Causal Layered Analysis: A Case Study of USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia)

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Higher Educational Institutionss are exploring ways to reorient their values and chart new futures for their stakeholders. Few have taken this task more seriously than Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Malaysia's premier university, USM has been working for over a decade on understanding how to engage the value of service as a defining ethic of the university. To use the language of Joas USM has established a 'generalised value domain' and under the guidance of futurist Sohail Inayatullah, and with the direct support of the university president Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, USM has worked through a sustained process of values clarification and futures thinking to craft a new dominant vision for itself (S. Inayatullah, 2012; Universiti-Sains-Malaysia, 2007a; USM, 2010).

USM has performed a skilful balancing act that bridges the desire to transform whilst maintaining legitimacy, even increased reputation, within Malaysia's higher education context. This delicate balancing act is presented in their strategic document "Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow" in the following terms. Having assessed the status of the European Union's leading universities USM noted:

> "Judging by their talent pool, abundance of resources and supportive governance, USM believes that we simply cannot play the same game in order to be excellent. As defined by their 'rules', we chose a different path to strategically be eminent and excellent measured in different terms and contexts … USM has chosen to position itself as a world renowned university for sustainability with relevance to the future, nurturing, learning, conducting research and services towards the stated goal" (Razak et al 2008, p. 64).

To realise this goal the university needed to adjust experience at the system level by initiating a set of new systemic processes. At the level of the day to day, life goes on as usual (ie all contemporary institutional concerns are still on-going as core business) though students and staff are becoming involved in sustainable programmes across the university campus such as: the White Coffin Campaign (reducing/eliminating polystyrene use on campus), the Campus-Wide Recycling Project, the Tree Planting Project and involvement in the Earth Hour and Earth Day campaigns (Razak et al 2008, pp 39-40).

Such programmes of course have a systemic basis being reflective of the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) beginning to emerge here (S. Inayatullah, and Milojević, Ivana, 2015). For instance, USM has adopted the Blue Ocean Programme (Razak et al 2008, p. 18) to generate new thinking about the future and its possibilities. This programme is deliberately open ended. USM recognises that the change must come from within (ibid, p. 10) so that the institution is in control of its own future and actively aligning with values that seek to promote its stated objective of sustainability, relevance and service to its region and to the developing world in

general. Thus it is seeking to become a Regional Centre for Excellence (ibid, pp. 21-22) and to direct research towards the bottom four billion people on the planet.

At the level of paradigm USM is developing a value base that fosters service and partnership models as the most effective route to sustainability. Its goal is "to achieve excellence holistically within a small ecological footprint" (ibid, p. 10). To further this it is challenging disciplinary categories by actively supporting interdiscplinarity and challenging traditional disciplinary silos. It now has a new story – the 'University in a Garden' (ibid, p. 14; p. 39) and a new value focus – service to the bottom four billion people on the planet. This is a suitably heroic mission and one which draws support from its regional context where the Malaysian government declared it to be its APEX University[1] in 2008. Table 1 offers a CLA of this process of accessing a new story.

Universiti Sains Malaysia		
Litany	Institutions shape people and people shape institutions	University Ranking; student numbers; teaching, research, publication rankings; assessment. Plus: recycling, tree planting, Earth Hour and Earth Day
The System	Institutions institute the rational as reality	Blue Ocean Programme (ibid, p. 18); Inside Out Approach(ibid, p. 10); Regional Centre of Excellence (ibid, pp. 21-22); APEX university
The Paradigm	The rational is contextual & value laden	Service; Partnership in tension with Competition and economic metrics; holistic excellence
The Story	When the rational, i.e. the story, fails so do institutions (or they change)	University in a Garden; Change the rules of the Game

Table 1: Mapping USM's Transformation

USM can be seen to be aligning its story and values with an emergent context that will have relevance for many decades to come. Thus it is seeking, following Plasker's 100 year life style principles, to ensure health, make choices one at a time and keep its goal of sustainability and service to the disadvantaged at the heart of all it does.

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[1] See http://www.researchsea.com/html/article.php/aid/3518/cid/1/research/universiti_sains_malaysia_is_malaysia___s_apex_university.html

This process began with an intensive period of reflection that included all core players, the seventy four members of their "Dream team" (ibid, pp. 100-101). This is summarised in Table 2.

USM's '100 Year Lifestyle' Plan	
Change is easy. Thinking about it is hard.	The futures scenario work summarised in USM's Constructing Future Higher Education Scenarios (2007b) describes the futures thinking at the heart of USM's sustainable lifestyle agenda
Change happens one choice at a time. Think progress, not perfection.	Blue Ocean Programme (ibid, p. 18); Inside Out Approach(ibid, p. 10); Regional Centre of Excellence (ibid, pp. 21-22); APEX university application
Approach change with your ideal 100 year lifestyle in mind. (Plasker, 2007, p. 15)	University in a Garden; Service; Partnership in tension with Competition and economic metrics; holistic excellence

Table 2: USM's '100 Year Lifestyle'

Plasker's process is quite fluid and can be understood as an unending and folded process of becoming (Deleuze, 1993). New stories and values generate new forms of expression and order rationality and process in ways that support this.

Values as a defence against Chaos

The emergent story being charted above is reflexive in nature. It requires institutions to be vigilant in assessing their own progress in achieving goals that without a reflexive system of self-appraisal may well be rhetoric in which green campuses become the substitute for green minds. Thus USM have developed a rigorous set of Indicators that seek to eliminate, reduce, raise or create (ERRC) conditions that support their primary values set (Razak et al 2008, pp. 68-71; USM, 2010). A broader reflection allows us to see the emergence of relational values as a basic feature of cultural evolution. Namely, that *humanity has generated civilisation in order to escape the instability of the random and the chaotic*. Yet paradoxically the random and the chaotic are the goad to anticipation and creative emergence and the reimagining of order when what is 'rational' fails. As actor participants we are all part of this drama and must acknowledge that in responding to context we also shape context (Bussey, 2016 Forthcoming).

What drives activity in this context are our values. In fact all our activity as individuals and communities is based on values. Our institutions enact and maintain these whilst individuals internalise, challenge and hybridise according to their aspirations and the pressures they find themselves under. So civilisations are expressions of values. Culture – the act of cultivating values? – is the value expression of context. Our values determine what it is we take as rational, which as

we have seen is a dynamic causally layered field of interrelated processes of meaning making that determines how consciousness operates within context.

There has been much talk about paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1996), the great turning (Korten, 2006), the tipping point (Gladwell, 2002), worldshifts (Laszlo, 2009), macroshifts (Laszlo, 2001), but what does this mean to institutions like the university which have the potential to represent the aspirational and cultural heart land of an emergent planetary civilizational project? Currently they act as gate keepers for a neoliberal model of learning but some, like USM, are seeking to redefine universities by aligning them with a deeper ethical agenda that is based on values such as service that assert the fundamental requirement of learning to facilitate the utilisation of human potential and to put this potential at the service of the planet (S. Inayatullah, and Gidley, J, 2000; Razak, 2008).

In this context, universities like USM find themselves seeking to represent the dominant economic value system of a secular Western model of educational delivery whilst remaining true to their cultural and normative agenda. As a result, they are transitional or bridging institutions that must navigate, on the one hand a value system based on a secular Western economic paradigm that promotes competition, rankings, economic accountability, structural imperatives, quality assurance and linear ahistorical utilitarian learning. While on the other hand they seek to develop valid and constructive contexts – a value generalisation - for extended cooperative holistic learning that promotes health, balance, integrity, relationship and inner accountability to values that will underpin a sustainable culture at both local and planetary scales (Nehls, 2013).

Conclusion

Transitioning to a new world order that values sustainable process requires transitional institutions as legitimacy is required for those not yet ready to risk everything on a single role of the dice. They are also necessary as none of us working in the present university system can clearly conceive of what sustainable cultures will look like and how their institutions will behave.

This paper has sought to tackle the question, How do we embed values and service in higher education futures? Such a question might suggest there is an answer, a formula or linear process we can follow that will help transition us from condition A to condition B. In the cultural field however process is messy and multiple and can better be described, using Deleuze and Guattari's term (1987), as rhizomic. The chaotic and multiple nature of rhizomic space always leaves out the unexpected lines of flight that an idea or process takes. These 'lines' are unpredictable and cross boundaries and geographic spaces in the most unanticipated ways. Thus changing institutional values requires us to accept liminality as a quality of transition and to play with a consciousness of *between-ness* that accounts for disorientation as part of reorientation (Bussey, 2009).

Universities used to educate for elites, then they were massified and linked to nation building projects (Gatto, 2002; Miller, 2006). The dominant ethos was neoliberal

competition premised on self-service; now global contexts are reframing human activity and higher education has the opportunity to respond proactively in these postnormal times (Sardar, 2010) by looking to move away from competition and towards service oriented values in which the hyper individual becomes the 'nested individual'. In these shifts we see institutions essentially committed to the legitimation and maintenance of the status quo coming under increasing pressure. Institutions usually control context and supply its dominant logic. YET, there are many who inhabit institutions today that nurture within themselves and their immediate environs alternative visions of what human beings can do.