



Theatre arts and futures literacy: Anticipating an approximation

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Educational, Scientific and
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Theatre & Future

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“the spectator is held in suspense, eager to know what will happen next in the story, so all sense of inhabiting the here and now vanishes.”

David Wiles

- Theatre has a complicated relationship with the Future
- Theatre practice is constantly dealing with the future

**To approximate the disciplines of
theatre arts and future studies**

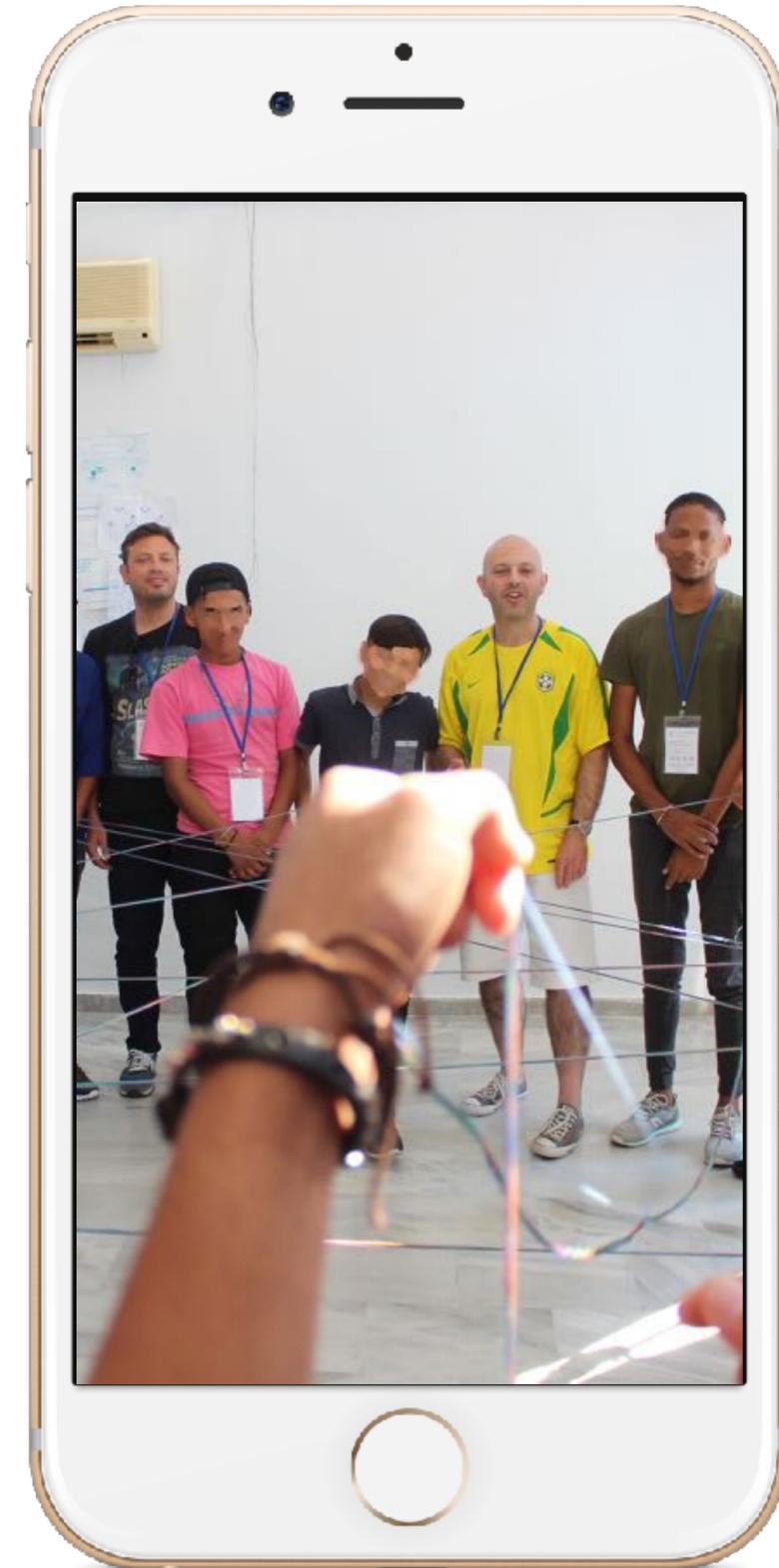
Case study

Design & Implementation of a Futures Literacy Lab that deployed theatre tools, involving asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors, which took place in the island of Lesbos, Greece in July, 2019.



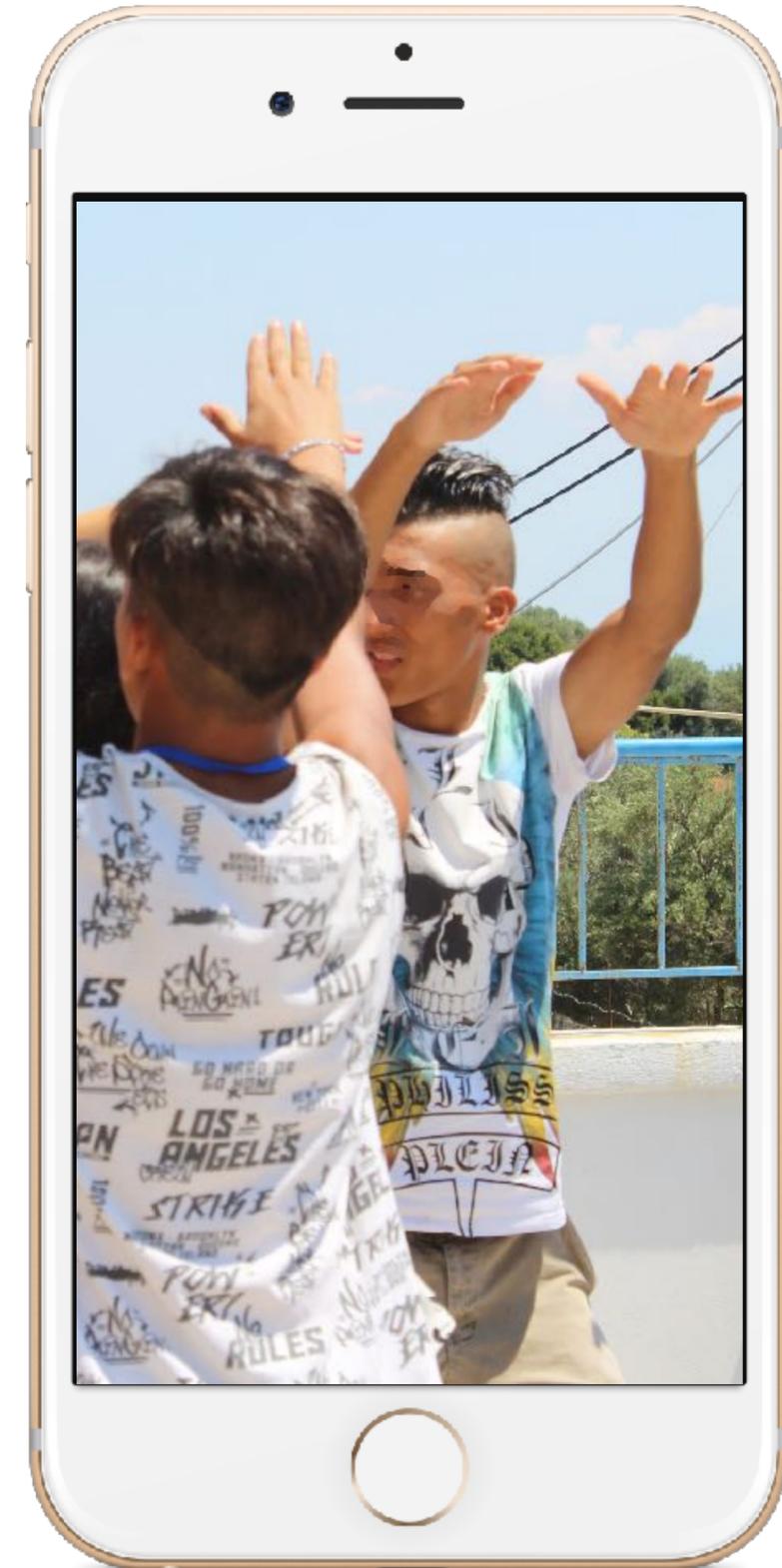
Futures studies

- “How can future possibilities be made real enough to stimulate present-day responses?” (Slaughter, 1996)
- The so-called ‘experiential gulf’ between abstract notions on possible futures and everyday experience impedes futures thinking from entering the mainstream culture (Candy, 2010).
- Drama can offer “rich, layered, concrete visions of the future through performance” (Head, 2010).



Futures studies

- Growing number of foresight practitioners and researchers have been focusing on **the potential of futures work for social change, transformation and emancipation** (Inayatullah, 2013), (Kahane, 2012), (Slaughter, 1996), (Miller, 2018), (Milojevic, 2002).
- Critical futures studies call for reflection on potential reproduction and perpetuation of power structures in the culturally predominant narratives about the future.
- At the same time, **Theatre Arts** as a discipline has a rich heritage of **social engagement** and has been theorized and practiced as a means to challenge underlying assumptions about the world – most notably, but not exclusively in **Piscator and Brecht's 'Epic Theatre'**.





Ethical questions

- Applicability of Theater tools in Futures Literacy Labs;
- Futures Literacy Lab have never been offered to asylum seeking participants;
- Work with a vulnerable group in a relatively uncontrolled situation;

Mitigation

- Extensive preparatory discussions with the NGO
- Minor's care-takers present and actively engaged in the FLL



And more Ethical questions

- "Intervention" in disenfranchised communities;
- Managing participants expectations;
- Power relations, triggering trauma, continuity, and longevity of the project;

Futures Literacy Lab

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TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE

ANTICIPATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

“Futures Literacy is a capability. A soft skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do.”

UNESCO

A Futures Literacy Lab, therefore, is a tool for developing Futures Literacy (Miller, 2015).

Futures Literacy Lab

Futures Literacy Labs (FLLs) are carefully designed workshops (customized to time and place specificities) where collective intelligence knowledge creation processes, and learning by doing approaches are deployed to enable participants to reveal, reframe and rethink their anticipatory assumptions (Damhof, 2018).

They follow a learning sequence of three distinct phases:

1st phase: REVEAL

Revealing anticipatory assumptions

2nd phase: REFRAME

Challenge assumptions, engaging in reframing

3rd phase: RETHINK

Reflect on the overall process



Case study

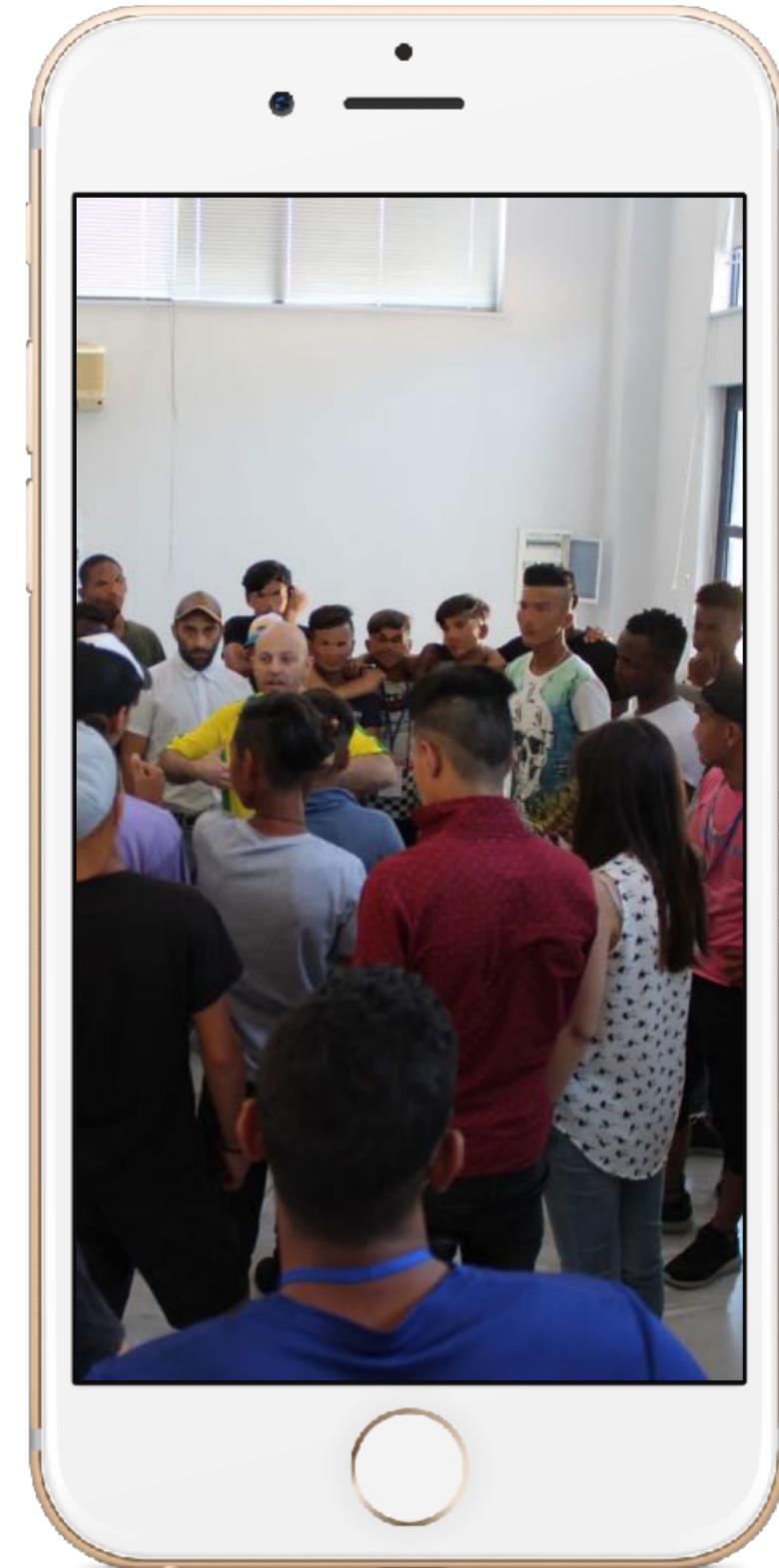
Assumptions

[a] help participants in a Futures Literacy Lab bridge the 'experiential gulf';

[b] encourage somatic modes of perception and expression, leading to different, non-logocentric ways of imagining, which in turn would:

[c] facilitate workshops with multi-cultural groups, who may not necessarily share a spoken language (important for us here), and;

[d] be fun! Again, particularly important when working with young people.



Case study

Working hypothesis

Tools from the arsenal of the **Theatre of the Oppressed** (Boal, 1979, 2002) - such as **Forum Theatre, Image Theatre** - might be usefully deployed within the structure of a Futures Literacy Lab.

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- i)** for enhancing the revelation of anticipatory assumptions (phase 1);
 - ii)** for fostering a collective process of rigorous reframing (phase 2), and;
 - iii)** for fostering introspection and reflection (phase 3)



Theatre of the Oppressed

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Theatre the Oppressed: developed and theorised by Brazilian theatre practitioner **Augusto Boal** (1931-2009).

“all human beings are actors (they act!) and spectators (they observe!).” and that therefore theatre is a medium available for all to practice (Boal, 2002)

In the Theatre of the Oppressed, “the spectator is, or must do his utmost to become, the protagonist of the dramatic actions”. (Boal, 2002)

Design Principles

- The wish to foster a sense of community in participants;
- To have an appreciation of the specificities of the particular group;
- To nonetheless acknowledge the diversity within the group;
- To prepare participants for disruption/reframing of their assumptions;
- To exercise at all times our duty of care towards this vulnerable cohort;



What we expected

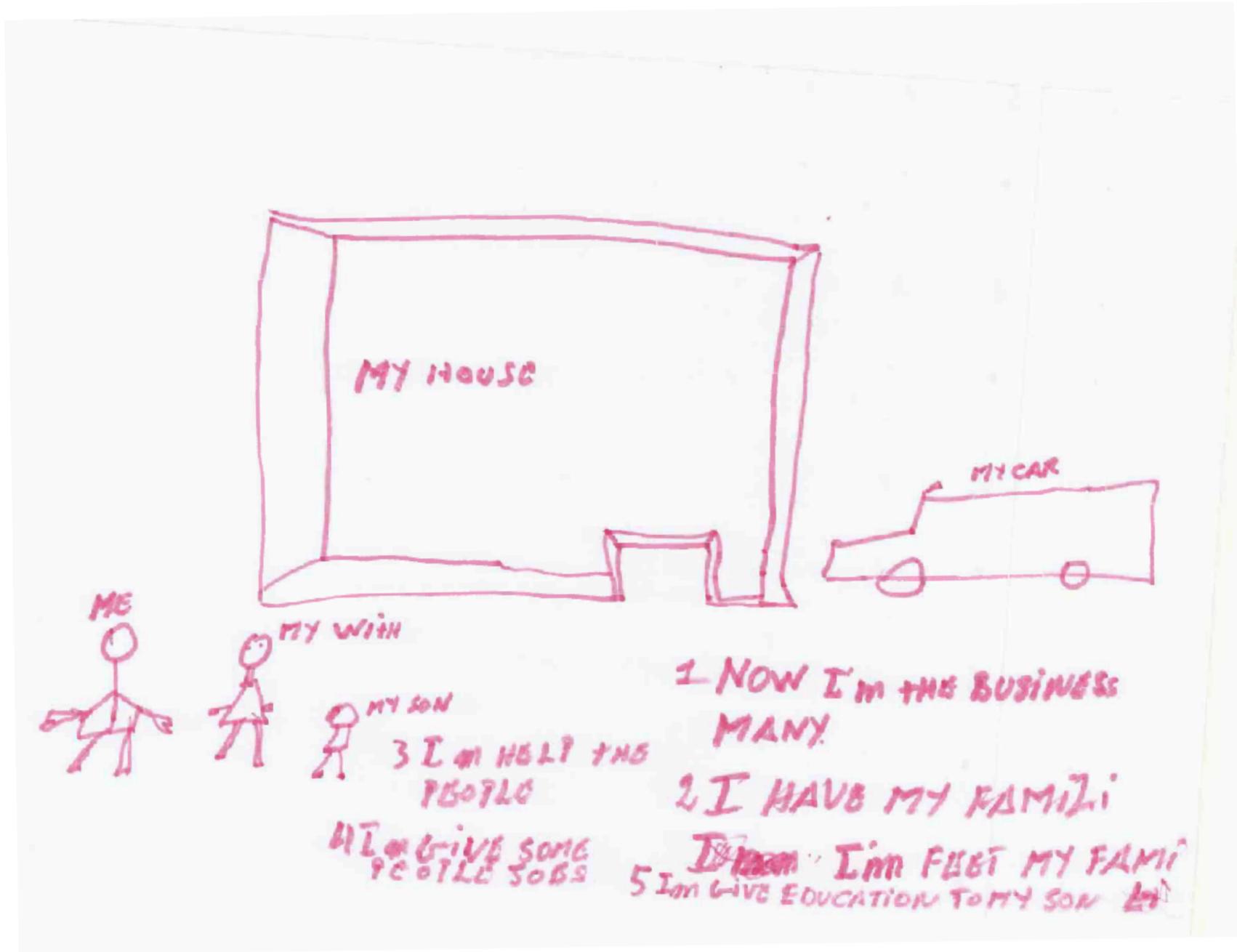
- group of up to 30
- English-speaking
- mixed-gender
- unaccompanied minors (15-18 years old)
- Afghanistan, Africa and few from Syria

What we got

- Almost 40
- little or no English
- Exclusively boys
- some as young as 11
- Afghanistan, Africa and few from Syria.

Some waiting to reunite with family in Europe





In the year 2040, Education will be like waste of time, cause their will be alot of killing and corruption will be a man best friend

A hand-drawn grid of social issues in 2040. The grid is divided into several boxes, each containing a drawing and a label. The labels include: Bribe, graduates, No Job, killing, Political, Prison, school, Innocent, Rich, Wars, and No facilities. The drawings are simple line drawings representing each concept.

TEKNO

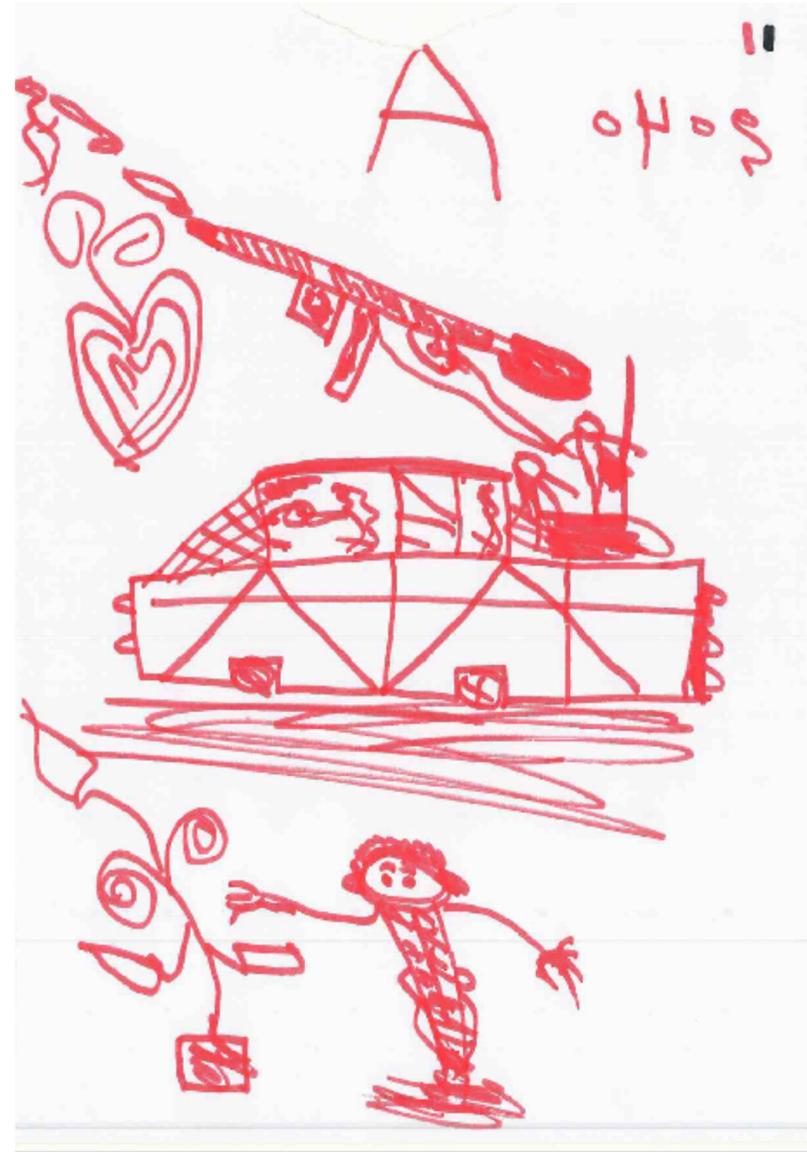
A hand-drawn face with the word 'TEKNO' written above it. The face has a simple, smiling expression with spiky hair.

- ... Skill
- ... Talent
- ... hard work
- ... Success
- ... Good life.

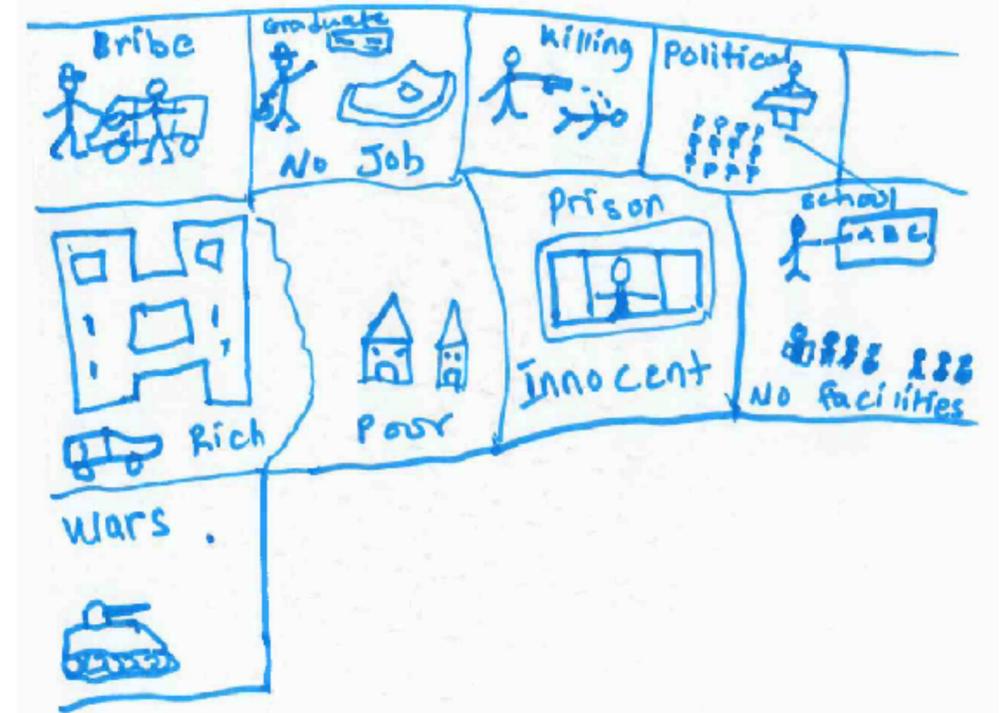
TECHNOLOGY

ACCESS TO EVERYTHING
ACCESS TO EVERYWHERE
ACCESS TO Good Info.
USE ME WISELY!!!





In the year 2040, Education will be like waste of time, cause their will be alot of killing and corruption will be a man best friend





Conclusions

- Anticipatory assumptions revealed and embodied and made "real"!
- Theatre of the Oppressed techniques served their purpose: release creativity of the participants.
- Potential for further transdisciplinary work is clearly there, and for future collaborations and conversations

Participant

"Only God knows the future"

Participant

"In my culture the future is in the present because all the actions we take in the present influence the future"