

Tool 4.1

Exploring futures through art

CLARITY Competence Area:

Opening up to diverse climate-resilient and regenerative futures

GreenComp Competence Area:

Envisioning sustainable futures

Why use this tool?

The world we live in today first existed in the imagination. The cities we live in, the smartphones we hold in our hands, the eco-villages we created... were first a vision, science-fiction, or a dream in people's minds. Numerous artists and designers have explored and experimented with different visions of the future at all times. They venture into different possible futures, without being limited by what the world looks like today. Expanding imagination is essential to bring to life a more climate-resilient and regenerative world, while fostering joy and excitement when working on addressing climate change impacts.

Activity 4.1.2

A photograph of the future

Overview

In this activity learners are invited to reflect on the changes they hope to see in their community, using photography to symbolize these changes. This exercise can help learners have less negative emotions in relation to their future, and shift towards more positive emotions such as curiosity and hope. This activity is a shortened and adapted version of 'a photograph of the future' from the [Re-Imaginary resources](#).

Curriculum linkage

Arts , Civics & Social Studies, Geography and History.

Competences built

Imagination, regenerative thinking, exploratory thinking, perspective-taking and active hope.

Prep Work

Have the necessary technology ready.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

Could be used in combination with tool 4.2: Growing Future Literacy.

Steps in the activity

1. Introduction
2. Photograph
3. Discussion and reflection



BASIC INFO

Age range:

12+

Duration:

15 minutes to 3 hours

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

Pen and paper for notes, phone/camera for pictures (or alternatives, see below)

Location:

Outdoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Not necessary but an intervention from local visual artists/photographers could be beneficial



Step 1: Introduction

1. Give an overview of the assignment by explaining to learners that they will be asked to reflect on the changes and transformations they hope to see in the world, in response to climate change and/or the ecological crisis, and then go outside and come back with one photo that symbolizes this change. Explain to the learners that the photograph can be as abstract or as literal as each person wants it to be. It can also be taken intuitively or following a clear logic.
2. Invite learners to reflect on the types of changes or transformations they are hoping for in relation to climate change. This could be prompted by a specific question, or questions, or be left more open-ended.

Step 2: Photograph

1. Invite learners to take some time alone and in silence (approximately 5 minutes) to walk or sit and see what naturally grabs their attention in the outdoors. If it helps, people are welcome to take notes.
2. Invite learners to take a photograph of an image, composition, or object that represents the change. Reassure the learners who may not be certain of why they have taken the specific photograph. Let them know that through discussion, they can discover some meaning.

Step 3: Discussion and reflection

1. Invite the learners to reconvene in small groups of 3-5 people and share their experiences and photographs with the group, one after the other. Ask the person to the right of the person who is speaking to take notes for the person who is sharing. At least 2 minutes should be allowed for each person to explain their photograph without interruption and another 2-3 minutes for others in the group to ask questions or share their interpretations.
2. Invite some volunteers to share key insights from each group with the plenary.
3. Optional: provide a way for photographs to be emailed or uploaded onto a central computer so that they can be shared. The photographs could also be printed and hung in the classroom.





Dos and don'ts

Don't:

Don't comment on the quality of the photograph. This exercise is not a photography workshop, but an activity to reflect on the transformations the learners want to see.

Adaptations:

- If the use of technology is not preferred, an alternative could be to have the learners draw/sketch what naturally grabs their attention.
- For younger groups (12- 16 years), this activity could be coupled with a tour of the city or neighborhood, during which the photographs could be taken.
- An example of an alternative photography workshop can be found here, for inspiration. For example, if the class cannot go outdoors, the learners could use photographs of themselves and use collage to reflect on their future.
- Possible to use before and after tool 4.2. Growing Futures Literacy, to see if the learners relationship to the future changes after those activities. How have their visions changed?
- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

This activity is adapted from the [Re-Imaginary resources](#) by One Resilient Earth.

Finnegan, W. (2022). 'It's beautiful, living without fear that the world will end soon' – digital storytelling, climate futures, and young people in the UK and Ireland. *Children's Geographies*, 21(5), 898–913. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2153329>

Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Autophotography and Photo Elicitation Applied to Mental Health Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748215>



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