



Book Review

Review of CLA 3.0: Deep in the Vast Forest with a Critical Outlook

Andrea Dieck

Student M.A. Futures Studies at Free University of Berlin, Germany

“CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research” is a collection of 25 articles about Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), written by nearly 50 authors and edited by Sohail Inayatullah, Ralph Mercer, Ivana Milojević and John A. Sweeney. CLA is both a method and a theory (Inayatullah, 2022b, p. 3), draws from poststructuralism, macrohistory and postcolonial multicultural theory (p. 5) and is “well situated in critical futures research” (Inayatullah, 1998, p. 816). Since the development of CLA by Sohail Inayatullah in 1992, thirty years have passed. Thus “CLA 3.0” can be understood as an anniversary publication acknowledging the continuous elaboration and various use cases CLA has experienced until today.

However, the book is neither a recapitulation of methodological or theoretical development nor the “final say” (Milojević, 2022, p. xvii) on the current state of the debate about CLA. Instead, Inayatullah’s (2022a) metaphor of “a true forest of transformative and critical futures research” (p. ii), when describing the third decade of CLA-related research, appears to be an apt portrayal of the book itself, too. The image of the forest not only resembles the publication’s impressive extent of 640 pages and its rich stock of topic areas. More precisely, those comprise theory, conflict, education and learning, environment and sustainability, economy and society, the city, science and technology. Like a forest, it also expands into a more *living* resource for CLA-related work (Milojević, 2022, p. xvii), represented by the new CLA website with more articles to discover.

Just as Causal Layered Analysis offers both depth and breadth in the engagement with alternative futures, so does the book regarding CLA itself. More precisely, it examines the *depth of CLA as a theory and methodology* and the *breadth of CLA’s applicability in various contexts*. For instance, deeper theoretical enhancements of the methodology are proposed by Nele Fischer and Konstantin Marquardt (2022) in terms of Systematic Metaphor Analysis, as well as by Adam Cowart (2022) regarding “situating metaphors” (p. 53). Further notions of *depth* derive from practical reflections on the combination of CLA with other methods and theories, such as scenario work (Minkinen et al., 2022), Design Pattern Languages and Project Action Reviews (Corneli et al., 2022), Epistemologies of Mind (Clemens, 2022) or Philosophy of Science (Virmajoki, 2022).

While the aspect of *depth* is particularly interesting from the perspective of futures research, the book’s overture of *breadth* on the method’s possible applications might come in handy to anybody involved in transformative thinking, no matter the (scientific) background. Whether the readers can already rely on experience with CLA or not, in the book’s first chapter Inayatullah (2022b) provides explanations, examples and tips on how (not) to use CLA as a method which could potentially be helpful to everyone. From there, the collected use cases span from Learning Identity Frameworks (Mercer, 2022) and *CLA of the Self* (Inayatullah, 2022b; Mercer, 2022; Riedy, 2022) over Participatory Urban Foresight (Zackery et al., 2022) and Regenerative Urbanism (Camrass, 2022) to Artificial Intelligence Evolution (Farrow, 2022) and Geoengineered Imaginaries (Sweeney, 2022). The probably most dominant issues (from a European perspective) currently discussed in public are taken up by Petro Sukhorolskyi’s (2022) application of CLA to Russian Aggression against Ukraine as well as Chris Riedy’s (2022) contribution towards “thrivability” (p. 368) of humanity on planet earth. Another link to current events can be drawn from a participatory urban foresight workshop conducted in Isfahan, Iran, where patriarchal “gendered norms and power relations depict a masculine image of the city of the future” (Zackery et al., 2022) to the present feminist uprising in the country. Finally, both the variety and quantity of contributions on CLA’s methodological application contexts are noticeable in this book, especially compared to the efforts on the theoretical side.

The book’s broad range of topic areas yet seems to come at the expense of reflections on transformative and

critical futures research as the broader context CLA is embedded into. A few articles relate to Critical Futures Studies (CFS) or emphasize their research projects' ambition to further inspire and develop critical futures thinking (Clemens, 2022; Fischer & Marquardt, 2022; Minkkinen et al., 2022), while reflections, implications and further development of transformative and critical futures discussion rather stay out of the research focus.

With Inayatullah (1998) stating the goal of critical research was "to disturb present power relations through making problematic our categories" (p. 817), one can get a hint of CLA's emancipatory aspirations in some of the approaches. One example are the Pedagogies for Critical Agency by Rieta Ganas, Kasturi Behari-Leak, Nalini Chitanand and Siya Sabata (2022) in the context of post-colonial Higher Education, where "practices facilitate the reproduction of a system that deprives the oppressed of agency to change material conditions" (Ganas et al., p. 234). Yet it remains unclear to what extent the use of CLA in the context of Risk Forward Investments (Jackson, 2022 p. 432) helping investors to "outperform" and "position them above and beyond their peers" lives up to the invoked aspirations.

A future CLA 4.0 edition might illustrate further discussion on that topic to support the readers' understanding of the critical and transformative context of CLA. In order to remain in the metaphor of the forest, after planting the seeds, watching the young trees grow and now looking at a forest, in the next step it might be worth considering the landscape the forest inhabits. This emphasis on the critical reflection of CLA derives from the author's personal interest to further discuss and develop CFS as a field of research, writing from the perspective of a student of futures studies.

Despite the lack of critical reflection mentioned above, this review ends with a recommendation of the book to my fellow students, to teachers and researchers in the field of futures studies and transformative research, as well as to anyone interested in or already engaged with CLA. Since the book provides fruitful learnings in various thematic contexts, also researchers and thinkers from the related fields should at least have a look at the CLA website: CLA.metafuture.org.

References

- Camrass, K. (2022). Regenerative Urbanism: A Causal Layered Analysis. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 507-524). Tamkang University Press.
- Clemens, R. (2022). Using Gregory Bateson's Epistemology of Mind and Causal Layered Analysis to Mitigate Asian Elephant-Human Conflict Risk. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 151-197). Tamkang University Press.
- Corneli, J., Murphy, A., Puzio, R. S., Vivier, L., Alhasan, N., Bruno, V., Pierce C. & Danoff C. J. (2022). Patterns of Patterns: A Methodological Reflection on the Future of Design Pattern Methods. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 69-103). Tamkang University Press.
- Cowart, A. (2022). Living Between Myth and Metaphor: Level 4 of Causal Layered Analysis Theorised. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 53-68). Tamkang University Press.
- Farrow, E. (2022). To Augment Human Capacity: Artificial Intelligence Evolution through Causal Layered Analysis. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 571-586). Tamkang University Press.
- Fischer, N. & Marquardt, K. (2022). Encounters on the Metaphorical Level: Introducing Systematic Metaphor Analysis for CLA. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 41-52). Tamkang University Press.
- Ganas, R., Behari-Leak, K., Chitanand, N. & Sabata, S. (2022). Pedagogies for Critical Agency: Portals to Alternative Futures. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), *CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research* (pp. 217-240). Tamkang University Press.
- Inayatullah, S. (1998). Causal Layered Analysis: Poststructuralism as method. *Futures*, 30(8), pp. 815–829.

- Inayatullah, S., Mercer, R., Milojević, I., Sweeney, J. A. (2022). CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research. Tamkang University Press.
- Inayatullah, S. (2022a). Foreword. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J.A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. i-ii). Tamkang University Press.
- Inayatullah, S. (2022b). Causal Layered Analysis: Theory, Conceptual Framework and Method. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J.A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 3-24). Tamkang University Press.
- Jackson, S. (2022). Applying Futures Based Frameworks for Emerging Sector Investments: Employing Causal Layered Analysis to Develop Decision Making Metaphors for Risk Forward Investments. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 425-433). Tamkang University Press.
- Mercer, R. (2022). Self-Writing: A Causal Layered Analysis Prospective on the Learning Identity Framework. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 283-291). Tamkang University Press.
- Minkinen, M., Heinonen, S. & Parkkinen, M. (2022). Drilling and Blasting to Learn Scenario Construction: Experimenting with Causal Layered Analysis as a Disruption of Scenario Work. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 25-40). Tamkang University Press.
- Milojević, I. (2022). Introduction. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. xi-xvii). Tamkang University Press.
- Riedy, C. (2022). Interior Transformation on the Pathway to a Viable Future. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 353-374). Tamkang University Press.
- Sweeney, J. A. (2022). Not Organic Gardening or Rocket Science: New Metaphors (and a Politics) for Geoengineered Imaginaries. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 587-604). Tamkang University Press.
- Virmajoki, V. (2022). Understanding Futures of Science: Connecting Causal Layered Analysis and Philosophy of Science. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 549-570). Tamkang University Press.
- Zackery, A., Demneh, M. T., Karimi, A., Nejad, M. E. (2022). Insights from a Causal Layered Analysis of “Isfahan 2040”: A Participatory Foresight Workshop. In S. Inayatullah, R. Mercer, I. Milojević & J. A. Sweeney (Eds.), CLA 3.0 – Thirty Years of Transformative Research (pp. 525-546). Tamkang University Press.