



## CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS

**Causal Layered Analysis** (CLA) is a group sense-making technique used to explore the underlying causes and worldviews contributing to a situation.

Causal layered analysis is offered as a new futures research method. Its utility is not in predicting the future but in creating transformative spaces for the creation of alternative futures. Causal layered analysis consists of four levels: the litany, social causes, discourse/worldview and myth/metaphor. The challenge is to conduct research that moves up and down these layers of analysis and thus is inclusive of different ways of knowing. (Slaughter, 1996)

Causal layered analysis is based on the assumption that the way in which one frames a problem changes the policy solution and the actors responsible for creating transformation.

The **first** level is the "litany" - quantitative trends, problems, often exaggerated, often used for political purposes - (overpopulation, eg) usually presented by the news media. Events, issues and trends are not connected and appear discontinuous. The result is often either a feeling of helplessness (what can I do?) or apathy (nothing can be done!) or projected action (why don't they do something about it?). This is the conventional level of futures research which can readily create a politics of fear. This is the futurist as fearmonger who warns: "the end is near". However by believing in the prophecy and acting appropriately, the end can be averted. The litany level is the most visible and obvious, requiring little analytic capabilities. It is believed, rarely questioned.

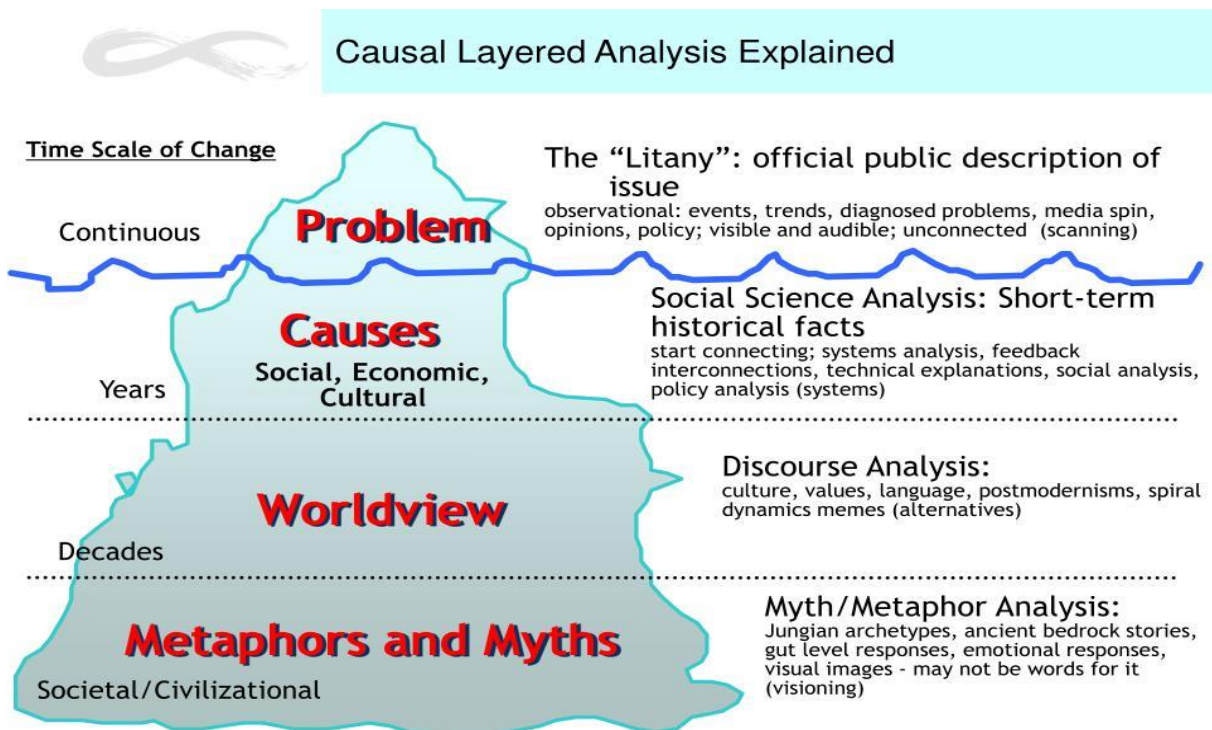
The **second** level is concerned with social causes, including economic, cultural, political and historical factors (rising birthrates, lack of family planning, eg). Interpretation is given to quantitative data. This type of analysis is usually articulated by policy institutes and published as editorial pieces in newspapers or in not-quite academic journals. If one is fortunate then the precipitating action is sometimes analyzed (population growth and advances in medicine/health, eg). This level excels at technical explanations as well as academic analysis. The role of the state and other actors and interests is often explored at this level. The data is often questioned; however, the language of questioning does not contest the paradigm in which the issue is framed. It remains obedient to it.

The **third** deeper level is concerned with structure and the discourse/worldview that supports and legitimates it (population growth and civilizational perspectives of family; lack of women's power; lack of social security; the population/consumption debate, eg.). The task is to find deeper social, linguistic, cultural structures that are actor-invariant (not dependent on who are the actors). Discerning deeper assumptions behind the issue is crucial here as are efforts to revision the problem. At this stage, one can explore how different discourses (the economic, the religious, the cultural, for example) do more than cause or mediate the issue but constitute it, how the discourse we use to understand is complicit in our framing of the issue. Based on the varied

discourses, discrete alternative scenarios can be derived here. For example, a scenario of the future of population based on religious perspectives of population ("go forth and multiply) versus cultural scenario focused on how women's groups imagine construct birthing and child raising as well as their roles in patriarchy and the world division of labor. These scenarios add a horizontal dimension to our layered analysis. The foundations for how the litany has been presented and the variables used to understand the litany are questioned at this level.

The **fourth** layer of analysis is at the level of metaphor or myth. These are the deep stories, the collective archetypes, the unconscious, of often emotive, dimensions of the problem or the paradox (seeing population as non-statistical, as community, or seeing people as creative resources, eg). This level provides a gut/emotional level experience to the worldview under inquiry. The language used is less specific, more concerned with evoking visual images, with touching the heart instead of reading the head. This is the root level of questioning, however, questioning itself finds its limits since the frame of questioning must enter other frameworks of understanding – the mythical, for example. (Inayatullah, April 2017)

Who solves the problem/issue also changes at each level. At the litany level, it is usually others - the government or corporations. At the social level, it is often some partnership between different groups. At the worldview level, it is people or voluntary associations, and at the myth/metaphor it is leaders or artists.



Sources: R. Slaughter, "Integral Operating System" World Future Society, July 2003, drawing on Sohail Inayatullah; Dennis List, "3 Maps of the Future," July 18, 2003; Andy Hines, UH-Clear Lake, 2006.

## MULTI LEVEL PERSPECTIVES (MLP)

According to Frank Geels (University of Manchester) Multi Level Perspective (MLP) can be used theory for understanding transitions. (Geels, 2006)

MLP is often used to describe socio-technological transition, with a focus on the intersections between society and technology. More recently MLP has been used to describe socio- systemic social issue transition, with a focus on the intersection between society and its systemic social issues.

The Geels framework best describes the process of MLP. Recently this framework has been used by collective impact initiatives to identify outcomes with a focus on changes in the behavior, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or situation. Outcomes are identified as occurring at three levels– landscape, regime and niche innovation. (Lowe, 2018)

