

Children on the Move

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Globalization and the growing interconnectedness of states, economies and communities has not resulted in the demise of the sovereign state. On the contrary, the peculiarity of the international order remains in how the existence of the unique goals of each nation motivates the manner with which states engages and drives the global agenda. Nor has globalization led humanity toward a more fair and equitable distribution of wealth, a resolution to poverty or to a universal civil society. In fact, for many of the challenges facing humanity we seem to be moving further from resolve. Nowhere has this had greater impact than on the sphere of migration and peace-building.

In 2015 over 60 million people were forcibly displaced globally, with over half of this population being children. The UNHCR's annual Global Trends Report indicates that this level of displacement is the highest level ever recorded¹. Escaping war, oppression and human rights abuses, from the moment they flee refugees inhabit an institutionalized world of non-government organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental agencies and governments within which highly developed policies and frameworks exist to deliver emergency and developmental assistance.

NGOs have a crucial place in this world. Mandated to provide safe-guard, service provision and advocacy for vulnerable migrants and refugees, these organizations are equally shrouded by long-established frameworks and systems that often leave restricted to the aspiration of the donor countries that fund them, disengaged from those they seek to aid and as such unable to effect real change. What results is a public discourse that questions the relevance of NGOs rather than delving deeper. As such, some NGOs are seeking to assess and transform the way they respond to the communities they support not only as a means to remain relevant, but to elicit the humanitarian outcomes that are at the forefront of their organizational mission.

There exists a great deal of literature in the field of international relations regarding the root causes and potential solutions to the swelling refugee crisis. Outside of this, the futures methodology Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) offers an alternate strategic approach to deconstructing and reconstructing the issue of migration and peace-building. This article undertakes to examine the effectiveness of CLA in application to the issue of migration and peace-building from the perspective of global NGOs.

Course Proceedings

On June 21, 23 and 24 2016 Incitare: Beris Gwynne and Associates hosted a workshop at the World Meteorological Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together key actors at NGOs to use strategic foresight tools and futures methodologies to provoke creative thinking about probable, possible, and preferred learning and livelihoods futures for children and youth migrants. Along with guest speakers the workshop was facilitated by Sohail Inayatullah and Ivana Milojevic.

The workshop was sponsored by the United Nation refugee agency (UNHCR) and the Oak Foundation, and attended by key personelle from UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Vision, Terres de Hommes, SwissAid, Fondation Suisse du Service Social International (SSI) and George Washington

University. The observations expressed in this article are not representative of the organisations or sponsors.

Inayatullah commenced the course by sharing case study comparisons of organizations, industries and sectors that have transformed using futures methodology. Framed by Inayatullah's Six Pillars Methodology (2008) participants were introduced to various modes of cognition (zero, single and double loop learning); anticipating (emerging issues analysis); scenario planning (three horizons); and how these tools enhance thinking about the future as a multitude of alternatives and opens up spaces for imaging these.

Participants were also introduced to methodologies to vision varying futures through the prism of the futures triangle and how back-casting can be used to map and plan toward the attainment of the desired future. Significantly, the workshop centred on how Casual Layered Analysis (CLA) is a methodology that systematically deconstructs issues or problems as a means to reconstruct them into a desired future (Inayatullah, 2015).

Futures by Design: An Introduction to Futures Methodology

In working groups, participants were guided through a series of questions that illustrated a framework for how futures and foresight planning may be designed and facilitated. Working groups were allowed 7 minutes to discuss each question and invited to report their thoughts back to the wider group

The questions presented were as follows:

- 1) Challenge the used future – what are the used futures that influence the present?
- 2) Scan the environment for disrupters – what are disrupters that may impact the future of the issue?
- 3) Create alternate futures – what are some scenarios of the alternate futures you would like to see?
- 4) Who is not in the room – who are the relevant stakeholders that need to be involved when creating alternate futures?
- 5) Link story to strategy – what is the narrative (myth or metaphor) for this work?

From a futures perspective much of the discourse on migration and peace-building remains superficial. Inayatullah (2008) refers to this as “the used future”, which is to say the rhetoric that assumes and perpetuates themes unconsciously derived from elsewhere. This is exemplified by libraries that now compete with the increasing connectivity of the internet, which not only maintains a greater knowledge base, but can easily be accessed from the comfort of home. Traditional libraries need to rethink their core purpose when faced with this new reality. By keeping to business as usual, the used future, they will stagnate and loose relevance.

In the context of migration and peace-building, participants articulated the used future as one where nation states maintain heavily regulated borders defended by governments and militaries; where irregular migration continues to be criminalized and refugees are vulnerable but for the support of NGOs. In this sense too, heavily reliant and accountable to donors and governments, NGOs remain cumbersome bureaucracies with a rigid organizational hierarchy elevated and removed from the ‘on-ground issues.’

This may be disrupted by the unification of regions who seek to leverage economic opportunity from more cohesive relationships with neighboring states. The emergence of new information technologies not only provides a platform for more rapid and accurate visa processing, but offers opportunity for refugees and migrants to connect directly with individuals, governments or corporations and potentially circumvent institutions they would traditionally engage. Further disruption may come from the private sector eager to secure commercial and trade routes. The

workshop envisioned that corporations may make assertive moves into the humanitarian sector by providing donors with more efficient and cost effective service delivery and as such better return on investment.

However, this future is imagined only by those in attendance. To that end the outputs here are limited as they only express the values and perspective of those in the room. As such participants acknowledged the absence of refugees and migrants, other global organizations, the private sector, the public, the media, politicians, security forces and people smugglers in their scenario planning. In this acknowledgment there was recognition that the primary concern of the workshop was from the perspective of NGOs as service delivery agents, policy makers and advocates and that their used future, disrupters and alternate futures are imagined from that perspective alone. Indeed, it was entertained that from the perspective of people smugglers the perpetuation of the used future would be a desired future as it supports the continuation of their business model.

Through this discussion metaphors emerged that illustrated the varied and contested narratives cluttering the issues. By linking their story to strategy participants were able to clearly articulate what their desired future would look like.

This was exemplified by the “Greenhouse” narrative that described a space where “new and exotic plants” can flourish, absent of the weeds that sporadically pop-up and strip the soil of the crucial nutrients these plants need to survive. Indeed, the weeds are a metaphor for the systems that once removed allowed harmonious existence for all plants within the “Greenhouse.”

Participants’ discovered that it is the narrative that enforces the system, and that to elicit real change they had to map, deconstruct and transform the narrative. This presented a quantum shift in thinking from a deficits base to one of empowerment and an enthusiasm for change. Feedback from participants indicates an inspired sense that, through the application of futures methodologies, they could implement the changes they felt crucial in their work to attain their desired future.

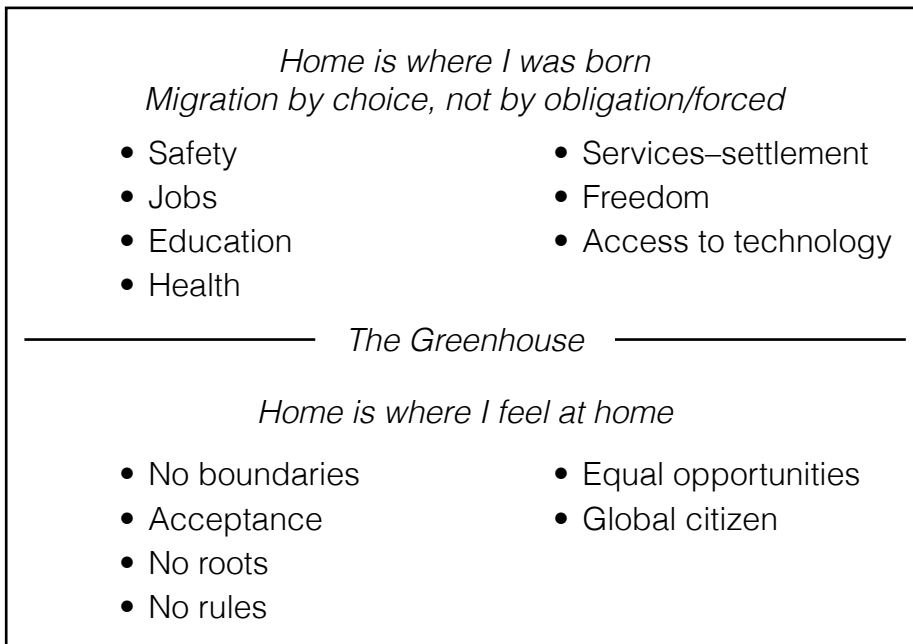


Figure 1. Linking the story to strategy – illustrating the narrative

In this regard, narratives were a powerful tool for imagining and mapping the plethora of possible futures. As illustrated, the use of narratives gave participants agency over the issue and enabled them to challenge the used future as a means to explore how they can influence change and achieve their desired future. Indeed the alternate future presented is one where refugees and migrants are not helpless, vulnerable or criminalized but empowered and supported to move freely across borders to find new homes within which to settle.

The Futures Triangle

For further context to the breadth of futures methodology, participants were introduced to the Futures Triangle a tool developed by Inayatullah and Milojevic for not only visualising the future, but mapping the past (the weight), present (the drivers) and future (the preferred). As such the futures triangle is three dimensional in application and highlights the tensions in foresight planning rather than discarding them. In doing so this ensures that the preferred future is not overly utopian but plausible.

In this exercise Milojevic invited the workshop to agree on a desired future for migrants and refugees, expressed the potential drivers and highlighted the weight that may hinder achieving that future. The most significant conjunctions between the three elements of the futures triangle as articulated by participants are illustrated as follows.

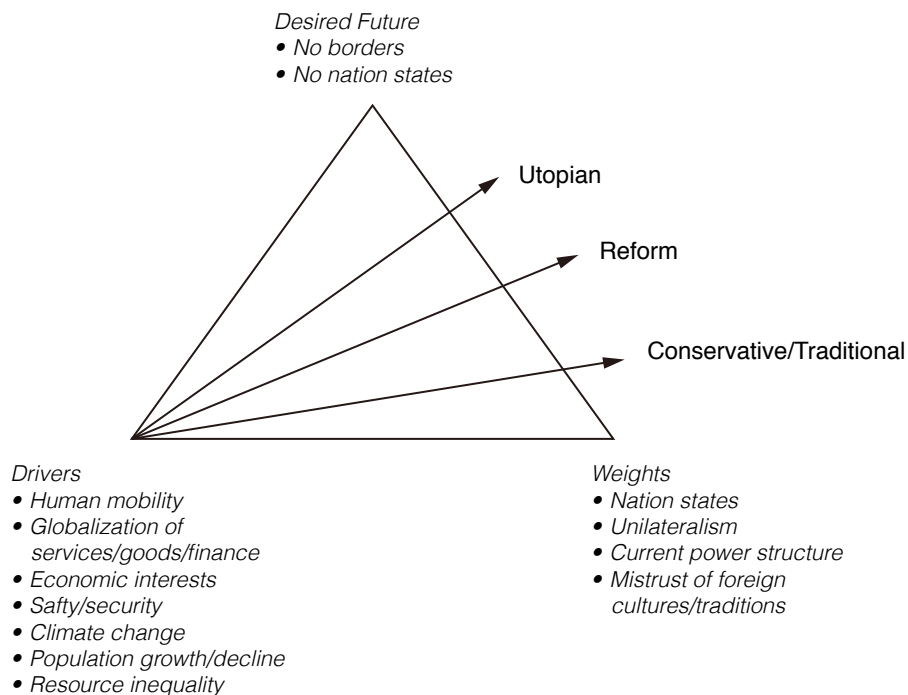


Figure 2. Key themes from the futures triangle exercise

As illustrated, while the drivers for change are many, the weights of the past will ultimately stifle the potential attainment of a desired future. Milojevic proposed that in applying the Futures Triangle to an issue counter agendas are expressed catalysing an effective dialogue to ensure visioning for change in pragmatic.

Of note, participants articulated globalization of services/goods/finance as drivers rather than as weights of the past or as an aspect of their desired future. As themes for each dimension of the triangle are agreed upon through discourse, this speaks to the notion of the shared future and exemplary of the importance of the question who is not in the room? With this in mind one can imagine that the themes would be very different for a refugee or migrant who may see the drivers as fleeing from violence; the weights property ownership, language/cultural identity and the fear of leaving behind family and friends; whilst the desired future may be to live a life in safety and security and to flourish and prosper.

Further, the drivers, weights and the desired future expressed by participants are broadly theoretical and conceptual. This provides insight as to the perspective of participants. As professionals operating in NGOs their interpretation of the issue, the future of migrants and refugees, is viewed through the systemic lens from within which they operate. Although the Futures Triangle provides sound methodology for opening discourse in futures forecasting, absent of the broader context and understanding of futures work participants may lack the perspective to appreciate their unconscious bias as part of this dialogue.

An Introduction to CLA: The CLA Game

CLA undertakes analysis at four levels: the litany, the systems, the worldview and the metaphoric. The litany level articulates the quantifiable trends and problems most superficial and requiring very little analysis. The second level is the systemic, which seeks to delve deeper than the most visible, and is more concerned with the social, economic, cultural and political causes, as well as historical influences. Worldview is the third level of analysis, and explores the social, linguistic and cultural structures that legitimize the systems and litany levels. The fourth layer of analysis is the metaphoric, and explores the narrative, often emotive and unconscious, dimension of an issue (Inayatullah, 2015).

As a dynamic introduction to the methodology, Inayatullah conveyed the CLA Game whereby participants were divided into four groups each representing a level of the CLA framework: litany, systems, worldview and myth/metaphor. In this way the participants were immersed in the CLA process. Inayatullah had everyone focus on the future of migrants and refugees and invited the litany group to share a “headline” that exemplifies a superficial analysis or commentary regarding the issue and for each of the groups to respond from their perspective.

Table 1. *The key issues expressed by the participants during the CLA Game*

Litany	News headline	“Refugee crisis continues to grow!”
System	United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We need more funding from member states” • “We urge governments to share the responsibility of this crisis” • “The United Nations has a mandate to ensure refugees are cared”
Worldview	Refugee Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The UN needs to do more to help refugees” • “The UN is powerless to affect any change”
	The USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We are the largest donor to the UN” • “The UN need to do more to influence other nation states to take responsibility” • “We support the UN as long as they agree with our position on matters”
	People Smugglers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We provide alternative passage for refugees” • “We can get all the documentation refugees need to travel” • “We provide a service at a fee”
	European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We provide sufficient funding to the UN” • “The EU is on the frontline of the crisis” • “We support the UN as long as they agree with our position on matters”
Myth	Many yachts in a race, sailing in different directions with no real direction or markers to guide the way. Each yacht feels they are in the lead and/or winning the race, but ultimately the race is endless.	

As the game played out it emerged that whilst litany, worldview and metaphor were easily expressed in this space, the systemic level struggled to sustain and satisfy the needs, desires and wants being asked of them. It became apparent that whilst the systems-players may feel heroic and righteous, ultimately they are slow to react and where only able to implement policies or systems that acted as a Band-Aid to the real issues.

This was highlighted when the systems group, playing from the perspective of the United Nations, responded to the news headline “Refugee crisis continues to grow” with a request for more funding from member states. What this demonstrated was that whilst the United Nations is so heavily dependent on traditional funding models it remains hamstrung to be responsive as needed.

Indeed, systemic failure has given way for alternate arrangements and structures to mobilize and operate as a way of by-passing the flailing establishment. In the case of children on the move, this has materialised as the people smuggling trade. Following this realisation it was agreed then that only through systemic transformation could real change be effected for the future. This would remain apparent throughout the workshop.

From Deconstruction to Reconstruction – CLA

Deconstruction

Having been introduced to CLA through the CLA Game, participants were asked to propose issues relevant to their own organization for analysis using the CLA methodology. Working groups formed around alignment of interest and/or theme.

The following topics were proposed:

- The response to children on the move through west Africa by global NGO working in Africa
- Response to children on the move by global NGOs working with migrants and refugees
- Response to emerging employment issues by global NGOs

These topics constituted the central premises on which discussion and exercises addressed. The workshop then broke into three groups and was guided through the CLA methodology as a means to deconstruct the issue and transform it to the desired future.

Table 2. *Key themes expressed by participants in application of CLA to deconstruct their issue*

	The response to children on the move through west Africa by global NGO working in Africa	Response to children on the move by global NGOs working with migrants and refugees	Response to emerging employment issues by global NGOs
Litany	Protecting vulnerable children and supporting their integrity	We are the refugee agency	High unemployment
System	Collaborating with local actors, regional harmonization of laws and policies	Historical mandate	Exclusive systems
Worldview	Human trafficking	We must protect the integrity of the agency	Immigrants steal our jobs
Myth/Metaphor	Not enough hands	We are spectators at a marathon and we keep losing the runners	Safety net with holes

Participants were able to apply their existing knowledge of the issue and deconstruct it using CLA methodological. In doing so they discovered that litanies are hard to challenge and are often used by those most powerful in society to influence an agenda. However, participants also found that they did not necessarily disagree with the litany – that often the litany was expressing their feelings toward the issue too. Having said this as actors within the realm mandated to elicit impact and change they found that through examination the inability to respond to the litany and achieve outcomes was more often than not due to rigid and out-of-date systemic factors. This is exemplified by the working group response to emerging employment issues by global NGOs who discovered that although they fundamentally agreed with the litany view that high unemployment exists within refugee and migrant populations, it is in-fact the antiquated systems that influence this space and quashes any real ability to influence positive change. An example of which is the significant absence of recognition for prior learning or experience migrants often face when they resettle in a new country. Highly skilled or experienced migrants are often forced into unemployment because potential employers will not accept their previous work history or foreign qualifications. Often this is not at the discretion of the workplace – rather the industrial laws of the new country. This analysis further reiterates the findings that emerged from the CLA Game.

Indeed, the commonality consistent across each of the working groups was that the desire to deliver successful humanitarian outcomes is hindered by systemic shortfalls. As highlighted in the

table above, the narratives describe a desired future of safety and freedom, but also express notions of autonomy and self-agency, absent of systemic influence.

This brought to light a tension for the participants. As professionals operating within large global actors are acutely aware of and understand the mechanics of bureaucracy yet through their desire to elicit real and effective change unknowingly find themselves, and their peers, subscribing to the notion that through continued systemization, progress will be attained. However CLA provided an alternative to this traditional approach and the opportunity for participants to not only analyse the issue through methodological deconstruction, but the ability to transcend the issue and reconstruct it as a means to articulate their desired future.

Reconstruction

CLA is a methodology that not only deconstructs issues or problems but can also be used as a means to transform them into a desired future.

Table 3. *Key themes expressed by participants in application of CLA to reconstruct their issue*

	The response to children on the move through west Africa by global NGO working in Africa	Response to children on the move by global NGOs working with migrants and refugees	Response to emerging employment issues by global NGOs
Litany	New partnering	Children safely achieve their objective	Real inclusion
System	Safe movement, deeper sustained partnerships, preventing movement through local governments	Taking into account view and aspirations of people on the move. UNHCR – service delivery redundant, but ensure accountability – act as facilitators	Flexible Provides opportunities No boundaries Flat
Worldview	Partnering	Children get what they need. States all support the development of the children.	Job fulfilment, not exploitative Contributions to society No child labour The golden rule Micro-entrepreneurship
Myth/ Metaphor	More linked hands	We are the marshals on the marathon	Trampoline – where individuals are not only caught when they fall but bounce back higher than ever.

By changing the metaphor to one of “More linked hands” the working group for the global NGO working in Africa was able to coherently articulate their desired future and then begin to build a roadmap toward how they would achieve this. “More linked hands” describes how organisations, governments, agencies and corporates can partner to ensure the safe passage and settlement of children on the move out of conflict areas. In this future “new partnering” will become the litany for the global NGO working in Africa as they respond to children on the move through west Africa.

The CLA work of the global NGO working with migrants and refugees represented significant tension between the “historical mandate” and the current worldview of the effectiveness of the organisation. Again, by shifting the metaphor from “the marathon that keeps losing the runners” to one where the NGO are the “marshals on the marathon”, a foundation was laid from which transformation can ensue. Similar to the “more linked hands” metaphor, this represents operational transformation and speaks to the frustrations in the modality of the current global non-government-organisation sector. In this new narrative, the NGO are not simply standing as spectators to the race, but are involved as marshals in so far as they guide the runners to the races end. There was much discussion in this working group around how the narrative would capture the NGO: not as the race starter (the push factors causing refugees to flee), nor as the finisher who met the runners at the end of the race (settlement countries). Interestingly too, the participants did not see the NGO as the support team handing out drinks of water to the runners. They believed that this was the role of other, more localised, NGOs and that if anything the role of the marshals would be to tell the support teams where to stand and what kind of sustenance the runners needed.

Finally, for the working group analysing the response to emerging employment issues by global Organisations, they viewed the current state to be that of a safety net with holes, capturing and supporting some people, but significantly letting many fall through the gaps into long term and systemic unemployment. But by changing this myth they found a clear vision for themselves as the trampoline that not only caught people as they fell from employment, but also bounced them back into a job. With this the participants gained a trajectory for how the issue could be transformed to achieve a desired future.

Using CLA to reconstruct the issue presented participants with a challenge to preserving the status quo through raising the possibility that they may be relying on outdated and fatigued narratives. By persuading participants to articulate a basic metaphor that supports their view of how they think things should be, they gave themselves a foundation from which to reconstruct a desired future. In this regard the changing of the metaphor stands a powerful tool for the transformation and exposing a disconnect between what they argued was the intelligent thing to do and the legitimacy/relevance of the foundational logic and perceptions meant to support them.

Conclusion

The gathering of key global organizations to workshop the issues and trends facing the learning and livelihoods of migrant children and youth using futures methodologies and tools provided participants the opportunity to elevate their thinking above business-as-usual and inspire creativity toward transformation.

Using CLA participants were enabled to challenge the used future; methodically analyze the complexities of the issues they face in their work, deepen their understanding of it and change the metaphor as a means change the future. This deepening provided a sense of clarity to the issue; that time and time again the systemic structure within which governments, NGOs and individuals operate continues to fail in meeting the needs of those on the ground. On the surface these include the global structures relating to conflict and war; international territories, borders, and the nation states sovereign right to manage and maintain their own borders; the 1951 conventions for the rights of the refugee; and, individual states responses to migrations. However through deepened analysis more subversive, yet equally influential systems are at play. As diverse in breadth, these include civic systems, bureaucracies, and governance, funding streams, work place structures, the patriarchy and cultural norms. It was not until these systems were challenged, and ultimately deconstructed, that desired futures could be imagined.

Migration is certainly not a contemporary phenomenon. It has been present throughout the modern era and is foundational to the international order. Certainly systems are fundamental to

migration. They are integral to public policy, to notions of identity and the perpetual operations of what we think of as modern society. However when these systems hamper and stifle the ability to maintain the human rights of vulnerable migrants, particularly children - a fresh perspective is required.

Whilst it may seem fanciful to envisage a world without borders, this undertaking provided the creative inspiration that participants needed to begin to imagine the plethora of possibilities and articulate these as desired futures relevant to their work. What emerged were desired futures that are aspirational and pragmatic. Further, and most significantly, the course participants will now return to their respective organizations equipped with futures methodologies to begin to deconstruct and reconstruct the issues facing their ability to better support the learning and livelihoods of children and youth in the care of their organization.

As the number of forcibly displaced people swells globally, the application of CLA to the realm of migration and peace building has never been more pertinent. More than this though, the Geneva workshop has illustrated that CLA provides a new and relevant analysis of the international order, a realm deeply entrenched in history of traditional theory and ideas.

Notes

1. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/6/558193896/worldwide-displacement-hits-all-time-high-war-persecution-increase.html>

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