

Building to think – using LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® for Causal Layered Analysis

Complexity requires us to examine futures-related issues from many perspectives and at multiple levels. This workshop will demonstrate how LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® can be used with Causal Layered Analysis to communicate visually and more deeply using a storytelling approach.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a theory of knowledge and a methodology for creating more-effective, futures-focused policies and strategies created by Sohail Inayatullah. Inayatullah identifies four specific causal layers: 1) the litany, which provides ‘everyday’ accounts of problems without deep critique; 2) the social layer in which people seek explanations for the issue or problem within the systems of social organisation that created them; 3) the layer of discourse, which provides an opportunity to challenge the world view that supports and legitimises these systems of social organisation; and 4) the layer of metaphor and myth, which focuses upon deep stories, where people find meaning in life.

CLA is situated in critical futures research, usually as a poststructural critical approach that is not assumed to foster prediction or comparison. CLA is less concerned with prediction of one particular future and is more directed to opening up the present and past to create alternative futures. CLA is not limited to the horizontal spatiality of futures - in contrast to techniques such as emerging issues analysis, scenarios and backcasting - and offers a way to explore the vertical dimension of futures studies, and the possibilities of layers of analysis.

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is a facilitated experiential process designed to enhance engagement, business performance and strategic innovation. The method helps participants communicate complex ideas more easily using Lego models, created both individually and in teams. The structured process draws on constructionism and constructivism to elicit deep thinking, metaphors and narratives, authentic collaboration, and problem solving of complex challenges. The method draws on play and storytelling to build deep learning and collaboration, which can more easily be provoked when people build ideas with their hands rather than just talk discussion and/or traditional meeting formats.

The session integrates the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (LSP) method to complement thinking and storytelling. The method can help participants build a solid understanding of a problem, issue or questions in order to reach emergent responses. In addition, it fosters emergent problem-solving by combining logical thinking and creative imagination. In a LSP process, the materials and methodology enable participants to identify and create the relationships and connections between people and their world, observe internal and external dynamics, explore various hypothetical scenarios, and gain awareness of the possibilities.

As its starting point, CLA holds that there are different levels of reality, expressed as visual and verbal narratives. Individuals and organisations see the world from different vantage points, both horizontal and vertical. LSP enables personal and collective expression through visualisation via Lego models that emerge through thinking to build, rather than building to think. The models are physical externalisations of our internal reality, thoughts and ideas, providing an alternative way for sharing with others. The Lego models themselves are not necessarily the most compelling part of the process; like CLA, it is storytelling and the uncovering (or recovering) of metaphors and meaning we apply to them that is significant. The stories we create to explain the model matter most and the stories applied to simple models create powerful metaphors to share in a group.

This techniques workshop will enable participants to experience CLA using Lego pieces, allowing for freeform modelling of ideas and responses to the questions and provocations in the CLA process of inquiry. The process includes several rounds of building, storytelling and reflection that serves as a catalyst to capture thoughts and feelings. Participants are engaged in a process whereby they construct models using a specific set of bricks to inspire the use of metaphoric story-making representative of realisations, struggles, complex systems and potential resolutions. The LSP core method includes a four-step process, a set of several application techniques that increase in complexity dependent on context and goals, and a number of process principles, all of which have been developed to integrate the CLA methodology.

By combining visual, auditory and kinesthetic skills, participants are engaged to learn and listen, and every participant has a voice regardless of language, culture or position—the Lego becomes a shared vocabulary and narrative tool.

Please note that this workshop requires only one facilitator due to the formal structure of the LEGO®SERIOUS PLAY®method. Typically one facilitator is required for sessions comprising up to 20 people. An additional facilitator may be sourced to meet the requirements of the conference committee.

References

Hinthorne, L.L. and Schneider, K., 2012. Playing with purpose: using serious play to enhance participatory development communication. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, p.24.

Inayatullah, S., 1998. Causal layered analysis: Poststructuralism as method. *Futures*, 30(8), pp.815-829.

Kristiansen, P. and Rasmussen, R., 2014. *Building a better business using the Lego serious play method*. John Wiley & Sons.

Swann, D., 2011. NHS at Home: Using Lego Serious Play to Capture Service Narratives and Envision Future Healthcare Products. *INCLUDE 2011 Proceedings*.

Presenter/Facilitator

Bridgette Engeler is a pracademic working across strategic design, innovation and foresight. A lecturer at Swinburne University in Melbourne, she regularly collaborates with industry and organisations on futures-oriented projects and programs. Her work spans strategic and transformative design, speculative design, experiential and critical futures, and transition design. Bridgette holds a BA, MA and Master of Management in Strategic Foresight. A PhD Candidate at Swinburne, her research interest is the nexus created between design and anticipation, and emergent opportunities intersecting design, ecosystems, people and technology. This includes connections and interventions between design and foresight, how futures thinking and design intersect and influence (especially NGOs and the third sector), design as politics, and the opportunities emerging between civil society, foresight and strategic design.