



Decolonizing the Imagination: Designing a Futures Literacy Workshop

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Abstract. This article explores the potential of narratives and creative writing as tools for imagining possible futures within the pedagogical framework of futures literacy. We share our experiences of a transdisciplinary pre-study on future mobility situated at the intersection of business model innovation, narrative theory and pedagogy. The pre-study results show that it is difficult not to repeat present and past patterns when anticipating the future. A great challenge is therefore to decolonize the imagination when imagining possible futures scenarios. Based on the insights from the pre-study, we propose a futures literacy (FL) workshop as a structured learning process that combines an open-minded imagining of possible futures with the creation of strategic scenarios. Designed for students and practitioners within a transformative learning environment, the proposed FL workshop is process-oriented and has a focus on anticipation and exploration of limitless futures. Furthermore, it is argued that the workshop has the potential for facilitating agency in the process of business model innovation towards innovative organizational value logics. This paper provides hands-on details for a particular way of improving the capacity of students and practitioners for imagining the future differently and pluralistically. A key argument in the paper is that competence in narrative technique is required in designing, performing and analyzing the workshop activities.

Keywords: Futures literacy · Business model innovation process · Narrative technique · Anticipation · Creative writing · Rigorous imagining · Transformative learning

1 Introduction

To speculate about the future has always fascinated human beings. On a very basic level it is a means of survival and of making necessary plans for action in the near future. On a more sophisticated level, speculative thinking is connected to worldmaking and to our urge to place ourselves in new and unfamiliar contexts. As the output within the genre of speculative fiction shows, the representational potential of such worldmaking is enormous. However, due to our inability to sever the future from the present and the present from the past, it is virtually impossible to conjure up a completely new world

[20]. So, when we perceive a world to be new, it is because familiar features have been rearranged in fresh ways that open up innovative perspectives.

For anyone who wishes to become futures literate, the connection between the future and the present is acknowledged as a prerequisite for imagining and for action. In fact, the main argument within a Futures Literacy (FL) context is that the future is used actively in the present [27–29]. Similarly, UNESCO [18] defines FL as “a capability” and “the skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do.” Moreover, since, according to UNESCO, all people are capable of imagining, FL is closely associated with democratic values and is therefore comparable to both traditional forms of literacy and to digital literacy. Thus, FL is very clearly inscribed within a pedagogical framework [21].

This paper discusses FL in a business model context (BM). For a firm which aims to anticipate and act upon the future by innovating its business model, FL is a key capability that holds the potential for managers to go beyond their own cognitive perceptions and worldviews to embrace new ones. At present, the most commonly used approach for firms to orient themselves towards the future is aligned with optimizing their efforts to be able to reach a predetermined strategic goal. As Poli [32] explains, in this form of active orientation towards the future, the efforts are optimized towards a pre-supposed known future, and all choices are rational in relation to the costs and benefits to materialize this future. However, great challenges and trends such as digitalization, bring about a number of wicked problems, great transformation and uncertainty, which make this optimization strategy irrelevant. Therefore, rather than optimizing towards the future, managers should develop “the ability to aspire as an opening of possibilities” ... for different ways of being and becoming” [32:5]. At present, however, as Sharma et al. [37] state, managers feel poorly equipped to do that.

In this article we will be sharing our experiences of working with creative writing as a tool for imagining possible futures within the pedagogical framework of FL. In a pre-study we asked two classes of senior high school students in southern Sweden to imagine what the world would be like in the year 2035 and then to compose short stories on the theme of mobility. The focus of the activity was to discern emerging trends in modes of transportation for people and goods as well as in digital user solutions. While this paper will discuss these trends, the actual implementation of them in the process of a company’s business model innovation is a topic to be explored in a future study.

The pre-study is situated at the intersection of business model innovation, narrative theory and pedagogy. The advantage of this transdisciplinary approach is that patterns and methods in a given discipline are challenged when studied through the lens of another discipline. Introducing FL pedagogy within business model innovation (BMI), for example, may reveal that an optimization approach needs to be replaced by more process-oriented thinking. Conversely, within narrative studies the emphasis on action and “rigorous imagining” [27, 28] associated with FL may call for innovative ways of employing traditional narrative terminology (e.g. point of view) in order to design strategies for the future.

The results of our pre-study show that it is difficult not to repeat present and past patterns when anticipating the future. A great challenge is therefore to decolonize the imagination when imagining possible future scenarios. At the same time, though, and

from a FL perspective, it is crucial to be able to distinguish a possible future which may generate innovative stories that are also of strategic importance and may inform the business model innovation process for companies. So, the aim of this study is to investigate how a structured learning process that combines an open-minded imagining of possible futures with the creation of strategic scenarios can be designed, and, more specifically, how this learning process may inform the process of BMI within a FL framework. These issues are addressed in our paper. We begin by introducing key ideas and terms related to FL generally which are then fitted into a BMI framework of organizational value logics [23]. Based on this theoretical foundation, we move on to present the main conclusions from the pre-study and end by proposing a more well-structured design for a futures literacy workshop. While an additional step will be to explore how the results of the proposed workshop can inform the creation of innovative BMIs, this is a topic beyond the scope of the present paper.

2 Theoretical Background: Futures Literacy and Business Model Innovation

What is so titillating about the future is that it cannot be known. No matter how sophisticated our calculations are, they are bound to be overthrown by uncertain parameters. This is because the world is never stable but in constant change and not even the present is completed although we may think so. FL is founded on this ontological premise of uncertainty and openness. According to Poli [32:4], accepting the “categorical openness” of hidden or emergent parameters is an essential component of FL. By contrast, the optimization approach is all about minimizing uncertainty in relation to the future. It is built on the assumption that the future can be known, that the sum of resources is stable [17, 28] and that costs and benefits can be calculated accordingly [32]. Considering uncertainty as an enemy to be conquered rather than a potential to be embraced does not only close down possible ways of knowing and doing but may actually have serious consequences [17, 32]. A case in point is ecological optimization where calculated disasters can lead to a management of fear [32] and to a suppression of possible futures scenarios.

Optimization is inscribed in a colonizing discourse. Making detailed calculations is a means of mastering the unknown. Miller [28:24–25] writes that “the idea is to impose our will on the future – imagining, if ‘all goes well’, that we can ‘colonise’ tomorrow so that it conforms to our desires and expectations”. Similarly, Facer [17] sees optimization metaphorically in terms of territorial conquest and of defeating a hostile other. Such a defense strategy reduces the number of unfamiliar factors; yet, since we are governed by the principle of minimal departure (PMD) [35, 36] in imagining the future, it results in mere repetition of what is already known. Thus, by projecting present patterns onto emergent worlds, rather than open up vistas we close them down. What is needed – to avoid falling into the PMD trap – is a pedagogical approach that “copes with disorienting dilemmas” [21:2]. One challenge is to make sure that the narrative of growth is not simply replaced by a narrative of disaster since these narratives are just two contrasting facets of optimization [17]. The educator’s role should therefore be to steer students away from

the optimization discourse altogether to help them explore a variety of possible futures [32].

Thus, the ontological grounding of FL in worldmaking as an incomplete process has clear epistemological implications. Facer [17:64], for instance, declaring that “futurity is embedded at the heart of the educational process” advocates a “pedagogy of the present” which “might be understood as a process of becoming open to the excess and abundance of possibilities of creating new worlds” [17:70]. A central idea in this pedagogy is that of the “thick present” which is “neither past nor future... but its own distinctive time and space in which anticipatory practices and lived experiences combine and mingle, changing both the past and the future” [17:71]. A similar position is taken by Miller [28:25] whose “exploratory futures” are aspects in the present which, due to their emergent character, break with our ingrained patterns of thought. It is neither a matter of making predictions nor of finding smart solutions but of “‘seeing’ the present differently”. Implementing an exploratory futures method within the framework of FL is a “balancing act” [28:25] that calls for “rigorous imagining” [27, 28]. Through several steps of “rigorous” choices to be made and questions to be answered, a large number of possible futures are narrowed down to a selection of possibility space stories that may be of strategic significance.

When designing for such “transformative learning” [21:2], anticipation is a key phenomenon. Since the future does not exist in the present, our only means of coming in contact with it is through anticipation, which “becomes a collective way of stepping into the future, of trying to transform one’s own future or the future of the collective before it occurs” [9:42–43 in 32:6]. However, as has been pointed out above, anticipating the future is not merely an imaginary and speculative rambling; it is just as much a means of making sense of the present “through active systems and processes” [29:19]. These systems and processes need to be carefully designed and scaffolded in order to translate imagined future scenarios into present action.

Within a FL framework, imagining future worlds is closely associated with creating narratives. In fact, as Liveley et al. [24] state, the two activities cannot be separated. The Futures Literacy through Narrative (FLiNT) project focuses on collaborative and performative ways of composing stories. The FLiNT project, based in the UK, is a network of people from different sectors: policy makers, academics and practitioners. The purpose is to engage in anticipatory futures practices to “envisag[e] uncertain futures and communicate those possible futures in impactful ways” [24:2]. A narrative kit consisting of performative, interactive and intersubjective tools has therefore been designed within the project. A case in point is a character-based collaborative storytelling activity where participants first compose their own characters individually and then interact in the creation of a possible future world. The added value of the collaborative approach is that the participants have to engage in negotiation in the worldmaking process. Moreover, they can speak and act both through their characters and through their own personal perspectives. Performing through these “hybrid subjectivities”, a “slippage” [24:5] is created between character and participant, between observer and hybrid participant and between participant and characters.

In this context Goodman’s [20] worldmaking theory is of great significance. This theory is based on the idea that “worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds

already on hand; the making is a remaking” [20:6]. Consequently, when we perceive the world as new, we are only seeing a recreated version of the old world. Familiar features may be decomposed, weighted, or ordered differently, deleted supplemented or deformed. The way we perceive the world thus depends on the frames used and these frames “seem to belong less to what is described than to systems of description” [20:2]. In the FLiNT collaborative workshop, the participants are challenged in their ordinary ways of seeing the world by being exposed to worlds imagined through the frames of other participants. Thus, these participants stand a better chance of avoiding the PMD trap than writers of individually composed speculative stories do.

This shows that we need other people’s perspectives “for the completion of our ‘narratable selves’” [13 in 23:2]. Another vital element in the FLiNT project activities is “storyknowing” [33], that is gaining knowledge about the world through situated, relational and embodied forms of learning. What makes the FLiNT project practices special within FL is that they are so firmly grounded in theories pertaining to narrative theory: “Being futures literate, then, should arguably include a suite of skills and competencies drawn from the world of literary criticism to help expose the mechanisms and heuristics which we draw upon in making sense of the possible worlds that the future represents” [24:4]. Expertise in narrative technique is particularly valuable for generating “possible futures which do not merely re-present ... the priorities and concerns of the present” [24:4], in other words, for avoiding PMD. This applies also to the BMI field where the optimization tradition is still strong despite established techniques for working with storytelling, scenario-making and “antenarratives” [7, 25, 31]. However, as will be discussed below, more process-oriented and explorative approaches that fit into a FL framework start to emerge.

Business models (BMs) represent the organizational logics, and are seen as models that simplify the complex reality of the firm [14, 22, 38]. They constitute a key factor in contributing to companies’ viability, and as such, they are descriptions of how firms define and achieve success over time [39]. BMs are, on the one hand, seen in terms of outcomes and market devices for value creation, delivery, and capture, and, on the other, in terms of a process perspective through which a new or innovated BM is created, namely BMI. Laasch [23:408] emphasizes the key role of the incremental, ongoing process of BMI and defines it as an “ongoing construction and reconstruction process of organizational becoming, rather than an exceptional event.” This notion is in line with Nailor and Buttriss’ [30:671] view of “business model as *practiced*”, characterized by continuous change over time, pushed by the dynamic interactions between various actors anticipating and realizing value.

Laasch [23] explores how the BM value logics manifests itself in three key states (cognition, artefacts and activities) and suggests a conceptual model for how the integration of those three states drives the ongoing BMI process and the stepwise materialization of the new BM. In other words, as Laasch [23] reveals, value logics are in essence programs of action and agency – they are embodied in people’s cognition, embedded into artefacts that together shape and enact activities for BMI.

To unpack Laasch’s [23] key concepts, the first state – *value logics as cognition* – relates to the fact that BMs are simply models, simplifications of reality, BMs are namely the mental images (or cognitive configurations) which are in the minds of, for

example, managers or entrepreneurs [1, 15]. Those mental images support anticipation, sensemaking, legitimization and decision-making processes when it comes to BMI in the form of mental shortcuts or simplified stories [14, 16, 26]. The mental images of the organizational value logic are realized in material or textual-visual *artefacts* such as populated visual BM representations of a BM described in, for example, stories, business plans, power point presentations and on websites. Those artefacts can be seen from the BM perspective as an outcome. However, such artefacts are also a cornerstone in the BM as a process since they shape cognition and activities [16]. The third state – *value logics as activities* – relates to the operational activities of the firm [11], for example, in terms of what kind of bundled products and services it offers in order to create and deliver value to its target customers. Another example of this state is what tools and processes are used in order to undertake the BMI process. The dynamics between those three states continuously influence each other to “constructing and reconstructing a firm’s value logics, which in turn manifests and remanifests through potentially altered cognition, artefacts and, activities” (23:408).

Arguably, since the possible future BMs are the result of anticipation, exploration, experimentation, decisions, actions and efforts that firms make today, there is not one ultimate future BM but rather a limitless number of possible futures and future BMs of organizational being and becoming. Additionally, Nailor and Buttriss [30] emphasize the value anticipated and realized as a key causal mechanism which continuously drives the BMI process over time. This makes anticipation an important ingredient in this process of BMI and emphasizes the interactivity of value and its time dimension.

As described above, the process perspective foregrounds the exploration and experimentation process for the creation and development of new BMs [8, 19, 34]. As Breuer et al. [8] and Bocken et al. [5] stress, it is essential to better understand the emergent, continuous nature of the process of BMI and especially how the exploration and experimentation process influences the dynamics between the three value logics states (cognition, artefacts and activities) towards action. Likewise, Miller [27] advocates an increasing importance of experimentation and non-predictive imagining. As such, Laasch’s [23] model may be said to be related to an anticipatory approach. Interestingly, this model is founded on the idea that BMs are modified in ways that are similar to Goodman’s [20] worldmaking theory. When Goodman [20] writes about decomposing, reweighting, reordering, deletion, supplementation and deformation, Laasch [23:408] mentions “revision,” “extension,” “evolution” and “transformation”. For both it is a remaking of something that already exists; it is a matter of using a different “frame” to use Goodman’s [20] terminology and, as argued above, it is this change of perspective that is so important for challenging ingrained ways of seeing and for avoiding optimization scenarios and PMD.

In Laasch’s [23] model – as in FL – there is a strong emphasis on transformative learning. Moreover, the nexus of transformation, embodiment and interactivity is reminiscent of the character-based FLiNT workshops: “These business models co-exist, interrelate and flexibly transform one into another. To understand business models, their becoming and change, it is thus necessary to not only understand a value logic or its individual states, but also the dynamics that interrelate them” [23:409]. While Laasch’s [23] model is inscribed in an actor-network context, which means that the interrelation

may take place between human as well as non-human actors, the FLiNT approach is specifically designed to generate interaction between human participants. However, the characters may be considered artefacts in the sense that they are created to make the slippage felt between themselves and the participant enacting them.

3 A Creative Writing Pre-study on Future Mobility

Our research process was divided into two phases. In the first phase, which took place from late autumn 2020 to late spring 2021, we designed a creative storytelling activity on the theme of future mobility at a senior high school in southern Sweden. We worked with two classes, each consisting of 27 students aged 16–17. The motivation for including this particular age group in our study was that their worldviews and perceptions in relation to the theme of future mobility have not previously been explored [12].

Our main interest was to find out how young people think about the future, the environment and mobility. The students were thus asked to create brief speculative scenarios of approximately 800 words set in the year 2035 and relating to the theme of mobility. A similar approach through the creation of “antenarratives” [6] has become established within organization and management studies. Antenarratives are short, fragmented stories in the making; hence, they lack the narrative stability and linearity of completed stories. In order to fit the activity as seamlessly as possible into the daily work at school, we had several meetings with two teachers from the senior high school. These teachers were to frame the theme of future mobility by providing inspirational material that they thought suitable for the students. Practical classroom details were specified and a selection of fictive and non-fictive genres (short story, diary, video, new article/report) suggested in a power point presentation.

In the first stage the students were asked to generate and share ideas about the theme of future mobility in groups; in the second stage they could choose whether they wanted to work individually, in pairs or in groups. A broad interpretation of the theme of future mobility was encouraged and included technical innovations of vehicles, short- and long-distance commuting, tourism, transportation of goods and migration as a result of climate change. With the aim to concretize the theme, the teachers put together an inspirational package consisting of for example multimodal material about future vehicles, digital innovations, the imaginary city of Notterdam and the lives of young refugees in Sweden.

As stated above, when planning the student activity, we were mainly inspired by previous studies made within organization and management studies foregrounding the treatment of time and place. This perspective was combined with a narratological focus and the two converged in the use of the *chronotope* [2], a term originally used within literary studies but now prevalent also within the field of organization and management [7]. The pre-study had not been consciously framed within FL. However, as we found out later, the general design of the activity may be said to be roughly in line with the first of the three levels (awareness, discovery and choice) in Miller’s [27] method of the hybrid strategic scenario (HSS) for developing FL. This method, which is an example of “rigorous imagining”, is hybrid in the sense that it is both sequential and non-hierarchical; the three levels are equally important but need to be dealt with in the set order. At the first

level participants join in group discussions to make their implicit assumptions about the future surface and become explicit. Another purpose for this level is to raise an awareness about the complexity of the temporal dimension: change happens *over* time while the present is situated *in* time [27:347]. A technique for structuring thinking at this level is to ask the participants to construct stories based on five main criteria: 1) the type or purpose of the story, 2) the temporal and chronological frame and time-span, 3) the point of view (micro or macro level or a mix of the two), 4) the main protagonists (decision makers) and their interrelations and 5) rules and causal relationships for the action. The students were introduced to parameters similar to Miller's [27] first two criteria: the purpose of the story was strategic imagining related to the theme of mobility and the temporal aspect was made clear since the time horizon was the year 2035. While a strict adherence to all five criteria would most likely have yielded more consistent stories, a too rigorous system might have had a dampening effect on the students' inspiration.

In the second phase of the pre-study, we interpreted and analyzed the student stories on the theme of future mobility in the year 2035. Being aware of the multi-layered and ambiguous character of stories in general [3], we started to classify the student stories both in terms of form (genre, temporal dimension, modal form) and content (mode of transport, ownership or sharing, travel distance, elements of the business model, attitudes towards sustainability and technology and the senses activated in relation to technology). We also mapped companies, technologies and characters mentioned in the stories. However, this detailed analytical grid failed to capture features that criteria 3–5 in Miller's [27] level 1 HSS method are meant to concretize. As for the third criteria, for instance, we had used traditional categorization for point of view (first or third person) rather than a micro/macro perspective. Interestingly, however, we had noticed that most of the stories were set in everyday family situations (micro) far removed from decisions made on a macro level. Thus, the shift in point of view suggested in Miller's [27] HSS method was of crucial importance for uncovering the pattern we had discerned without being able to categorize it in a meaningful way. The question is, though, whether we should explicitly have raised an awareness in the students of all five story criteria in Miller's [27] level 1 HSS method and risked confusion or whether for this particular age group, it would have been sufficient to have included Miller's [27] parameters in our analytical model.

We found that the material used in class for introducing the theme of future mobility to the students had a great impact on the stories produced. For example, the hyperloop, which was included in the inspirational material as an example of a future vehicle, was frequently represented in the stories and often within the context of time efficiency without any obvious reason. In the student stories, generally, there is a strong emphasis on measurement in terms of time and space and little exploration of places and landscapes without a clear optimization purpose. The narratives of disaster dealing with the consequences of climate change, are different in this respect, though. These stories contain descriptions of damaged nature and, as such, function as a contrast to the narrative of growth but within the optimization context [17]. Technological and digital solutions are often added as an external feature and are superimposed on everyday patterns that are easily recognizable as our own present ones. The impression is that artefacts in the form

of vehicles and digital tools impact cognition mainly to reinforce ingrained patterns of thought while the more complex role of artefacts in Laasch's [23] model is missing.

As a result, the PMD is clearly manifest in the student stories and this phenomenon is further reinforced by the choice of genre. As observed above, the genres in the inspirational material given to the students include, in addition to the short story, the semi-fictional diary form as well as the non-fictional news report. Analyzing the stories, we were little surprised to find that the non-fictional texts were not multi-layered in the sense in which Facer [17] defines the "thick present". As for the diaries, while the first-person perspective adds emotional depth, it fails to invite "disorienting dilemmas" [21:2] due to an absence of conflicting views of other possible futures. The diary entries are completed by the experiencing "I" and the same mono-imaginary approach is evident also in the short stories irrespective of being composed in the first or the third person.

4 Designing a Futures Literacies Workshop

Based on our insights from the creative storytelling activity in the pre-study, we suggest in this paper a futures literacies workshop which builds on the work from Liveley et al. [24] within the FLiNT project as well as on Miller [27]. The workshop is designed as a structured learning process that combines an open-minded imagining of possible futures with the creation of strategic scenarios which can inform the BMI process. The participants in the workshop can be students from different educational levels as well as industry and public sector representatives. The greater the diversity of actors the better.

The workshop is designed for approximately 20 participants. We start by dividing them into groups of five. First the participants work individually developing fully realized characters, fictional human beings, with the help of a facilitator with expertise in narrative theory and creative writing. The facilitator's function here is to raise an awareness about the chronological frame for the characters and the network of relations in which the characters are to exist. This first step is thus in accordance with the awareness-raising level in Miller's [27:348] model presented above for "shifting both values and expectations from tacit to explicit – all of which builds the capacity of people, teams and leaders to respond and innovate". It is also in keeping with the initial state of the FLiNT approach [24] in which the participants construct their characters individually.

In the second step, the students continue working in their groups. Their task is to collaboratively devise a possible world setting in which all characters can be brought together on a given future date. This step is intended to "develop a space for imagining possible futures" [27:352]. In Laasch's [23:411] terminology, this activity is a form of "process of translation", which corresponds to what Liveley et al. [24:4] describes as "an act of negotiation, creating a performative setting in which different subjectivities, emotions and modes of knowing are brought together to envisage a possible future". In this way, the participants perform their agency of sculpturing and constructing the world or, with reference to Laasch [23], contribute to the emergence of an actor-network. During this stage, the facilitator has the crucial role of asking questions directly to the characters about their worldviews so that participants may engage in the activity and "step outside the boundaries of the self-up-to-this-point" [24:5]. In other words, the participants are to be teased out of their normative thinking to avoid the PMD. In Miller's

[27] terminology, this is the “discovery” level informed by “rigorous imagining”, where participants move beyond the PMD to be able to explore a plurality of possible futures. To facilitate such exploration is especially important as the pre-study showed that the students were restricted in their imagining due to the PMD.

In the third step all the groups meet in a joint class discussion where the members of each group share their experiences of being in a possible world with other characters. This activity is followed by a discussion exercise suggested by Miller [27] in which the participants are asked to discuss good and bad aspects in the created world, what features a preferred from a particular actor’s/firm’s point of view and what similarities and differences between the future worlds and the present worlds may be found. This shared activity is informed by Miller’s [27] last stage of choice.

As has been described above, we have been inspired by Laasch [23], Miller [27] and Liveley et al. [24] in designing the FL workshop but have taken the liberty to combine features of these three frameworks in new ways. We realized, for example, that for the sake of clarity, Miller’s [27] model needs to be somewhat simplified and some details have therefore been removed to make it more flexible and suitable for a greater variety of contexts. As a result, the “rigorous imagining” element is a little less “rigorous” in our modified version than in the original. We find the strong performative character of the Liveley et al. [24] approach appealing and believe that the situated, relational and embodied learning process it is founded on will have a stimulating effect on the anticipatory activities of imagining. Thus, the element of performativity is more foregrounded in our model of combined frameworks than it is in either Laasch [23] or Miller [27] individually.

We believe that the proposed workshop, with its strong focus on performativity, will be more useful for setting the stage for anticipating future possible worlds than the inspirational material of the kind used in the pre-study proved to be. We therefore suggest an additional workshop step in which participants compose exploratory and anticipatory stories about possible worlds subsequent to having engaged in the performative process. At this stage the participants are likely to be in a better position to decolonize their imagination and minimize the influence of the PMD in imagining the future by creating artefacts of narration in line with Laasch’s [23] strong focus on the role of artefacts for the process of BMI. In creating these artefacts of future possible worlds, the participants will have the chance to draw on such factors as gesture, tone of voice and other embodied and multimodal forms of representation experienced during the workshop. These stories may be produced individually, in pairs or groups in the mode(s) chosen by the participant(s).

On the whole, this workshop approach allows us to explore whether we imagine the future differently when doing so through the eyes of another imaginary person and what new and previously hidden insights into worldmaking such collaboratively developed characters and contexts may reveal. Applying the FLiNT approach is not merely a matter of shifting perspectives but of creating “hybrid subjectivities” and a creative “slippage” [24:5] both within a participant and between participants. To move intuitively between the use of a first-person and third-person pronoun, between a present and a future self is an anticipatory activity that facilitates agency.

In line with Laasch [23], characters with different cognitive configurations that envision different value logics must be created so that new perspectives for driving BMI can

be found. The proposed workshop has the potential to do so and to serve as a “change actant” [4:96]. As Laasch [23:411] states, the value logics are “programs of action” and agency requiring a process of translation; the suggested FL workshop provides one element in this process. Callon [10:60] explains that if there are actors with different logics, they will start a process of translation – an “interdefinition of actors” attempting to convince each other into adopting their respective logics. This definition aligns well with the character-based shared storytelling [33] feature of the FL workshop, which is connected to agency and emphasizes the role of relational experience. The outcome of our proposed FL workshop has the potential for inducing the process of translation, especially since it offers an encounter with non-business-model actors with divergent logics (e.g. students from different educational levels), if used as is suggested in this article. Furthermore, the FL workshop provides an opportunity to grasp scenarios in an accessible and impactful futures output which may engage diverse groups of actors in creating possible futures through audio-visual artefacts [24]. Thus, in line with Laasch [23], those artefacts may develop agency in creating and changing organizational value logics which may be useful in the early phases of BMI.

5 Conclusions

In this paper we have used the FL framework as an umbrella structure for business model innovation, narrative theory and pedagogy in order to promote a transformative learning environment not only for students but also for practitioners. One great advantage of this approach is that students within different disciplines and practitioners may engage in collaborative learning that opens up new ways of seeing the world. In the near future we plan to launch the workshop outline presented here with students from the Master’s Program in Industrial Management and Innovation. The next step we envisage is to include students with competence in narrative theory. We believe that such a combination of student perspectives sets the stage for transformative learning processes [21].

This paper makes several contributions to prior research. When it comes to BMI, it aligns with Sharma et al. [37] and their cocreating forward approach. The suggested FL workshop gives students and practitioners a more process-oriented approach with focus on anticipation and exploration of limitless futures instead of optimizing scenarios based on the past and the present. Furthermore, in line with Laasch [23], the suggested FL workshop holds the potential for agency in the BMI process towards innovative organizational value logics. This agency can support the anticipation and realization of value as discussed by Nailor and Buttriss [30].

When it comes to narrative studies, this paper shows that competence in narrative technique is required outside the field of literary studies. Imagining possible futures is a difficult task for participants without proper knowledge of such aspects as point of view, setting and characterization. Conversely, for literature students who are mainly used to applying their skills when analyzing already completed fictional worlds, exploring possible futures in the making provides an added value: the effect of a particular narrative tool is made evident and thus the worldmaking process is concretized. Hence, the theory of narration is understood through a practice of narration. Moreover, to work with imagining based on a theme like future mobility within a BMI context gives a sense of

purpose and direction to the process of narration and worldmaking. Exploring possible futures becomes a means for action and doing in the present.

As for pedagogy, this paper provides hands-on details for a particular way of how to improve the capacity of students and practitioners for imagining the future differently and pluralistically. This approach is in line with Miller [27] who also advocates a need for developing a better capacity for more imaginative storytelling decoupled from the planning of the future in a probabilistic manner associated with making calculations about the unknown.

While the present article presents one way of decolonizing the imagination through a futures literacy workshop, it only outlines the beginning of the journey. In the present study, we have explored anticipatory futures through the creation of narratives within a senior high school context, and based on this work, we have designed a workshop setup. Our next step will be to study the implementation of this approach in a business context during the early phases of BMI. Future research can test the FL workshop in different classroom settings and in multistakeholder workshops involving students from different programs and educational levels as well as practitioners and policy makers. In our opinion, it is vital that the practitioners and policymakers are involved already from the start including the stage of creating narratives and then throughout the whole process. This approach will give significant insights not only into how to further develop the workshop by, for example, including roleplay and joint reading of created narratives, but also into understanding how the FL workshop may contribute to learning and capacity building. Additionally, a longitudinal study can be made to follow up the role of the FL workshop and its future output; as a non-explicitly-business-model-related artefact it will be interesting to explore how effective it is for changing the business model of a firm. In conclusion, it will be of great interest as a means of revealing why and how and in what context artefacts develop agency.

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