



**IMAG::
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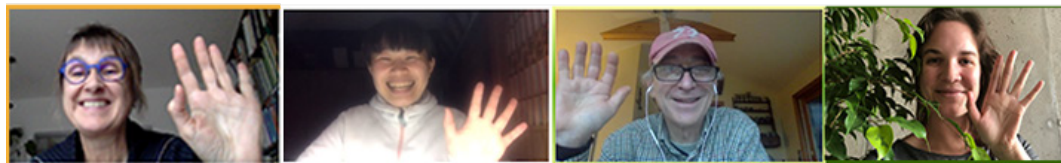
RESILIENCY THROUGH ARTMAKING

Re-charging the IMAGination

As artists and educators, we continually find ways to energize and invigorate our practice. Now, as we strive to make sense of unprecedented global events that have uprooted our routines we are at new beginnings compelled to again witness the power of art to bring us hope, joy, and meaning. In this issue we present visual essays that have demonstrated novel and innovative ways that artists, educators, and community members recharge as an active commitment to revitalize the imagination and sense of wonder. These essays illuminate how visual language and aesthetic experience brings optimism and resilience into the creative process. By exploring the unexplored they refresh the imagination of self, learners, and community members.

As newly appointed co-editors we are also at new beginnings exploring the unexplored and honored to present this, our first issue. We are grateful to Teresa Eca who pioneered and edited IMAG through these past seven years and to graphic designer Angela Saldanha for her keen dedication and vision. We hope to follow their path to Re-charge Imaginations for our readers through many upcoming IMAG issues.

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IMAG issue 11 **RESILIENCY THROUGH ARTMAKING**

The first issue by the IMAG QUARTET ::

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Front and back cover image: ©Wanfei HUANG

Imaginary classrooms. Exploring new directions in visual art education through future workshops in teacher training.

Keywords or phrases: future workshops; teacher training; art classrooms

Introduction

Future workshops were originally developed to facilitate civic participation among groups that otherwise seldom take part in decision making processes, such as children and young people (Jungk & Mullert, 1987). It is a collaborative method where participants identify problems within a specific context and come up with concrete solutions together. This text combines the future workshop model with creative and participatory approaches as a way to discuss and imagine alternative futures for visual arts education with students in teacher training.



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Figure 1
Future workshop discussion. Photographic field note from PhD project (Forsler 2020).

Process

Future workshops have later also been used as a research method to explore future imaginaries among specific groups such as children and young people (Alminde & Warming, 2020; Clausen et al., 2019) and teachers (Dirckinck-Holmfeld et al., 2019; Forsler, 2018, 2020) where it has been considered useful to facilitate discussion and reflection between participants. When used in research, the workshops are usually divided into three phases, a *preparation phase* where the framework for the workshop is introduced, a *critique phase* where participants identify and visualize perceived problems and a *fantasy phase* where they come up with a shared vision of how these problems can be solved. The method can easily be combined with creative methods as both the problems and the imaginary future in some way should be materialized through for example notes or drawings.

I used this workshop methodology in my PhD dissertation to study how prospective teachers in visual art reason about the relation between the art classroom and their teaching, and how this space could be re-imagined as to facilitate alternative directions and approaches in the subject (Forsler 2020, pp. 76–80; 191–211). The students participating in the study became

very engaged during the workshops and some of them explained that it had helped them to think more concretely about their future profession. Based on these accounts, I continued to explore the use of future workshops in the training of visual art teachers (for grade 1-6) at Södertörn University in Sweden. The workshops were implemented in a module focused on how visual art education has developed over time and the role of the art classroom in the compulsory school.

The workshops lasted two hours and were performed with 56 students in groups of 4-5. Half of the workshops were performed in the classroom using colored paper, markers and scissors and the other half online using digital tools. No teacher was present in the online sessions that were performed in study groups, but these students were introduced to the workshop format beforehand. In this preparation phase, the length and structure of the workshop was described by me as a teacher. The students also prepared for the workshops by reading about the method in the previously mentioned dissertation. In the following critique phase, the students were asked to draw and cut out all the media technologies, tools and materials they have encountered in visual arts education during their own schooling or in teacher training.

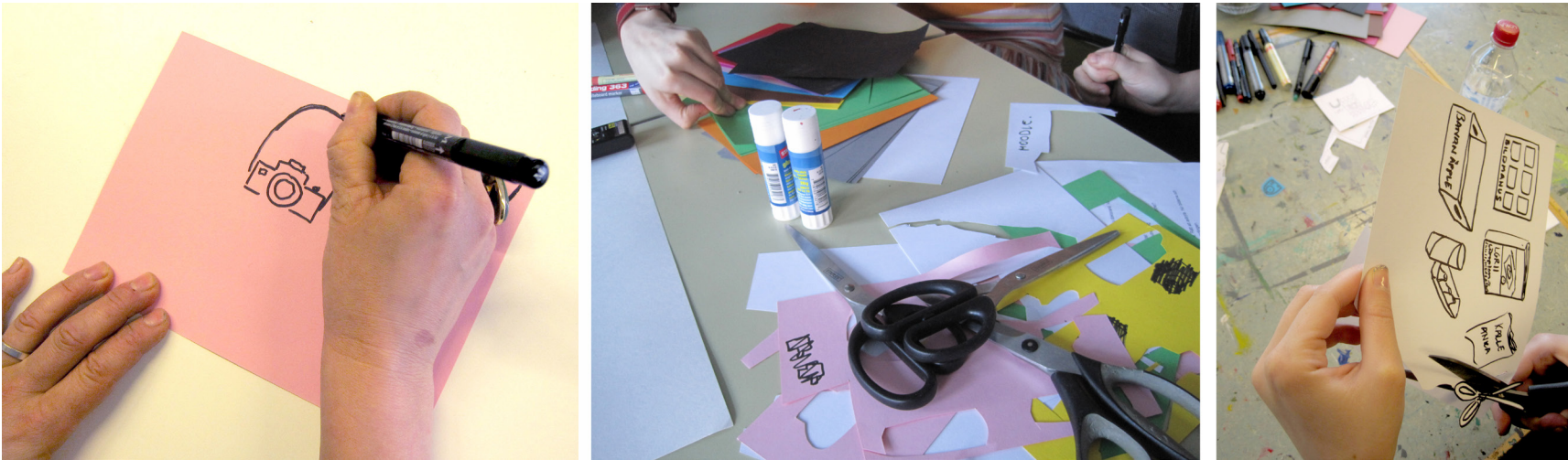


Figure 2
Critique phase. Photographic field note from PhD project (Forsler 2020).

In the final fantasy phase then complemented these cutouts with other ones that they thought could facilitate the kind of art education they thought will be needed in the future and placed these within a desired teaching space.

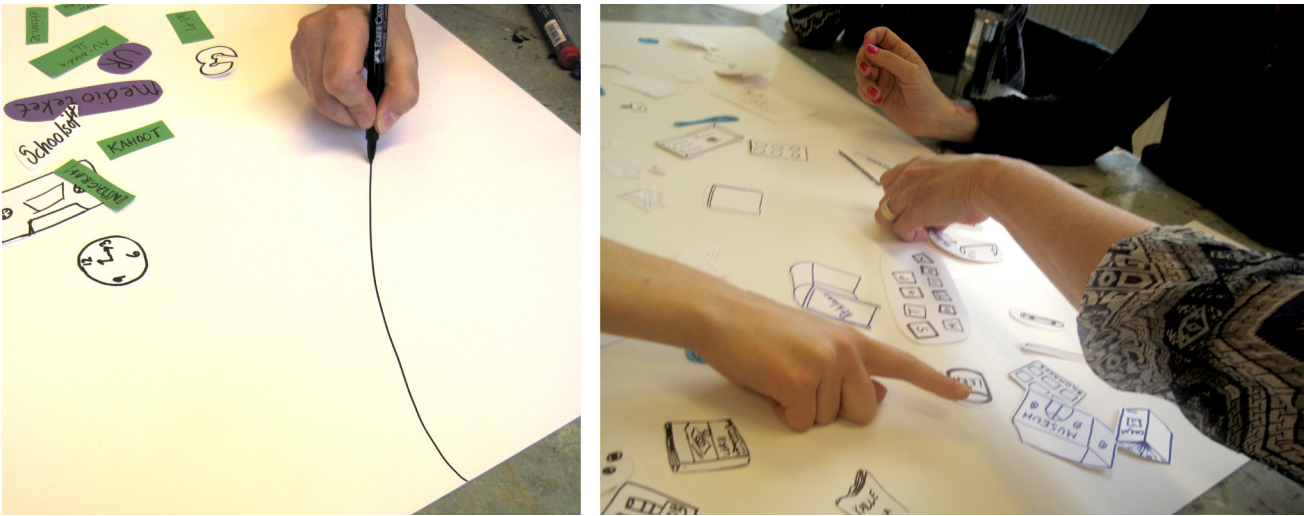


Figure 3
Fantasy phase. Photographic field note from PhD project (Forsler 2020).



Figure 4
Students imaginary classroom with integrated outdoor area, editing area, storage area and brainstorming area. Digital image from teacher training exercise (2020).
Text on map reads "media room – green screen – editing – outside area – graffiti wall – wet area – cleaning/storage – recycling – toilets – brainstorming – kiln room".

The students appreciated the assignment and for many of them it seemed to spark a discussion about the underemployed potential of visual arts education, due to limited resources. In a written reflection one student states that "it was really fun to dream this big but at the same time sad because it differs so much from reality." Another student's vision "an intercultural classroom centered around art as visual culture" and describes this space as an attempt to move away from past paradigms within the subject as well as from an outdated and male bias definition of art.

The students also used the assignment to reflect over the relation between the teacher and the teaching space. One explains that s/he sees the classroom as an extension of the teacher, and that if structured right it can embed a certain mode of teaching that will remain even if the teacher falls ill or even changes workplace. "There is an aspect of the art classroom that lives in the teacher" explains another and continues that without him or her "even the most advanced art classroom will remain an ordinary room."

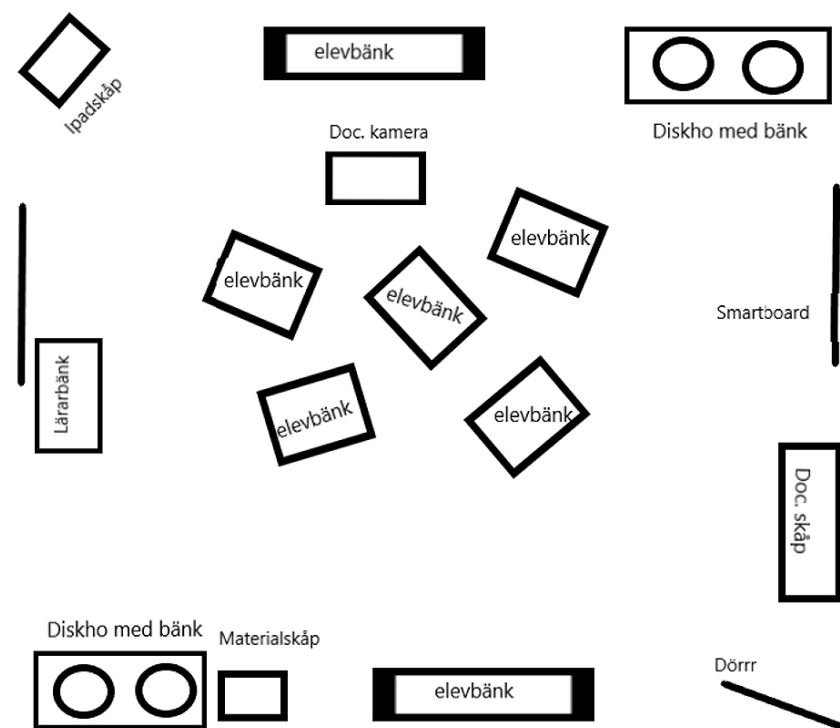


Figure 5
Students imaginary classroom with nonhierarchical furnishing. Digital image from teacher training exercise (2020).
Text on map reads "student desk – teacher desk – iPad locker – document locker – camera locker – material locker – smartboard – sink – door".

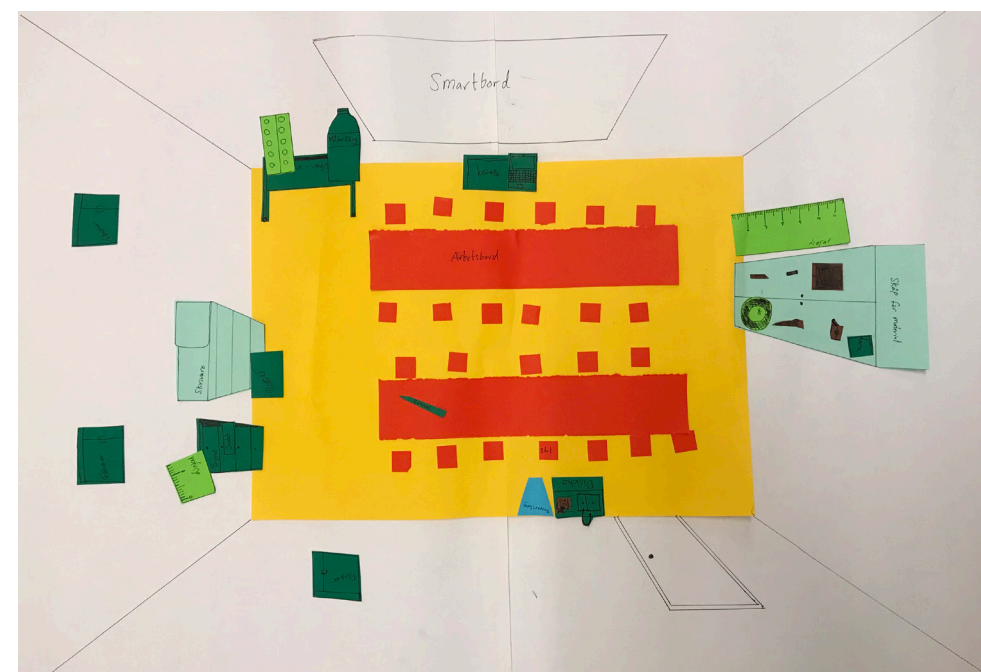


Figure 6
Students imaginary classroom with empty walls for highly sensitive children. Collage from teacher training exercise (2020).
Text on map reads "printer – desk – material locker – sink – smartboard – paper basket".

While the students appreciated the opportunity to “dream big,” the maps and their reflections are also characterized by a kind of pragmatism, a practical thinking based on experience from teaching. Many maps include storage facilities, solutions to darken the room and also accommodations for children with special needs, such as a classroom with empty walls for highly sensitive children.

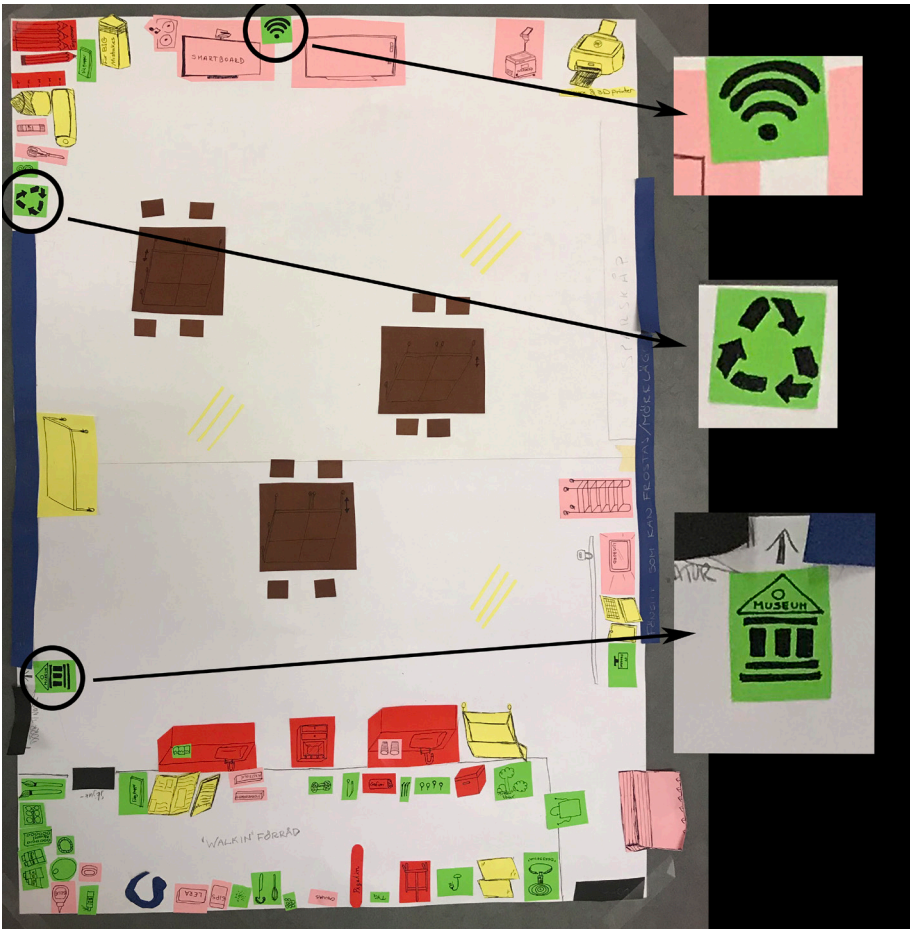


Figure 7
Students imaginary classroom as a distributed space (details of internet connection, sustainability mindset and cultural institutions). Collage from teacher training exercise (2020).
Text on map reads “walk in storage” and “windows that can be darkened or made matte”.

Reflection

The main aim of this intervention was to encourage prospective teachers to see the future as non-given, something that is not predetermined but that can be reshaped based on our actions. In an increasingly neo liberal school system – based on the logics of economy, efficiency and employability rather than on holistic learning and civic skills – we need teachers who are able to imagine alternative modes of education that in turn can enable a more sustainable future. Future workshops offer an opportunity to combine such utopian thinking with concrete questions “from the floor” concerning housing facilities, equipment, budget, groups sizes and curricula. Within teacher education, this method can be used to train the professional judgment and autonomy of the students. It is also way for them to get familiar with a format for discussion that can be used to develop the civic literacies of children and young people in educational settings. To create a classroom where new knowledge is possible, we need teachers who dare to think beyond the present.

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