

# The Story of Stuff

## A film about the ecological limits of our economic model

### Overview

With the help of the video “The Story of Stuff”, participants examine the planet’s ecological limits in the context of economic growth. The film serves as a springboard for the topic, leading to a deeper exploration of selected examples on both the input and output side.




### Instructions

#### Preparation

The equipment is set up.

#### Execution

1. To begin with, the concept of ecological limits is discussed with the participants. The participants are then invited to suggest ecological limits to economic growth in a brainstorming session. The suggestions are recorded on a flip chart.
2. Subsequently, the video “The Story of Stuff” by Annie Leonard is shown. Comprehension questions can be asked at the end of the video.
3. On a pinboard, the terms “Input” (left), “Economic growth” (middle) and “Output” (right) are displayed on three sheets of A4 paper, reflecting the style used in the film. The participants make a list of the limits on the input side mentioned in the video (e.g. trees, water, fish, ...). Next, the limits on the output side (toxic waste, air pollution, CO<sub>2</sub>, rubbish, ...) are listed.
4. The lists can now be completed with the limits suggested by the participants in step 1, as well as new suggestions.

	8-30
	45 minutes
	Laptop (with internet connection if required), projector, A4 paper; Downloadable materials (< <a href="http://www.endlich-wachstum.de">www.endlich-wachstum.de</a> >): Video “The Story of Stuff” (< <a href="http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff">http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff</a> >)

#### Evaluation

Possible questions for evaluation:

- > What strikes you about how the limits are represented in the film?
- > Our economic system is based on constant economic growth. What consequences does this have in terms of input and output?
- > Where do you see connections between the input and output side?
- > What alternatives to the existing system are mentioned?
- > What could we do to change or reduce input and output?
- > Do you have any suggestions for an economy that does not rely on constant growth?
- > The film mentions “closed loop production” as a possible alternative. What might such a system look like?

Variations	If time is limited, extracts from the film can be shown instead. Besides ecological limits, the film focuses on topics such as externalisation of costs, planned obsolescence and falling levels of life satisfaction, which can also be addressed in relation to growth.
Tips for facilitators	The sequel to “The Story of Stuff” (2007) is the film “The Story of Solutions” (2013), available at: <a href="http://storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-solutions/">http://storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-solutions/</a>
Suggestions for follow-up	A suitable continuation for this activity is “Memo-Spiel – Die ökologischen Grenzen der Erde” (“Memory Game – The Ecological Limits of the Earth”, chapter 2, currently only available in German - see <a href="http://www.endlich-wachstum.de">www.endlich-wachstum.de</a> ). The topic can also be explored further with the method “Why do we consume?” (chapter 3).