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What Do You Think About the Future? Students' Imaginaries in Colombian Post-Conflict

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Abstract

Thinking about the future is relevant in Colombia to help denaturalize violence and overcome the armed conflict with the construction of social changes. To achieve this, Social Studies have the challenge of teaching how to imagine alternative futures at school. This research aimed to contribute to the understanding of the personal and social future imaginaries of Colombian elementary school students. The qualitative methodology with a critical approach guided the data collection through a questionnaire and a teaching unit. Data were analyzed using content analysis. In conclusion, students saw future projection as a novelty, although they recognized the possibilities of making their own decisions and participating in society.

Keywords

Education for the future, future imaginaries in students, peace process, post-conflict, teaching Social Studies

Introduction: Why teach the future in schools?

Including the future in education is important for the orientation and construction of the students' personal and social life projects. To make the future visible in their educational process is to allow them to think about the creation of desired and fairer ways of life. From this perspective, the future is the driving force of the history that is taught. The future as hope, as an unconstructed time, must allow young people to be themselves (Pagès, 2019).

From foresight, Anguera and Santisteban (2016) consider the future as a horizon of possibilities. This makes it possible to imagine changes that can be achieved with actions of democratic social responsibility by seeking to improve the world. This is because the future must not only be perceived but also created (Bell, 2009; Inayatullah, 1998; Polak, 1973; Slaughter, 2003).

According to Hicks (2006), we create our future through the acts we do or omit to do. For example, in the face of global events that affect humanity, such as climate change, human rights violations, and armed conflicts, among others, these problems give us a foreseeable panorama of hopelessness, which in turn, face a variety of opportunities that would allow future changes for individual satisfaction and social harmony.

Nowadays, countries such as Colombia are demanding social changes for coexistence, social justice, and a culture of peace (Congreso de Colombia, 2014; Escobar-Gómez, 2019). This projection of change is important to help overcome violent crises and segregation generated by the long-standing internal conflict (Jiménez-Becerra, 2019; Ramos-Pérez, 2017). This conflict is described as an irregular war with social and political precedents (Duque-Gómez, 2017) which triggered an intense armed conflict between various illegal guerrilla groups fighting against the state, society, and the armed forces. Among the main consequences are the forced displacement of the population and the increase in poverty due to land abandonment.

Throughout Colombia's history, solutions have been proposed to guide the transformation of these realities,

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raising the need to build a future in peace. Today, the country is going through a phase following the signing of a peace agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP). This negotiation, which rises in a post-conflict scenario, cannot be limited to the opposing parties. On the contrary, it requires the participation of most of the country's population to contribute to the transformations, otherwise, it could be called elitist or discriminatory.

Every person and every group in the country has a voice in the post-conflict, including ethnic, religious, political, trade union, women, LGBTI population, and children, among others (Escobar-Gómez, 2019). Citizens must become aware of such commitment to ensuring that the armed conflict is not repeated. It is up to us to get involved because we have been directly or indirectly affected, therefore, we must participate in the decision-making that will shape the future. In this case, the educational system and specifically Social Studies are key to develop this task because of their capacity for social transformation.

A central purpose in the teaching of Social Studies is to contribute to the formation of critical thinking in students so that they become critical citizens who assume commitments to transform the problems and injustices present in the environments they live (Gutiérrez & Pagès, 2018). In this scenario, education for the future (Anguera & Santisteban, 2016; Bateman, 2009; Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks & Gidley, 2012; Hoffman, 2019; Kong, 2015) emerges as an innovative and interdisciplinary proposal with a high social, educational, and research relevance.

Education for the future relates to the teaching purposes of Social Studies by enabling students to locate themselves in the world, interpret it, and participate in it (Pagès & Santisteban, 2014). Given this, reflecting on the past is important to help interpret the present, to think about and manage preferable futures (Bell, 2009; Hicks, 2012; Inayatullah, 2013; Slaughter, 2003) within the framework of human temporality. This allows students to imagine different versions of tomorrow, to be aware of their civic responsibility, and to assume with optimism the changes (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015; Santisteban & Anguera, 2014).

Contributing to the above implies searching strategies that recover voices, experiences, and knowledge with the creation of stories open to the future. Therefore, this work, which is part of a doctoral thesis, is linked to the line of research in teaching Social Studies (Henríquez & Pagès, 2004) on the understanding of the imaginaries of the personal and social future of elementary school students between 9 and 11 years old, from a qualitative approach and with a methodology of case study research with critical interest (Simons, 2011). The future imaginaries were analyzed based on a questionnaire and the development of a teaching unit, which for this paper focuses on addressing the first set of findings on the content of the personal and social future concerning human temporality in a post-conflict context.

Access to the field of this research was linked to the role of one of the researchers as a practicing teacher in the classroom and as part of the educational community. The institution to which she belongs is located in the municipality of Santa Rosa de Cabal (Department of Risaralda - Colombia). This territory has had the particularity of being the recipient of vulnerable populations directly affected by the internal conflict of the country (Unidad Nacional de Protección - UNP, 2021).

Given the background of the national context, emphasis is placed on the possibility of helping in the consolidation of the peace process in the post-conflict stage by making the imagination and construction of futures with students at school visible. The results obtained in this research highlight that, students consider it a novelty to be able to imagine the future given the uncertainties it generates, and at the same time, they recognize the possibility of participating and making decisions about their future.

Theoretical Framework: Openness to the future

History is created between changes and continuities that have been projected in diverse visions of the future of humanity. From the point of view of a scientific perspective, education for the future (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks, 2006; Kong, 2015; Pouri & Wilenius, 2018) studies the possibilities of the future and makes it possible to influence the desired future. Academic production in this field increased considerably in the second decade of the 21st century. However, Pagès and Santisteban (2014) affirm that the future needs to be addressed as an element that affects education, citizenship, historical consciousness, and critical thinking in students.

A review of international research (Anguera & Santisteban, 2016; Bateman, 2009; Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks,

2006; Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015) and teaching proposals (Chen & Hoffman, 2017; King & West, 2018) shows that the future should be the object of teaching and learning to prepare people to make possible and preferable decisions in a complex and changing world. In the case of Latin America, there are very few studies on the future (Guerra-Chacón, 2015). In Colombia, there is a big gap in this regard (Quiroz & Muñoz, 2013). The teaching of the future as a human temporality is invisible in schools. Although there are international advances, education for the future is a promising field that needs to be explored from multiple perspectives.

In this context, questions arise such as: what is the meaning of the past, the present, and the future in our world? why teach students to project themselves as temporal beings? why train them in historical thinking? (Plá, 2005; Seixas & Peck, 2004) Provided this, teaching to think historically is thought to have as its main objective the development of historical-temporal consciousness (Rüssen, 2004; Santisteban, 2017) to give meaning to the past in a changing nature that allows us to rethink human action. Historical consciousness is conceptualized as an operation of the human intellect that makes it possible to reflect on time from a diversity of experiences and perceptions of what has happened, what is happening, what could be, or what one wishes to happen (Pagès & Santisteban, 2010).

Giving meaning to history is not the exclusive domain of experts. Historical construction also takes place in non-disciplinary contexts, to some extent in everyday contexts. This is because we live in a world that contains many other voices telling the story, voices that the dominant culture often ignores (Milojević, 2005), and that need to be articulated and regarded as equally valid.

From a critical Futures Studies approach, there is a particular interest in language, how it is used, and how it transforms the individual and society through conscious expressions and actions. In this logic, language is not static, its use and development attract new possibilities for the future. Understanding future imaginaries through language influences education for democratic citizenship by using history as a function of today’s world to better manage the future as temporal beings (Santisteban, 2017).

Human temporality is a central aspect of the development of historical consciousness and its relationship converges in education for the future (Bishop & Strong, 2010; Santisteban & Anguera, 2014). It can be said that historical consciousness (Rüssen, 2004) temporally orients the past with the present and projects it as ideas about the future. On the other hand, education for the future (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks, 2006; Pouri & Wilenius, 2018, 2018; Staley, 2018) considers foresight studies to analyze images of the future and forms the capacity to imagine desirable alternatives to make them a reality with responsibility and social commitment.

Specifically, the academic discourse of futures education is represented as a subdomain of the broader discipline of Futures Studies (Anguera & Santisteban, 2016; Bell, 2009). This approach moved the concept of the future to learning experiences in elementary, secondary, university, and non-formal settings. Reflecting on the need to prepare school communities for the future is an initiative that stems from an interest in the human condition and its improvement. This implies helping students to recognize the types of future according to the personal or social level, the distance, and the possibility of occurrence, as shown in Figure 1.

Future according to personal (Wheelwright, 2005) or social level (Anguera & Santisteban, 2016; Bell, 2009)	Future according to proximity or distance (Weizäcker, 1970)	Future according to the possibility of occurrence (Hicks, 2006; Slaughter, 1988)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal: Related to aspects of daily life in the person’s immediate environment. • Social: Alluding to situations with other individuals at the world, country, or city level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near: Determines immediate actions. • Medium: Within the next 20 to 30 years. • Distant: From half a century onwards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible: Anything can happen. • Probable: Based on evidence and trend projection, it could happen. • Preferable: Emerges when previous futures are judged and desired according to personal values.

Fig. 1: Future types

Until relatively recently, there has been an occasional interest in how young people and children view the future (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks, 2006). Today’s children will be the adult citizens of the 21st century, their images influence their aspirations for the future. According to Hicks and Holden (2007), the older children get, the more

pessimistic they become about the future in general, either because of the influence of the media or because of the lack of education for the future to help them face the social problems they become more aware of as they grow up. What is expected of the future is not usually what is desired, therefore, it is imperative to pay more attention to future imaginaries as constructs of meaning to create new ways of living and think of education to promote creative exploration of possible utopias (Hurtado-Herrera, 2004).

It is necessary to work on the future at school based on democratic values to contribute to optimism and change. Without these values, young people may become less critical and more consumerist, for example, in the face of what the media offer. Considering that, the teaching of Social Studies must address the social problems facing the world and the ideas of the future that are yet to be built.

In Colombia, González & Santisteban (2014) consider the importance of Social Studies in a possible end of the armed conflict that allows us to understand what happened in the country and learn to imagine alternative futures. In this case, the school is essential to promote formative processes that recognize the reality of all social sectors conducive to democracy and peace (Pérez, 2014).

Education for the future can be key in the challenge of trying to break cycles of violence when it becomes a logic in which no other option seems possible. This can be achieved with the opening of peaceful futures (Hutchinson, 2005), different from the present and the past (Finlev, 2012; Milojević, 2005, 2022; Milojević & Izgarjan, 2014). Efforts to manage conflicts and overcome social injustices need to direct people towards empowerment processes with the visibility of the construction of the future.

Methodological Framework: How was this research done?

This paper, which is based on a doctoral thesis about teaching the future at school, was developed as a qualitative approach with a critical-social interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The aim was to contribute to the understanding of the students' personal and social imaginaries of the future, within the framework of participatory citizenship.

The methodological strategy corresponded to a case study research (Simons, 2011; Stake, 2013), from the educational practice of a teacher-researcher and her group of fifth-grade elementary school students ranging from 9 and 11 years of age. The above was oriented by the research question: what are the imaginaries of the personal and social future of a group of students in fifth-grade elementary school, in a post-conflict context?

The participating group of 19 students (26% male and 74% female) was part of a state school located in the urban area of the municipality of Santa Rosa de Cabal (Risaralda, Colombia), where Spanish is the official language. The group was characterized as a convenient sample (Flick, 2015) because it worked with students assigned by the school to the teacher-researcher. The number of participants depended on the acceptance of the ethical considerations of the study by the parents through informed consent. Most of this population belonged to low-income Colombian families. They had varied backgrounds concerning their status as migrants (especially from Venezuela), also forcibly displaced people, and relatives demobilized from the internal armed conflict.

Other contextual aspects that are worth mentioning include gangs, drug addiction, prostitution, child abuse, difficulties in waste management, and animal abandonment. Additionally, the educational level of the students' parents varied, since most of them do not have a professional education but have elementary, secondary, or technical education. Parental occupation was diverse, with some working in independent commercial businesses and most doing various odd jobs.

The conditions for the coronavirus pandemic were also recognized in the year 2021 and the season of school classes was carried out with the support of technological tools. Before the fieldwork of this research was done, on-site classes were restrained to prevent infection. In addition to this, there were infrastructural issues in the institution, which reduced school days and classroom availability. However, it was possible to carry out the entirety of the work in person at the school facilities with the students.

To achieve the such, the data for this research were obtained through techniques validated by experts (Flick, 2015) and with the support of pilot tests applied to another group of students in similar conditions. This helped adjust the proposal to work with the study participants. This work was developed in the light of content analysis (Arbeláez & Onrubia, 2014), supported by grounded theory tools (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). The accumulated data were systematized with the support of the MAXQDEA software. With it, the processes of Codification and Constant

Comparison Method were followed to integrate concepts into a coherent theory (Cohen et al., 2007). To contribute to scientific rigor, validation strategies such as Theoretical Saturation and Methodological Triangulation were used (Cohen et al., 2007).

For this paper, the first set of results of the diagnostic questionnaire "Let's think about time" and of the first session "My personal and social time" of the teaching unit (Granados & Pagès, 2011) entitled "What could we build for the future?" is presented concerning the topic of the future and its contextualization in human temporality. Due to the educational level of the students, the proposed theoretical categories were adapted in the fieldwork with a language according to the age of the participants.

Results: Imaginary futures of students in a post-conflict context

Research on education for the future in Colombia, based on a formation in historical and temporal consciousness (Rüssen, 2007), is a social and educational necessity. The circumstances of the context demand from the school community a contribution to the social transformation thought of the students. Students should not be educated only to answer questions about the past, but to question themselves critically about what the future will bring them from the present (Audigier, 1999; King & West, 2018). In this sense, it is important to recognize the conceptual construction of the categories of human temporality and the relationships that human beings build in the tense intersections in time.

Human temporality: Between thoughts of past, present, and future

Learning to think about and appreciate changes and continuities over time helps to consolidate historical consciousness (Rüssen, 2004) with knowledge and power in the future (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks, 2006). For its development, human temporality is a central aspect that orients past time with the present and projects it to ideas about the future. Therefore, helping students to identify themselves as temporal beings is essential. This implies recognizing that the treatment of temporality can be addressed at the personal or social level (Anguera & Santisteban, 2016; Bell, 2009). Locating themselves based on their own experiences and those shared with others in their environment favors the understanding of their experience in time.

A supporting view of how the aforementioned is experienced by the students who participated in the questionnaire is presented in Table 1. It is observed that in personal time, students project their thoughts more on past and future situations. As an example, alluding to the past: "the death of my dog, my rabbit, my chicks, my cat, it makes me very sad to think about it" (F11)¹. Concerning the future: "money shortages, lack of jobs and so many things that afflict us" (M10). In lesser choice was the present, justified in responses such as "we can hardly come to school anymore, and we don't know many classmates, and we all want Covid-19 to be over" (F9).

While in social time, situations that are discussed with others stand out from the past category, for example, "like when I was a little child" (M10). Other less chosen options were the present and the future. In students' testimonies: "like moving house and adapting to a new neighborhood" (M10) to talk about the present, and "leaving the country (Ecuador) to save and buy a house" (F11) related to the future. The justifications in the answers selected in both types of time, personal and social, were associated with experiences and feelings generated by the students.

Table 1: Human temporality

Time category in the answer option	Personal time In your day-to-day life, you think more about situations that:		Social time With your family members, you talk more about situations that:	
	%	Justification	%	Justification
Already passed	37%	Memories of the death of close ones, events due to the covid-19 pandemic, and accidents experienced.	48%	Shared memories about discoveries, life stages since childhood, and emotionally supportive events.
Are happening	26%	Ongoing problematic pandemic situations, prohibitions on sharing with others or regularly attending school.	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems caused by pandemics, lack of communication between family members, and desire for reconciliation. Shared lives in school and sports activities.
Have not happened, but could happen	37%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about the lack of economic resources in their environment. Aspirations of what they might do in the coming days. 	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worries about lack of communication in the family. Aspirations of goals to be achieved (travel, acquisition of goods).

The ways of conceiving human temporality with a projection into the future vary according to the context, population, and historical epoch (Hölscher, 2014). In the case of the present research, the participating children were in the schooling stage in a context characterized by complexities of violence and insecurity during a historical moment of a pandemic. The questionnaire asked them to consider whether what they had learned in the past helped them to think about the present and the future.

As illustrated in Table 2, most of the students responded that it was useful because of the beneficial implications of recognizing their previous experiences in the continuum of their lives; for example, “yes, because I have made mistakes in the past and from those mistakes, I have learned quite a lot” (F10). While a small percentage chose to be in doubt because of their age as a limiting factor and the lack of knowledge about the future: “I don't know because maybe I was too young to know if it would be useful in my future” (M11). No participant selected the “no” option.

Table 2: The usefulness of what was learned in the past to think about the present and future

Utility	No	Don't know	Yes
%	0%	26%	74%
Response justification	Doesn't apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to young age. Lack of knowledge of what the future brings. Uncertainty in changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effort to defend themselves. Problem-solving skills. Acquisition of knowledge. Being part of new opportunities. Considering mistakes as a reflection to generate changes.

As a contribution to the understanding of human temporality, students were asked in the questionnaire to make a drawing relating the past, present, and future, accompanied by a one-sentence description. Among the diverse images made by the students, in the questionnaire, it was possible to group their answers into six categories referring to stages in evolutive moments, increase in social problems, use of time, progressive acquisition of objects, religious creation, and elements of the environment. The above is exemplified in Figure 2.



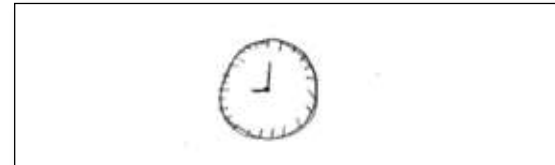
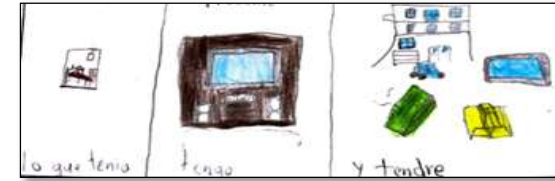
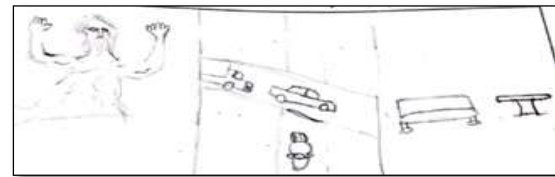
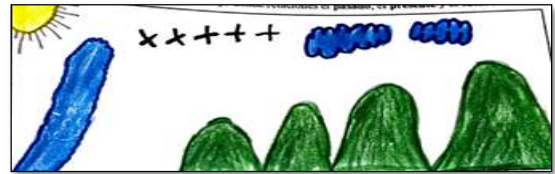
Relationship past, present, and future	Response justification	Evidence and example in the drawing
Stages	Evolutionary moments contextualized in situations of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human growth. • Events from the presence to the absence of planets in the universe. • Progressive situations during the pandemic. 	“Growth of a human being” (F9). 
Social problems	Increased recognition of social problems over the years: pollution, vehicular traffic, buildings in nature.	“Traffic and constructions in nature” (M10). 
Time	The time display on the clock.	“The clock as a symbol of time” (F11). 
Acquisition of objects	Material relationship based on possessions.	“Possession of objects” (M10). 
Creation	The religious connotation in the creation of the existent.	“God’s creation” (M11). 
Environment	Relationship from natural elements.	“The mountains are the past, the river the present, and the future the birds” (F11). 

Fig. 2: Categories of human temporality

Projecting the future

As a historical epoch, the future is a late discovery. There were always future events that human beings expected, but there was not always the idea of a homogeneous time that was running and in which such events would end up settling (Hölscher, 2014). According to Anguera and Santisteban (2016), throughout history and in different cultures, the understanding of the future can be distinguished from three approaches: beliefs or religions, according to ideologies, and from science-oriented Futures Studies.

Considering the above, the questionnaire asked students about their perception regarding the definition of the future (Table 3). Most of them agreed in conceiving it as an alternative open to its construction, for example, “in my future I imagine myself studying to fulfill all my dreams” (F11). While the future, as something predetermined, was justified to a lesser extent in responses such as “it is what we live every second as God tells us to” (F10). And the future projected as uncertainty was the least chosen, justified in the following example “it is what we do not know will happen” (M10).

Table 3: What do you think is the future?

Response option	%
Luck, we don't know what will happen	11%
It is already written and cannot be changed	21%
It is a construction that we can make reality according to possibilities and desired changes	68%

Contributing to the understanding of how students perceive the future implies contextualizing their projection of personal and social images. When students in the questionnaire were asked about how they considered their future (Table 4), most were optimistic as they recognized their capacity to intervene in the future. Besides, another percentage visualized the future in the randomness of circumstances and the identification of limitations to action. Another option chosen varied in the extreme perspective dependent on agents external to their actions. On the other hand, only at the social level, a smaller group of participants chose to project the future of the world with significant problems.

Table 4: Personal and social future images

Response option	Personal future What do you think your future will be like when you become an adult?	Social future What do you think the future of our world will be like?
With many problems	0%	11%
Things will go between positive and negative	10%	5%
Everything will remain the same	0%	0%
We must wait and see what happens	37%	37%
With changes, depending on the decisions we make	53%	47%

Images of the future are constructed, on the one hand, from general knowledge. This is obtained through education and life formation. On the other hand, social knowledge is obtained through one’s own experience and that of other people who live and have lived in the world according to their beliefs, ideas, and values. These types of knowledge that an individual attains are reflected and filtered through his or her identity and personality. Another aspect to consider is that culture provides its members with a set of roles that change from one life stage to another. These roles may be associated with gender, age, or personal characteristics in terms of talents and skills. Consequently, what is understood as the future is the result of the relationship between the elements mentioned above (Rubin & Linturi, 2001).

For Slaughter (1988), images of the future are understood as guides that present options to choose, argue, or debate. With this type of inquiry, future images are considered from their possibilities, not to predict what will happen precisely, but to discern in the creation and realization of what is valued.

Projected personal and social time between change and continuity

The first session of the teaching unit "My personal and social time", was proposed as a phase of exploration and explanation of the contents to be addressed with the students on human temporality. The objective of this activity was to "relate personal and social time through the identification of changes and continuities that have existed in my life since I was born".

Santisteban (2017), states that the process of conceptual construction of temporality in history must consider two spheres. One has to do with change and continuity in giving meaning to the study of history to explain processes of transition, evolution or revolution, crisis, cycles, modernity, progress, or decadence. The other has to do with, the categories of human temporality and the relationships in which human beings live the remembered past and the expected future.

In this research logic, the session produced timelines made with students' personal and family photographs brought from home, selected for representing past and present events, to project them into the future in the production of a drawing. To do this type of work, the teacher guided each moment of the class through instructions, guiding questions, and a written form that structured the construction of the timeline. Figure 3 summarizes the students' responses.


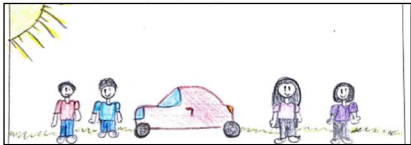

Category	Past	Present	Future
Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situations occurring close to their first years of life (2010 to 2013). Early childhood (5 years of life - the year 2015). Lack of knowledge of the relationship between year and age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The year 2021. The year 2020. Omission of year. Only age identification (9, 10, 11 years). 	Consideration of adulthood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 years in 2030 or 2031. 30 years in 2041. Confusion in identifying age and year.
Evocation	Relation to stories told by relatives (mother, grandmother, uncle) and the place where it happened (house, restaurant, farm).	Nearby experiences (religious events, walks) and their relationship with the place where they occurred (church, thermal baths).	Aspirations about the place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue living in the current municipality. To move to another part of Colombia. To live abroad. Unspecified (house, countryside).
Imagine family life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching family members through their experiences. Possibility of sharing. More time to play, go for walks, or shopping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious traditions (going to mass, first communion). Shared daily routines (cooking, studying, walking in the park, watching videos, eating together). Celebration of special dates (birthdays, New Year). Family dynamics disrupted by working or separated parents. Conflicts with close people and searches for a solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Living alone with a pet" (F11).  "Continue living with the same family and acquire more assets (a car)" (F11).  "Aspirational desires such as getting a successful job, being happy, having a united family, and living peacefully without violence" (F10). 

Fig. 3: Personal and social timeline

In general, the previous references reflect desired states of the future that are optimistic because they propose situations that could become a reality, which would generate well-being and hope for the future. In none of the cases were pessimistic future visions projected. It was also evident that some students presented difficulties in the use of language to communicate facts about the past, present, and future. In specific cases such as the conjugation of verbs and conceptual representation of temporal categories.

To contribute to the conceptual construction of temporality in the teaching unit, the categories of change and continuity were considered in the elaboration of the timeline (Figure 4). Although it was difficult for the students to approach these concepts, the development of the session suggested that it is a valuable contribution to relate the activity to their previous life experiences.

Category	Past - Present From the years when they were babies until now	Present - Future In the next few years until they become adults
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way of being and speaking. Habits. Progress in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical appearance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age. Development of intelligence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifestyle. Effort. Material goods to be acquired. Company. Fears and worries.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same people, same bodies. Their family and love.
Continuities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External aspects that continue as nature, education, and ways of helping others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing continues, everything changes.

Fig. 4: Changes and continuities

Images of the future provide goals and motivations to intervene in the world. These images have no power in and of themselves to bring about change at the personal or societal level. Their impact will depend on the people who put them into action (Bell, 2009). Therefore, allowing students to design their futures favors democratic participation by considering what they could turn into a reality, as summarized in Figure 5. Students concluded that “it was a novelty to work on the future at school because in this work we must imagine, think, remember, and create new things” (F10).

What could you do to build the future you imagine and desire for yourself?	What do you wish for the future of people living in Colombia in the coming years? And what could they do to build it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “To make an effort” (F11). “Being responsible” (M11). “To live well” (M10). “To set goals and achieve them with clarity of desires” (M10). “Study, go to college” (F9). “To be orderly” (F10). “To have patience” (F10). “To work on mental balance” (F11). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A better future based on cooperation among people” (M10). “Well-being, peace, union, respect, and good coexistence” (M10). “Need to overcome health problems, poverty, bad habits, and lack of communication with children” (F10). “To build the future, it is necessary to take care of oneself, the family, and the environment. Also, to study and work with effort” (F11).

Fig. 5: Building a preferable future

Education for the future contributes to prospective imagination in students and its construction, with possibilities different from what had been experienced in other times. In this perspective, from the Colombian context, efforts to

manage conflicts and overcome injustices need to direct the critical thinking of people in processes of empowerment and change in the creation of preferable futures.

Discussion: Towards education for the future in Colombia

Considering the research results that were presented, this work is a valuable contribution to the generation of awareness of what could be built in the future. Giving students the space to imagine their futures and that of their community represents a breath of hope to learn to act responsibly and in solidarity in an environment that requires overcoming barriers from different relevant social problems.

In Colombia, there are barriers to the consolidation of peace (Hutchinson, 2005) and social justice in the framework of an agreement designed for post-conflict times (Escobar-Gómez, 2019), where collective responsibility is assumed. In this case, the school has an essential role in the configuration of participatory and decision-making experiences. This allows us to think and to build alternatives for the future in the face of scenarios that require a broader perspective to overcome the logic of domination (Finlev, 2012; Hutchinson & Herborn, 2012; Milojević & Izgarjan, 2014; Quiroz & Muñoz, 2013).

The former is a task that must be conceived in the teaching of Social Studies with orientations assumed from the early school stages. This is because each student is the possessor of a part of history that deserves to be placed in relief in the framework of a reflective temporality and above all to make it visible in the school with the challenge of projecting him or herself into the future.

The challenges of the Colombian school, from the field of Social Studies education, are diverse. Given the social problems that occur following the signing of a peace agreement due to the armed conflict (Jiménez-Becerra, 2019; Ramos-Pérez, 2017), it is necessary to reflect on what should be considered in education to imagine and build possible futures (González-Valencia & Santisteban-Fernández, 2014). For example, a field to be explored would be the development of skills in Futures Literacy (Poureu & Wilenius, 2018) linked to critical thinking and citizenship education. Developing formative processes that recognize the multiple realities that affect social sectors, in terms of democracy, implies the need to contrast positive images of a desirable future that are worth participating in or working for. According to Anguera and Santisteban (2014):

It is true that if we analyze the ideas or images of the future, we face a liquid and uncertain time (Bauman, 2007), a future full of risk (Luhmann, 2006), or a situation in permanent destabilization (Burke, 2007). But it is also true that against these representations of time, today more than ever it is necessary to form the historical-temporal consciousness and educate for the future... If we do not help to build scenarios of tomorrow where there is greater social justice and more solidarity, if these images do not even exist in the imagination of young people, how will they be able to make them a reality? (p. 262).

In this work scenario, the invitation from education to imagine personal and social futures (Bell, 2009; Chen & Hsu, 2020; Finlev, 2012; Hicks, 2006; Inayatullah, 2013) that help students to acquire a certain optimism about the possibilities of change, confidence in their perspectives, and reflection in decision making remains. It is uncertain what the future holds, but it is possible to learn to imagine what will happen based on what is happening now and what happened in the past within the framework of human temporality.

Conclusions: Between uncertainties and possibilities for change in the future

What people think about the future has a great influence on their attitude to participate with enthusiasm and change the social reality (Santisteban & Anguera, 2014). It is necessary to re-think the time spent at the school with a more explicit orientation towards the future (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Hicks & Gidley, 2012; Kong, 2015). To contribute to the above, the purpose of this research article was to understand the imaginaries of personal and social futures of elementary school students living in a post-conflict context.

When analyzing the students' imaginaries regarding personal time, they recognized those thoughts of the past predominated, as well as those oriented to the future. These thoughts of the past made sense through memories and

feelings that emerged from experiences that occurred previously. While thoughts of the future were related to concerns and aspirations for the days ahead. Most of them considered that they are agents of change based on the decisions they make, unlike others who believe that they should wait to see what happens because they do not know what is going to happen. Those who thought more in the present time, tend to occupy their ideas with problems that occur in their lives.

On the other hand, the students' ideas about social time, that is, time shared with others stood out in the dialogue about past events from the memories and feelings that emerged there. To a lesser extent, conversations about situations of the present (related to problems and experiences of the moment) and of the future (also focused on concerns and aspirations) emerged.

Regarding the use of language in terms of the future and the conceptualization of human temporality, limited justifications were identified, with little contextualization, and a variety of terminology. In some cases, they showed a lack of knowledge of the proposed contents. Although the above did not prevent the understanding of expressions of optimism regarding the possibilities of better worlds, both at a personal and social level, based on the opportunity of changes that, according to the students, can be built with effort, study, and work as part of the alternatives when making their own decisions.

Parallel to the feelings of encouragement, many students also expressed confusion and fear regarding the uncertainties generated by not knowing about the future. Faced with these perceptions of hope and concern, another group of students visualized many of the future situations from a continuity point of view, without many alternations in their lives and based on the daily environment shared with their families.

In this type of scenario, it is necessary to promote images that motivate hope for the imagination and construction of a desirable future. As an educational contribution, the inputs obtained also revolve around the purpose of constituting guidelines to support the teaching of the future, within the framework of a historical-temporal consciousness, in the Social Studies class in a critical perspective.

Therefore, considering the field to be explored in Colombia, the proposal of embracing the topic of education for the future as a novel option to intervene in conflicts and social injustices based on the alternatives of the future is left open. Rethinking the curriculum, teaching practices of Social Studies, and citizenship education would be an opportunity to include the future in educational practices oriented to the formation of temporal historical consciousness, critical thinking, and citizen participation (Santisteban, 2017). This would, in turn, help to build prospective peace scenarios with the students, to favor optimism in the face of change and responsible social intervention in the post-conflict stage.

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Note

5- Gender F: Female, or M: Male + age

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