citizen-led food system which prioritises equity, health and nature. This involves communities, made up of engaged citizens, taking the lead in a bottom-up transformation of the food system which would be supported by other key actors (such as state and market actors). Achieving this would involve a series of shifts in mindsets along the lines detailed in Table 1.

Enablers of this change include right to food legislation; a clear definition of government duties across planning, monitoring and regulation; consistent financial support for food system actors (such as farmers and food workers) including income support; and non-governmental organisations working more effectively with civil society across local, national and international scales.

Table 1. Version two of the bottom-up vision: food policy activist's interpretation

Existing paradigm & system	Envisioned paradigm & system
Farming versus nature	Farming with nature
Farming as business	Farming as service
Bargain-hunting consumer	Risk-sharing citizen
Extractive supply chains	Mutualist supply chains
Sustainable nutrition as private challenge	Sustainable nutrition as public duty
Consumer customers	Citizen customers
Corporate actors	Corporate, citizen and community actors
Commodity production: inputs to outputs	Sustainable nutrition: circular economy
Worldview of *it's a business*	Worldview of *it's a universal service*
Owners of land and capital	Owners are governments and people
Environment of scarcity and market forces	Environment of planetary health boundaries

The third and final version of this vision was given by a food activist Julie Brown, Director of Growing Communities, which is a civil society organisation that provides local vegetables to citizens in Hackney. In her analysis, the "monochrome" current system was contrasted with a"multicoloured" vision for the future of food, detailed in Table 2. In the transformed "multicoloured" vision, a diversity of solutions operate across multiple scales and the "painfully tidy" transitions to the "beautifully messy." Similar to other panellists, growth in this version of the bottom-up vision is redefined as growth of desirable "multicoloured" elements with de-growth of undesirable "monochrome" elements.

Table 2. Third version of bottom-up vision: interpretation of a local veg box scheme leader

Monochrome (existing system)	Multicoloured (transformed system)
Farming is increasingly dominated by large-scale operations geared up to supply supermarkets and commodity markets	Diversity of solutions operating across multiple scales, e.g. a continuum
Productivism	Productivity redefined
[Unfair] Price to the farmer	Paying farmers a fair price
No limits! Minimal regulation	Limits and standards
Disconnection	Decentralisation
Profit maximisation and shareholders returns	Trading with principles

FEEDBACK: WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK OF THIS VISION?

The bottom-up vision was very positively received by participants; most feedback was supportive and a few comments expressing difficulty with critiquing it (see Box 3). That said, participants raised many questions about the practicality of this vision, even while commending its ideas and values-led approach. Some felt that detail was lacking on how to achieve or implement the ideas behind this vision, while others expressed the need for bottom-up and state-led actors to work together to make this vision possible. Many questioned how businesses (including farmers and workers along the supply chain) could remain productive and profitable and sustainably generate income without exploiting themselves through, for example, working long hours for little recompense. Others identified tensions within the vision itself, including, for example, the value conflict between pursuing individual free choice (with self-sufficiency values) on the one hand and collective goals on the other. Another participant identified a tension between local and individual-scale changes given the urgent pressures of climate change and need for large-scale transformation. Two participants also raised concerns about rising food insecurity and whether or not the bottom-up vision could adequately address this. They questioned whether local-scale production could sufficiently feed the world or whether this vision would make food more inaccessible (physically and economically) to those in poverty. Overall, participants enjoyed and were inspired by the concepts expressed by panellists but sought more detail on how to achieve them practically.

BOX 3. PARTICIPANT QUOTES FOR BOTTOM-UP VISION

"Bottom up and state are contentious"

"Without state support community-led is self-exploitation"

"There is a disconnect around implementing the grassroots riddle which require significant economic reform of a state and global level."

"Need more representation of the values-led emphasis. People are motivated by what is right, but this also needs to generate £"

"People seem overwhelmingly keen on local approaches, but had to find negatives to talk about it."

"The bottom-up vision is the most appealing and clearly the direction should go – for people + planet – but needs support to overcome huge obstacles.."

"Who knows better than local actors to mobilise change"

"Great opportunity to get govt attention and handl-deliver policy solutions (rooted in reality)"

Vision development

During the final workshop session, we asked participants to work in five groups to develop new visions for a better food future, reflecting and building on the overall workshop content. Due to the limited time available, this exercise was used as a tool to reflect, critique, develop and refine descriptions for the original three visions of market-led, state-led and bottom-up rather than starting with a totally blank canvas. In future iterations of the workshop, we aim to dedicate more time to this exercise to allow participants to more fully develop new visions.

Each group was asked to pinpoint three values upon which to base their vision; then continue by identifying key actor groups and describing the roles they would serve in shaping and contributing to their ideal food future. At the end of the session they presented their vision to the rest of the participants as stories of transformation„ so as to bring their vision to life. While specific value choices varied between groups, common themes of diversity, equity and justice (e.g. 'fairness', 'inclusivity', 'One Health', 'valuing the more than human') were included in every vision. The same key actor groups of state, small businesses and market were also included in all five visions. The fundamental structure of the systems too were similar: the state served as a regulatory, facilitative force which established the guardrails within which the other actors operated; the market offered capital investment and some innovative energy, whilst bottom-up (local, citizen, grassroots) actors drove the creation of new enterprises and organisations. This more generally reflects the comments participants made to us after the workshop that their collective vision for a better food future cannot be bound within a singular market-led, state-led or bottom-up approach, but rather drawn from a combination of all three. On the face of it, this could be said to describe present-day reality in which the market, state and community all play a part. However, there was clearly a difference in the existing power relations among actors that we have today and among the positive visions participants envisaged, and it is in these specifics that the participants focused their innovative energy.

In one vision (*balance*, *harmony*, *nourishing*), a new actor, the Convenor, was introduced to mediate between state and private actors; this Convenor would be radically diverse, transparent, neutral and evidence-driven, trusted, and accountable. This vision also emphasised consideration of future people, placing their needs at a separate level above those of all present actors; the participants suggested looking outside the British political system for examples of how this consideration might be formalised.

Another vision (*diversity*, *more-than-human*, *equity*) emphasised the role of the state as systems thinker, as well as facilitator and regulator. Also central in this vision were the role of educators. Participants specified many concrete outcomes: more organic production, more horticulture, fewer grazing animals, more small mixed farms, lower meat consumption, limits to the role of UPFs in diets, and food provision through community diners, but disagreed on roles for rewilding and for cultured meat.

Yet another vision (*connectivity*, *One Health*, *diversity*) offered a particularly clear theory of change. The first mover in this story is the state, which initiates a transformation of the supply chain towards more local, environmentally friendly and healthy food production through public procurement. Citizens come to realise the importance of health and environmental guardrails, partly through seeing the effects of climate change and partly through the decriminalisation of protest and a blossoming of grassroots pressure; as a result, state regulation of markets is increased, and markets and market innovation are required to operate in service of society. All of these changes are self-reinforcing.

These exemplify some common threads throughout the visions: a call for a strengthening of state regulatory power over markets, coupled with the devolution of power to local, smaller-scale actors, an increase in deliberative democracy, and private investment in local solutions. These were by no means perfect consensus positions across all participants, and the fact that they emerged as common, appealing positions may reflect the composition of attendees. Still, they also reflect the convincing arguments that the different speakers made for their three 'pure' visions: those positives were found threaded throughout the mixed visions that resulted.

A group session at the workshop in October 2024. Photo by Jacquelyn Turner

3. Forging a new future food system

This workshop represented a small start in strengthening connections between people from different disciplines and fields working towards better political, economic and food system futures. We used visions and futures thinking methods as tools to help bridge the divides between stakeholders, while constructively exploring and critiquing their own assumptions, values and beliefs about what changes should occur and how to make them happen. We end this report with reflections and observations about these methodological tools and the experience of the workshop itself. We explore what worked and what could be improved in the future; what we have learned through the experience; and how we would like to take this work forward.

Lessons learned: what worked and what didn't?

Workshop attendees – including participants, panellists and TABLE team members – provided feedback through comment cards, materials created during the workshop (such as workshop reflection cards, vision walls and new vision boards), feedback forms, and spontaneously getting in touch with us after the workshop with further reflections and requests for additional meetings. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees enjoying the workshop and the challenge of exploring new perspectives, and with ongoing requests for future collaborations and keen interest in TABLE's next steps. This section describes reflections from both participants and TABLE team members about the workshop structure, engagement activities, and our collective experiences.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

While supportive of the overall workshop format and structure, participants suggested that future workshops should have more time for discussion and less for panellist presentations. They also recommended that future workshops should focus more on *how* to achieve visions than on *what* visions are seen to be desirable. After reflecting on this, we feel that future TABLE workshops should ideally take a two-stage approach: the first workshop would develop *what* futures stakeholders envision, and a second workshop would further explore *how* to make them a reality. This would be a time-intensive process and would require considerable commitment on the part of participants and a persuasive rationale for doing so – one being, perhaps, the opportunity to work together to do more work (research or practice based) on these issues.

Participants strongly supported the collaborative, creative and inclusive approach we took with this workshop, valuing in particular the networking opportunities, the diverse attendee list and the opportunity to engage with people from outside of their own fields and knowledge spaces. That said, one participant commented that the TABLE team missed an opportunity to invite large environmental charities and representatives of major landowners (such as the National Trust, RSPB, RHS and Country Land and Business Association) to the meeting – their presence is important as they have both influence in policy-making and decision-making power of their own. Relatedly, the TABLE team discussed the effects of stakeholder choices on discussions, and what might have emerged if we had supporters of more radical positions (within all three visions).

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Attendees enjoyed the creative activities we designed to enhance and support discussions. For some, the amount of sticky notes was overwhelming and they felt that the activities became repetitive after the second vision session. On reflection, we feel that future work could make more use of virtual tools (e.g. polls, quizzes, interactive whiteboards, etc.); that we could plan physical activities differently so that materials created had uses after the workshop and a bigger role in outputs; and that we could further refine activities with impact goals in mind.

Participants had mixed views on the artwork, with some feeling the visualisations were useful and valuable, others finding them confusing or inaccurate, and still others reporting that they had not engaged with them at all. To address this, TABLE team members suggested that future workshops could include participants in the creation of the artwork at the workshop itself. We as TABLE members found the process of visualising the future with the artist illuminating and challenging and it makes sense that this approach should be one for all participants to share. Another (or perhaps complementary) suggestion *was* to include a separate prompt for participants to reflect on visual aspects of their ideal future food version (e.g. colour, texture, shape) during discussion sessions, and use that feedback to design the artwork after the workshop.

A tall order: reflections on TABLE's approach

After reflecting on our experiences and exploring the workshop materials, TABLE team members discussed how we might better design and lead workshops which bring together different stakeholders to envision better food futures. We focus on challenges for both TABLE, as the workshop designer and facilitator, and workshop attendees (including both participants and panellists). This section describes these challenges in more detail and proposes ways in which we can better address them in future work.

TABLE'S CHALLENGE

Our theory of change is to enable others to be aware of and transparent with their own mindsets and facilitate empathetic engagement with diverse, and seemingly opposing, perspectives. For this workshop, we used values thinking, futures thinking and visioning as methodological tools to help participants discover and explore their own mindsets, expose them to new ways of thinking, and work together to build visions for the future of food. This type of work is inherently challenging; it is a complex and difficult ask which requires people to think critically about themselves in ways that are both unfamiliar and personally provoking. As facilitators of this workshop, the TABLE team faced the challenge of engaging (and perhaps introducing) people to thinking about mindsets and equipping them with the skills and empathetic willingness to do so. We approached this task practically, by designing workshop activities and prompting discussions that would enable participants to experience values, visions and futures work first-hand rather than learning about it through a presentation. Throughout the workshop, participants were asked to reflect directly upon their own values, assumptions, and beliefs, then share them as a group before discussing them in the context of future food systems.

After reflection, however, the TABLE team observed a few challenges with this approach in practice. The first challenge was that we asked participants to think in new and unfamiliar ways both methodologically (with values, futures and visions work) and across different fields (food systems, political, economic thinking). The second was that an inherent requirement of values, futures and visioning work is to communicate openly, honestly and vulnerably with very personal views and ways of thinking. We asked participants to do this, possibly for the first time, within an academic and potentially intimidating setting and then share those views with strangers. Closely related to this, the third challenge was that cultural and discourse norms have conditioned us to be uncomfortable sharing personal perspectives within professional settings, especially when the purpose of sharing those perspectives is to be critiqued and challenged. Participants responded to this with the natural tendency of seeking consensus in discussions and avoiding conflict rather than clearly and explicitly disagreeing with their group members. The rest of this section discusses these challenges in more depth along with ideas for future work to better address them. We believe there are no 'one solution' or easy answers to these challenges, so instead we plan to continue experimenting with different ways of addressing them to discover what works best.

THE IMPOSSIBLE ASK

We called the nuanced challenges participants faced 'the impossible ask' because we recognize how complex and difficult values, futures and visioning work may have been for participants to do.

New ways of thinking

Participants' first challenge was to think in new ways, both in terms of values, futures and visioning work and in terms of system thinking for political, economic and food systems. Before developing future food visions, participants had to recognise and understand that: first, that we each have our own, unique mindset built on a set of assumptions, beliefs and values; second, that these mindsets may change over time and in different contexts, sometimes to the point of inconsistency; and third, that others have mindsets that may appear different on the surface, but might actually be rooted in similar values, beliefs and assumptions at their core. While this process of self-reflection and provocative thinking is inherent to values and futures work, it is an uncomfortable, deeply personal and difficult task, especially when people are unfamiliar with thinking this way.

Beyond this, participants had to engage with personally-provoking values work within the context of developing visions for the future of food. Visioning work requires systems thinking, and for this workshop that included three different systems: food, political and economic. Change across economic and political systems, in this case, was framed as the necessary goal for facilitating a better food system. We purposely invited stakeholders from the different backgrounds of politics, economics and food to bridge the divides between their perspectives and prompt collaboration towards transformative visions for a better food future. While this diversity was a central goal of the workshop, it also required participants to speak about change within systems with which they were not universally familiar and beyond their particular areas of knowledge. Thus, we were asking participants to not only challenge their own personal values, beliefs and assumptions through values, but to push a step further and explore how these beliefs influenced and related to three different, and possibly unfamiliar, systems. As a group, this is a strength of the workshop design in that it brings together different knowledge bases and creates space for mutual learning. For individual participants, however, it required quick learning, flexibility and a willingness to rely on others' expertise to develop robust visions.

In future workshops, the TABLE team could help participants and panellists to think in new ways by providing more hands-on support and training. For panellists, this may involve more direct assistance with developing their presentations and sharing nuanced insight into the complexity of food systems thinking, or adapting the workshop format so that TABLE develops and presents the different future food visions based on advice from and consultations with those working to change political and economic systems. For participants, we could provide resource materials or 'homework' before the workshop to establish a shared foundation of knowledge. In practice, however, more 'homework' would add to the amount of time requested of participants so might be infeasible. As an alternative, we could incorporate the resource materials into the workshop itself by, for example, including a 'food systems 101' in the opening session, but that would leave less time for discussing and exploring the different visions.

Sharing personal views

As noted, values and futures work is a deeply personal process and is notoriously difficult to do, especially when values are rooted in unconscious biases, long-standing beliefs or unconsidered assumptions. For some, this workshop was the first time they had critically questioned these personal views or thought about them in the context of systems change. After thinking in these new ways, participants had to clearly articulate their personal views in a concrete way, while also considering different contexts and levels of analysis (e.g. different stakeholder interests; different food system problems such as health, environment, power; local versus national scale). Then, participants were asked to share these reflections with people they had just met and who might disagree with them. They were instructed to do this all with the aim of challenging, discussing and re-evaluating their own personal views in the context of others' perspectives to evolve their own thinking and discover novel pathways for change. Honest, open and direct communication about one's values, assumptions and beliefs was a fundamental part of this work; without it, thinking could not evolve, mindsets could not develop, and innovative pathways toward a new, creative future could not be easily discovered. Sharing such personal views, however, demanded an emotional authenticity and even vulnerability from participants which may have been intimidating within a workshop setting.

The workshop might have seemed more intimidating to participants due to its location at the Oxford Martin School, and the University of Oxford more generally. This setting established a more formal and academic atmosphere which might have been strange and uncomfortable for some participants. We also designed the workshop to follow a 'presentation and discussion' format which reflects and upholds a more traditional academic environment. This may have reinforced implicit power structures

of ‘expert and student’ between panellists and participants rather than enabling a more equal two-way dialogue model. These power dynamics have the capacity to affect both panellists and participants: panellists, in that they may feel intimidated or even vulnerable by presenting on difficult and potentially unfamiliar topics in front of a large audience; and participants in that they may feel their perspectives and opinions are less valued or educated compared to panellists and therefore, are not as worthy of presentation.

To address these challenges in future projects, TABLE could be more explicit about the need for open, honest communication and reasons behind it. We could develop more defined ‘rules of the workshop’, which would be shared with participants both in advance of the workshop and at the start of each day, to help foster a safe and welcoming atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their personal views. The purpose of this process would be to both recognize the difficulty of sharing personal views and also thank participants for their openness. We could also consider alternative workshop formats based around more group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, or roundtable ‘circuits’ which participants would rotate between. Different locations for the workshop could also be considered, depending on the project’s budget and target audience.

Responding to tensions

In response to the challenges already discussed, participants had a tendency to seek consensus, or complete agreement, in their discussions rather than explicitly disagreeing with strangers and engaging with inevitable tensions. Such a response is common, natural, and even expected when sharing such personal views, especially when any critique or feedback may be interpreted as a personal attack on deeply held beliefs rather than constructive criticism of the expressed ideas. Being exposed in this way is an inherently uncomfortable exercise, and may have required a higher degree of trust than participants had with each other. However, consensus-building can lead to a level of superficiality which fails to engage with genuine disagreements (with rewilding and cultured meat being two examples that came up in this workshop, but which we didn’t have time to discuss). It also may have obscured some of the nuances and conflicts participants identified within and between visions, as the records could not capture all of the subtle points discussed during group work. Some viewpoints may have been overruled by the majority of group members, or individuals may have chosen not to share all of their opinions and ideas.

Part of the TABLE’s theory of change and the purpose behind this workshop was to challenge and provoke participants into considering new perspectives and re-evaluating their own ideas. While challenging and uncomfortable, we believe self-reflection of this sort is a valuable and worthwhile exercise in both work and life. These skills enable stakeholders to more critically evaluate the world around them, identify and define their own perspectives, empathetically engage with different viewpoints, and, thus, evolve their own thinking in novel ways. The most common feedback from the participant survey about discussions was that they were a “provoking” and positive experience, which we think reflects a strength of TABLE’s approach to this workshop. For future workshops, we aim to move away from consensus-building and hold ‘creative tensions’ by encouraging participants to express disagreements more directly and explore them in more depth. We believe that these differences of opinion are a valuable and good thing to have within vision workshops, as they reveal tensions between visions and provide new avenues of discovery and insight.

WORKSHOP IMPACT

Despite these challenges, participants’ feedback suggests that this workshop did help participants evolve their own thinking. Most attendees started the workshop with a preference for one of the three visions and a certain bias against other visions. For example, some were drawn initially to the values and ideals of the bottom-up vision and were more critical of the perceived profit-driven motives of the

market-led vision. After hearing from panellists, however, and discussing the visions in more detail, participants commented on how their initial impressions shifted or were changed altogether. By the end of the workshop, many attendees expressed a greater openness to exploring perspectives they may have disagreed with in the past and noted that the three visions did not have to be mutually exclusive: different visions focused on providing different elements, *all* of which, together, could form a robust vision for the future of food.

> **On a personal note, even though I was an advocate for the market, I left with the feeling that a bottom-up vision, guided by a state-led approach, acting as a leader and partnering with the market, is essential to demonstrating the interconnectedness of nature, people, and health. In my mind, I envisioned a combination of all three of those elements.**

Even so, participants were engaged in the workshop sessions and demonstrated through their feedback that they enjoyed expanding beyond their comfort zones and are keen for future work. We believe that this workshop shows that, even though it is challenging, values, futures and visioning work provides many more opportunities to explore, experiment and discover effective ways to think about the future of food.

Next steps

To that end, there are many opportunities for more work in this space. Participants expressed keen interest in further developing and refining the new visions they had developed together, for exploring the synergies between the presented visions, and for identifying practical pathways to achieve them. In addition to these goals, the TABLE team believe there is more work to be done in deepening and clarifying the three presented visions, in order to feed into richer and more innovative hybrids. The following section sets out a few ideas as to how we might move forward.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

We believe there are clear opportunities to build and develop the work started in this workshop by exploring our three visions with new stakeholders, by testing new workshop formats, and by expanding on workshop discussions. In the future, we could hold a similar version of this two-day workshop with other participants, after taking into account the feedback and reflections described in this report. A variation of this would be to host a two-stage workshop in which the first workshop would focus on developing future visions and the second would explore different pathways for achieving them. Another option is to compress the workshop into a one-day format in which TABLE team members present the different visions rather than bring in external panellist speakers. While this would reduce the time available for discussion, it would also lessen time demands on participants (making it accessible for more people). We want to continue to engage with people who hold power and think in novel ways about political and economic transformation (e.g. investors, philanthropists) to discover what they envision for a better food future and provoke them to consider new viewpoints. Alternatively, we could bring together people who hold similar values and beliefs and explore how alike their future food visions are to each other. For example, it would be interesting to run *separate* workshops

involving investors on the one hand and radical non-governmental organisations on the other. This format could enable the separate groups to articulate visions with less orthodox views and clarify their understanding of their own positions. We could build on this even more by bringing the two groups into conversation with one another in a final half day workshop.

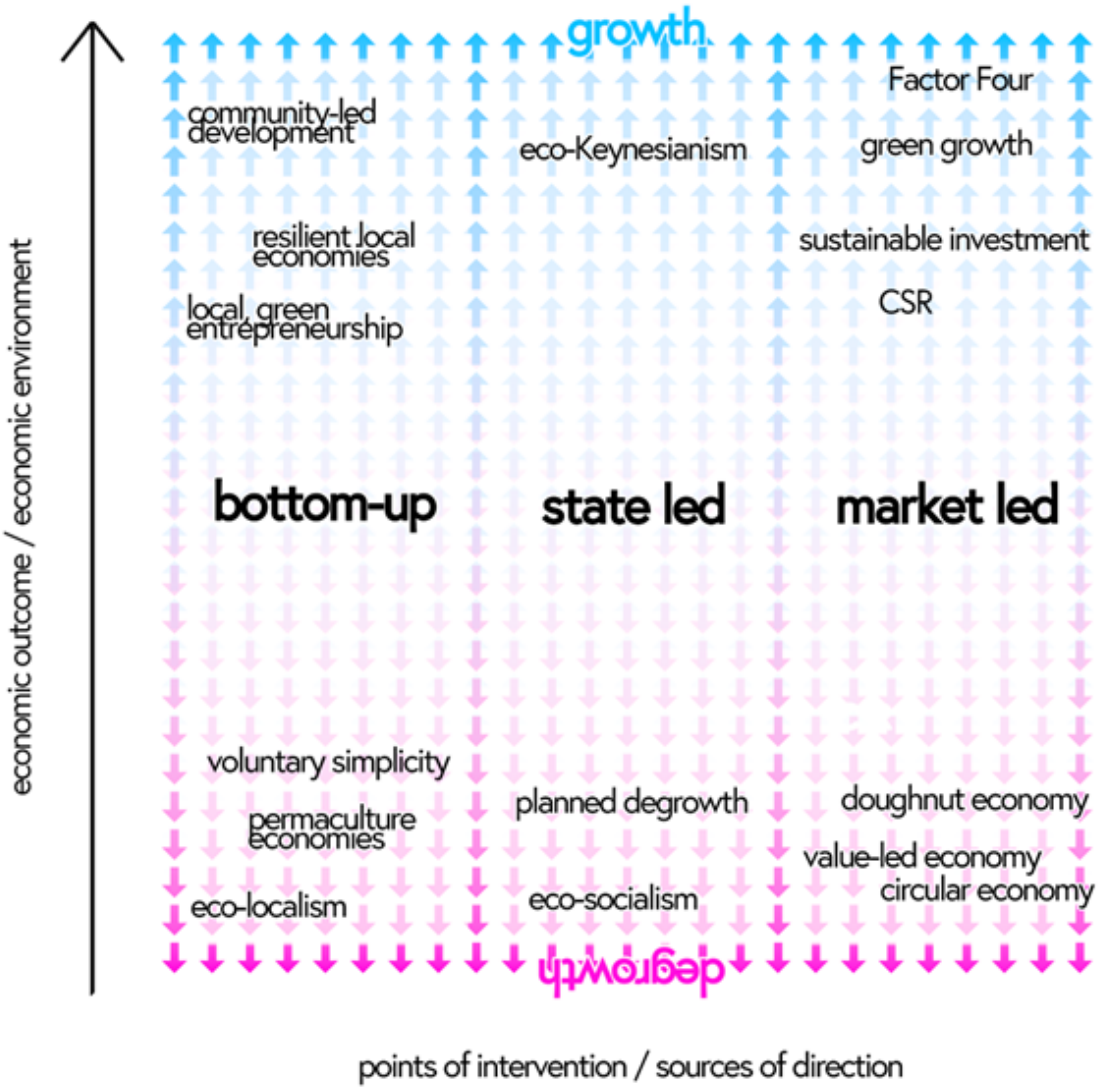
ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

We also feel there is significant value in doing more in-depth research to explore the diverse visions people have for the future of food. We believe values, futures and visioning methods are useful tools which can help people understand their own values, beliefs and assumptions while also empathetically engaging with others' diverse perspectives. Our aim with this project would be to 'sharpen' and develop these tools. It is important to note that an implicit claim in this work is that the three visions we have used here reflect three poles (extreme points) in the range of visions energising stakeholders to try to transform the food system. By undertaking further research with stakeholders, we would build more robust versions of the visions, strengthening our empirical basis for this assumption. Our hypothesis is that this work would confirm and add nuance to the three political-economic visions of food systems transformation (market-led, state-led, and bottom-up) around which we structured this workshop. The richer versions of future food visions, developed through this project, would be more effective tools to provoke stakeholders to reflect on their own values, assumptions, and use of evidence, and to engage with those of others in future iterations of this workshop and elsewhere in future research.

We would explore these diverse stakeholder visions through interviews and surveys, then cluster the responses into broad vision categories. Then, we would talk to specialists working in diverse fields (population health, economics, environmental modelling, historians, and others with food system knowledge) to gain more structural, food system knowledge and to deepen and strengthen the visions. We would ask, for example, how would these visions work in practice? Would they work at all? What would be the risks and opportunities in pursuing these visions? What would be the assumptions and necessary requirements for them? A particular point we hope to explore more deeply in this work is the role of concepts of 'growth': what do stakeholders mean when they talk about 'redefining' growth, and how does this relate to ideas of degrowth? Although we prompted speakers and participants to engage with ideas of (de)growth in our workshop and incorporated them into our initial contrasting visions (see Figure 7), we believe there is more nuance and depth to be found here.

After we have developed stakeholder ideas into more robust visions, we would hold backcasting workshops with experts in relevant fields to explore practical pathways for achieving them. For example, a robust vision for a market-led food future would be held with economic thinkers and financial experts. We would present this vision at the workshop, then ask stakeholders to collaboratively explore the challenges for achieving it and how to overcome them. Finally, we would try to get more people thinking deeply and expansively about what they want for the future of food by communicating and sharing the final visions in creatively engaging ways. These outputs would describe the positives and negatives for each vision and may take the form of, for example, immersive narratives, multimedia formats, or serious games.

Figure 7. The three visions and their relation to growth



FINAL THOUGHTS

Most agree that food system transformation is not only necessary, but urgent. New thinking has evolved for political, economic and food system change, but we have yet to decide what form this change will take and how it will happen. While there are many ideas out there, some more influential than others, on how to transform economic and political systems for a better human society, the complexity of food systems is often overlooked or not factored into these discussions. Additionally, political, economic and food systems thinkers remain siloed within their own fields and do not actively collaborate to address the challenges of climate change, poor health and polarisation. *The Politics and Economics of Food System Transformation* workshop aimed to bridge this divide and encourage people to step outside of their comfort zones to understand new perspectives and think critically about their visions for the future of food. Beyond this, we challenged participants to scrutinise the values underlying their visions, the novel political and economic approaches needed to progress them, and the mechanisms and theories of change needed to achieve them. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive for this experience, with many attendees keen to see what TABLE will do next. We believe there are many exciting opportunities to continue the work we started here, through ongoing engagement with additional workshops or a longer-term action research project, and welcome collaborations or further suggestions.

Find out more

TABLE helps people navigate the evidence, values and visions that shape important debates about the future of sustainable food systems. Learn more at our website.

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