

Poverty Amidst Plenty: a role for Causal Layered Analysis

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Poverty is multi-dimensional and relative. Can poverty within prosperity be progress? Is poverty inevitable? And why, in bounteous NZ, is there material poverty? Is it only because there is spiritual poverty? Or could there be dysfunction within our systems of social and cultural organisation?

We create the future by our actions in the present. Our actions though are largely prescribed by our systems of organisation. So whose future is created? And are we complicit or innocent by-standers? Is it a just future, our preferred future and is it sustainable? Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a futures research tool that enables the creation of transformative spaces in which we can envisage alternative and preferred futures.

CLA was developed by Sohail Inayatullah (1998), an internationally renowned futures researcher. It has similarities to psychotherapy where the root causes of mental dis-ease are sought. CLA takes as its starting point the assumption that there are different perceptions of reality and ways of knowing. It focuses on the deeper dimensions, forcing us to question the assumptions, and thus exposing the contradictions and prejudices, in our own worldview and the societal worldview. Thereby we can see dysfunction within our systems of societal organisation, and come to recognise that the worldview that creates a problem can frame it in such a way so as to prescribe the solution, which may be no solution at all. CLA is a process of deconstruction, historical examination, detachment, envisaging alternative pasts and futures, and of the reordering of knowledge. But it is not a linear process, for it continually reflexes through the layers. CLA enables the creation of transformative spaces in which we can envisage alternative and preferred futures. Thereby we provide a richer account of the dilemma. As a process CLA does not of itself provide answers and may not be appropriate for all social dilemmas.

CLA has four levels:

- The Litany. The issues and problems are articulated. They are often exaggerated, distorted and politicised, and usually presented as discontinuous issues and quantitative trends. The reasons for the problems are challenged, often in a similar manner.
- The Social Causes. Enter the professional - from government, social policy institutes, and academia. The explanations are sought within the systems of social organisation that have produced the problems. The economic, cultural, and historical factors are analysed through rational analysis and the quantitative interpretation of data. The solutions are legitimated within that worldview.

- The Discourse/Worldview. The world view that supports and legitimates these systems of social organisation itself is challenged. The task here is to discern the assumptions, contradictions and prejudices and to find deeper social, linguistic, and cultural structures that are independent of the actors.
- The Metaphor/Myth. These are the deep stories of experience and perceptions of reality. The unconscious dimensions of the problem or the paradox find expression - seeing it not in quantitative terms but in terms of community where people are creative resources and in terms of what ultimately sustains us. This level allows our humanity and our emotional experiences to enter the worldview. Language is less specific, we are more concerned with evoking visual images, with touching the heart rather than reading the head.

This presentation can only serve as an introduction to CLA. As a process it requires time and space for the participants, preferably with a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives, to feel secure as they delve deeply into themselves, their experiences and to articulate them.

Case Studies

Inayatullah (1998) presents five case studies, one theoretical and four from workshops. Others by Fricker and Wildman will appear shortly in a special issue of *Futures* on transformative research methods that is in press. None addresses poverty. Fricker applied CLA to the state of the 'debate' around genetic engineering in NZ at the beginning of the year, before the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Genetic Modification was announced. Wildman presents a particularly startling retrospective analysis of the 339 recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. He classified them thus: litany 71%, social causes 27%, worldview 2%, myth 0%. Around three quarters of the recommendations related to legal matters and one fifth to alcoholism and violence. All but 2% of the proposed solutions relied on the legal/jurisprudential system for implementation - the very category that generated the issue in the first place! Imagine the reverse, where the energy of the Commission had gone into the deeper layers of the causation. The outcomes and recommendations could have been profoundly different. Tragically then, it is of no surprise that aboriginal deaths in custody have shown no decline during the period of the Inquiry (20 years), or since. In Western Australia they have increased.

Poverty in NZ

The following is merely one person's application of the process. It has none of the richness of a group process. For simplicity it is confined to material poverty in NZ and is selective as to which issues are progressed to the deeper layers. The accompanying table addresses the two main cries of the impoverished - basic needs and livelihoods. Cries that demand immediate responses. The responses are validated by the institutional, academic and rational analyses of the social causes. They, and the solutions they offer, come however from within the prevailing worldview. Together they comprise the superficial levels of the analysis. The critique or discourse of these social causes, the possibilities for reconstruction, an alternative worldview and myth of how we now understand the world are developed further in discussion format.

The Discourse/Worldview

The prevailing worldview has brought much dignity to modernity. It is essentially a rationalist utilitarian worldview. Yet its assumptions, contradictions, and prejudices are legion. NZ, more than any other country, has the resources to adequately feed, house and clothe its inhabitants, without significantly impacting on its export capacity. The global, and therefore national economic framework, is founded on scarcity when in fact, at least for NZ, there is an abundance to satisfy basic needs. Money, the foundation of economics, is now effectively the sole medium of exchange, and has become the 'thing of value' itself and is deliberately kept scarce in the common market. Scarce money is the driver for economic growth, efficiency and competition, cost reduction, technologically-displaced labour and fuelling wants far beyond our needs that are ultimately unsustainable. Furthermore, income is now related to market worth rather than a sustaining livelihood.

Utilitarian ethics, the greatest good for the greatest number, prevails. Caring for each other and the environment which sustains us is of lesser consequence. When the market is truly free, capitalism cannot succeed. Capitalism depends on disequilibrium and inequity, which only the state can provide through regulation.

The decline in social capital is supposedly because we don't sing in enough choirs. Critics of Robert Putnam argue that social capital diminishes as mobile money is drained from immobile communities. Low socio-economic status accounts for most of the increase in decreasing health, low educational-attainment levels and crime. Health investment is directed mainly at high tech private benefit rather than low tech public benefit, ie. primary care and raising socio-economic status. Similarly investment in education (manner as well as money) at pre-school and primary school education is woeful relative to later years. There is more than a hint of institutionalised self-interest, bias and racism.

These forceful statements of fact, rather than assertions, suggest that we now see only exchange, and no longer redistribution and reciprocity in Polanyi's classic components of social integration. Money in an unregulated market will inevitably concentrate in fewer and fewer hands. Our elected representatives have abdicated our national and sovereign duties to persons and forces outside our borders, who can effectively dictate our economic well-being through a monetary system that is in need of reform for its dysfunction is central to not only NZ's material poverty but that of the rest of the world.

Perhaps too we need to revisit some our deeply held beliefs. Have biblical references conditioned us to the view that the poor will always be with us? Need they, in these days of technological wonder? There is a need for the modestly rich, but do we need to have poverty? The bible advocates the jubilee year, every 50 years not every millennium. Game theory tells us that an evolutionary stable state (John Maynard Smith) - the state to which we are 'bound' by nature to gravitate to - has some 'hawks' (exploiters/explorers) that the 'doves' (conservers) are powerless to do anything about. But it is an aggressive state where the existence of new horizons is assumed. An 'all dove' state is the most efficient biologically, the

transition to which, as advocated by Christ and Kant, may be the measure of man, the extent to which he is free. (Women are absolved for the time being.)

The exposing of these assumptions, contradictions and prejudices necessitates an environment of respect and trust. Such an environment may take time to create and the exchange needs to be open, inclusive and non-threatening. When there is acknowledgment of and respect for the differences of fact, perspective and opinion it is possible to conceive of structures that encompass, fairly and equitably, all the concerns that are independent of the actors.

The Metaphor/Myth

The myth of the prevailing worldview is the Grand Narrative of Progress - Easter Island serves as a stark reminder in miniature of the possible outcome. Joseph Campbell believed we cannot predict the next mythology, but we can conceive of it through a glass darkly. Its key elements however could begin to emerge from deep discourse. In doing so, the postmodernist Kenneth Gergen suggests: we may shift our focus from principles to participants; we may escape the prison of language to enter into relationships; and we may seek out our common ground rather than our differences. Several strategies could emerge, such as:

- learned optimism - from Muggeridge's pessimistic tacticians to optimistic strategists
- superordinate goals - of mutually beneficial outcomes
- synergy - in beneficial outcomes that transcend self-interest
- emotional education - which supplements reasoning and critical thinking
- spiritual enrichment - that is open ended unlike religion.

Clearly this conversation with this self implicates the conventional money system, self-interest and deep prejudices as key builders of our dysfunctional systems of social organisation. The discourse is far from over, not even begun, because we all need to engage in it. The emerging myth is the Conserving Narrative of Sufficiency. Possible solutions to material poverty in NZ though could include:

- a Universal Basic Income and/or supplementary currencies (eg. Green\$ or Toronto\$ schemes) as temporary relief whilst we agitate for global monetary reform
- the reconceptualisation of authentic and sustainable community in a precarious future
- wisdom education as distinct from knowledge education, and
- renegotiating the concept of ownership.

References

Inayatullah, Sohail 1998: Causal layered analysis - poststructuralism as method, *Futures*, 30(8), 815-30.

Wildman, Paul 2000, and Fricker, Alan 2000: separate papers in forthcoming special issue of *Futures* on transformative research methods.

Poverty amidst Plenty - Causal Layered Analysis

LITANY Cries (Responses)		SOCIAL CAUSES	DISCOURSE	METAPHOR
1. Access to basic needs				
food, clothing, housing, energy, health, education	scarcity of resources eg. money, land, services	global forces need export income need to be efficient and competitive living beyond our means	abundance of resources money = 'thing' of value money made scarce scarcity drives 'wants'	Prevailing myth is Grand Narrative of Progress cf. Easter Island
2. Inability to lead sustaining livelihoods				
employment bias discrimination	need qualification marketable skills retraining need to be mobile/flexible low self-esteem need personal management need 'attitude' parenting/upbringing learned dependence race/culture	technology replacing labour income ≠ livelihood capitalism better than socialism market rules utilitarian ethics health, crime, safety need to pull our socks up social capital (whoa! - taboo)	real work plentiful caring as well as producing capitalism contradicts itself triple bottom line unconventional opportunity reciprocity not valued public vs private investment altruism vs self-interest game theory deeply held beliefs	Emerging myth is Conserving Narrative of Sufficiency where progress seen as meaningful livelihoods, caring communities, valuing nature, tech that mimics nature spiritually enriching