

Can we imagine a Sustainable Future?



Figure 1.

photo credit: wonderopolis.org

Can you imagine a sustainable future? What would it look like? And how do we get there? To get to a sustainable world, we first need to be able to imagine it. However, many (young) people find it difficult to imagine anything but dystopian images of the world ravaged by climate change and ecological destruction. Not surprising perhaps, if we follow the news, or see the latest IPCC report. However, imagination is a skill that we can learn. Wouldn't it be powerful if teachers teach both the scientific facts about the climate crisis, as well as the skills to envision and create a future that we DO want to live in? In this blog I would like to share some thoughts and practical tips.

As part of my sabbatical journey in search for sustainability education in Europe, I was lucky enough to teach the international group of teachers and teachers to be, who are studying [Education for Diversity and Sustainable Living](#) at [INN Hamar](#), Norway. Part of the programme were the competencies needed to create a sustainable society, and indeed future. [Lazano et al.](#) (2017) identifies a range of these competencies, one of which is "*Anticipatory thinking: Envisioning, analysis and evaluation of possible futures including scenarios with multi-generational timescales.*" The article outlines a framework on pedagogies best suited to teach these skills. Useful, as it is not something I am trained to do, nor do I think are most teachers. It was exciting to explore this with a group of (trainee) teachers; it made us realise the potential impact we can make when we use this.



figure 2 Teaching EDSL

[75% of young people experience eco-anxiety](#). They suffer from worries about the future. As a teacher I want to create a space in school where these feelings can be shared, and at the same time teach skills to envision a more hopeful scenario. Two practical methods I learned from Wouter Buursma, coordinator of the project [Transformation through Imagination](#) (TTI) at Stichting Technotrend, that help do this are:

- [The Polak Game](#): a participatory approach that facilitates the discussion of the following questions; are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future, and secondly, do you feel you have influence on the outcome of the future?

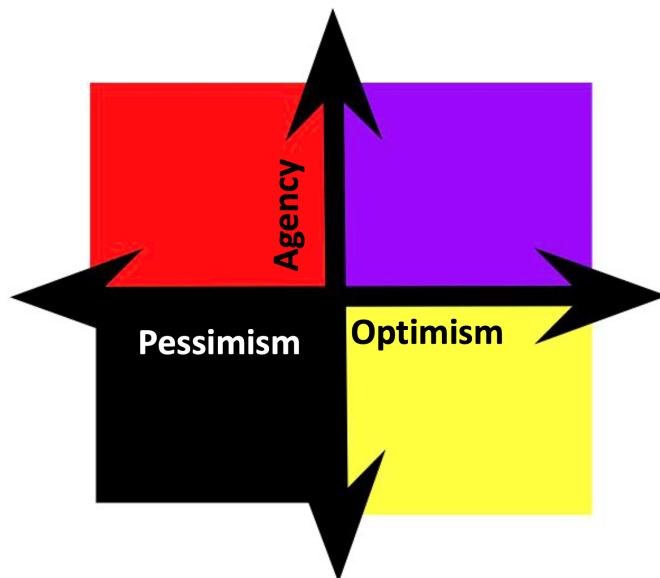


figure 3. Quadrats in the Polak game

- [A Letter from the Future](#): a reflective activity that helps students imagine a possible future and personal actions that could lead there.

What I like about these strategies is that they make us realise how we think about the future and help us imagine a future we would like to live in. Moreover they help identify the actions we can take to get there. As for the social emotional aspect of teaching about the climate crisis; these are ways to create a space to talk about how it affects us.

Wieneke Maris, October 2022

Reference

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