

Imag(in)ing Living

A series of 5 Futures & Visual Literacy on-line workshops
January 9 & 11 to February 6 & 8

TOOLKIT

The Visual Literacy tools aim to encourage individuals to become aware of their own thinking – feeling – acting processes. Recognizing the pivotal role of experience in anchoring perceptions, assumptions and perspectives, these tools facilitate a profound understanding of how we remember, make sense, and imagine the future.

The tools explore the assumptions that lay behind the stories we tell and the narratives we share as members of our collectives. Questioning our stances and opening our minds to alternative perceptions allows active, willful choice and agency; unlocks new possibilities for research, innovation, ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking, and societal understanding; and leads, eventually, to transformation of individual and social structures.

The tools are designed by the Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Visual Anticipation and Futures Literacy towards Visual Literacy, Associate Professor Dr Vicky Karaiskou, and make part of a larger collection of educational methods applied during the workshops.

Who can use them?

The Visual Literacy tools are designed to be suitable for any kind of users, workshops’ audience and topics. Therefore, they apply to a variety of research, professional and private fields, and contexts. Specifically, the tools are useful for:

- Individuals interested in figuring out what gets in the way between their needs and desires and their not-so-fulfilling reality.
- Students from the last year of elementary school up to postgraduate levels of studies.
- Educators of all levels of education who aspire to become beacons of thought for their students.
- Researchers and professionals from all fields, from humanities to applied sciences.
- Stakeholders of the cultural sector (a pivotal fabricator of identity and ‘reality’)
- Employees and managers in the business sector aiming for leadership, growth, and inclusion.
- Organizations, NGOs and, in general, entities that deal with sustainability, governance, health and environmental issues, vulnerable groups (refugees, children, elders), human rights and gender issues, people from conflict societies and society reconciliation.

How can the tools help me?

The Visual Literacy tools support you to:

- Appreciate individual experiences as a source of learning, opportunities, and growth.
- Bring to the surface existing perceptions and assumptions; deconstruct them; and understand how they drive your anticipations for the future and your actions.
- Embrace change and the unknown, and bring to light alternative paths of resilience.
- Reframe concepts and situations and lead innovative thinking and transformation in your personal and professional life.
- Explore the social and cultural dimensions of memory in shaping individual and collective identities.
- Build bridges of understanding and communication and eliminate thought patterns of division and scarcity.
- Apply alternative modes of staging the past and strengthening democratic structures; contribute to capacity building, and impact action.
- Stress the importance of the many stories, and foster people-led change-making and transformation.

The Visual Literacy tools included here are the following:

1. Alternative Futures
2. BABEL
3. Barcoded Baby
4. Frame
5. Identity Triangle
6. Improv-storytelling
7. Reframing concepts
8. Role Model Stereotypes
9. Role-playing
10. Sensing instead of making Sense
11. Stage
12. Visual Stimulus
13. Visuality Iceberg
14. Wall

1. ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

The “Alternative Futures” tool cultivates the conscious imagination of multiple trajectories for societal and personal challenges. The tool is designed to engage learners in exploring their prospection (thinking about the future) mechanism in a playful manner and envision different types of futures such as possible/probable and expected as well as ideal futures. In these projections learners spontaneously apply their personal experience, their perceptions on reality, their assumptions, limitations, aspirations, and value systems.

The tool **aims** to:

- Make learners aware of how their thought patterns influence decision-making in the present and their capacity to relate with possibilities in the future.
- Enhance imagination by applying creative storytelling and speculative thinking.
- Support understanding of what sources in the public domain solidify perspective, perceptions and assumptions, and how they shape our prospection process.
- Foster empowerment and resilience by exploring diverse outcomes, by embracing possibilities and coming to terms with uncertainty.
- Cultivate a future-oriented mindset that emphasizes agency and proactive problem-solving.

How to apply it

Facilitators ask learners to think, note and share how they expect the topic under examination to evolve in the future. Facilitators need to set a specific year in the future. This prompts learners to envision within a more concrete frame. It is advisable that this point in time ranges somewhere between 50 to 100 years ahead. Learners are much more likely to engage with a timeframe that exists in the spectrum of ‘familiar’. For the possible/probable future, facilitators need to stress that this is just an imaginative scenario; not a wishful, neither a forecast, nor promoted. Learners need to imagine what, according to their experience and knowledge, they expect that the topic under examination will look like in that point in the future. It is advisable that learners note on post its and in bullet points the components of their imagined future. Once they conclude their notes, facilitators ask them to share their narrative with the group. At this point of the activity, it is strongly suggested that facilitators prompt learners to distribute their post its on the “Visuality Iceberg” (please refer to the instructions described in that tool).

The “Visuality Iceberg” works equally well with deconstructing present (actual) observations and future (imaginative) scenarios. The combination of these two tools will make tangible for learners the components (outcomes, assumptions, values, structures, systems, emotional states) that compose their possible/probable future narrative.

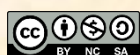
Once this process is concluded, facilitators repeat the same procedure for the ideal futures: They ask learners to think, note (bullet points on post its) and share how they ideally wish for the topic under examination to evolve in the future. Facilitators need to stress that learners are free to imagine their ideal version regardless of what they consider as doable. Once learners conclude their notes, facilitators ask them to share. Again, it is strongly advised to apply the “Visuality Iceberg” and deconstruct the components of the ideal narratives.

In both narratives, possible/probable and ideal futures, learners articulate and examine their tacit mental structures, fears, needs and aspirations.

The third and last step in this activity is for each learner to compare the two projections and spot the differences and the similarities. This comparison aims to stress attention on the structures, ideals, and values that support them, generate questions and dialogue among learners and stimulate their curiosity on to how they can contribute towards sustainable and inclusive solutions for their own lives and communities.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Alternative Futures” combines effectively with the “Visuality Iceberg” (for both futures), the “Encoded Baby” (for the possible/probable futures), the “Wall” (for both futures), the “Stage” (for both futures), the “Identity Triangle” (for both futures), and the “Reframing Concepts” (for both futures) tools.



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2. BABEL

When discussing rather abstract concepts, such as freedom, democracy, success, failing, future, etc., individual memories and perceptions are of paramount importance in altering, enriching and shaping collective narratives. Different memories create different realities in the present and different expectations for the future. The use of images contributes decisively to making these different realities tangible that individual meanings and feelings generate.

The Babel tool takes its name from the tale of the tower of Babel where people could not communicate amongst each other because of the different languages they spoke. Our own memories, i.e. experiences and affect, constitute unique ‘languages’ and, although they might have affinities with other ‘languages’ (i.e. memories and narratives), remain unique, as our fingerprints are.

The tool **aims** to:

- Associate learners’ experiences with concrete images and, thus, support them to clarify possibly blind spots, vague thoughts and feelings they have.
- Create the space for learners to share their own memories and narratives.
- Encourage learners to dig into their own perceptions and deriving assumptions, regarding any given topic, by making them tangible.
- Underscore the many different perceptions on any given topic; create space for all to co-exist; and shed light on the resulting communication gaps.
- Raise awareness on the consequences that perceptions and assumptions have on how they shape the learners’ worldviews and experiences in the present.

How to apply it

Facilitators ask learners to take their smart phones or cameras and take a couple of pictures that represent for them the topic under examination. A couple of keywords, as captions, need to clarify their meaning. Learners are encouraged not to use images from the web because a) they often carry stereotypes and b) the facilitator seeks to dig into learners’ own personal memories.

Only a couple of images are enough to reveal their prevailing spontaneous mental associations.

The facilitator gathers all images and keywords, assembles them (anonymously) on a power point or in any other form, and shares with the whole group.

It is a good idea to separate the images from the captions/keywords and ask for volunteers to comment on each image. This will give the opportunity to learners to either further discuss their own image or/and listen to the (different) interpretations peers provide. Sharing and commenting on the keywords at the

end, will make apparent the different perceptions and realities among the group regarding the topic under examination.

By asking the appropriate questions, the facilitator supports learners to get in touch with their own memories, i.e. experiences and affect.

Guiding questions can include:

- What do you make out of this image? How does it make you feel?
- How would such an interpretation (an X point of view) affect a person and/or a society? What would be some of the consequences?
- What assumptions lay behind this interpretation?
- Can you imagine a radically different interpretation? How would this alter the prior reality?

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “BABEL” tool combines effectively with the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Wall”, the “Identity Triangle”, the “Visual Stimulus”, the “Alternative Futures”, and the “Visuality Iceberg” tools.



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3. THE BARCODED BABY

The barcode is a symbol of standardization and tracking associated with commercial goods. When related to a human being, it implies uniformity, categorization and, possibly, reduction in a product. Fritz Lang, in his iconic *Metropolis* 1927 film, was among the first to raise concerns about dehumanization because of social conditioning.

The “Barcoded Baby” tool uses the image of a baby face – as a metaphor of innocence and the not-yet-conditioned individuality – and provokes reflection and discussions on how cultural and social systems, norms, and expectations condition individual and collective identities, and with what consequences.



The tool **aims** to:

- Foster awareness of how individuals unconsciously internalize social expectations.
- Encourage them to explore how the implicit biases they carry affect their perceptions of self and others.
- Support them by balancing the tension between the need of individual expression versus belonging or fitting in a collective.
- Empower them to reclaim agency over their life choices by critically examining external influences.
- Highlight the randomness of identity construction, loosen the deriving rigid divides and stress attention to the dangers that divide pose to democracy and social sustainability.

How to apply it

Although the tool is ideal to deconstruct the concept of identity, it is not limited to that. Depending on the circumstances (i.e. topic of discussion, number and profile of learners, time limitations), facilitators can apply the tool as well when discussing topics, among which democracy, success, failing, stereotypes, diversity, inclusion, well-being etc.

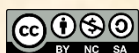
Facilitators share the image of the barcoded baby and pose the following questions:

1. What is your socially imposed bar-code?
2. How much of your self-perception is built by the expectations / assumptions of others?
3. In your daily life and experience, what images around you talk about how your identity should be?
4. What are the consequences of your assumptions, expectations and choices?

The learners are expected to reflect on what are the identity items their society expects them to enact; identify how expectations from family, the professional or the social environment shape the appreciation (or not) of themselves; become aware of the visual and verbal narratives in the public sphere that encourage and solidify stereotypes, and determine the measure of comparison for individuals; and consider how these affect their thoughts, value system, choices and expectations. Open-ended questions support learners to make tangible the thought and behavioral patterns they unknowingly endorse. Facilitators can delve on certain answers or patterns of answers and generate more opportunities for in-depth discussions.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Barcoded Baby” tool combines effectively with the “Role Model Stereotypes”, the “Role-playing”, the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Frame”, the “Identity Triangle”, and the “Visuality Iceberg” tools.



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4. THE FRAME

A frame is a structure that surrounds and highlights a certain content and meaning. Metaphorically the word is used to describe the context of an idea or a topic, the reference to. The “Frame” tool intends to make tangible our unconscious mental automations. It supports learners to visualize and analyze the frameworks that shape their perceptions and influence their decision-making processes. The golden style of the frame is deliberately chosen to imply the value we all bestow on the components that constitute our individual and collective identities.



The tool **aims** to:

- Enhance self-awareness by encouraging learners to identify and understand the cognitive filters they apply.
- Challenge assumptions by revealing the limitations of habitual thoughts and by embracing complexity and ambiguity.
- Empower learners to question the origins of their frames and consider alternative perspectives.
- Foster prospective thinking (thinking about the future) by highlighting how current mental models shape expectations that influence the planning for the future.
- Build resilience against biases by instilling awareness on the innate power to control one’s own thoughts and narratives.

How to apply it

Facilitators share the image of the frame and ask learners to place in it items related to their perceptions, assumptions, stances and feelings on the topic under examination. Facilitators support learners to discern what items belong into the frame (are the outcome of their mental frames, their perceptions) and which make part of the frame itself (are their interpretative lenses). While learners share their narratives and thoughts, facilitators assist them to make their abstract cognitive processes tangible and comprehend how the items in and on the frame interact and shape their interpretation of reality and their ability to envision future possibilities.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

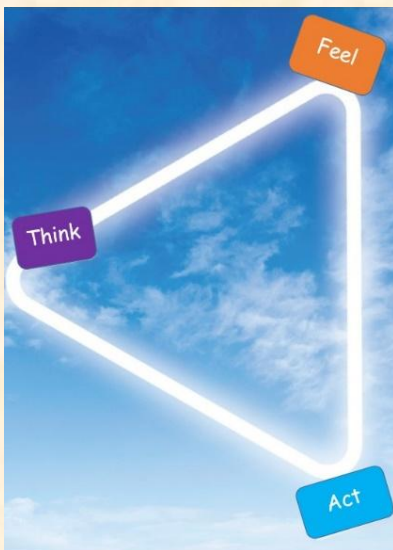
The “Frame” combines effectively with the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Role Model Stereotypes”, the “Role-playing”, the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, and the “Reframing Concepts” tools.



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5. THE IDENTITY TRIANGLE

The thinking – feeling – acting process lays in the core of our brains' mechanism. Our way of thinking is regulated by, and regulates anew, our memories, which, in their turn, exist in a constant interaction with our affect and actions. In fact, we carry emotional imprints for every single memory we have. Both thinking and feeling dictate our actions and build our behavioral patterns. Ultimately, they shape our personality that composes a big part of what we call 'identity', including cultural and social dimensions. The words "Think" – "Feel" – "Act" indicate the three angles of this triangle. The tool intends to make tangible the interconnection among these three realms in all manmade situations. It provides useful insights to learners regarding their individual and collective awareness and identities, or how they handle change.



The tool **aims** to:

- Make learners aware of the three interconnected realms and their interaction with our memories.
- Explore their influence on how they shape the learners' perceptions, assumptions and anticipations because affect keeps some memories vivid and shifts others into oblivion.
- Shed light on how this core mechanism regulates individual and collective behaviors.
- Support learners to comprehend the consequences of their choices and the power of their agency.
- Underline the triangle's role and importance both for the recurrent social and, generally, collective phenomena, as well as for personal challenges.

How to apply it

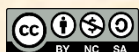
Facilitators can apply this triangle to any topic. Given that our brain translates automatically any incoming information into affective images, even the most perplexing events can ‘break down’ and become material for analysis along these three axes. Hence, abstract concepts, values, goals, visuals such as photographs, filmic narratives, advertisements, social media images, urban spaces (e.g. squares, iconic public buildings, street arrangements, names etc.) can become valuable materials for exploring, deconstructing and comprehending their impact and role in constructing memories, experiences and identities.

Guiding questions can include:

- What do you understand when discussing the [X topic under examination], or when looking at this image? What are your thoughts?
- How do they make you feel?
- What assumptions lay behind your thoughts?
- Based on your thoughts and feelings, how would you react and why?
- How do you think your community perceives this topic or image?
- How would different interpretations lead to different feelings and actions? How would this alter the prior reality?

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Identity Triangle” tool combines effectively with the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Stage”, the “Alternative Futures”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, and the “Wall” tools.



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6. IMPROV-STORYTELLING

This tool recalls the surrealists' automatic writing and their non-sense images. The surrealists employed improvisation as a technique to tap into the subconscious mind and unleash creative imagination. Their intention was to embrace spontaneous, unfiltered methods of creation, make sense of the world around them, and generate unexpected imagery and ideas for social transformation. Through improvisation, surrealists aimed to reveal hidden desires, fears, and associations buried in the subconscious. To this end, they created artworks that challenged conventional notions of reality and invited viewers to explore the mysteries of the unconscious mind.

The tool **aims** to:

- Make apparent the decisive role each individual narrative holds in the collective.
- Underscore how collective narratives and phenomena evolve randomly and as a consequence of single interventions.
- Encourage active listening and collaboration, and thus hone communication skills.
- Support learners to generate novel and unexpected ideas.
- Cultivate imagination, adaptability and flexibility, enabling learners to adjust to changing circumstances and respond effectively to unexpected situations.

How to apply it

Surrealists used techniques such as “automatic writing”, or the “exquisite corpse” to generate unexpected imagery and ideas. Storytelling here can be equally visual or written and involves teamwork. Both the writing and the visual techniques facilitate memories, fears, needs, expectations, assumptions and anticipations to emerge; provide exploration material in relation to the topic under examination; and generate rich discussions.

Automatic writing: While discussing the X topic under examination, facilitators choose a keyword or a short phrase/statement, write it on a piece of paper and hand it to a random learner. Learners must contribute with a spontaneous thought or phrase prompted by what the previous person shared and pass it to the next one. Facilitators need to remind learners to be spontaneous and not censor their thoughts regardless of how odd they might seem. At the end, a volunteer reads the co-created story. Facilitators ask learners to give feedback and discuss the outcome.

Exquisite corpse: This is a process where learners assemble diverse words and images. The storytelling can start with an image related to the X topic under examination. Each learner sees only a small part of

what the previous person contributed. They assume what the invisible part might be and add a phrase or/and uses coloured pencils and materials to draw their thoughts. When all learners have contributed, the observation of the result brings into the discussion the power and role of perceptions and assumptions, as well as communication gaps that prevail in the public sphere due to the diverse level of information we all have as well as to the different perceptions we carry.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Improv-storytelling” tool combines effectively with “BABEL”, the “Visuality Iceberg” and the “Sensing instead of Making Sense” tools.



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7. REFRAMING CONCEPTS

The Reframing tool is especially powerful because it extracts main suppositions from dominant narratives with the intention to provide a radically diverse approach to the topic under examination. This tool challenges established frontiers, broadens the spectrum of our understanding; and unpacks the hidden assumptions we all carry, limiting our potential choices in thinking and acting. It applies to a broad range of everyday life issues, on a personal and collective level, where innovation, urgent and effective solutions, or empathy and understanding the ‘other’ becomes a challenging task and, at the same time, a crucial prerequisite for healing, resolution and co-existence.

The tool **aims** to:

- Challenge established frontiers and stereotypes of thought and discover ‘out of the box’ approaches.
- Push imagination into uncharted areas with an aim to bring in the fore ‘unconventional’ realities.
- Broaden the spectrum of understanding our own thought patterns, emotions and actions, as well as those of the ‘other’.
- Unpack hidden assumptions we all carry limiting the potential of our thinking, choosing and acting.
- Facilitate the empathy process and the rapprochement of the ‘other’.
- Support peace, co-existence, democracy and transformation of dominant politics, especially when the topic under examination involves social, political, cultural and / or environmental challenges.

How to apply it

The following is just an example for facilitators to understand how they can flip a dominant narrative. Assuming the discussion topic is about the conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and, especially, the 1974 invasion.

The dominant narratives among Greek Cypriots demonize the ‘other’ part across all media (i.e. newspapers prior to the invasion [1960-1974], during the event and since the occupation; official political narratives; school history books; school slogans [“I do not forget and I keep fighting”]; memorials; commemoration rituals; literature; arts; museum narratives etc.). There is no account, whatsoever, on the unjust actions of the Greek Cypriots against the other ethnic group.

Within this context, a reframing statement that eliminates the basic premise of the official Greek Cypriot stances (i.e. being the victim), could be “Turkish Cypriots felt victimized and powerless to defend

themselves for a long period”. This point of departure completely reverses the perpetrator-victim dynamics. Consequently, stereotypes, biases and certainties are deconstructed and new ‘what if’ questions arise with an aim to broaden understanding and communication, create possibilities for new narratives, and, hopefully, new realities that support peace and co-existence.

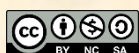
Facilitators need to underline that this is just a tool, an imaginary statement to work with, and does not imply a personal stance or any intention to persuade. They support learners to mentally adjust in the discomfort of the reframed statement; accept possible (and expected) reactions; create safe space for all participants to share feelings and thoughts; and insist on the rule of not being critical, as well as not assigning responsibility, insults and accusations.

Facilitators ask learners to take 5 minutes (max 10) and write down, in silence, their thoughts, feelings and deriving questions. 5 minutes are usually more than adequate for spontaneous thoughts and feelings to be noted.

Once everybody is ready, learners share and a rich discussion with many new questions and ‘what ifs’ provides a new light and grounds to explore the topic under discussion.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Reframing Concepts” tool combines effectively with the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Wall”, the “Role-playing”, the “Frame”, the “Alternative Futures”, and the “Role Model Stereotypes” tools.



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8. ROLE MODEL STEREOTYPES

The tool encourages learners to critically analyze and question societal norms, comprehend the underpinning biases, and consciously reflect on how these parameters affect their own perceptions and, eventually, identity. Engaging in activities that explore and challenge stereotypes of role models helps to develop critical thinking, cultural competence, self-awareness, the sense of empowerment, and valuable media literacy skills.

The tool **aims** to:

- Make learners aware of the stories they carry and reiterate, constructing their own role models.
- Support learners to comprehend how they limit their understanding and exclude – or make it difficult to be open and receptive to – different narratives.
- Encourage them to realize the diversity and potential of existing narratives.
- Support them to realize the assumptions their perceptions, interpretations and narratives carry, as well as the ensuing anticipatory patterns they project.
- Encourage them to reflect on how collective interpretations and narratives affect them, individually and collectively, as a community.

How to apply it

Images can be either printed or a collection of digital/online material. It is important that they involve depictions of one or more human figures involved in memorials, arts (paintings, sculptures, installations etc.), photographs, adverts, social media snapshots etc.

Learners are asked to choose four images that respond to the questions:

1. What image depicts best what a role model is to you? (A)
2. What image depicts best what you want a role model to be in the future? (B)
3. What image depicts best what a role model means to society? (C)
4. What image depicts best what you want role models to mean to society in the future? (D)

The facilitator asks learners to place their images on the chart below and build narratives based on their choices.

A	C
D	B

Depending on the context and the specific pursuits of the facilitator, they can ask guiding questions such as:

- What do you see when you compare images A & B?
- What are your thoughts when comparing images A & C?
- How do you think they differ, or are the same? How do you feel about that?
- What assumptions are hidden behind your narratives?
- How would your interpretations and the narratives be different, had the assumptions been different?

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Role Model Stereotypes” combines effectively with the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Wall”, the “Frame”, the “Role-playing”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, and the “Reframing Concepts” tools.



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9. ROLE-PLAYING

Assuming different roles while researching, discussing or analyzing a topic provides a dynamic and immersive learning experience that allows learners to engage with scenarios and concepts. This experiential learning fosters critical thinking, creativity and imagination, encouraging participants to think outside the box and explore alternative viewpoints. By embodying different roles, they gain insights into their own behaviors, beliefs, and reactions, leading to personal development and self-reflection. Regardless of the role, personal memories and points of view always emerge during the process.

The tool **aims** to:

- Support understanding and the development of empathy and interpersonal skills.
- Shed light on different aspects of a topic and train learners to defend different points of view.
- Facilitate emotional growth and self-awareness as learners explore and express emotions in a safe and supportive environment.
- Shed light on tacit memories.
- Bring to the fore and comprehend tacit assumptions and deriving anticipations.

How to apply it

Facilitators offer a variety of roles corresponding to main actors involved in the X topic under examination. Learners are free to choose any of the available roles and take some time to imagine how the chosen persona would experience the topic under examination.

Learners are expected to step into the shoes of the chosen persona and imagine her/his life, ways of thinking, thoughts, feelings and actions. Learners need to a) narrate the topic/event from the point of view of the assumed persona in the most possible concrete manner; b) bring visual materials that support their narratives; c) explicitly refer to the affective impact of the topic/event on the assumed persona; d) speculate on the consequences it has/d on her/his imagined life.

This tool involves rigorous imagination and a great deal of assumptions on the part of the learners. While narrating the imagined scenario, they will inevitably expose their own understandings, assumptions, perceptions and anticipations. It is important that facilitators support each learner to dig deeper, focus better and visualize in as many details as possible the assumed role.

Peers take notes on the questions and thoughts that emerge in their minds while listening. Facilitators need to note all crucial information that provide new insights and understandings for further discussion. This material will become a new starting point to broaden the discussion of the topic under examination, will deepen understanding and will facilitate novel solutions.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Role-playing” tool combines effectively with the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Wall”, the “Stage”, the “Identity Triangle”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, the “Frame”, and the “Reframing concepts” tools.

NOTE: Role-playing could be sensitive or problematic under certain occasions, e.g. when it involves assuming victim/perpetrator roles in violent conflict environments. Facilitators need to judge if this tool is appropriate to use or if they need to adjust their questions in a way that will not (re)traumatize the learners or cause emotions difficult to handle.



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10. SENSING INSTEAD OF MAKING SENSE

Sensing, instead of making sense, focuses on the emotional impact of events and encapsulates a paradigm shift in how we perceive and interpret the world around us. Colors, textures, shapes, and materials become potent symbols and carriers of meaning, and serve as conduits that allow us to grasp the complexity and depth of our sensory encounters. Beyond mere cognitive processing, the tool suggests a deeper engagement with our surroundings – one that transcends language, rational thought and analysis to embrace the full spectrum of sensory experiences on a primal level. In this way, we move beyond the confines of traditional making sense, to embrace a more holistic understanding of the world.

The tool **aims** to:

- Enhance emotional awareness by encouraging learners to deepen the observation of their own thoughts, reactions and emotions.
- Promote sensory engagement and awareness through active sensory exploration.
- Foster empathy and understanding by facilitating a deeper appreciation for the diverse range of emotional responses.
- Encourage creative expression.
- Facilitate descriptive skills in communication.

How to apply it

When learners share their own memories and narratives, it is important to get in touch with their feelings, fears and needs to achieve deeper comprehension of their thoughts, perceptions, assumptions and anticipations.

Facilitators can support learners to make as many associations as possible with their own experiences by asking simple questions. Even if learners cannot possibly have any direct memories or personal experience – because an event belongs in the past or a situation involves a different community or/and country – they are still carriers of collective narratives. Thus, affective imprints exist already in their memory.

The same process can apply when discussion evolves around any kind of archive materials: Facilitators can easily figure out what events, narratives or visuals particularly engage learners and use them as starting points for exploration.

The more the facilitators insist on supporting learners to associate their thoughts and emotions with colors, textures, shapes and materials, the more the learners will make them tangible. Becoming familiar with them and understanding their patterns and associations will help them comprehend how they

directly relate to physical manifestations such as body language, facial expressions, actions and social interactions.

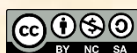
For better results, if time allows, facilitators can ask learners to draw the shapes they associate with the topic under examination, use colored pencils, or bring into the class textures and materials that correspond to the materiality of their emotions and create an actual visual and literary tangible outcome of their thoughts and feelings.

Guiding questions can include:

- How does the X memory/event/experience make you feel?
- Why do you think it has this effect on you?
- Had the X event/ memory/experience etc. been a color / texture / shape / material, what would it be?
- What do you usually associate the X (chosen) color / texture / shape / material with? How do these associations make you feel? What are your thoughts?

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Sensing instead of Making Sense” process combines effectively with the outcomes of other tools such as the “BABEL”, the “Visual Stimulus”, the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Frame”, the “Wall”, and the “Reframing Concepts” tools.



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11. THE STAGE

This tool uses the theater stage as a miniature of the public space. The structures and functions of the former can explain in a tangibly manner the symbolic functions and the power of the latter. As we all know, all elements on a stage are carefully chosen from the set designer to support and promote the director's narrative. To the same end, actors' attires and reciting style convey the essence of the theatrical text with an aim to emotionally engage the audience. In exactly the same way, public spaces exist in a constant interactive mode with their inhabitants, communicating values, structures, dynamics and 'realities'.

The tool **aims** to:

- Explain how public spaces, like theater stages, are carefully designed and organized to highlight heritage values and accommodate current dominant narratives.
- Make tangible the symbolic role and narrative power of the public sphere.
- Bring awareness to the fact that individuals in public spaces subconsciously adjust with the collective just as actors on a stage assume different roles and serve their script.
- Draw attention to the fact that citizens are at the same time the transmitters and the receivers of narratives in their daily lives.
- Deepen the understanding on how public spaces serve as platforms for citizens to engage with collective rituals, cultural values, and collective memories, shaping their experiences and identities.

How to apply it

While examining a topic the facilitator asks the learners to stage their narrative in as many details as possible, i.e. location (urban space, nature, a private internal space, a specific location etc.), colors, lights, actors, audios, etc. This requires a detailed observation and vigorous imagination on part of the learners who are invited to design their thoughts on a piece of paper. If colored pencils are available, so much the better: the chosen colors, the stage arrangements and, in general, all the pictorial elements will be telling of how learners mean and feel the topic under discussion.

The whole activity should not require more than 15 minutes.

Once all learners are done, they take turns to present their staged narrative. Peers note their thoughts and questions while listening.

Facilitators notice key points that repeat, prevailing assumptions, dominant narratives etc. (depending on the intentions and focus of the topic discussion) and use this new material to delve deeper into the

topic under discussion. One good option is to use the learners' input for the visible part of the "Iceberg" tool.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

"The Stage" combines effectively with the "Visuality Iceberg", the "Sensing instead of Making Sense", the "Role-playing", the "Alternative Futures", and the "Reframing Concepts" tools.



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12. THE VISUAL STIMULUS

This tool helps to unpack tacit narratives embedded in our public spaces. At the same time, it makes tangible abstract concepts we share and use, such as power, identity, democracy etc. When discussing ideologies, collective values, or intended collective notions and behaviors, facilitators can use images to support learners to gain insights into how urban spaces narrate powerful stories and communicate, on a daily basis, with their inhabitants (that is, all of us).

The tool **aims** to:

- Deconstruct the visual grammar and the messages familiar iconic buildings, urban structures, monuments, memorials, memory places, museums, public buildings etc. convey in the public space.
- Enhance perception and enable learners to recognize how values, ideologies, and intended collective notions and behaviors disseminate through a multitude of media under our radar of attention.
- Support learners to comprehend the psychological impact of volumes, shapes, compositions, and urban associations.
- Shed light on how we all assume both the role of the receiver/audience as well as of the carrier/narrator in our daily lives, and what are the consequences of this interaction.
- Sharpen critical thinking and foster cultural literacy as learners question how power, identity, and social values, diverse beliefs and aspirations are expressed and reinforced.

How to apply it

A discussion, e.g. on power, can start by presenting and discussing images where volume, or the vertical axis, prevail. Examples abound throughout human history, from the pyramids to the Empire State Building. Memorials that depict human figures, usually on high pedestals, or situated on elevated constructs, can relate to the concept of power and authority, as well (i.e. the power and authority of collective memory, ideology, role models etc.).

Facilitators can present the images and prompt discussion by asking simple questions.

An ideal starting point to explore the importance of concepts such as discipline, law, order or discuss why and how law-abiding citizens and orderly societies are respected as role models, is to use photographs that depict symmetries in urban planning or the symmetrical design of iconic public buildings – usually involving repetition of architectural components, as well.

As in the previous example, facilitators can prompt discussion by asking simple questions.

During a discussion around respect and veneration, commemoration and memory, images of public squares are very compatible. Usually, public buildings are placed on their perimeter, while a monument, a memorial, or an iconic construct, are situated in the center.

Facilitators can associate the void of a square with the pause of a musical composition, discuss its function, and draw attention to what is situated there, how are the forms and the aesthetics etc. Simple questions prompt valuable insights here, as well.

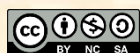
A juxtaposition with modern architecture across all examples works very well. Learners easily spot the different emotional reactions and thoughts that modern forms bring about.

Guiding questions can include:

- What do you see in these images and how would you relate them to the topic under examination?
- What are the similarities / differences when comparing X and Z images?
- Imagine standing in front of this building, monument, memorial, etc., what is the spontaneous posture of your body? What do you think it might mean? In what other cases did you react in the same manner? How do the dots connect?
- Had an observer from a radically different culture come across the X or Z images, what would they understand in relation to the people and society that constructed them? What are the prevailing features?
- What kind of buildings surround the square? Can you imagine why they are there?
- What occupies the center of the square? Can you describe it? What are the materials? Why does it have these particular features? What do they serve? Who might have decided the erection and why?

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

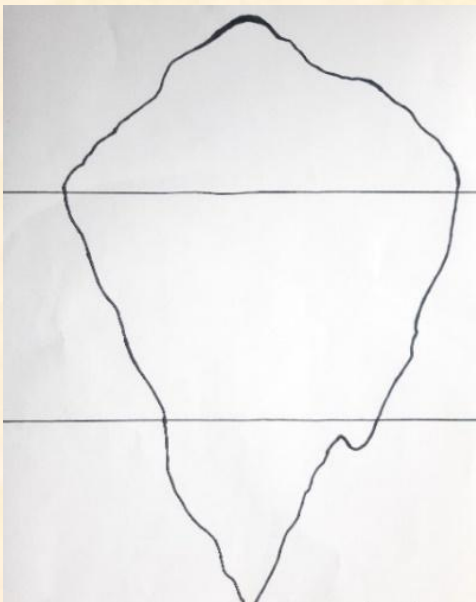
“The Visual Stimulus” tool combines effectively with the “Identity Triangle”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, and can yield very effective results for transformation when combined with the “Reframing Concepts” tool.



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13. THE VISUALITY ICEBERG

The iceberg metaphor serves as a powerful tool for deconstructing social phenomena. Just as the shape and size of an iceberg's submerged portion can significantly affect its behavior and stability, the hidden dynamics of social phenomena (and individual traits) determine the outcomes. The process of uncovering these hidden dynamics sheds light on the underlying causes, structures, and systems that drive the visible part, and highlights their depth and complexity. The nuanced analysis and exploration it supports, prompts a deeper understanding beyond superficial observations.



The tool **aims** to:

- Decompose and examine the underlying factors of what seems to be solid and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic under examination.
- Encourage learners to consider multiple perspectives and layers of analysis when examining social phenomena, or events in their private lives.
- Support understanding on how worldviews and values (deepest level) have very concrete consequences (visible level), as well as how social structures, institutions and systems (middle level) function as bridges facilitating the values, worldviews and ideologies to enact as tangible realities.

- Make apparent the different perceptions among the learners, their deriving assumptions and the different ensuing possibilities they introduce into – or exclude from – their lives and communities.
- Co-create understanding and knowledge among the learners.

How to apply it

The form of an iceberg divided in three horizontal zones corresponds to the visible reality, where our conscious memory and experience exists, and to its invisible parts – the domain of tacit and subconscious memory materials, thought patterns and dispositions. The middle part corresponds to the concepts that support structures, institutions and systems of our societies. The deeper part describes values, worldviews and ideologies, as well as the generated emotions that motivate us as individuals and members of our collectives, molding our thoughts and actions. Although we might think all these make part of the visible reality, their interconnections are subtle and mostly tacit.

Discussing any topic, e.g. an event, a concept, an ideology etc., the facilitator asks the learners to write on different post its the various components, involving parts, and consequences they think of. Most probably, most responses will involve tangible reality (upper, visible level), but there will be thoughts and notes regarding structures, institutions, systems, values, ideologies, and emotions as well.

Learners will stick the post-its on the iceberg (drawn on a whiteboard or printed and stuck on a wall). The facilitator will help learners to specify vague thoughts or break down others into their constituent elements and appropriately position them on the iceberg.

Next step is to ask learners to observe and figure out a couple (max three) different story lines that derive from the post-its horizontally and vertically. Learners can move similar post its in groups (e.g. a positive and a negative narrative/outcome, or a third, not so extreme, perhaps neutral) and create visible storylines. The facilitator should group learners into 2 or 3 groups. Each group will decide what the respective narrative will be, and one representative from each group will share with all peers.

The post-its and the ensuing narratives will provide much material for discussion, analysis, reflection and new questions. This activity will make them understand the delicate dynamics among the events; their interconnection; their complex nature; as well as the different existing possibilities.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Visuality Iceberg” combines effectively with the “Stage”, the “Wall”, the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Role-playing”, the “Frame”, the “Alternative Futures”, and the “Identity triangle” tools.



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14. THE WALL

This is a collective ‘game’ where all learners add and/or detract virtual bricks. The intention is to build collectively a broader picture and become aware of its constituent parts and their role. During the process, the learners comprehend how the resulting wall can take different forms depending on their choices and agency.

The title of this tool could very well be “the puzzle”, however, the ‘wall’ has the additional symbolism of a burden and a limit. That corresponds to the limiting nature of all stances and points of view and prompts discussions on the power and potential of transformation.

The tool **aims** to:

- Bring to the fore the parameter of randomness in history and, in general, in collective phenomena.
- Shed light on the fragile interconnections among the parameters that lead to certain situations and events. Consequently, stress attention to the fact that ‘events’, ‘reality’ and ‘history’ are the random outcomes of a constellation of parameters.
- Highlight the role, power and responsibility each and all of us have as an active citizen.
- Suggest to learners the importance and power of communities in building realities and in bringing change and transformation.
- Train learners to assume the role of an observer and attempt a detached evaluation of events and situations with an aim to sharpen their imagination, observation and agency.
- Train learners to shift from the small picture to the big one, from the micro to the macro scale, and become aware of the sensitive dependence between small-scale changes and far-reaching effects.

How to apply it

Facilitators can use the whiteboard / blackboard as an imaginary wall. They encourage learners to think and share their thoughts, experiences and suggestions.

Learners use post-its to write elements of the topic under discussion (i.e. peace, co-existence, democracy, abundance etc.) and stick them on the ‘wall’. Elements can include events, stakeholders/actors, values, ideologies, emotions, institutions, prerequisites, side effects etc.

Once all elements are on the wall, the facilitator encourages learners to observe what narratives derive from them and share with their peers. Convergences and divergences between narratives are to be expected and should not be discouraged.

Once all narratives are shared, more steps can enhance the understanding of the topic under examination. Depending on the context, facilitators can ask learners to:

- a) Remove certain values or ideologies and all relevant consequences and observe what the new reality that emerges looks like.
- b) Reverse emotions with their opposites, spot the parts affected by this change and note what new perceptions come up.
- c) Become outsider observers and evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each narrative and propose up to 3 ways to address them.
- d) Suggest solution-oriented actions that promote co-existence, sustainability, social justice etc. Each action can become the starting point to repeat part or the whole of this activity and, thus, provide additional opportunities for learners to delve into research, critical analysis and active citizenship mentality.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

“The Wall” combines effectively with the “Visuality Iceberg”, the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Alternative Futures”, and the “Identity Triangle” tools. The subtraction and altering of elements on the ‘wall’ reframe the concept under examination and, thus, applies to the “Reframing Concepts” tool, as well.

NOTE: This tool was co-developed with Andromachos Dimitrokallis,
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/andromachos-dimitrokallis/>



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