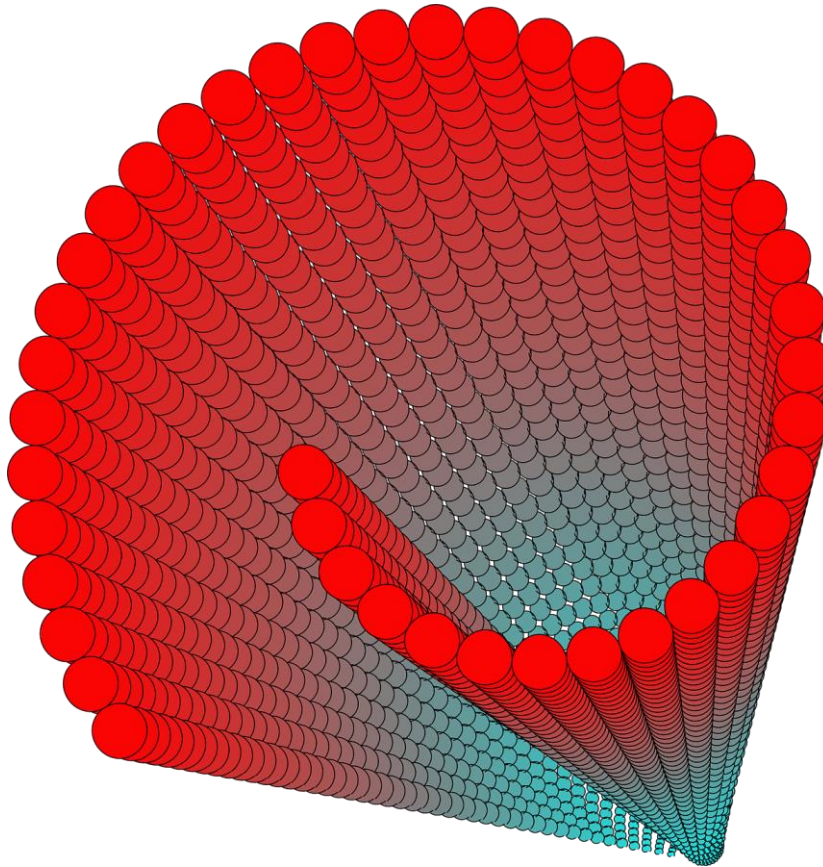# Futures-Thinking   Jan. 2025

FUTURES, PEACEBUILDING, PARTICIPATION, CONFLICT, DECOLONIAL

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Futures-thinking encompasses a range of methods, tools and practices designed to explicitly engage with possible and desired futures. The word "futures" is used in the plural to acknowledge the diversity of potential future situations that have yet to materialise. Both external experts and conflict-affected communities use futures-thinking for analytical purposes and to drive societal transformation in conflict contexts. While business and military planning have professionalised the systematic development of futures-thinking methodology, anticipating and preparing for the future is inherent to all human societies. Therefore, systematic and power-critical futures-thinking can lend itself to participatory, reflexive and constructive practices that are beneficial to conflict transformation.

Abstract

Futures-thinking is used to gain new perspectives on futures, identify future opportunities, and devise solutions to shape present-day actions. It includes diverse creative approaches that engage with ideas about the future, whether for analytical purposes or as a tool for political intervention. On one side, private and public organisations analyse possible futures to improve strategic planning. On the other, futures-thinking allows political actors and communities to imagine transformational change and desired futures. Increasingly, it is being researched for its value in peacebuilding for conflict prevention and resolution.

In peace and conflict contexts, methods such as scenario analysis, horizon scanning and visioning emphasise collaboration between participants. In contrast, quantitative forecasting relies on data analysis and computer algorithms to analyse possible future trends like conflict onset. Policymaking has seen a proliferation of quantitative early-warning systems and forecasting, reflecting the increased quantification of evidence-based policymaking. While quantitative methods are often used for external conflict analysis, qualitative approaches can also be used for direct interventions with conflict parties and conflict-affected communities.

This entry examines divergent perspectives on decolonisation in the futures-thinking literature. Some authors advocate for the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative methods, while others critically examine the assumptions underlying these approaches. Critiques of futures-thinking focus on power dynamics and hierarchies, mirroring decolonial perspectives in peace and conflict studies. One key critique is the assumed linearity of futures-thinking models, such as the "futures cone", which may contrast with non-Western knowledge systems that view time as non-linear or cyclical. Additionally, the notion of neutral methods, rooted in a positivist understanding, is challenged on the grounds that it masks normative assumptions. As a result, the widespread (possibly uncritical) adoption of futures-thinking in policymaking risks reinforcing Western perspectives in peacebuilding.

The entry highlights a number of alternative approaches in futures-thinking that offer pathways for the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledges and practices to foster sustainable peace. First, critical futures approaches such as Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) aim to expose hidden assumptions and challenge entrenched thinking, which is crucial in conflict settings. By engaging with dominant perspectives, underlying systems and worldviews, CLA helps participants to

develop critical insights and imagine post-conflict futures that move beyond the conflictual status quo. Second, the Transformative Scenario Process methodology was pioneered during South Africa's transition from apartheid, and allowed key conflict actors to jointly reflect on and work towards desired futures. Third, narrative foresight, which is closely related to CLA, focuses on the deeper layers of myths and metaphors that shape contentious issues. This approach can harness traditional knowledge instruments, such as oral storytelling, to explore potential futures. By treating reality and futures as continuously negotiated, narrative foresight allows conflict-affected communities to engage meaningfully with their circumstances and envision constructive futures.

The entry thereby demonstrates how futures-thinking offers valuable tools for analysis and intervention in peacebuilding. It also reflects on critical approaches that emphasise the need to address underlying biases and incorporate a broader range of non-Western and local knowledges.

Introduction

Futures-thinking encompasses a range of methods, tools, and practices designed to explicitly engage with possible and desired futures. The term "futures" is used in the plural to acknowledge the diversity of potential future situations that have yet to materialise (Bisht, 2020, p. 218). Other related terms include (strategic) foresight, futures studies, and forecasting. Engagement with futures enables us to deal with uncertainty and anticipate upcoming challenges. In the field of peace and conflict, futures-thinking methodologies are used for analysis and strategic adaptation by actors outside of the conflict, as well as for peacebuilding interventions with affected communities and actors (Bøjer, 2018, p. 3).

Mainstream approaches in futures-thinking include Scenario Planning, Backcasting, Horizon scanning, Stress-testing, Gaming, Modelling, and Simulation (Popper, 2008, pp. 88–89). Process designers select approaches according to their ability to overcome institutional and individual biases and to encourage imaginative thinking. Additionally, futures methodologies can be categorised by the objectives of the process, such as predictive/empirical, interpretive, or critical analysis (Inayatullah, 2013a).

Scenario approaches are widespread across various disciplines and sectors as they help process participants to engage with multiple futures and prepare for possible eventualities (Amer et al., 2013, p. 23). Backcasting can draw on scenarios of the future to understand "how desirable futures can be attained" rather than understanding "what futures are likely to happen" (Robinson, 1990, p. 823). Stress-testing constitutes an approach that aims to "future-proof" new proposals (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 14), which can take various forms such as a gaming set-up to test new policies (Enbaye et al., 2024). Alternatively, modelling and simulation may rely on quantitative analysis of trends and forecasts (Bankes, 1992).

Mainstream futures-thinking approaches are often employed to develop strategies for individual actors within an existing system, e.g. a specific business or a particular political environment. While these approaches acknowledge these systems' complexity (School of International Futures, 2019, p. 2), especially in conflict contexts, strategic adaptation narrows the attention of researchers and practitioners to managing future risks and immediate problem-solving solutions, with limited potential for the holistic transformation required for political and social change (Kahane, 2012). Futures-thinking is also used for conflict transformation and peacebuilding where its potential for power-critical practice is acknowledged.

Futures-thinking in peace and conflict

Private and public organisations analyse possible and plausible futures to improve strategic planning, for example by analysing violent conflicts for better conflict management. Alternatively, futures-thinking allows political actors and communities to imagine transformational change and desired futures in response to conflict situations. By explicitly engaging with possible futures, both practitioners and analysts seek to deal with uncertainties and manage complex challenges (Sardar, 2010, p. 183). Collaborative approaches to futures-thinking are recognised to leverage a more diverse pool of ideas, and to minimise the risk of conformity and collective bias in groups (Weigand et al., 2014, p. 15). They lend themselves to explorative exercises in futures-thinking to create interesting narratives of different futures (Kuosa, 2011, p. 328).

While there are various categorisations of approaches in futures-thinking, Sohail Inayatullah (2013a, pp. 42–43) distinguishes between 1) predictive/empirical, 2) interpretive and 3) critical approaches.

1) Predictive or empirical approaches, such as forecasting, assume that the relationship between present and future is deterministic (Inayatullah, 2013a, p. 42; Milojevic, 2002, p. 37). The objective of forecasts is to reduce uncertainty as much as possible (Bressan et al., 2024, p. 5). Therefore, "forecasts are predictions about tomorrow given information we have about what has happened in the past and up until today" (Nygård et al., 2020, p. 8).

   Strategic foresight seeks to use insights from futures exercises and identify strategic action that can be taken in the present. While both predictive and interpretive approaches have their value, we can see that many mainstream futures approaches related to conflict tend to rely on extrapolation from data on past events. Consequently, Jae (2024) and Bisht (2020, p. 219) emphasize that much of Western futures-thinking is guided by deductive reasoning. Inayatullah (2002, p. 298) notes that "governments [and] business organizations tend to desire one future, a clear answer". Therefore, policy practitioners increasingly use predictive insights on conflict onset to adapt their policies and interventions in conflict contexts.

   Clearly, technological advances have enabled improved quantitative forecasting that seeks to cut through complexity in conflict analysis. Bressan et al. (2019) distinguish "three generations" of conflict forecasting, where the 1960s generation focused on data collection on the conflict event level, while the second generation linked game theory to advanced computational models in the 1980s. The third generation of forecasting benefitted from heightened policy interest and institutionalisation of conflict prediction within the scientific community as a form of evaluation (Bressan et al., 2019, p. 9). Some current efforts in conflict and violence prediction are more granular in data collection, and focus more on theoretical mechanisms that may explain different conflict phases and trajectories of escalation (Bressan et al., 2019, p. 11).

2) According to Inayatullah (2013a, p. 43), the interpretive outlook considers truth to be relative since it is shaped by language and cultures. This outlook is inherently pluralist, and assumes that "there is no single, knowable, predictable, or static future since events and actions keep making the future" (Bressan & Korb, 2024, p. 5). It therefore seeks to

create "competing images of the future", as in scenario processes via the creation of various scenarios (Bressan & Korb, 2024, p. 5; Inayatullah, 2013a, p. 43). Scenario processes are used by external analysts to better understand conflicts and prepare institutions for policy responses. Interpretive tools such as scenarios can also support conflict parties and affected communities in mediation and dialogue processes to acknowledge their conflicting and common viewpoints, while enabling them to collectively envision possible and desired futures (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 16).

For example, the Schlaining Process for the Georgian–Abkhaz conflict included facilitated workshops between 2000 and 2007, where futures-thinking played a major role despite this label not being explicitly used (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 20). One exercise engaged participants in a speculative discussion, exploring the conditions under which Georgia could accept Abkhazia's secession or Abkhazia could accept staying with Georgia. The exercise allowed for an open and imaginative dialogue, and was not focused on anticipating developments in the immediate future; rather, it explored long–term future options for the conflict parties (McCartney et al., 2022b, p. 3).

3) The power-critical approach to futures-thinking seeks to undo and interrogate assumptions about the future (Goode & Godhe, 2017; Inayatullah, 2013a, p. 44). These interrogations question assumed hierarchies of concepts. Such assumptions can be made explicit, e.g. by developing multiple scenarios in a futures-driven peace mediation process and comparing them (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 14). According to Inayatullah (2013a, p. 44), a critical approach problematises existing images of the future and deconstructs them, with deconstruction understood as an interrogation of power hierarchies where social conditions are not treated as a given. Therefore, critical approaches in futures-thinking contribute to transformation and emancipation.

Methods such as Causal Layered Analysis allow participants in peace mediation processes to critically examine images of the future and engage a broader audience beyond the immediate participants (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 14). Alternatively, the Wind Tunnelling process enables participants to stress test policies, interventions or strategies against a diverse range of future scenarios (Roche, 2019, p. 102). Wind Tunnelling is already common in mainstream futures-thinking, e.g. in the private sector where the robustness of measures can be evaluated against markers such as effectiveness in terms of achieving the desired impact (Cordova-Pozo & Rouwette, 2023).

As a critical approach, Wind Tunnelling could be harnessed to evaluate strategies against markers like power imbalances.

4) Participatory action-learning, developed later by Inayatullah as a fourth approach, is a democratic and reflexive process where images of the future are constructed by a diverse group of stakeholders rather than just by powerbrokers (Inayatullah, 2013a, pp. 38, 40). The process is based on iterative questioning of the alternative images that are created (Inayatullah, 2006, p. 657), and therefore it is closely related to the critical approach to futures-thinking.

Futures-thinking as a new phenomenon in policy?

As Kuosa notes (2011, p. 331), the emergence of positivist futures-thinking and pluralist foresight in policy coincides with a heightened interest in managing risks related to political and economic uncertainty. Quantification of indicators to analyse social phenomena increased after World War II, and this tendency continues to permeate peace and conflict studies today. Numerous global datasets tracking incidents of organised violence allow researchers to better understand developments in conflict contexts, and Merry (2011, p. S90) notes that increasing demands for evidence-based funding have led to a "corporate form of thinking and governance" in governments. Quantitative approaches such as forecasting are also used in futures-thinking to extrapolate trends for conflict onset (Gleditsch & Ward, 2013), or to design early-warning mechanisms for international organisations and governments (Rød et al., 2024).

However, the quest for positivist "fact-finding" and the use of digital technologies for early warning also pose challenges, since "war is the realm of uncertainty" (Clausewitz, 2007, p. 46; Hirblinger et al., 2023, pp. 187–189). Policymaking increasingly relies on positivist methods in data collection and analysis, e.g. through early-warning mechanisms for the protection of civilians during UN peace operations (Hirblinger et al., 2023, p. 202), However, it must be noted that positivist research, like all other research, remains ultimately partial and cannot eliminate the uncertainty of knowing.

The rise of strategic foresight in policymaking demonstrates how uncertainty may be tackled by anticipating future developments and conceptualising strategic action today. It differs thereby from predictive approaches such as quantitative forecasting and early-warning systems.

Strategic foresight practice first gained popularity in business and military organisations post–World War II (Hines, 2020), aiming to increase organisations' preparedness for future events by anticipating developments that could impact their future work. Thus, it has a "dual purpose task", both seeking to capture aspects that are likely causing future change and conceptualising appropriate organizational responses (Iden et al., 2017). While strategic foresight's emergence coincided with the "golden time of planning, quantitative methods, positivism, global trade and financing" in the 1940s, other tools for strategic and pluralist future planning were developed much earlier (Kuosa, 2011, p. 331). For example, Chinese nobles used strategic games for military planning as early as 4,000 years ago, in order to prepare for future developments and test out strategies in a "safe-to-fail environment" (Perla, 2022, p. 208; Sabin, 2021, p. 6).

Over the past ten years strategic foresight has become more institutionalised in government work, including in Canada, the United Kingdom and the EU, according to a study by the German Fraunhofer Institut (Fraunhofer ISI, 2022, p. 3). Strategic foresight equips policymakers with tools to enhance decision-making by actively involving them in exploring future scenarios. It is widely employed by foreign and defence ministries, as well as military organizations, to better prepare policymakers and strengthen preventive actions. Most government institutions use both strategic foresight and forecasting methodologies in their work. In Germany, both the defence and foreign ministries have set up foresight and forecasting units focused on futures analysis within their areas of responsibility. For instance, the German Federal Foreign Office established a dedicated unit that utilises the PREVIEW data tool for early conflict warning (Mangelsdorf, 2020), while the Metis Institut für Strategie und Vorausschau (2024) advises the German defence ministry by conducting thematic studies based on strategic foresight methodologies to support its planning and decision-making.

Operationalising decolonisation in futures-thinking

Recent initiatives to "decolonise futures-thinking" could be interpreted as responses to trends in quantitative forecasting or positivist strategic foresight in policymaking (Bisht, 2020, 2024). Literature and initiatives problematise implicit power hierarchies in many mainstream futures approaches. They demand an interrogation of these approaches and resulting futures, because "the future is not neutral but rather colonized" according to Inayatullah (2013b, p. 2). Therefore, initiatives such as the "Critiquing Futures" approach by SUPERRR Lab offer an initial framework

for critical and decolonial engagement with futures in digital policy and beyond (Stumptner & Keleta, 2024). Within futures-thinking as well, there is a risk of reproducing power structures if the "coloniality of power" is not rendered explicitly (Quijano, 2000).

On the one hand, Jae (2024) suggests that decolonisation can come from a diversity of methods employed in futures-thinking. Diversity in methods and approaches is relevant to cultivating a plurality of voices; alternatives to mainstream approaches such as scenario planning are also discussed later in this entry. However, futures-thinking can also risk reinforcing existing power structures if participants lack a "safe space" that is free from fear of repercussions, or if the group involved is too homogeneous (Kambunga et al., 2023). Therefore, decolonial engagement with futures in peace and conflict must also problematise key elements in mainstream approaches, including power hierarchies/inclusion and conceptions of time.

In contentious conflict contexts, futures-thinking can become a transformative tool for inclusion when it empowers and centres the agency of marginalised groups. However, it must also be noted that futures-thinking cannot resolve all power dynamics and asymmetries, even though it provides many opportunities for more inclusive processes. To ensure a transformative approach it is essential to include a wide range of participants in the process, fostering a participatory environment that embraces diverse perspectives (Nikolova, 2014, p. 2). Ideally, futures-thinking processes in areas like conflict analysis and peacebuilding must seek to actively "counteract psychological, social and institutional biases" (Bressan & Korb, 2024, p. 5).

Broad participation in all dimensions of peacebuilding, including conflict analysis, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, increase the process' legitimacy and validity (Pauls, 2023, p. 8). The knowledge and information that feed into a futures-thinking process are closely tied to issues of power (Foucault, 1991). A key pillar of any futures-thinking process is deciding who is included in the process and whose interests it is designed to serve. Sardar (1996, p. 667) frames the question as "who benefits" in any given "futures endeavor". Similarly, SUPERRR Lab's "Critiquing Futures" catalogue includes questions that aim to allow scenario processes to assess power hierarchies and understand which societal groups might be excluded in a given scenario (Stumptner & Keleta, 2024). Similarly, the liberal vs. local peacebuilding debate elucidates how liberal assumptions about peace afford limited agency to local actors and regard "external actors as omnipotent" (Sending, 2011, p. 55). Consequently, marginalised groups and actors may be structurally excluded as agents in the peacebuilding

sector (Peace Direct, 2023). "Hybrid peace" suggests that local actors may either adapt to or resist liberal notions of peace, thereby creating a hybrid environment between the international and local (Mac Ginty, 2010). Consequently, local peace actors continue to operate within the structures of liberal peace, which influences the transformative potential of futures-thinking approaches. When futures-thinking processes are applied in conflict contexts, challenges related to inclusion and power imbalances also are likely to emerge unless steps are taken to ensure pluralist processes (Bressan & Korb, 2024, p. 5).

Inherently, futures-thinking is linked to conceptions of time. Milojevic (2002, p. 29) highlights that the "conception of time and the future exists in every known society", making it native to all communities. However, mainstream futures approaches engage with a linear past-present-future sequence (Inayatullah, 2013a, p. 45). The "futures cone" is emblematic of this linearity, conflicting with alternative non-linear understandings of the past-present-future. The futures cone is a framework that is commonly used to analyse "projected, potential, possible, plausible, probable and preferable futures" (Voros, 2003, pp. 12–14). Its left tip represents the present situation as a singular point in time. This singular point then expands into a cone encompassing a range of futures at later points in time. The framework allows for analysis of multiple futures as opposed to a singular future, and can distinguish the futures that are considered "business as usual" or desired futures by the participants (UN Global Pulse, n.d.).

Therefore, the framework excludes the past from analysis, and assumes a "singular present" (Carey et al., 2021, p. 2). However, Bisht (2020, p. 219) emphasises the plurality of conditions in the present that are not visualised in the singular starting point of such a cone. In addition, non-Western perspectives might view the relationship between past-present-future as cyclical, and these views are excluded by this mainstream conceptualisation in futures-thinking (Sardar, 2021, p. 19).

Linearity is also prevalent in peacebuilding where the "linear cause-effect problem-solving model" has dominated policy and academia in efforts to respond to large-scale violence (Paffenholz, 2021, p. 367; De Coning, 2018, p. 302). According to De Coning, however, the liberal peace paradigm is "waning", and its theory of change to sustainable peace is not holding up anymore. As a "deterministic-design" model, liberal peace suggests that the implementation of democracy, a free market economy and human rights will inevitably lead to sustainable peace in conflict-affected contexts (De Coning, 2018, p. 302). However, current literature acknowledges
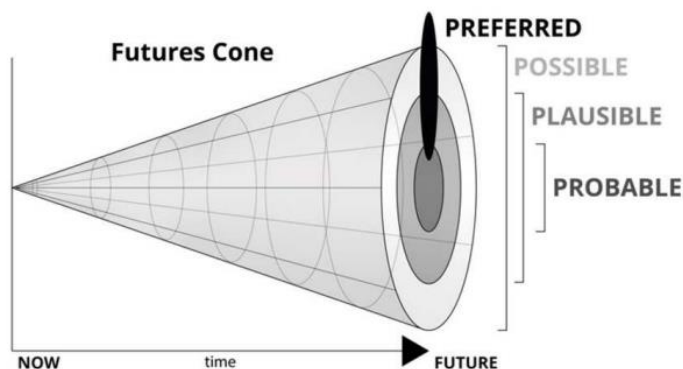
Futures Cone

Figure 1: Gall et al., 2022, p.3)

that paths to peace are not linear, but require an iterative process of adaptation informed by complexity (De Coning, 2019).

Forecasting and predictive approaches in futures-thinking also rely on linearity since they assume that the "universe is deterministic" (Inayatullah, 2013a, p. 42). This includes conflict early-warning systems, e.g. the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS) that seeks to anticipate future risks based on available data on past events (Rød et al., 2024). The EEAS champions its early-warning system that "identifies structural risk factors that frequently correlate with the outburst of violence" (EEAS, 2022). Such conflict early-warning frameworks serve to monitor ongoing developments and flag any potential escalations of violence for analysts. As a tool for strategic foresight, policymakers use conflict early warning to prioritise preventative action over ad hoc crisis management.

Early-warning systems heavily rely on data collection and quantitative analysis, with predetermined thresholds set to flag conflict risks to users (Sweijs & Teer, 2022, p. 18). Consequently, the risk of false negatives and false positives can limit the value of analytical insights. In addition, the "warning-response gap" is widely discussed in the literature as it counteracts the objective of preventative political action and response to mitigate the escalation of violence (Beaumais, 2023; Muggah & Whitlock, 2022, p. 3). Furthermore, Kanno (2014, p. 4) questions the implicit "epistemological foundations" of conflict early-warning systems. Drawing on Zanotti's (2005) Foucauldian view of "global governmentality", Kanno argues that conflict early warning seeks "to make [...] illiberal and irresponsible states more legible and transparent to the international community" (Kanno, 2014, p. 5). Since international security actors, such as governments and international organisations, cannot fully control violent environments, they prioritise strategies aimed at risk reduction and prediction (Kanno, 2014, p. 98).

Critical approaches in futures–thinking

Critical futures approaches, including Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), seek to reveal hidden assumptions and confront entrenched thinking patterns, which is essential in settings affected by conflict (Inayatullah, 2004). By explicitly deconstructing the "litany, systemic causes, worldviews and myths" of a particular problem addressed through the futures process, process participants engage

FIGURE 1. CLA: THE ICEBERG IMAGE WITH LAYERS

Litany: The official description of the problem. Externalized reality. Often disconnected to other perspectives. Usually a repeated newspaper headline.

Systemic causes: Often short-term analysis, either single or multivariable. Historical variables are explored. Policy reports.

Worldview/Discourse: Discerning deeper assumptions behind the problem. Important to understand the issues from multiple worldviews. Critical thinking.

Myth/Metaphor: Deep stories, unconscious dimension of the problem. Inner transformation is required here. Solutions emerge from new narratives.

Figure 2: Inayatullah (2017), p.5

with implicit biases on various cognitive levels. CLA allows for these assumptions to be problematised instead of letting them limit the imagination of process participants (Inayatullah, 2004, p. 17). Currently, there is limited literature suggesting that this methodology has been used in conflict contexts with affected individuals or communities, despite its potential for transformative change (Lipsett, 2020). Similar to the Transformative Scenario Process (TSP), engagement with implicit assumptions within the CLA framework can open up transformative spaces by unpacking "wicked community problems" through a critical lens (Bishop & Dzidic, 2014, p. 13).

Alternative approaches in futures-thinking can offer pathways for the inclusion of local knowledges and practices to foster sustainable peace. For example, South Africa's "Mont Fleur" initiative pioneered the Transformative Scenario Process methodology during the country's transition after apartheid (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 15). Drawing on experiences from the private sector, the methodology allowed key conflict actors to jointly explore scenarios of "what can happen, rather than […] what should or will happen" in the future (McCartney et al., 2022a, p. 15). In scenario planning for conflict analysis, scenarios are used for adaptive objectives, i.e. to allow an organisation to adapt its strategies and responses in the face of a conflict (Bøjer, 2018, p. 3). In contrast, TSP allows conflict parties and communities affected by conflict to build trust and overcome fixed viewpoints. Therefore, TSP targets the relationships and intentions of participants that will be transformed by engaging in the process (Bøjer, 2018, p. 4).
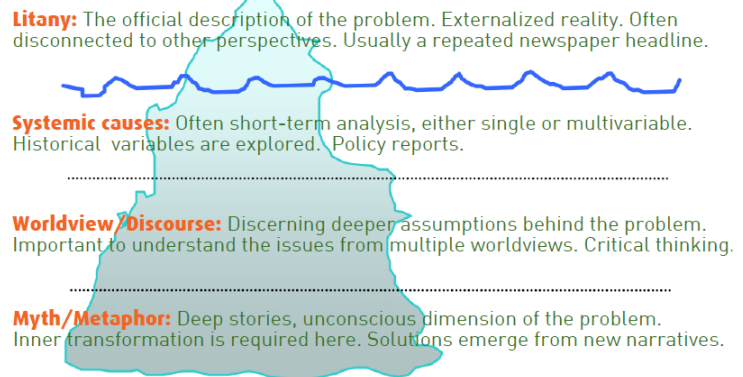
Narrative foresight, a methodology closely related to CLA, focuses on deeper layers of myths and metaphors that shape contentious issues (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015). Narrative work is a crucial pillar for peacebuilding and conflict resolution because narratives can be multifaceted; complex narratives may support social engagement in the face of grievances. In contrast, simplistic narratives can also drive polarisation and the escalation of violence in societies (Fairey, 2024, p. 8; Institute for Integrated Transitions, 2021, p. 3). Therefore, peacebuilding seeks to "reconstitute, or re-story the narrative" in order to cultivate peace (Lederach, 2005, p. 146), allowing strategic narrative peacebuilding to integrate multiple narratives rather than forging a single story in conflictual environments (Fairey, 2024, p. 9). Complex narratives are a fundamental aspect of futures thinking, particularly in narrative foresight which integrates predictive, interpretive and critical approaches.

Additionally, narrative foresight creates desired futures according to the needs and preferences of the involved participants (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, p. 5). Its focus on transformation allows participants to dive deeper into the myth/metaphor layer of CLA in a joint learning process (2015, p. 14). Batchelor (2007, p. 6) highlights how the Western transitional justice industry is currently seeing a "return to narrative", while indigenous and traditional peacebuilding mechanisms have always relied on storytelling to cultivate peace. Consequently, narrative foresight can be used as a practice that harnesses alternative knowledge instruments such as oral storytelling to explore and unlock alternative futures. Milojević highlights a 2009 peace education project for young people in Serbia where future-oriented storytelling was used to counter narratives of domination and promote alternative inclusive futures (Milojević & Izgarjan, 2014). By treating reality and futures as continuously negotiated between stakeholders (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015, p. 5), narrative foresight allows conflict-affected communities to engage meaningfully with the roots of their grievances and envision constructive futures.

Conclusion

This entry highlights the potential of futures-thinking for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. While recognising the growing prominence of futures-thinking in the private sector and public policy, this entry leverages its utility to promote peace and engage with conflict actors. A distinction is made between adaptive and transformative futures-thinking approaches, with these alternative transformative approaches, such as narrative foresight and CLA, offering

tools to challenge power hierarchies. Both are recognised in academic literature as critical methodologies and have been applied in areas such as peace education.

It is important to acknowledge that all communities engage with futures, and can therefore implement forms of futures-thinking in their conflict resolution and transformation. Further research is needed to explore how futures-thinking has supported various processes of conflict transformation beyond the examples presented in this entry.

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