

Both sides of the coin

Arguments for and against economic growth

Overview

Participants independently explore the pros and cons of economic growth by taking part in an interactive exhibition using short texts. They conduct a silent discussion about their own thoughts and questions using posters, and explore additional materials displayed in the room providing information and starting points for a closer examination of the subject.

Instructions

Preparation

This activity requires a certain amount of preparation. To begin with, the growth “coins” must be printed out and prepared. They are then displayed in such a way that the participants can easily read them, arranged throughout the room. Next to the coins, sheets of paper from the flip charts are hung for the silent discussion (Materials: questions for reflection).

Other stations can also be set up in the room. Some suitable ideas include:

- > information about the topic of growth (texts, graphs, etc.) such as the “BIP BIP Hurra” graph
- > a laptop showing short films or extracts such as “The Impossible Hamster” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sqwd_u6HkMo>)
- > Growth Quartets (chapter 1), Rebound Comics (chapter 2)
- > an inspiration table: cards showing alternatives to growth (see method “Building another world”, chapter 5)
- > a book table: books, magazines and other materials



7-25



30–60 minutes



Flip charts, markers, pinboards if possible, laptop, headphones, table to display books if used, exit cards (chapter 5), videos
Downloadable materials (<www.endlich-wachstum.de>): “Coins”, questions for reflection

Execution

1. To begin with, it is useful to discuss with the participants what is meant when we refer to economic growth and GDP.
2. Ideas can then be elicited as to why the economy should grow at all, and recorded on the flip chart. The most frequent answers here are the usual arguments such as jobs, prosperity and tax revenue, shown on one side of the “coins”. However, the “other side of the coin” calls these arguments for growth into question.
3. The activity is then briefly explained to the participants: displayed throughout the room are “coins” showing arguments for and against growth. There are also large sheets of paper for a silent discussion, on which the participants – without speaking to each other – will write their thoughts and questions and complete or comment on the contributions of others. Other materials such as videos, the inspiration table, etc. are briefly presented.
4. The participants are then given some time to explore the room and the materials. During this time, the facilitator is on hand to answer any questions.

Evaluation

To conclude the activity, it is a good idea to come together in a seated circle. The evaluation can be based on questions such as the following:

- › What was new to you, and what were you already familiar with?
- › What interested/surprised/impressed you the most, or gave you the most cause for thought?
- › Do we need continued growth in Germany/other country (as appropriate to the group)?
- › What about in the countries of the Global South?
- › How do we contribute to growth in our daily lives?
- › What alternatives to a growth-oriented economy are you aware of/appeal to you?
- › What difficulties do you foresee in the transition to an economy without growth?

Variations	<p>The “coins” can also be prepared and presented in small groups.</p> <p>The evaluation can also take the form of a discussion of the pros and cons of growth using the fishbowl discussion format. An introduction to the fishbowl format can be found online: http://slitoolkit.ohchr.org/data/downloads/fishbowl.pdf. The following statements are suitable for this purpose, each represented by one chair in the discussion: “We need more growth”, “We need growth, but it must be ecologically and socially sustainable” and “We need a post-growth society”.</p>
Tips for facilitators	<p>This method relies on self-managed learning on the part of participants. They are given the freedom to decide which texts and materials they wish to examine more closely. It may be appropriate to use only some of the “coins”.</p>
Suggestions for follow-up	<p>This method is suitable as an introduction to the topic. Depending on the desired focus, a wide range of follow-up activities are possible to explore particular aspects.</p>