

An Analysis of Queensland City Futures Initiatives: Using CLA to Analyse Processes of Planning and Engagement

Colin Russo
Managing Director, Engaging Futures
Australia

Abstract

This article applies Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to analyse critical factors of four influential South East Queensland City visioning and foresight initiatives conducted by the Cities of Maroochy, Logan, Gold Coast and Brisbane. Previous articles in the March 2015 issue and the September 2016 of Journal of Futures Studies gave a prima facie litany of the phases of the initiatives (including the Visions and Governance phases) – and mapped their processes respectively. Conclusions drawn from the analysis in this article are unique as they apply futures methods and specifically CLA as a multi-methodology to create, unpack and explore phases of futures initiatives and the context they operate within.

Introduction

This article maps critical processes of four Southeast Queensland city futures visioning initiatives. It identifies learnings and contributes to knowledge by focusing on the cities' projects and initiatives, and discussion about contemporary theory as it relates to futures tools and methods. It then applies CLA to map the initiative's processes in order to explore how city futures methods and tools are transforming governance in South East Queensland cities.

Four South East Queensland councils in this study were responding to perceived challenges posed by rapid growth. The initiatives aimed to deliver, explore and shape the multiple opportunities anticipated from this growth and to protect against potential threats that unrestrained growth implied. These city futures initiatives explore imaginative city visions and themes, which, when implemented, would guide the popular development of city policy and strategies for issues such as cultural, transportation and sustainable economic development. The city futures initiatives were more about constructive longer-term topics and were less about particular city plans of issues in the business-as-usual scenario.

Three phases in this study represent firstly, the reason, problem or opportunity that the initiatives found, secondly, how the cities planned to respond and thirdly, how they engaged their communities. Each phase has its own characteristics and rationale. Content issues such as sustainability are visited in this article, but content