The CLA Questioning Methodology

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The CLA Questioning Methodology integrates Causal Layered Analysis as epistemological layers and questioning as a method of deconstruction. This article describes how layers might be theoretically established using the concepts of human nature and human experience. These concepts are linked to CLA's linear layers and to first person perspectives. Then CLA is further described in terms of lateral discourse paradigms and their practical application to community consultation projects. Action learning theory underpins discussion throughout the article.

Introduction

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is comprised of layered philosophies each of which assists the defining and understanding of the duality of:
- human nature to develop personal perspectives; and
- human experience of interaction with individuals, organisations and communities.

The accumulation of personal perspectives is human nature. This accumulation process commences with a plethora of communications from word of mouth to electronic media, and is followed by our personal storage of information (using memory to electronic records). We often act on our most basic understandings. One of the principles of action learning is that new action is based on new learning, hence the need to question the source thinking and communication that lead to a decision. It is an aim of the CLA Questioning Methodology to identify the source of action.

This is similar to the work of Gregory Bateson. Of relevance are Bateson's learning types II and III. Bateson's learning type II is that learning occurs from within a framework. Learning type III is that 'looking back onto the framework' (from a 'third person' perspec-

tive) enables insightful learning. The CLA Questioning Methodology enables and enhances the third person perspective with the use of questions structured according to the CLA method.

The third person perspective should be confirmed with others. It is the human experience of interaction with others that brings new information whether that be from the questioner or within the framework of a project. Schutz (1972) argues that it is only with the input of others that the construction of reality and meaning is made possible. Schein (1992) also uses an interactive perspective stating that "overt cultural behaviour is always determined both by the cultural predisposition (the thoughts, perceptions and feelings that are patterned) and by the situational contingencies that arise from the immediate external environment". This is the duality of human nature to develop personal perspectives and human experience of interaction with others.

The Causal Layered Analysis Questioning Methodology is used as an exchange process in situations such as the following.

Community consultation is a two way communication process in which principles and guidelines are followed to ensure representativeness in information collection for decision making purposes. Community consultation is used by OECD nations such as Australia to increase the effectiveness of government policies by gaining valuable input. Sometimes, this input actually changes how policies are implemented. However, it can be tokenistic as well, merely giving the appearance of democracy. The use of CLA can assist a more democratic consultation planning, implementation and evaluation process.

In a government community consultation project the community will accumulate perspectives of an issue prior to being consulted by the government. Then, by

being consulted the community are able to exchange perspectives with government. The government consultants test the community perspectives (and vice-versa) against:

* the "intended information" (the process used to generate the data for the consultation can be discussed 'first-hand' (transparently) with community which should prevent mis-communication about the information being consulted on); and

* the experience of the government consultants (used to test the community suggestions for workability and plausibility).

In this article the CLA Questioning Method is described in light of its epistemology and application. CLA is comprised of layers of litany, system, worldview and mythology.

CLA's epistemological principles

Epistemology addresses the categories from which we know and includes changing the way we know (Inayatullah, 1997, Global Transformations). As a founding "father" of CLA Inayatullah uses the macroscopic lenses of historical trends to focus onto a range of futures typologies. Inayatullah maps many of the macro historical trends in earlier works such as *Understanding Sarkar* (2002) and *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians* (1997) and weaves these with CLA to provide an enriched fabric of linear and lateral layers/knowledge categories. The CLA Questioning method uses Inayatullah's representation of CLA and analyses this epistemology to prepare broad questions for layered thoughts. In so doing CLA's epistemological principles include the lateral discourse for each of the linear layers.
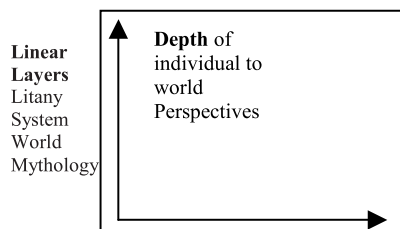
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The linear layers

Each of the linear layers can be mapped in terms of the perspectives. The linear layers per-

tain to the depth of the individual-perspectives to world-perspectives of the research subject. CLA can be applied to both the subject as person and/or literature. Within the layers perspectives act as filters to modify the type of information that can be researched. The perspectives provide alternative options for action. Fisher (1978) argues: "clearly, a concept that is trivial or irrelevant or even ignored in one perspective, may suddenly leap into importance when one applies an alternative perspective."

Individual perspectives

Perspectives are established through human nature and experience. The individual's perspective is one of self, memories, career, social and recreational aspirations, and is connected to family. Friends, role models, their influences and the culture that we individually subscribe to equally play a role in forming our individual perspective. Our perspective is our outlook on others and what we think other's perspectives might be.

My perspective might be fuller or emptier by comparison to my friend's perspective (etc.). As more issues are involved careful unraveling of the issues may be required if comparisons can be made between perspectives. This unraveling of an issue may be described as 'deconstruction'. Fisher (1978) suggests that triviality and relevance changes as new perspectives are applied. The CLA Questioning Methodology aims to clarify what that perspective might be. An understanding of our own perspective assists our ability to benchmark to other's perspectives.

Local Perspective

The local perspective continues from the individual perspective to include interactions with local community: work interactions, hobby and/or sporting communities, arts, professional and/or trade affiliations and from where we seek our entertainment, religion and sense of social identity. Our local perspective entails the core philosophies that are embraced by the community that we participate in.

The number, quality and intensity of issues held by people who hold similar perspectives can act to reinforce beliefs about a perspective.

State Perspective

Our perceptions of economic, environmental, social and political issues (etc.) across a large collection of localities form part of our State perspective. In some countries nation States are formed officially and are comprised of many regions (groups of localities). There are official State views and views that we generate through our own human nature

and experience to consider.

The World Perspective

The world perspective is the personal and/or collective perspective of our self's/community's/ State's/nation's relationship to the world. The perception might be political, economic, environment or social. It also might be linked to our mythology e.g. sporting or pioneering heros and global myths/legends. It includes our perception of the significant influences on the globe's creation, existence and/or continuation.

1 Litany		3 Worldview (characteristics)	
Individual perspectivebreadth of perspective		Individual perspectivebreadth of perspective	
Local perspective	"	Local perspective	"
State perspective	"	State perspective	"
World perspective	"	World perspective	"
2 System		4 Mythology	
Individual perspectivebreadth of perspective		Individual perspectivebreadth of perspective	
Local perspective	"	Local perspective	"
State perspective	"	State perspective	"
World perspective	"	World perspective	"

Integration of perspectives and layers

The 'perspectives' presented above are integrated with the CLA layers of litany, system, worldview and mythology.

This table shows the integration of the CLA layers with the 'perspectives'.

The framework increases the flexibility of the CLA Questioning Methodology by supplementing CLA with the individual, local, state and world perspectives. The "breadth of perspective" is how much is known about the perspective.

Layer 1 The litany/compendium of human nature

In the first layer a litany of issues and sub-issues is sustained and is represented by all possible issues including prevalent triple bottom line environment, social and economic macro issues. The majority of these issues are entertained in our sub-conscious (conscious-subconscious

issues). We can manage very few of these issues consciously (conscious issues) at any one time.

Often our personal knowledge, community network contacts, limited resources to consult our authorities and management of competing interests mean that we are not able to organise our personal compendium of issues stored in our subconscious. It is possible to discuss the conscious and sub-conscious issues through a process of questioning. Our individual perspectives, local perspectives (etc.) can be drawn upon to enrich our responses to facilitative questions.

Layer 2 Systems links to human nature

The second layer of triple bottom line issues also remains in the sub-conscious. In this layer the decision making about an aspect of the issue commences. Opinions about the issue are formed through comparisons between the 'known' and the 'unknown'. These opinions can then be used to influence systems that drive

whole sets of decisions and actions. The litany/compendium is contrasted with other's opinions and linked to organisational systems potentially to produce actions. Human nature is thus linked to an individual's systems, community and organisational systems of patterns of behaviour (etc.) and ultimately the 'trans-societal'' systems are engaged.

Layer 3 Worldview in human experience

When an issue is discussed the values of those involved in the discussion are stimulated in many ways. Our values may be stimulated by images and thoughts of symbols of our society: our Churches, educational systems, sporting facilities and events, the environment we consume and the friendships we share and the prop-

erties we own (etc.). This third layer is represented by our interaction with our society and what it represents. It may even stir our patriotism and sense of family pride. The deconstruction of these issues at this level is often swept up by the emotion of tradition and customs of our respective cultures. Our local, national and world perspectives are more powerfully represented in this layer.

From representation and emotional connections comes a comparison with what we would prefer or of what is needed to support the existing connection.

Futures research methods assist the inquirer to identify and refine the preferred future and strategies for achieving them. For more on these methods see *Futures studies: Methods, Emerging Issues, and Civilisational Visions* (Inayatullah and Wildman 1997).

Layer 1	Layer 2	Layer 3	Layer 4

▪ Quantitative trends*
 ▪ Problems*
 ▪ Events*
 ▪ Issues*
 ▪ Predispositions
 ▪ Bias
 ▪ Qualitative tendencies
 ▪ Unquestioned*
	▪ Social causes*
	 ▪ Interpretation*
	 ▪ Occasional analysis*
	 ▪ The role of authorities*
	 ▪ Technical explanations*
	 ▪ Unquestioned*
		▪ Structure*
		   o Social
		   o Linguistic
		   o Cultural
		 ▪ Discourse*
		 ▪ Deeper assumptions*
		 ▪ How to revise problem*
		 ▪ Discourse analysis to constitute strategy*
		 ▪ Scenarios*
		 ▪ Questioned*
			▪ Metaphor*
			 ▪ Myth*
			 ▪ Deep stories*
			 ▪ Unconscious*
			 ▪ The worldview is given emotion*
			 ▪ Questioned*
			 ▪ Questions are limited in reconstituting the problem and require strategy*

Layer 4 Mythology of human experience

Mythology and folklore illuminate and convey our cultural phenomena. Mythology often describes era's and ethos' in neatly packaged colloquialisms such as 'Australia is the lucky country' or 'the golden era of Hollywood'.

The layers in this table are derived from Inayatullah's (2002) *Questioning The Future*.

The breadth of the perspective

The breadth of the perspective ranges across each layer and each perspective to expand the sub-issues e.g. economic, environment and social sub issues.

By questioning the many perspectives associated with an issue it is possible to gain a fuller understanding of a course of actions.

Benefits of the CLA questioning model

Broadly, the CLA questioning model can be customized to place the learner's human nature and experience at the center of attention. Weekes and Macnamara describe this type of customization as making the learning process of the strategist the determinant timeframe for the design and negotiation of the strategy instead of having the design of the strategy in the dominant position (MacNamara & Weekes, 1982). The CLA Questioning Methodology enables a process of inquiry through customized questions. This customization relies on action learning, produces learning from questioning and provides benefits that are not possible using traditional methods. One of these benefits is a co-learning relationship (Friedman, 1973) because the questioner and respondent learn of responses to questions that emanate from the layered framework.

CLA allows the interviewee to think through their experience. It is not necessarily the practice of CLA for the questioner or the answerer to analyse or 'judge' the answers, rather the goal is to understand the perspective of the answerer for one or more of CLA's layers.

More specifically the CLA Questioning Methodology invites deeper responses where appropriate. CLA presupposes that each question could potentially lead to additional layers and issues.

CLA may be applied to attain deep and broad answers. An answer invites two types of responses. Further questions could be asked of one of the subjects offered in the answer, e.g., Question: Why research? Answer: to learn about (a) the options for the future and (b) because futures research methods are effective. Deeper information could be sought for either (a) or (b), or the answer could be broadened.

Breadth questions relate to the use of CLA epistemology. Broadening the question allows associated discourse from the same layer to be addressed: e.g. In your response you mentioned options for the future. What might be an example of an option? Or, in your response you mentioned that futures methods are effective. What is an example of the effects?

Each vertical layer has an association with a connective perspective. These perspectives are the local to world perspectives. Broad analytical questions can act as filters to filter for this information, e.g., "In your response you mentioned options for the future. What effect would these options have on your (element of local-perspective to world-perspective) relationship to your local community?

The table below accommodates four depth and breadth questions. It indicates how perspectives can contain various issues to be questioned using the CLA method.

Causal answers	**Layered** answers	Answers based on questioner's **analysis** and recipient's issues		
Answers to each layer.	*Questioner works through 4 layers.*	*Questioner analyses whilst listening to respondent and customizes a question to satisfy the questioner's broader objectives.*		
Answer to cause of Q1, L1	Layer 1	Bq1	Bq2	Bq3	Bq4
Answer to cause of Q1, L2	Layer 2	Bq1	Bq2	Bq3	Bq4
Answer to cause of Q1, L3	Layer 3	Bq1	Bq2	Bq3	Bq4
Answer to cause of Q1, L4	Layer 4	Bq1	Bq2	Bq3	Bq4

The breadth questions relate back to the purpose of the research project, e.g., if the project's purpose is to identify the research communities' perspectives regarding cultures recovering themselves or designing the future then related 'how' type questions would be used:

- How can we learn from the Islamic, Buddhist, Tantric, Confucian and others' perspectives, asking what can the defeated offer to the future?; or

- How is it possible to increase democratic participation in imaging and designing the future, and communicating and advocating a particular image of the future?

Questions could also be structured to introduce broad categories e.g which of the following types of environmental issues affect you: noise, air, water, waste, land use or conservation?

Ultimately, purpose will dictate the depth and breadth of response required.

Questioning eloquence

Michel Godet in "From Anticipation to Action", 1993, understands that questioning can displease others. This is perhaps when 'the end justifies the means'.

In community consultation projects the process is as important as the content. That is the end most often does not justify the means. Credibility of the consultation process relies upon satisfied community. [1]

The more eloquent the question, the more easily communicated are the answers. Questioning down and across the vertical layers can be trite and uninteresting if the same question type is used. A variety of deconstructive or 'causal' questions are "why", "cause", "rationale", "reason", and "purpose". 'Too much' use of the question "why" might create an apprehensiveness to respond. Alternating questions from the lateral discourses with questions from the linear layer might be an innovative option.

Causal answers	**Layered** answers	Answers based on questioner's **analysis**
Answer to cause of Q1	Layer 1	Bq1, Bq2
Answer to cause of Q1, Layer 2	Layer 2	Bq1, Bq2
Answer to cause of Q1, Layer 3	Layer 3	Bq1, Bq2
Answer to cause of Q1, Layer 4	Layer 4	Bq1, Bq2

CLA can also be integrated into a futures scenario and strategy development process by using breadth questions for a scenario (eg. economic, environmental and social futures).

Layers of individual Local State and/or Global perspectives	**Breadth Questions**	**Futures scenarios** (economic, environmental and social)	Time	Money	Actions
Layer 1	Bq1				
Layer 2	Bq1				
Layer 3	Bq1				
Layer 4	Bq1				

In the breadth questions resources of time and money can be accounted for. Once the futures technique of (a) freeing the participant of the present and (b) the strategy component of the scenario is developed (c) the resource issues and limitations are applied. This is to ground the exercise in a context of reality when developing strategies.

CLA oriented action learning in community consultation

CLA oriented action-learning and customized questions can be applied to community consultation project stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.

1. Planning

The CLA Questioning Method can be used to generate questions to assist inquiry regarding the project's aims and objectives. CLA questioning can be used with futures visioning and backcasting methods to enrich and deepen the con-

sultation's vision, aims and objectives.

2. Implementation

Implementation of the research process often includes focus groups, interviews and other research techniques that would benefit from CLA questioning. Interviews might be conducted with key stakeholders who hold high interest in the outcomes of the project.

3. Evaluation

CLA can be used in community consultation and other projects to assist the process of evaluative inquiry. Questions can be generated to facilitate participant observations about a project either in a general way or more specifically regarding targeted aspects of the project. Questions would be applied in the context of

community consultation to ensure that principles and guidelines were followed and that community were satisfied that they had the opportunity to be involved.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction of the issue raised by the respondent might include:
- hearing about the issue and identifying the events that lead to its creation; and
- understanding the emotional connectivity between a community member and an issue i.e. the affect of the issue on the community member's local or other perspective.

The purpose of deconstruction is to traverse back through the events of the past to treat the cause or to understand the cause from an outsider's perspective. Margaret Mead (1978) described this as prefigurative learning.

Each meeting raises a series of perceived and real issues
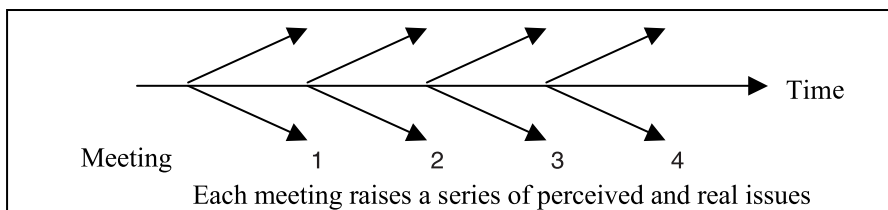
Deconstruction of the past is not 're-factualising' the past. It is understanding what type of information was communicated to generate the perspective held. For example, in the 'fern-timeline' below of various meetings, as time passes perspectives are taken on board regarding an issue such as 'developing state environmental policy'.

Meeting 1. An informal gathering of residents discusses the potential negative effects of having to wash their cars on the grass to prevent wash-over effects into street drains. The information supporting the negative effects is anecdotal, but produces no real concerns.

Meeting 2. A group of multi-national business people discuss the costs of having to comply with the new policy and the national precedents that it might set. The real benefits might be less than the perceived benefits from this perspective.

Meeting 3. A regional community organisation interested in conserving a range of fish species from increasing pollutant levels meets to discuss the advantages of the new policy. The new policy might protect the fish species, but more specialized policy may need to be added to the proposed policy. The benefits might be more than the costs from this perspective.

Meeting 4. The government organise a consultation meeting of residents, business people and community organisations interested in the policy to clarify the perceptions and the realities of the effects of the new policy. At each meeting above new ideas are generated and these take the groups into new issues. In meeting 4 the consultants use many CLA type questions to deconstruct what occurred in meetings 1-3. New understandings are gained and the basis for concern/interest in the new policy is determined based on intended information. The consultants

could also increase the variety of community perspectives by introducing new information and options. This has the potential to change expectations of outcomes positively or negatively. In this regard action learning occurs beyond education and research, and extends into management and planning endeavours (Somerhoff, 1969). This type of active learning can involve CLA as the questioning method to reinterpret the past in order to satisfy expectations for given decisions. Learning through active questioning and reforming questions as occurs with the CLA questioning model might be described as an action learning strategy.

Layering

Perhaps layering is the opposite of deconstruction. Time is described by Saul (2001) as another level that futurists use to understand complex situations. An understanding of the time and all of the events that occurred in that time assist the layering/reconstruction of events and triggers for action.

Construction or layering is thinking through the CLA layers and questioning "what could happen in the future?". Questions identify potential outcomes and can be customized to assist the objective of planned action.

Summary/conclusion

This paper discusses CLA in light of the duality of the human nature to develop personal perspectives and human experience of interaction with individuals, organisations and communities. CLA's epistemology stems from litany, system, world and mythology linear and lateral layers. These layers are connected to individual, local, state and world perspectives which may be questioned and their perspectives broadened. The layers and perspectives are developed through human nature and human experience. The CLA questioning model can be customized to place the learner's human nature and experience at the center of attention. The methodology can be used in many ways including in project stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.

CLA provides questioners an opportunity to delayer or layer an existing issue or future actions.

The CLA Questioning model is structured and may be applied iteratively and sequentially, to determine a course of action. Individuals are not bound by the CLA Questioning Methodology rather they can apply action learning principles to customise questions. The Methodology can be applied to futures scenarios and techniques within planning processes to identify aims, means and evaluative process.

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Endnotes

1 I had the pleasure of listening to a radio announcer on the ABC's 'Australia All Over' a relaxed Sunday morning talk-back show. The announcer's questioning style seemed to characterize eloquence in action. Deep questions alternated with less deep questions. An easy question such as 'where are you from' seemed powerful as there is high confidence that the respondent would know the answer and this confidence was represented in the answerer's voice. "Croydon" was the firm response from the 103 year old caller. He delved back further into his parent's history in Croydon and when his first thoughts had emptied the announcer asked 'what do you do on a typical day now?'. This question was a little less well received, however the announcer had gained rapport with the caller and he responded "They are holding a birthday party for me in the park this week. I am 104 on the 1st of October." When the full response was complete the announcer alternated to deeper questions about Croydon. Rapport and alternation of questions maintain the respondent's interest and patience with the questioner.

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