



**UNESCO Chair
on Visual Anticipation
and Futures Literacy
towards Visual Literacy**



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 on 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 is broadly used during the Future Literacy Labs with an aim to engage in alternative storytelling about the future*.

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.



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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 “Five Mirrors”, the “Frame”, the “Alternative Futures”, the “White T-shirt”, and the “Role Model Stereotypes” tools.

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