

IN 5510

Workshop Inspiration for Participatory Experimental Design

Balancing study, work and life

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Two Workshops, One Topic

Workshop 1 – Understanding

Open-ended and exploratory

- What does balancing study, work and life actually look like right now?
- Mapping, storytelling, clustering, prioritising
- Participants are the experts of their own experience
- Output: shared themes, tensions and vocabulary

Workshop 2 – Imagining

Structured futures workshop

- Critique, fantasy and realisation phases (Jungk & Müllert, 1987)
- Starts from the themes we found in Workshop 1, not from a blank page
- Moves from challenges to visions to concrete steps
- Output: visions and more concrete ideas and starting points

The first workshop (building an understanding) gives the second one something concrete to work with.

Starting the Master's (PhD) Programme: Why This Topic?

- Starting a master's programme is a transition: new expectations, new people, a new rhythm
- Many students combine studies with paid work, care responsibilities, commuting and a social life
- Balance is not only time management. It also involves belonging, uncertainty and expectations
- Everyone in the room is an expert on this topic in their own way

What we are curious about:

- What does a good week look like for you?
- Where does the pressure actually come from?
- What already helps, formally and informally?
- Who is missing from the picture we usually draw of a student?

WORKSHOP 1

Understanding Student Life

An open, exploratory workshop to build an in-depth understanding of the topic

Background: The Exploratory Workshop

- Before imagining futures, we need to understand of the present
- Open-ended: no fixed problem statement and no solution on the table
- Generative methods: making, telling and enacting, rather than only asking
- Participants are the experts of their own experience; we facilitate and listen
- Also part of the fuzzy front end, but earlier than the futures workshop
- Output: themes, tensions, early prototypes and a vocabulary the futures workshop can build on

Diverging

Collect as much lived experience as possible

Converging

Cluster into shared themes but do not forget about tensions and contradictions

Warm-Up and Groups

Lets get started

- Groups of four to five, counting to build groups or building groups intentionally
- Warm-up: select one picture and write down one word for your first weeks in the programme, written on a post-it and read aloud
- Give every person in the group a bit of time to explain why the chose a certain picture and why they wrote down this specific word

Ground rules

- No advice-giving and no fixing during the first half of the session
- All experiences count, including the ones that may sound trivial to you
- Anything personal stays in the room
- You decide how much you share 😊

Mapping a Typical Week

Get creative!

- Each participant makes a typical week, choosing whatever material speaks to them
- The form is up to you: a grid of days and hours, a line, a landscape, a pile or a model
- First layer: what fills the week. Teaching, self-study, paid work, travel, care, rest, social time and the in-between
- Second layer: how it feels. Where is the week good, and where is it tight?
- Then tell us about it. Nobody interprets someone else's week; the maker explains, the group asks questions

Prompts

- Where in the week does it usually break down?
- Which hours are yours, and which belong to someone else?
- What did you cut first when the week got full?
- What did you leave out of your model on purpose?

Choose Your Materials

Draw it

Paper grids, felt pens, pencils, post-its

Build it

Clay, blocks, pipe cleaners, wooden shapes

Collage it

Magazines, coloured paper, stickers, tape

Lay it out

String, ribbon, pegs, tokens, beads

More inspiration:

Coloured yarn, washi tape, dot stickers, tissue paper and textures. Rough for friction, soft for what carries you, transparent for what is barely there. Photograph every artefact before clustering, so the notes and the models stay connected.

Stories: A Good Day and a Hard Day

Story time

- Each participant tells two short stories: a day that worked, and a day that did not
- Listeners note concrete details: what happened, who was involved, which tools and spaces were used
- No solving and no advice. Ask what happened next instead
- Collect the striking moments on post-its, one moment per note

Listening for

- Workarounds people invented themselves
- Moments of relief and of being stuck
- Other people in the story: peers, staff, employers, family

Clustering into Themes

- Put all post-its on the wall or the shared board
- Group them by what they are about, not by who wrote them
- Name each cluster in the participants' own words, not in ours
- Notice which clusters are about time, which about expectations, and which about relationships, spaces or systems
- Leave the notes that fit nowhere visible. They are often the interesting ones

From Understanding to Imagining

01

Themes

Three to five tensions the group agreed matter most

02

Vocabulary

The words participants themselves used for their situation

03

Stories

Concrete moments the critique phase can start from

The futures workshop can now start from what we found, not from a blank page.

WORKSHOP 2

Futures Workshop

Critique, fantasy and realisation, applied to student life

Background

- A type of workshop developed by Jungk & Müllert (1987)
- Read more on p. 152-153 in the PD book
- Can be adapted to suit most topics
- Could involve several different exercises to fit your topic and participants
- Typically used in the fuzzy front end
- Involves both diverging and converging

Today

A short version, on starting a master's programme and balancing study, work and life

Possible Structures of Futures Workshops

Phase	2-day	1-day	½-day
Preparation phase Designing the room, introducing the theme and the working method	1 h	½ h	½ h
Critique phase Creating a richer, common image of the problematic situation	4 h	2 ½ h	1 h
Fantasy phase Generating visions of an improved situation, without restrictions	6 h	2 h	1 ½ h
Realisation phase Bringing the visions down to earth and developing a plan	4 h	2 h	1 ½ h
Follow-up phase Discussion, reflection and what happens after the workshop	–	–	–

Jungk & Müllert, 1987

Preparation Phase

Getting started

01

Setting up the room

Tables for groups, wall space, post-its, pens, and the themes from Workshop 1 already on display

02

Introducing the methods

Explain the three phases and why critique comes before fantasy

03

Introducing the theme

Present the themes the group produced in Workshop 1

THE THEME

The Future of Student Life

Starting a master's programme, and balancing study, work and life

Critique Phase

Objective: identify and discuss the problems and challenges of balancing study, work and life as a new master's student.

First step: let's make some groups

Critique Phase

Discussion + Presentation

Objective: identify and discuss the problems and challenges related to balancing study, work and life as a new master's student.

- Brainstorm-ish
- Make a subjective list of the issues in today's student life that are worthy of critique
- Start from the themes and stories from Workshop 1, then add what is missing
- Make notes of the identified issues
- These critiques should not be antagonised or discussed on a deeper level

Fantasy Phase

Let's get creative

Objective: creatively imagine the ideal student life, without worrying about practical constraints.

- Brainstorm-ish (still)
- Bold and creative ideas for what a genuinely balanced student life could look like
- The critiques should be turned into their positive counterparts
- The feasibility of these suggestions is irrelevant
- Prepare a visual representation of your ideal week or ideal semester using sketches, diagrams or digital tools

You could consider

- Timetables, deadlines and teaching formats
- Campus spaces and how they are used
- Group work and supervision
- Paid work, care and commuting
- Digital tools and communication
- Community, belonging and rest

Realisation Phase

90 min

Objective: transition from visionary ideas to practical strategies for reaching the student life envisioned in the fantasy phase.

- Fantasy visions form the base of a development plan, and then a strategy
- Discuss what needs to be done in order to realise the vision
- Identify practical steps that could be taken this semester to move closer to it
- Consider resources, rules, routines, spaces, technologies and who would have to be involved
- Be explicit about what students can change themselves and what depends on the institution

Who could act?

- Students themselves
- Peers and student organisations
- Course teachers and supervisors
- The department and the faculty
- Employers outside the university

Group Presentations & Discussion

Groups share their visions and their action plans

Follow-Up Phase

1

Make room for discussion and reflection

What surprised us, and what did we avoid talking about?

2

Listen and reflect

Make sure to also give the quieter groups/participants the floor

3

Plan for enough time

The follow-up is where a workshop turns into something that continues

Any questions?

