

Causal layered analysis (CLA)

A futures studies method that analyzes a topic on four levels, from visible data to the worldviews and myths that sustain it.

In Spanish

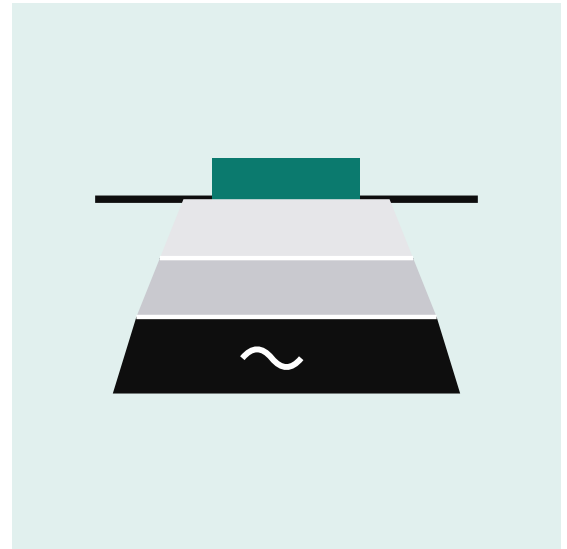
Análisis causal por capas

Origin

Inayatullah (1998)

Output

The problem read in four layers and other possible ways of telling it



What it's for

It helps the futures you imagine go beyond the surface and also change how the problem is seen.

Key elements

The litany

What is repeated in public, with figures and headlines.

The social causes

The economic, political and historical reasons that explain it.

The worldview

The underlying ideas that make the problem seem normal.

The myth or metaphor

The deep stories that move emotions.

How it's done

1



Describe the topic in each of the four layers.

2



Look for another metaphor that tells the problem differently.

3



Climb back up to the actions that come from that new story.

Applications in design

✓ When to use it

When the scenarios you get look too much like the present.

✗ Avoid

Staying in the first two layers, which are the most comfortable.

👁 Don't fall for it

The deep layers depend on who takes part; invite people with different perspectives.

Connections

Builds on

■ Futures studies

■ Image of the future

Related to

■ Design futures

■ Scenario planning

Authors and works

1998

Sohail Inayatullah

Proposed the method in the journal Futures to combine the analysis of data with that of discourses and myths.

Sources

Original sources

- Inayatullah, S. (1998). Causal layered analysis: Poststructuralism as method. Futures, 30(8), 815–829. [View source \(https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287\(98\)00086-X\)](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287(98)00086-X)

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

Atlas público de diseño, de Adriana Ojeda. Texto e ilustraciones bajo licencia CC BY 4.0.