

UNESCO Chair in Learning and Teaching Futures Literacy in the Anthropocene

Method mosaic

Title:	FUTURES STORIES LAB: a futures literacy workshop
Target audience:	Starting from primary level II, Secondary Level I, II, university education, adult education
Time:	Approx. 4–5 hours intensive or as a week-long project
Objective:	Envisioning sustainable futures (GreenComp 4.3)
Topic:	Freely selectable future topic
Materials:	Digital or analogue tools for brainstorming, video creation, etc.; drawing/craft materials; Padlet or cloud for online sharing

Brief Description:

The FUTURES STORIES LAB offers a structured yet flexible framework for working on a future-oriented topic with a group. Through joint creative engagement, futures stories emerge: ideas about what a desirable future might look like.¹

We train our imagination. We explore, research, imagine, craft and share visions of a good future: with each other and for each other. The result is images and stories of the future that are not just dreams. Because what we can imagine with the help of our imagination can also become reality. Together, for each other.

The five steps – or five chapters of the ‘futures story’ in which the ideas come to life – are presented here in a sequential manner, but they can also overlap or arise individually: EXPLORE – RESEARCH – IMAGINE – CRAFT – SHARE.

- (1) **Which future topic do we want to address in the FUTURES STORIES LAB?** We want to find out in the **EXPLORE** chapter. We use an image, a text or a song as inspiration and see what thoughts and feelings it triggers in us. What future does it hold? For example, in people, animals, plants and their ways of life? In the things we use and how we use them? In the places where we and others live? In how we get there and what we do there?
- Is this a probable, possible, plausible future? And what does a desirable future look like? A good future for people, animals, plants, things, places and activities? Tell their stories!
- We collect all our associations, thoughts and questions on a poster or in a word cloud. Then we consider: What do we actually know about this? Why do we believe that it is as we have described and noted it? Where do these ideas come from?
- The EXPLORE chapter is complete when we have realised that our ideas about the future have something to do with where we come from and who we are. And when we have decided which vision of the future and which futures story we want to explore further.

- (2) **What can we know about our future topic?** We want to find out in the **RESEARCH** chapter. We look for figures, data, and facts – which we collect, document, and analyse. We critically examine where this knowledge comes from, when and where it originated – because knowledge always arises in a social, cultural, historical, and political context.

In this way, we create a knowledge base based on the current state of research. We are assisted in this by experts we interview, experiments we conduct, and excursions that take us to meaningful places.

We document our research process in a research diary and visualise it – e.g. on a research board. In this way, we make connections visible: between people and theories, between non-human beings and matter. This helps us to recognise the symbiotic networks in which all life on Earth is interwoven and to consider the long-term consequences of interventions.

The RESEARCH chapter is complete when our research stories have been written and illustrated, documented and presented. But we are aware that knowledge is always a snapshot and always in flux.

- (3) **What might an alternative, desirable future look like?** In the **IMAGINE** chapter, we want to find out – with the help of our imagination.

We take our research stories from the RESEARCH chapter as a starting point: What knowledge is still missing – and might be developed in the future? What will our vision of the future look like then?

The ideas that arise from these questions are openly exchanged and discussed, with one important rule: anything is possible. So we refrain from restrictions, criticism, and excuses. Instead, we express our wishes and desires, weigh up potentials and possibilities, give free rein to our imagination and even think the impossible.

This results in sketches – perhaps of a picture or a construction plan, a future landscape or a comic strip. The sketches represent our vision of an alternative, desirable future.

The IMAGINE chapter is created in an open, creative process that takes a variety of perspectives into account. It does not necessarily have an end.

- (4) **What does our vision of a alternative, desirable future look like?** In the **CRAFT** chapter, we want to make it visible.

Our sketches from the IMAGINE chapter accompany us in this process. We use them to plan the steps towards realisation, find solutions to problems, weigh up consequences, identify ethical principles and values, make adjustments, and give shape to our vision of the future.

For the implementation, we choose a creative form of expression – project sketch or sketchnote poster, photo essay or role play, comic or play, video or podcast, interview or board game, dance performance or hidden object game – or other narrative forms in other media.

The CRAFT chapter is created in a creative process that involves consistent planning. The product is developed step by step, with feedback and revision loops. Until we are ready to share it with others.

(5) **How can we inspire ourselves and others with our visions of the future?** In the **SHARE** chapter, we want to share them.

Cooperation and collaboration, as we have seen in the previous four chapters of the **FUTURES STORIES LAB**, are key if we want to shape regenerative, solidarity-based futures. We have therefore explored, researched, dreamed, imagined and planned the implementation of our vision of the future together on many occasions.

Now we are sharing it with other visionaries. To this end, we are planning a stage performance for our stories full of future possibilities – where we can present, discuss, and reflect on them. So that we can inspire others – and be inspired by others ourselves!

The **SHARE** chapter documents the presentation of our vision for the future – e.g. in a video or podcast, blog or vlog post, in a shared cloud or on an online platform.

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¹ A detailed description of the **Futures Stories Lab** can be found in the article: Sippl, Carmen (2025). The Futures Stories Lab. A Tool for Futures Literacy Pedagogy. *R&E-Source* 12 (4), 78–92. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53349/re-source.2025.i4.a1485>