



Article

Decolonizing Futures Practice: Opening Up Authentic Alternative Futures

Kevin Jae

Independent scholar, Toronto, Canada

Abstract

This article collects and organizes research to help others pursue a futures practice focused on opening up alternative futures. Through a literature review, we conclude that such a task requires a decolonized futures practice with methodological heterogeneity, open to plurality and non-Western modes of thinking, and inclusive to diverse collaborators. Afterwards, we discuss the practical aspects of decolonizing futures practice through several themes: methodology, project design, the role of the futurist, exploring others' worldviews, and decolonizing hegemonic time.

Keywords

Decolonization, Futures studies, Futures practice, Futurist, Alternative futures

Introduction

Just as there are multiple futures, there are also multiple futures studies. One orientation to the discipline focuses on finding alternatives to the future “colonized” by the dominant status quo (Dator, 2005). For some futurists and some organizations like the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) and the former Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF), this is the primary purpose of futures studies: it is to find alternatives and to pluralize human destiny (van Steenberg, 2005).

The question emerges: what kind of futures practice is required for such a task? This article collects and organizes research to help others pursue a futures practice focused on opening up alternatives. Through a literature review, we conclude that such a task requires a decolonized futures practice unafraid of methodological heterogeneity, motivated by an interdisciplinary (and perhaps more accurately, non-disciplinary) spirit—a futures practice open to plurality and to non-Western modes of thinking. Afterwards, we discuss the practical aspects of decolonizing futures practice through several themes: methodology, project design, the role of the futurist, exploring others' worldviews, and decolonizing hegemonic time.

A Decolonized Futures Practice for Decolonized Futures

Futures studies has a long history of use as a tool for decolonization and dissent. Dator (2005) was an early and influential voice who articulated the case for decolonization through futures studies. Dator used the word “colonization” metaphorically, taking it from its historically specific context, to point to the “bad guys” that “irresponsibly wield incredible long-range power,” such as “building contractors, housing developers, freeway builders, defense manufacturers, resource exploiters, political decision-makers...” who make decisions that “effectively shapes the future and limits options and alternatives for others” (p. 94-95). Essentially, Dator's point was that the “future is not neutral” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 2) but is already beset by various “colonizing” limitations. Dator (2005) imagined futures studies as a solution to the problematique, or as Inayatullah (2013) writes in his study of Dator, as “a vessel through which the future can be decolonized” (p. 2). Against the

** Corresponding author.*

E-mail address: kevinjwjae@gmail.com (K. Jae)

“colonizing” impositions made by the powerful, who enforce their vision of the future—the “used future” (Inayatullah, 2008)—onto the rest of the population, Dator called for the project to “decolonize” these dominant articulations of the future by mobilizing alternative visions of the future through “authentic participation with stakeholders” (Inayatullah, 2013, p. 2).

Dator used the word “colonization” metaphorically, but his point still stands in the particular histories of colonization, decolonization, and dissent. Nandy’s (2006) work in particular shows the potency of alternative futures for the purposes of decolonizing. His work points out that the task of discovering, elaborating, and articulating authentic alternatives to the West is fraught with challenges due to the impacts of colonization on the colonized: the legacies of colonization leave a psychological imprint on the non-West (Nandy, 1983). Express intentions of finding alternatives to the West ultimately reinforce the West by taking it as its point of identification, or as Sardar (1997) summarizes in his article on Nandy, “to be anti-West itself tantamount to be pro-West” (p. 651).

Additionally, dissent itself has been colonized. Radical dissent in its primal, cacophonous form is in danger of being co-opted into a standardized and legible form (Nandy, 1989), which, in the contemporary world, is in the “universal” language of the Enlightenment, in the “language of liberation” (p. 267). The alternatives that use this language end up as “products of the same worldview which has produced the mainstream concept of science, liberation, and development” (p. 270)—dissenting alternatives often end up conforming to prescribed boundaries. In response to these challenges, futures studies emerges as a mode of thinking and creation to overcome the current impasses and to open up authentic alternatives for the non-Western future (Nandy, 2006; Ramos, 2005).

What kind of futures studies can create authentic alternatives? It is one that opens up non-Western futures through the categories and concepts of the non-West, as an exercise of non-Western agency, instead of one mediated through the frameworks of the West (Sardar, 1999). It is an un-disciplined futures studies that can, in Nandy’s words, “maximize and enrich dissent, decentralised, imaginative, risky, experimental modes of thinking” (Ramos, 2005, p. 437). Without this un-disciplined ethos, there is a danger that futures studies will form its own priesthood, its own sacred texts, and become an insular discipline with its own symbols of prestige (Sardar, 1993). It could follow the route of disciplines of dissent before it, such as “[e]cology, feminism and cultural studies [which] have been successfully domesticated and professionalized as new specializations in the knowledge industry... [ensuring] that the capitals of dissent, along with the capitals of global political economy, are located in the stylish universities, think tanks and other intellectual centres of the First World” (Sardar, 1997, p. 657). If such an institutionalization of futures studies based in the Western world were to happen, Sardar (1993) warns that that will mean the futures studies will be the means for “the non-Western future itself” (p. 187).

In summary, decolonized, authentic alternative futures require a decolonized futures studies and practice that is capable of thinking beyond dominant institutionalized frames. Only by doing so can one form alternative futures of genuine dissent. It is with this spirit in mind that we move to our discussion of decolonizing futures practice.

Decolonizing futures practice

How can futurists and foresight practitioners decolonize their practice to help give birth to authentic alternative futures? What can futurists do to include non-Western (or non-standard) modes of thinking and knowing into their projects? How to encourage and explore plurality in a project? Following the discussion in the previous section, our approach to decolonizing futures practice seeks to facilitate plurality and heterogenous thinking with a non-disciplinary spirit.

While the research seeks to promote futures work carried out in a “decolonizing” mode, we admit that this does not necessarily mean that the readers to whom we direct the research will be intimately involved with exploring non-Western alternatives to dominant Western visions of the future and modes of thinking and knowing in their projects. Futures practice and projects are messy and cannot be categorized neatly in binary terms, either “colonizing” or “decolonizing.” The applicability of the insights depends on the context of the project, practitioner expertise, the goals and purpose of the project, limiting factors like time and budget, and the group of people one is working with. Both metaphorical (Dator) and historically particular (e.g., Nandy and Sardar) uses of the word decolonization are used concurrently in the field. While the article is directed at the latter usage, the discussion on decolonizing futures practice can also inform attempts toward the former, bringing about unthought alternatives to

the status quo. By organizing, discussing, and present the research, we hope to encourage a futures practice that is more open to plurality.

From a literature review and discussions with established futurists, we highlight several broad considerations that factor into decolonizing futures practice. In this section, we expound upon them by organizing them into several themes: methodology, project design, the role of the futurist, exploring others' worldviews, and decolonizing hegemonic time. Table 1 at the end of the section summarizes the key ideas.

Methodology

The literature suggests that there are some methods that lean toward colonization and the continuation of the status quo, like “technological forecasting and other paraphernalia such as dynamic modelling, applications of general systems theory, computer simulations and Delphi method” (Sardar, 1993, p. 181); “linear, expert-led... [processes] based on deductive reasoning” like the “2X2 Uncertainty Matrix, Dator’s Generic Images of the Future, Three Horizons, Delphi, and trend extrapolations” (Bisht, 2020, p. 219); and “forecasting or trend analyses” (Milojevic, 1999, p. 69). In contrast, the literature suggests that other methods are more suitable for decolonization, such as methods like “backcasting as well as visioning workshops with disadvantaged groups ... [which] empower them” (Milojevic, 1999, p. 69). There are also some methodologies that have been proposed for “decolonization” (see Bisht, 2020).

However, in this section, we will largely refrain from recommending one particular methodology as a guidebook and “the best way” to decolonize. We will also refrain from enumerating a laundry list of methods.¹ Speaking on non-Western futures, Sardar (1999) writes that “there have to be a whole variety of futures studies, each using the conceptual worlds of a particular culture and thus reflecting the intrinsic values and concerns of that culture. The plurality of futures has to be reflected in the plurality of futures studies” (p. 17). We think about methods in this spirit of openness and non-disciplinarity, recognizing that different combinations of methods work in different contexts (Sardar, 1996; Goonatilake, 1996; Tough, 1996; Mahadevan, 1996). Individual predilection, experience, and competencies also matter for selection of methods. Additionally, research shows that different methods lead to different futures; there is the potential danger that prescribing some methods over another could actually stifle certain types of futures (Curry & Schultz, 2009).

Instead, we think of decolonization in a more expansive way, and with Milojevic’s statement in mind: “If our world is based on particular power arrangements – i.e., based on specific cultural and gendered norms – then it is obvious that ‘more of the same’ and ‘business as usual’ are going to support the existing system”²; and to decolonize, one must escape the current “business as usual” status quo—or as Sardar (1996) asks, “Who benefits?” (p. 667). Some methods can be prone to furthering the status quo rather than disrupt and present alternatives; however, there is flexibility based on how the method is used. Milojevic identifies some methods for which this could be the case, saying that the “Futures Wheel could both reinforce as well as challenge the status quo, depending on how it is used. Emerging issues analysis is more disruptive, but here again, it is important to see what type of emerging issues we are focusing on.”³ We could even imagine the appropriation of methods like the Delphi Method for the purposes of decolonization, where, instead of surveying experts from the West, local community members could be surveyed to develop a consensus. On the other hand, methods like backcasting, which could empower marginalized groups to articulate a preferable future, can be used by business consultants working with fossil fuel companies to “colonize” the futures of humanity. So, practitioners have latitude to appropriate and make creative use of methods for their own purposes. When evaluating the specific methods used for decolonizing a project, one could keep some general thought in mind: will it disrupt the status quo, or will it reinforce current power relations, and is it a vehicle for dialogue and inclusion? And who benefits?

An extended elaboration of futures methods is outside of the purview of the article, but there are a variety of sources that discuss the most commonly used methods in detail (e.g., Bell, 2003; Slaughter & Bussey, 2005; Slaughter & Hines, 2020). However, practitioners should not limit themselves to orthodox methods; there are also a large number of unorthodox and highly personal methods used by futurists for a variety of purposes. This is also evident in the special “What Futurists Think” issue in the journal *Futures*, which attempts to challenge dominant paradigms in futures studies by introducing a “range of futures thinking/activities as input into the knowledge base of futures studies and to present a balanced account of futures studies, visions and activities throughout the world”

(Inayatullah, 1996, p. 509). A wide range of personal methods are presented. For example, Markley (1996) finds it “important to use intuition-based research methods, most of which involve focused meditation (useful when working by myself), and guided cognitive imagery” (p. 622).⁴ Antunano’s (1996) methodology takes inspiration from “the ‘New three Rs’ of research... reflexivity, responsiveness and reciprocity” (p. 526). To reiterate the above, plural futures requires a plurality of futures studies. Methodologically, practitioners should not be afraid to adopt a mindset of exploration and experimentation.

Project design

With the convergence of design and foresight, there is recognition that design is not a mere accoutrement of a foresight project (Hines & Zindato, 2016; Candy & Kornet, 2019). Design considerations, which range the gamut from participant selection to physical setting (Miller, 2018), are a core part of the project, and must be thought through for the purposes of decolonization.

Project design is intimately connected to what Inayatullah (1998a) terms the “politics of planning,” or “the role of participation and hierarchy, of who gets to speak and who listens, who is expert and who is lay...” (p. 389). Every project entails a series of conscious design decisions that has implications for the politics of planning. Inayatullah offers some considerations: “Who’s in the room? Who’s not in the room? Am I doing this to people? Or are we co-creating?” He suggests that with diverse participants, there is a better chance to have “more robust scenarios... a better story,”⁵ pointing to the importance of consciously adding and including diverse, and perhaps provocative, voices. However, it is also important to incorporate the numerous voices in the room, instead of tokenizing participants for their identity categories. Milojevic says that “dialogical approaches are much better for decolonising projects, as these are, by their very definition, to be inclusive.”⁶ In the spectrum between expert-led hierarchy and horizontal participation, monologue and dialogue, leaning toward participation and dialogue could provoke decolonized visions of the future.

The first term in Inayatullah’s “politics of planning”—namely, politics—speaks to the power dynamics involved in foresight projects. On a more general level, addressing power dynamics may reveal completely new topics of inquiry that are rarely addressed by practitioners and by the discipline. Speaking to the lack of a feminist perspective in futures studies, Milojevic (1999) writes, “[i]f futures studies opted to work within ‘feminine’ guiding principles it would most likely prioritise the futures of education, parenting, community, relationships and health—the real grand issues!” (p. 69). Following this observation, the predominant topics of futures studies could be a relic of an uneven power dynamic, which completely limits exploration into entire lines of inquiry and, by extension, limits articulation of certain futures.

Power and knowledge are intimately connected (Foucault, 1980) and this abstract idea finds its concrete expression in foresight projects. As Inayatullah (1998b) writes, power dynamics not only control what issues and trends are put to discussion, but also “how an issue has been constructed as an event or trend in the first place as well as the ‘cost’ of that particular social construction—what paradigm is privileged by the nomination of a trend or event as such” (p. 817). Even the most basic building blocks—the identification of certain trends and events as such—are the result of power relations, behind which are “common sense” paradigms and epistemological frameworks. The design of a project dictates whether certain interlocutors and systems of knowledge are privileged over others and fundamentally determines the type of questions that are asked, how the project is framed, what is constituted as a relevant fact, and what is valued, radically influencing the futures that are constructed during the course of a project. In order to pluralize futures possibilities, the practitioner must respond to these fundamental design questions, which get at the heart of power dynamics.

Role of the futurist

Futurists and foresight practitioners play multiple roles during the course of project. As an example, Wilkinson (2017) offers a basic taxonomy, discussing the various roles and skills required of practitioners, ranging from storytelling coach (storytelling for change), window cleaner (helping those see outside of the box), map maker (providing a larger context for new meanings), psychoanalyst (creating positive thinking), to learning facilitator (creating learning experiences with participants). In addition, there is a psychological dimension to thinking about

the multiple roles played by practitioners. According to Stone and Stone (1994), there are multiple individual selves in the psyche, with “its own personal history, physical characteristics, emotional and physical reactions, and opinions on how we should run our lives.” Futurists need to listen carefully to the self to access an “ecology of selves” (Ramos, 2015, p. 97) to be aware of which self is doing the futures work and to approach projects through these multiple selves.

Often, the dominant frame of reference imposed on practitioners is the role of the “expert,” who is paid by organizations and sponsors to provide expert guidance and solutions to problems in the future. To open up a space for horizontal dialogue, it is important to reframe these assumptions and embody another self. As Inayatullah says, “I always try to deconstruct and decolonize and think about other narratives [and] ... say to groups that I'm not the smartest person in the room, but I can help the smartest people think differently.”⁷ When aiming for decolonization, practitioners should aim to take on roles that promote dialogue from multiple participants. To do so effectively requires consciousness of their internal multiple selves to take account of which self is doing the futures work and to bring up a frame for the self that permits dialogue and accepts openness and possibility.

To promote a dialogue with individuals of different cultures, class backgrounds, identity categories, and lived experiences, all of which leads to a different way of viewing the world, there are some personal characteristics that practitioners could cultivate. Futurists need to understand the participants on their own terms, instead of “colonizing” their futures anew with the futurist’s uninterrogated conceptual frameworks. To do so, futurists need to escape their own cultural categories to enter into the conceptual and symbolic world of their participants. According to Inayatullah, this requires “multiple skill sets, its knowing multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence... [and it is a] meditative spiritual practice” and “mindfulness.”⁸ Given the non-disciplinary ideals of a decolonized futures studies expressed above, futurists could strive to be omnivorous readers and absorbers of heterogeneous sources of information (not necessary books, articles, and written texts, the valorization of which is a product of the Western fetishization of the written word). As for Inayatullah’s words about mindfulness and spiritual intelligence, one can think of it with Zen master Shunryo Suzuki (2005) remarks in mind: “In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few” (p. 1). Practitioners need to adopt the beginner’s mind to enter into multiple ways of knowing and being, to move past their own conceptual categories, and co-create futures with participants on their own terms.

Futures through others’ worldviews

As Nandy (1989) writes: “... domination today is rarely justified through oracles, ritual superiority, or claims to birth rights; domination is now more frequently justified in terms of better acquaintance with universal knowledge and better access to universal modes of acquiring knowledge. In the world of awareness in which we live, without such things as scientific rationality, laboratory experiments and analytic reasoning, without the acquisition of a progressivist, social-evolutionist idiom and without a proper historical consciousness, reportedly no human being is any more fully human” (p. 269). Only through familiarity with the supposedly “universal” Western intellectual tradition can individuals be seen as legitimate producers of knowledge and only knowledge legible by the Western tradition are validated as legitimate (Smith, 1999). Creating alternatives with participants requires practitioners to take participants’ non-Western viewpoints, which may seem unsophisticated and valueless to the unsympathetic and untrained listener, and integrate them into alternative visions of the future.

This is easier said than done. While we try to avoid prescribing specific methods, we must make special mention to Inayatullah’s (1998b) Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), which can serve as an invaluable tool to help practitioners inhabit other worldviews. As the previous sub-section “Role of the Futurist” explored, practitioners must be able to exit their own cultural categories and enter into that of their participants—participant voices can be stifled if practitioners unwittingly impose their cultural categories (and their futures) onto that of their participants. In this context, CLA can be used to create epistemological distance from the futurist’s own categories of thought. CLA focuses on several layers of analysis: the litany, the social, structure and discourse/worldview, and finally, the metaphor or myth. Exploring each layer offers a different series of problematiques, framings, and scenarios. On the deeper levels—the levels of structure and discourse/worldview and metaphor or myth—the familiar turns into the strange, and the strange into the familiar; basic assumptions and status quo units of analysis are challenged.⁹ By moving up and down the four levels when approaching problems, practitioners are able to

better understand their participants—they are able to estrange themselves from their own worldviews, better situate themselves into the world of their participants, and to co-create futures with them, not onto them.

The insights from Casual Layered Analysis can be thought through with Inayatullah's (1990) three epistemological premises for futures studies, which are the predictive-empirical, the cultural-interpretative, and the critical-post-structural. The predictive-empirical "reinscribes the present" (p. 115) into the future and is associated with quantitative and forecasting methods and exists in the empirical framework shared by the natural sciences, which maintain current status quo power relations. The cultural-interpretative approach takes a cultural approach and attempts to see the future through the perspective of different groups, meaning that "there is no one way to constitute the real, the future" (p. 123) and no universals, only particularities. Finally, the critical-post-structural approach takes a Foucauldian framework to the real as a social construction of power relations, allowing practitioners to problematize naturalized categories. Through this approach, not only does the "past" and historical facts become the discursive creations of interconnected webs of power, but one can see that "the coming about of a particular future is the silencing of other futures" (p. 129). By using CLA, the practitioner adopts the latter critical-post-structural approach "to disturb present power relations through making problematic our categories and evoking other places or scenarios of the future." (Inayatullah, 1998b, p. 817), leading to the decolonization of status quo futures.

Decolonizing hegemonic time

An additional note must be made for participant categories of time, especially given the inextricable connection between time and the futures. The future is not conceptualized in the same way throughout the world (Inayatullah, 1993a; see also Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997). There are numerous constructions of time and the future that are incommensurable with that of the West (e.g., Inayatullah, 1993b).¹⁰

It is important to critique and present alternatives for the normative construction of hegemonic time to make room for alternative futures. As Milojevic (2008) notes, time is power, given that social groups who succeed in "normalisation and universalisation of 'hegemonic' time also succeed in 'controlling' both the present and the future in indirect ways" (p. 334). The normalization of a particular conception of time serves the interests of a particular social group, and the current hegemonic linear, industrial clock time is a construction that is "western, Christian, linear, abstract, clock dominated, work oriented, coercive, capitalist, masculine, and anti-natural" (Griffiths, 2002, as cited in Milojevic, 2008, p. 333). Only after decolonizing ourselves from normative expectations of time do alternatives emerge (Inayatullah, 1999). As Milojevic says, "once the fundamental assumptions about the past, present and future are challenged, alternatives immediately open up. Then the questions become: 1. How do I live in this world which demands we all yield towards certain norms that may be destructive for me personally, the social group I belong to, or even to the whole society, and 2. How do I live and work so to not only deconstruct what is not wanted but construct what is wanted?"¹¹

Given the importance of cultural categories of time for decolonization, practitioners should look to address the question of time during an engagement. To do so, Inayatullah says that it is important to explore alternative conceptions of time to help participants deconstruct hegemonic conceptions of time. For example, he "bring[s] in microhistory; in the Six Pillars Framework ... Sorokin's pendulum... Sarkar's spiral" to discuss "which parts of future is cyclical? What things are back and forth in terms of pendulum?" All these examples are aimed at helping participants understand that "they have a particular theory of time."¹² By bringing multiple conceptions of time to the foreground, participants are able to deconstruct and decolonize their dominant conceptions of time to better reflect on the theories of time that they hold to be "natural."¹³ By loosening the grip of hegemonic time, the practitioner and participants will be able to work toward alternative conceptions of time that could suit their desired alternative futures.

Table 1. Summary of key themes

Decolonizing Futures Practice Themes	Description of Theme	Summary of Key Ideas
Methodology	The theme explores the methods used in a decolonized futures practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of thinking about one particular method as the “best way” to decolonize, adopt an experimental and multi-disciplinary approach (Nandy, 2006; Sardar, 1999) • Different combinations of methods could work in different contexts (Inayatullah, 1996) • Think about which methods will disrupt the “business as usual” status quo (Milojevic, 1999; Sardar, 1996)
Project Design	The theme discusses how project design can lead to decolonized outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When designing a project, consider who is involved, who participates, who makes the decisions, and the extent to which diverse voices are included (Inayatullah, 1998a) • Project design should aim for horizontal participation and dialogue (Milojevic interview) • Project design can change the project completely by privileging certain issues, trends, and events over others, and by privileging certain paradigms and epistemological frameworks (Inayatullah, 1998b; Milojevic, 1999)
Role of the Futurist	The theme examines the roles futurists can adopt to decolonize practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futurists play multiple roles throughout the project (Ramos, 2015; Wilkinson, 2017) • The dominant frame of reference imposed on futurists is that of the “expert.” To open up space for horizontal dialogue in these situations, reframe the situation and adopt a role that promotes dialogue (Inayatullah interview) • Futurists can cultivate multiple intelligences, read and listen widely, and be intellectually dexterous to pursue a deeper dialogue of people from all different walks of life (Inayatullah interview)
Exploring Others’ Worldviews	The theme is about how practitioners can create futures with participants on their own terms and through their own cultural categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfamiliarity with the “universal” Western tradition can structurally de-legitimize the ideas of individuals and groups of people (Nandy 1989; Smith, 1999) • Authentic alternatives require creating alternatives with individuals on their own terms (Inayatullah, 1998b) • CLA can help practitioners create futures in the terms of the participant by creating epistemological distance from their own categories of thought to enter into the categories of participants (Inayatullah, 1998b)
Decolonizing Hegemonic Time	The theme explores deconstructing normative conceptions of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are numerous cultural constructions of time and the future around the world (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997; Inayatullah, 1993a; Inayatullah, 1993b) • The normalization of one conception of time serves the interests of one group. It is important to deconstruct the normative construction of time. (Milojevic, 2008) • Practitioners should look to deconstruct the dimension of time by offering alternative conceptions of time, which will open up alternatives (Inayatullah, 2008)

Conclusion

The search for alternatives and a plurality of different futures can appear to be a monumental task, especially as it requires deconstructing firmly held convictions and assumptions about the world. However, more than ever, the world today requires new thinking and alternatives to the problems for which the current status quo lacks solutions. The climate crisis is a poignant example: as Wainwright and Mann (2018) write in *Climate Leviathan*,

“...if good climate data and models were all that were needed to address climate change, we would have seen a political response in the 1980s. Our challenge is closer to a crisis of imagination and ideology” (p. 7). Instead of alternatives, we are stuck in the status quo and the “common sense” thinking of dominant political institutions, which continue to “colonize” the futures of the world with their failed visions of the future—and the future that awaits us promises to be miserable and even fatal for many of the world’s people. We need novel, powerful, and imaginative alternative futures to move past the doomed status quo.¹⁴ To inspire these alternatives, we need a decolonized futures practice.

A decolonized futures practice is methodological plural and open to alternative ways of thinking and being. This is a futures practice that promotes dialogue and, by design, invites a diverse group of participants to explore the issues and the topics that are important to them, while taking them and their worldviews seriously as legitimate sources of knowledge. The article explored the contours of such a futures practice through several themes, which are methodology, project design, the role of the futurist, exploring others’ worldviews, and decolonizing hegemonic time. Creating these powerful alternative visions of the future is one of futures studies’ unique contributions to the world; we hope that the article will spur new discussions and provoke potent and yet-unimagined alternative futures.

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Notes

- 1- We make a small exception for CLA, given that it is a powerful framework for exploring alternative worldviews for practitioners who are unhabituated to thinking through and with the categories of others.
- 2- Personal correspondence
- 3- Personal correspondence
- 4- There is a history of this approach in the field: P.R. Sarkar’s method also relies on intuition and meditation to access eternal truths hidden in the deeper layers of the mind; see Inayatullah, 1988.
- 5- Personal correspondence
- 6- Personal correspondence
- 7- Personal correspondence
- 8- Personal correspondence
- 9- See Inayatullah, 1998b for the full elaboration of CLA as a method.
- 10- It must be noted, as per the critical realist tradition, that time also exists as an external reality outside of human categories (Bell, 2003; Inayatullah, 1993b); time is not wholly a cultural construct.
- 11- Personal correspondence
- 12- Personal correspondence
- 13- See also Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997 for different conceptions of time and the Third Pillar, “Timing the Future,” in Inayatullah’s (2008) Six Pillar approach for another discussion of how macrohistorical approaches can be used in a project
- 14- This said, we must adjust our expectations: it is not our intention to suggest that decolonizing futures practice will magically solve all of the most pressing global problems.

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