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Core shifts for emerging desired futures: Unpacking the collective unconscious

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Core Shifts for Emerging Desired Futures

Unpacking the collective unconscious

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The question "What is your desired future" is usually answered with several other questions. Among the most common of them is: "My ideal or possible future?". Ideal is defined by the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary as: "a standard of perfection, beauty, or excellence, one regarded as exemplifying an ideal and often taken as a model for imitation or an ultimate object or aim of endeavour. What does this question highlight about our beliefs? Why are we reticent to share, or even imagine a future we truly desire? Why are our ideals perceived as unreachable? If it is, in fact, unreachable, why do we desire it? How does that limit what we can co-create? Our workshop is an opportunity for participants to explore these questions while imagining and creating possible paths towards desired futures.

The interest in desired futures comes from the dissatisfaction of our present state. To understand what makes our present undesirable, we use the concept of "divides" explored in U Theory, a process named due to the U shaped framework that helps detail transformational development, where we move from past unproductive patterns into the desired future. Through that lens, we are experiencing the ecological, social and spiritual-cultural divides. The ecological involves our overuse of natural resources and the impacts that we, as a society, have caused in our ecosystem. The social divide revolves around inequality and its consequences, such as lack of financial distribution, political representation, and increased polarization. Finally, the spiritual-cultural divide relates to our lack of self-awareness and awareness of others, that create a barrier for us to discover and live according to our values and purpose. (Scharmer, 2018) These divides generate a cycle of symptom-oriented problem-solving. Considering that the future is created through declarations of what is possible, we are using a foresight method to uncover the nature of these divides finding beliefs and systems that might limit or expand what we envision as plausible. (Inayatullah, 1998)

The exercise we are proposing is based on a framework and practice created for organizational, social and civilizational change known as Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). It is a futures research method designed not to predict, rather create space for transformation by unearthing profoundly ingrained belief systems. (Inayatullah, 2019).

Our workshop is designed around a modified version of the CLA, developed for collaborative investigation encompassing several aspects of our reality simultaneously, such as culture,

economy, technology, and so on, funnelling down to a core belief or myth, that originates them. The practice is oriented for emergence to happen beyond our habitual ways of thinking, enabling themes of interest to surface through the connection of information, opinions, and ideas.

The purpose is to guide our thinking away from symptoms focused problem-solving through the often unrecognized realms of the imaginary. It is precisely by bringing the unconscious to consciousness that we might be able to change core narratives promoting individual and cultural shifts.

Our full day workshop is divided into two major blocks. In the morning, participants will reflect on what are their thoughts on desired futures. The outputs of this reflection will be clustered through an affinity exercise, allowing commonalities to emerge. Groups will select a theme to work on, focusing first on our "undesired present." What are the systems, worldviews and myths that perpetuate these unwanted symptoms?

In the afternoon, participants will then explore the future. How would this ideal future look like, and what systems, worldviews and myths would have to be shifted or created for that future to emerge?

Our objective is to familiarize participants with a different way to use the Causal Layered Analysis unpacking the collective unconscious and observing the intricate connections surfaced. With that, we will address the underlying causes of creation and perpetuation of systemic failures, bringing awareness to limiting beliefs and behavioural patterns that distance us from imagining and consequently co-creating a desired future.

Keywords: foresight, future, causal layered analysis, innovation.

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