

Hessisches Landestheater Marburg GmbH  
Am Schwanhof 68–72  
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## Lecture performance by Ia Tanskanen “Future Narratives - local labs for children and adolescent”

### FUTURE NARRATIVES FOR PLANET EARTH

Temperatures are rising, heat waves are hitting, bushfires are raging, several species are going extinct, seas and rivers are flooding, soil is worn away by erosion. It's happening, we feel the impact. Ice caps are melting like popsicles, we are floating in an acidic ocean and it's getting darn hot in that pool!

What could be future narratives for the planet earth? What stories should be told on the theatre stage? Who should have the mic? Or is the situation already beyond descriptions, impossible to put into words?

US politician and activist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez once said:

“We don't have time to sit on our hands as our planet burns. For young people, climate change is bigger than election or re-election. It's life or death.”

Indeed, the topic is tremendously urgent. We refuse not to just sit on our hands. We want to move and give the mic for the kids. Let the first local lab begin:

A class room in Bottendorf elementary school in the outskirts of Marburg, in Hessen, Germany. One dramaturg and a theatre pedagogue knock on the door. We come with heavy backpacks and hearts wide open. We are surrounded by 25 kids at the age of 10. Many curious eyes are on us. We are going to talk about future narratives, aren't we? We are going to move, talk, draw, circle around the topic and later dig deeper by using multisensory methods. With complex questions and funny exercises, we are exploring together this unknown terrain. After getting to know each other we take another step. Small pieces of paper are scattered around the classroom, different coloured pencils and pens rest on tables. We ask our first question.

What do you wish for the planet earth? Ready, steady, go!

The pencils begin to rustle.

Answers:

*Enough water, money, no more waste, no war, Fortnite should go! Exclamation mark! More sun, more holiday (sun emoji), 23 degrees, war, I don't wish for anything, more sun and water, no more driving cars, no more plastic, no more nature, less waste in the nature, nature protection, 2 that the ice caps would not melt, start living instead of being on the phone, water for the earth, rainforests, lots of colors, more animals, more nature, that the black animals would be accepted and that no one would be superstitious about black animals*

*anymore, that animals would not be abandoned, no more greenhouse gases, health for the world, no meteors, less war.*

The papers are being collected in the secret envelope, the envelope of possible future narratives. We shake our limbs, we laugh, we jump around, we change places, we are focused, we continue.

Next question:

What do you wish for the future? Ready, steady, go!

The pencils start to rustle.

Answers:

*Becoming an actress, meeting Jenna Ortega, good grades, no war, that everything will be better and no meat will be eaten, (heart emoji), lots of beautiful moments, joy, fun, health, no robbery, that the world remains alive!*

We shake our limbs, we laugh, we jump around, we change places, we are focused, we continue.

Third question:

Which object would you take with you to the future if you could travel with the time machine? Ready, steady, go!

The pencils begin to rustle.

Answers:

*A cat, a towel, my favorite necklace, a cell phone, my bat, a plush animal, Lisa Marie, money, food, comics, a backbag, a handball, electricity, a bed, Lamborghini, my plush horse Ferdinand (heart emoji), a house, a pair of sturdy shoes.*

We shake our limbs, we laugh, we jump around, we change places, we are focused, we inhale and exhale. Pause.

These are maybe not the exact answers we predicted, yet they are the answers we get. What becomes evident is that the kids realize that sources such as clean water and food are slowly running out and temperatures on the globe are rising. Wars and conflicts damage people, animals and nature. Carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels keep rising. There is a cause and effect. However, for them it's not doomsday yet. Luckily. They are hopeful. They are still eager to see and imagine their future. We open up the discussion. The kids share their thoughts.

Then it is time to draw speculative futures, hopes and dreams. The children are allowed to draw anything they can imagine for planet earth. Whether it is a group pressure or an art of collective thinking, we ended up having multiple pictures of planet earth.

Now each and everyone of you will get one of those pictures. It's your precious blue planet. Here you go!

(I am going to give a small picture of planet earth to every participant).

Now you have a planet in your hands. Consider yourself to be honored. You are on a special mission. There is no planet B. Take good care of it!

Lastly, we imagine what could be the voices we don't see or hear on stage yet. What would the forest say if it was a play. The indigenous Sámi people living in the Arctic have a saying: "*Eennâm Lii Eellim*". *Land is life*. Please, close your eyes and hold the planet in your hands, we will take a leap to an imaginary forest created by the kids.

(Sound file: Forest with the kids).