

# Six shamanic concepts: charting the between in futures work

Marcus Bussey

Marcus Bussey is Lecturer in World History and Sustainable Futures, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore, Australia.

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper offers six shamanic futures concepts to augment Inayatullah's six pillars, questions and concepts of futures studies.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Drawing on Ashis Nandy's use of the shaman as a futures category that posits alterity and the unknowable as the dissenting component of futures studies, six concepts (geophilosophy, rhizome, intercivilisational dialogue, heterotopia, immanence and hybridity) from poststructural thinking are proposed to offer an account of the agency-structure interface (context) that is of practical value to futures practice.

**Findings** – Futures praxis is pragmatic and goal driven, seeking preferred futures outcomes for those in context. The six shamanic futures concepts further this end by outlining conceptual processes that deepen understanding of context as a co-creative and living space.

**Research limitations/implications** – Futures studies is becoming increasingly sophisticated; the six shamanic concepts push practitioner's understanding of how to facilitate deep organizational change.

**Practical implications** – This paper provides six concepts that enable futures practitioners to better understand the nature of their own practice.

**Originality/value** – This paper extends Inayatullah's mapping of the futures field by suggesting six concepts that facilitate an understanding and harnessing of the potential of context.

**Keywords** Forecasting, Organizational change, Sustainable development

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

My recent work on the play between agency and structure has led me to focus on process – the point where individuals and their contexts meet (Bussey, 2008). Following a range of structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers (Arendt, 1958; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Dewey, 1938; Latour, 1991; Serres and Latour, 1995) I came to think of this point of encounter as the between, where process and paradox were dominant and creativity was the bedfellow of possibility. Context became a dominant consideration requiring a set of tools open and flexible enough to make the kinds of processes I am fascinated by intelligible and accessible to futures thinking. Inayatullah's six pillars and six futures concepts provided a useful map for this work but I found myself still looking for concepts to push the between further as a contextual marker for doing futures work. The search led me to Nandy's (1987, 1999, 2007) concept of the shaman as one who stands in the between, or better still straddles it, linking the knowable with the unknowable, the actor and the context, in ways that are non-prescriptive and unique. This article details how six 'shamanic' futures concepts of geophilosophy, rhizome, intercivilisational dialogue, heterotopia, immanence and hybridity elucidate this process and build intelligibility, though always provisional, into my futures work.

## Futures spectrum

The practice of futures thinking challenges context to reveal that which habit and worldview obscure from view. Sensitivity to context requires the capacity to move from empirical factors

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shaping our experience of reality, to the sense making we apply to this reality, to critical engagement with the powerful processes that order this sense making and finally to holistic engagement with the environment-body-mind-spirit continuum. Context thus evokes the ability to navigate the futures spectrum described here from empirical, to interpretive, to critical to holistic-spiritual. As noted, Inayatullah describes six pillars, six questions and six concepts that underpin such futures thinking (Inayatullah, 2008). This article suggests that in addition to these pillars, questions and concepts, which supply the epistemological, procedural and structural underpinning for futures praxis, we need a further six concepts that operationalise the interface between individuals and their context. Following Nandy's work these concepts are described as shamanic and are employed to enrich and destabilise practitioner's encounters with context.

In his overview of the six pillars, six questions and six concepts of futures studies Inayatullah details the structural processes for engaging futures thinking and the conceptual ground upon which this work is to occur. The six shamanic concepts bring to his map six concepts that engage poststructural insights into the cultural processes that underpin, consciously and unconsciously, futures thinking. They are responses to the encounters that occur at the micro level of daily life and also the macro level of civilisational process. They offer an account of the prosaic that sets it against the deep, the mysterious, the paradoxical and the transformative. The shaman in this context acts as a signifier for our groundedness in the life world, while acknowledging that there are other, less coherent, less tangible and more mysterious dimensions to our being and becoming.

### The shaman

Nandy has argued on a number of occasions for the importance of the shaman to futures thinking. The shaman cannot be captured by a single lens because the "shaman has one foot in the familiar, one foot outside; one foot in the present, one in the future; or, as some would put it, one foot in the timeless" (Nandy, 2007, p. 176). Futurists with a pluralist commitment must struggle to be open to the multiple, the layered, the contradictory and the irrational, being able as Judge (2008a) argues to practice "the deliberate avoidance of definitional closure through 'not saying'". For Nandy the shaman is a strategic manoeuvre that represents the spirit of dissent. Invoking the shamanic offers a way out for those struggling to free themselves from dominant narratives that come from somewhere else. Thus, he observes of many "developing" societies that "[t]hey have a past, a present, and someone else's present as their future" (Judge, 2008a, p. 174). Nandy's advice for the intellectual (read futurist) is to cultivate dissent:

I doubt if the rebellious spirit of humanity can ever be fully captured in what is essentially one civilization's concept of rebellion at a particular point of time. What is dissent if it has no place for the unknown, the childlike, and the non-rational? And what is the intellectual's job definition if it does not include the ability to be in a minority and at the borderlines of the knowable (Nandy, 2007, p. 185).

This article suggests six shamanic concepts – geophilosophy, rhizome, intercivilisational dialogue, heterotopia, immanence and hybridity – as concepts that offer a set of categories that facilitate such dissent and a commitment to the non-rational, which is basically anything that lies beyond the dominant paradigm, and that which lies at the edge of the knowable. They embody an approach to futures work that offers multiple entry and exit points to thinking about human agency and transformative praxis. In doing so, these concepts extend the original commitment of Futures Studies to strategic engagement with reality (Clarke, 1996) to forms of futures thinking beyond the epistemic range of the instrumental rationality (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972) that dominated its early years.

### The shamanic tool kit

Nandy's (2007, p. 176) work on the "shamanic" element in futures studies, which has a foot in both the present and the immanent, is an invitation to explore possibilities beyond immediate strategic concern without in anyway diminishing the concrete and strategic realities futurists face. This is the paradox of such an approach that plays on tension and inversion where the best strategy, shamanically, may be no strategy (Senge *et al.*, 2004). To

engage with the depths of the between this article seeks to operationalise the shaman as a discursive stance with relevance for futures thinking beyond acting as a category for the other within a dominantly Western framework.

To activate this “shamanic” space the following six shamanic concepts will now be introduced:

1. geophilosophy;
2. rhizome;
3. intercivilisational dialogue;
4. heterotopia;
5. immanence; and
6. hybridity.

These concepts augment the trio of “sixes”, namely the “six foundational concepts”, the “six questions” and the “six pillars” of futures studies, proposed by Inayatullah (2008). The six concepts described here supply reference points for negotiating the futures terrain and enabling an understanding of agency that accounts for both subjective and structural process. This twofold objective is important when institutional outcomes are sought. Institutions, as structural expressions of social process, require a structural hermeneutic yet agency, which lies by definition, beyond structure – or at least dialectically defined *vis-à-vis* structure – requires a poststructural and postmaterial invitation to any conversation about its role within institutional process[1].

The futures thinking that emerges as a result, elicits a range of new categories that facilitate the intersection of poststructural and structural processes. This work allows for agency to be evaluated as a process of human activity that moves between these two epistemological commitments while flagging a beyond that is immanent to context.

These six concepts are theoretical positions with practical applications within the futurist’s working life.

### 1. Geophilosophy

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept “geophilosophy” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 85ff) challenges the absolutist root of Western philosophy and history by linking both to the universalising culture of capitalism (Box 1). The result is the opening of philosophy – which they define as the art of making concepts (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 2) – to a conversation beyond its borders; and here borders pertain to culture, tradition as well as academic discipline. Gough (2007, p. 286) sums up the creative challenge this concept holds.

Deleuze and Guattari’s geophilosophy enlarges the field of concepts and signs that we can deploy to account for difference, which in turn multiplies the possibilities for analyses, critiques, and interventions. Such a broadening of our repertoires of representation and performance may be particularly useful when we encounter remarkable difference (difference that puzzles, provokes, surprises or shocks us) [. . .]

Thinking geophilosophically allows the analysis to enter into creative synergy with non-Western concepts and possibilities. As with many of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts it has a spatial quality. Not only does it invite in the non-Western other, but also more broadly the atemporal – what they call the aphasical (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 109), the

#### Box 1. Geophilosophy

Knowing grounded in geopolitical grid. All knowledge is invested in its own history and references meaning against this. When geophilosophies interact new possibilities emerge

This futures thinking asks: What is the civilisational commitment of this line of thought? How might geo-futures become bio-futures?

pre-modern, and the post-Western. Such encounters allow psycho-social space (traditions) and human agency to be rethought (Dallmayr, 2002; Giri, 2006).

That such an approach is considered appropriate arises from the impact of globalisation on the futures context under examination. Futures studies aim to expand human potentiality and explore issues that are emergent in order to engage proactively with ever more complex choices. The goal is to identify and develop a range of preferred futures. These preferred futures have expanded and diverged as a result of globalisation. This is a new and unstable situation marked by what economist Joseph Schumpeter has called “creative destruction” (cited in Senge *et al.*, 2004, p. 84). In this context, as traditions encounter one another, there has been an increased range of preferences on offer. Such encounters are sources of great vitality for the futures field and can result in a wide range of hybrid possibilities.

Furthermore, in recent years a postcolonial temper has expanded the critical grammar of futures work (Sardar, 1999) as the largely Western reach of futures studies has encountered clear voices of dissent from activists and academics working in the majority world (Nandy, 2004; Lal, 2002). Such dissent has sought to operationalise the other (Said, 1995; Butler, 2004) as an active participant and stake holder in futures thinking that is original and authentic and free, when necessary, to move beyond the paradigm of Western rationality (Lal, 2002). As noted above, Nandy (2007) has offered the indigenous notion of the shaman as a metaphor for such dissent. Deleuze and Guattari provide the theoretical context for dissent by challenging traditional epistemological and ontological assumptions about reality and offering geophilosophy as a critique and an invitation to “shamanic” thought.

Finally, geophilosophy implies process. It is the encountering under a set of historically and culturally determined rules that facilitate what Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 38) call “becoming”, which as they remind us is always double, marked by the immanence of multiple, or what they like to call “fractal” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 40), inversions. In this context nothing is static, and the critical agent too moves as an “a-signifying particle” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 15) that is always under construction/deconstruction (Semetsky, 2006, pp. 16-17). Thus subject and context are inseparable. Semetsky (2006, p. 14) makes this point:

The subject is never an isolated independent individual but is the most versatile component of the whole complex collective system.

This “system” is rich with possibilities. This is not a dualistic process, like a Marxist dialectic, but a process of disengaging from an over attachment to any specific context other than the context of becoming, itself forever immanent in the moment; always finding entry and exit points. Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 7ff) point out, both entry and exit are relative in that we are, by the very nature of our social and historical being, forever inside what they call the rhizome. It is in this potent metaphoric concept (Reynolds, 2004, p. 29) that they develop a process structure which can be utilised to negotiate the epistemological and cultural terrain of the critical stance. The following section outlines this process structure.

## 2. Rhizome

Geophilosophy brings to futures thinking a context that acknowledges the historical construction of Western philosophy as a project of epistemic “democratic” imperialism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 97). Critical Futures Studies, though located within this context, is also ethically committed to transcending it. Deleuze and Guattari developed the rhizome (Box 2) as a procedural metaphor for facilitating such transformative aspirations. Their thinking, as May (1994, p. 34) notes of Deleuze, is not philosophical in the traditional sense but seeks instead to loosen the hold of a specific episteme on thinking by “offering us different ways of looking at things”. Albrecht-Crane (2005, p. 129) makes the same point, stating that all of Deleuze’s writing is designed to “make possible new ways of thinking”. This is an ethical activity that challenges the power of context to determine a single reality. Thus May (1994) argues that:

For Deleuze, the project of philosophy is one of creating, arranging, and rearranging perspectives.

## Box 2. Rhizome

Context to be understood as relational, relative, multiple and organic; process orientation that disrupts the apparent stability of any moment; context is co-created, unique, ephemeral and internally logical (coherent).

The issue for futures this is: What does each stakeholder in a context bring rhizomically to that encounter? How can the co-creativity of this encounter be maximized? And therefore what method best harnessed the potential of the rhizome?

The metaphor of the rhizome, pictured in Figure 1, allows for context to be understood as relational, relative, multiple and organic.

Hence, rhizomic thinking disrupts the order and pattern of a context, making it vulnerable to the multiple voices suppressed by a dominant discourse. The nature and function of the rhizome is outlined in detail by Deleuze and Guattari. The rhizome is a concept designed to spatialise our thinking about power and order. It allows for connection to be identified within a "grid" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 9) of possibility that is the contextual field. As Albrecht-Crane (2005, p. 126) points out:

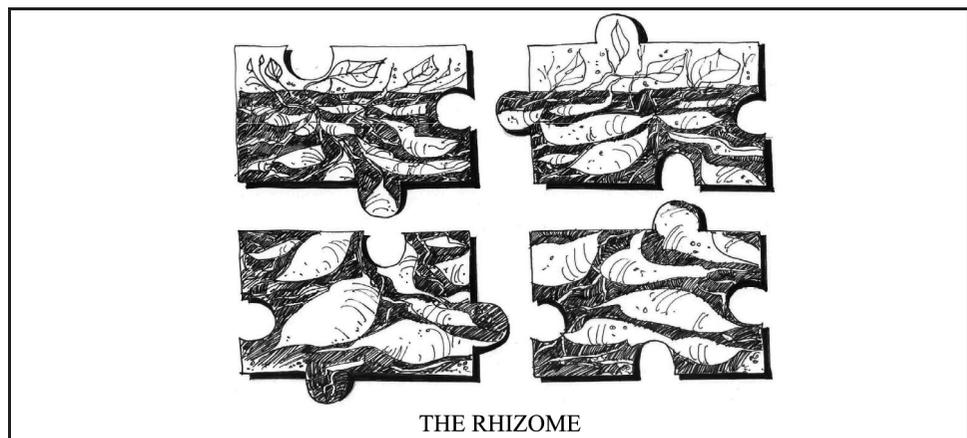
Deleuze's writing, and his argument, can in fact be summarised as employing and discovering ranges of variables, multiplicities, that are not subsumed under molar processes. Thus, opposing the territorial aspect of order-words, Deleuze speaks of a "rhizome" as an open system that emphasises the capricious, undifferentiated and "nomadic" character of life and language.

Although an open system, the rhizome still represents a place – a becoming place, or a between place – that corresponds with an activity such as thinking, languaging, painting, playing music, philosophising, blogging, even cooking. Rhizomic thinking at times works the macro dimension of social reality with discursive strands functioning as rhizomes; at other times the rhizome functions at the micro level of interior subjectivity – in this it draws together all the experiences and personal narratives of multiple subjectivity. In these contexts rhizomic thinking maps the threads of meaning-making as rhizomic narratives that function as connections and relationships both expressed and unexpressed. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 21) note this is a process:

[...] the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.

The map is constructed, often unconsciously, by those present in the context both physically and historically, and, in some respects, also by those who will constitute it in the future. Each constituent part of this field behaves as a signifier that crosses space and time, following what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 9) call "a line of flight". Each line of flight marks the

**Figure 1** The Deleuze and Guattari rhizome



passage of a rhizome (idea, person, virus, tradition, etc.) from one context to another. Thus the Greek notion of democracy follows lines of flight that bring it into multiple contexts in the twenty-first century where “democracy” is no longer a unitary concept (if it ever was). As lines of flight intersect they build up fields of intensity that act like gravity to shape the context, anchoring meaning in a shared “gravitational field” as is shown in Figure 2. In this context power is understood as the capacity to generate and maintain such a field of intensity.

Such “fields” are where knowledge is constructed. Knowledge for Deleuze “runs in between the visible and the articulable” (Semetsky, 2006, p. 14)[2]. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 9; 22-3) emphasise the constructed nature of the rhizome and thus describe them as assemblages being assembled and disassembled (reterritorialised and deterritorialised following lines of flight), ruptured, fragmented, transposed and folded: yet the planar nature of the rhizome remains. Furthermore, there is an implied dimensional hierarchy present in the concept that allows for rhizomes within rhizomes within rhizomes. Thus as noted already, we can have macro rhizomes that correspond to discourses of meaning and micro rhizomes that pertain to the very interior of each subject.

For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomes are constructed of multiplicities that account for the multiple behind the unitary façade. Thus they argue:

A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing . . . (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 8).

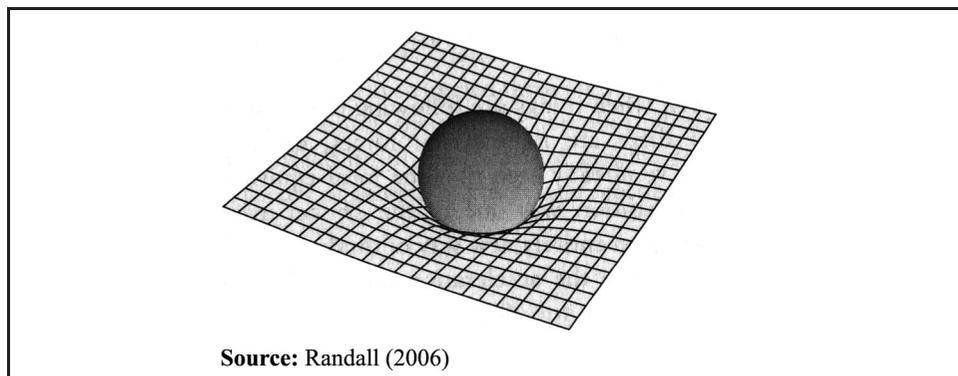
These multiplicities are layered and function rhizomically – hence they are unstable, moving processes[3] – and are of real import to our understanding of a layered and contextual method such as CLA. This layered process is explained with reference to the puppet and the puppeteer:

Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first . . . An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree or root. There are only lines (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 8).

As a critique of knowledge the rhizome is radical (no pun intended) as it places the knower in a relationship of becoming with the known. We are in the middle of the rhizomic field, being participants, as Kaku (2005) notes, in the universe. From a critical perspective this is a difficult even paradoxical position to be in as critique has usually implied distance. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 23) acknowledge this:

It's not easy to see things from the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes.

**Figure 2** Field of intensity



Source: Randall (2006)

Rhizomes therefore represent a participatory logic that account for reality contextually, functioning at different times – or simultaneously – as discourse, as local subjective practice and as cultural process.

This logic is the logic-of-becoming and is premised, as Semetsky (2006, p. 16) points out, not on beginnings and ends, but on “middles and muddles” and the presence that process requires of us (Senge *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, Semetsky (2006, p. 53) identifies a “process-structure constituting an open ended non-linear system” in this rhizomic muddling. Such procedural work is central to futures work and develops what Deleuze (cited in Semetsky, p. 63) calls “a grammar of disequilibrium” by applying various futures tropes, sometimes inverting philosophical assumptions, such as metaphysical dualism, inherent in Western philosophising while also augmenting the epistemic pool with concepts from non-Western traditions. In doing so a “new syntax” (Deleuze cited in Semetsky, 2006, p. 63) emerges as the rhizomic possibilities inherent in the potential for globalisation to generate a cross-civilisational dialogue are explored.

### 3. Intercivilisational dialogue

The futures space that the critical dimension of intercivilisational dialogue (Box 3) creates is inherently ethical. It is the space that Deleuze and Guattari (1994) invoke as the backdrop for the geophilosophical critique. Intercivilisational dialogue builds on the postcolonial sensitivity Nandy alerts us to, of the shaman (Nandy, 2007) pushing language and intelligibility into the shadowy domain of cultural memory and myth. Thus Ranajit Guha reminds us there is a critical sensibility we must explore that is “born of the experience of living dangerously close to the limit of language” (Guha, 2002, p. 6). Such a sensibility goes beyond the transdisciplinary as it is understood in the context of learning systems, actively seeking new categories for better understanding context and the role of people in context to transform it through the creation of new hybrid categories. It is futures studies’ interest in new categories of understanding that leads to a focus on the intercivilisational dimension of shamanic futures thinking. That such categories are needed is attested to by the “limit of language” that Guha is referring.

Essentially the intercivilisational approach is a position at odds with the poststructural critique of universality (Giri, 2006). Its focus is on encounters between western and non-western philosophical and critical engagements with the world. It is the inevitable result of the colonial and globalising reach of human encounters. In this context tradition is central to an ethical and value-oriented appreciation of the possible new forms of thinking that can emerge from such conversations. In the following statement by Giri (2006, p. x), introducing his own intercivilisational work, we find a rationale for a transformative ethics rooted in a validation of non-Western forms of philosophic thinking:

The present volume presents the pathway of a conversational ethics and transformational morality and in this walking and wandering play an important role. In such an engagement of walking, we have to come out of our secured homes and systems, (risk again) and carry out conversations with both self and other in a new way. In our conversations, we have as much to cultivate the art of silence and listening as discursive argumentation. In fact, in its emphasis on listening and self-transformation, conversational ethics differs from the discourse ethics of Jurgen Habermas as the issues of the cultivation of silence, art of listening and self-transformation are conspicuous by their absence in such a predominantly procedural approach to ethics. In fact,

#### Box 3. Intercivilisational dialogue

Futures thinking enriched by array of new categories; Ecumenical temper – inclusively ethical; dialogical process that accommodates contradiction, paradox and aporia; backdrop for geophilosophy; result of historical processes of globalisation where encounters and cross pollination (hybridity) between tradition are inevitable.

The issue for futures thinking is: How can new categories be engaged to explore the limits of language and the possibilities of prediscursive formations?

building on Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, the book pleads for a new ethics of argumentation where both reason and love animate practices of deliberation.

Giri's point is that in a globalising world, traditions are escaping their geophilosophical configurations and seeking to both challenge and engage the dominant "fortress-West's" rational-linguistic theoretical traditions that have defined critical inquiry to date. This bringing in of tradition – rich in values and alternative categories – allows for a prephilosophical "indigenous voice" that generates new conceptual and discursive practices to enlarge the act of questioning. So, though as Muecke (2004, p. 163) rightly observes, "The practice of writing is the thinking", the practice of writing, or storying, is also the "feeling" that goes with this. As Australian Aboriginal elder Neidjie (1989, p. 19) states:

This story e can listen careful  
and how you want to feel on your feeling.  
This story e coming through you body,  
e go right down foot and head, fingernail and blood . . .  
through the heart.

This embodied sense of the presence and process of story-discourse that Neidjie captures so well, conflates the Western separation of parts (human-natural; I-other; subjective-objective; etc.) that Latour (1991) critiques so strongly. The richness of this intercivilisational approach is great and it offers limitless possibilities for what Deleuze and Guattari characterise as "lines of flight". Such lines, they assert, are ruptures in a rhizome or semiotic chain in which the line of flight remains part of the rhizome while moving from context to context in a process they describe as deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 9ff)[4]. Such lines of flight are evoked, for instance, by the movement of a word such as "pyjama" or a food such as the chilli from one geographical and cultural context to another in which they become naturalised within the new environment. Ideas and values also can move in this way with the West's encounter with Buddhism, a wide range of eastern esoteric knowledge, world music and cuisine being clear examples of how such a process occurs.

Giri (2006) insists that such engagements are inherently normative as they draw on traditions that are, from the Western perspective, "pre-philosophical". This term is used advisedly; it points to the grounding of cultural and philosophical activity in conscious or unconscious value systems: animism, empiricism, materialism, Buddhism, Tantra, etc. . . . Such lines of flight lead to encounters that generate "normative conversations". Thus Giri (2006, p. ix) observes of his own work that it is laden with "normative conversation(s) [. . .] such as social criticism, cultural creativity, institutional well-being, self-development, dialogical democracy, civil society, social exclusion, identity politics and aesthetic ethics".

The intercivilisational is not simply about the West appropriating concepts alien to it and thus reinvigorating its moribund system. Giri insists it must be about real dialogue, as equals[5]. Hattam (2004) makes the same point as he weaves an intercivilisational dialogue between critical theory and Buddhism. In this process he strives for "a 'hermeneutical sensitivity and imagination' [Bernstein (1991, p. 65)] that will enable a dialogue to work across difference/incommensurability" (Hattam, 2004, p. 23).

This intercivilisational positioning opens up the discursive space for rich dialogue[6]. It allows access to traditions that have not been trapped by a narrow scientised-worldview and the language matrix that supports this, and (worn so thin, as Arendt (1993) points out, as to break and scatter confusion, doubt, vulnerability into not just the philosophical domain, but also into the lives of all. This break brings a special, self-conscious relationship to both past and future. Arendt (1993, p. 14), who is condemned by her own historical position to a highly Western perspective, still identified this problem with clarity:

That . . . tradition has worn thinner and thinner as the modern age progressed is a secret to nobody. When the thread of tradition finally broke, the gap between past and future ceased to be a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought and restricted as an experience to those few who made thinking their primary business. It became a tangible reality and perplexity for all; that is, it became a fact of political relevance.

Western critique, as a result, has a circularity about it because it has no reference other than itself: it has, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argue, no dialogical partner. Arendt is clear on this. Critique has failed because it is set within the context of a dead tradition, one premised on the duality of thought and action.

Our tradition of political thought began when Plato discovered that it is somehow inherent in the philosophical experience to turn away from the common world of human affairs; it ended when nothing was left of this experience but the opposition of thinking and acting, which, depriving thought of reality and action of sense, makes both meaningless (Arendt, 1993, p. 25).

Giri engages a Vedantic hermeneutic to deepen both the structural and poststructural conversations of Western critique. In this way he demonstrates a pathway back to an embodied critical faculty that bridges the gap between thought and action that Arendt laments. In this way he illustrates the intercivilisational capacity to deepen and enrich the critical faculty by making room for Nandy's shaman and Deleuze and Guattari's (1994, p. 109) "people to come"[7].

#### 4. Heterotopia

Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia (Box 4) is a useful way to represent the creative potential immanent in the context being explored. It evokes the shadowy space inhabited by Nandy's (2007, p. 176) shaman, who lives permanently between categories. For futures thinking it operationalises the fragility of the present, flagging the possibility that things can change, have changed and will change in the future. Hetherington's (1997) work on modernity and its eighteenth and nineteenth century heterotopias demonstrates this admirably. He works with the utopic of space to demonstrate how ordering emerges from novel encounters between concepts and sites. Such intersections channel the creative energy of periods into social forms and human aspirations. Through an analysis of sites such as the Palais Royal and the Factory the fluidity of social ordering – relationships of power, pleasure, desire and promise – become clear. These sites he calls "utopic", a term he borrows from Marin (1990), and defines as "a spatial play on the theme of utopia" (Hetherington, 1997, p. 10). At the heart of this idea lies the necessary tension to drive change. Hetherington (1997, p. 11) sees such a tension lying in Marin's reading of the word utopia itself:

This term, which [Marin] derives from a deconstructive reading of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1985), is associated with the ambivalence ... contained in the original word utopia, which for Thomas More referred to both *ou-topia* meaning no place and *eu-topia* meaning good place. For Marin, who is neither concerned with *ou-topia* or *eu-topia* directly but the gap between them, a space that he calls the neutral, this deferral expresses the utopian idea as a process of spatial ordering and disordering that tries to close the gap. Marin's neutral ... I shall argue ... is also Foucault's heterotopia[8].

The point for Hetherington (1997, p. 11) is that modernity is built paradoxically around the tension between freedom and order. Both are situated sets of "social performance" that interface in specific sites. Such sites can be physical, like the Palais Royal, or ideal, like the generic factory. Yet both have a spatialised quality that contain "like laboratories ... new ways of experimenting with ordering society" (Hetherington, 1997, p. 13). Furthermore, the transgressive nature of heterotopia, its creative potential, lies in the fact that it represents "sites associated with alternate modes of social ordering ... They are spaces, defined as Other ... " (Hetherington, 1997, p. 12).

Futures studies can be read as a heterotopic site capable of hosting contesting visions such as the empirical, the cultural, the critical and the holistic. It is in this way simultaneously able

#### Box 4. Heterotopia

Sites of alternate modes of social ordering; identifies tension and paradox; operationalises fragility; Utopic in nature.

The question then: What do heterotopias tell us about us?

to offer dramatically divergent sets of epistemological order. That futures studies can function as such indicates that the neutral quality that Hetherington and Marin associate with heterotopia as a site where all corners are allowed, and where the hybridity of encounter can occur, is clearly a necessary condition for creative futures thinking.

## 5. Immanence

The concept of immanence (Box 5) accounts for the multiple in the moment which we read as reality. As context is usually experienced as monolithic this is a useful antidote to despair and a stimulus for creative engagement with the forces that produce, and have a deep stake, in the dominant order. Thus it furthers the heterotopic potential of futures thinking. It does so in two ways. First, drawing on the critical work of Theodor Adorno, who pursued the immanent in the dialectic that produces reality, it is possible to find the Other or shaman, the inversion of the real, the rational, in any social context.

This inversion Adorno describes as the result of the “negative dialectical” potentiality of any context. Such a dialectic is described by O’Connor (2000, p. 57) as “the consistent sense of nonidentity” *vis-à-vis* the whole. This concept gave the title to Adorno’s (1973) book of that name and formed his most sustained exploration of immanence as the creative presence of inversion (dialectic) in the social field (Adorno, 2000, p. 115). It is ably employed today in the work of the Israeli critical theorist and educator Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, who argues for a reformulation of Adorno’s negative dialectics as an “ethical experience [which] can offer transcendence, responsibility, and meaning, even if only dialectically, temporarily and with no total and eternal salvation” (Gur Ze’ev, 2003, p. 14)[9].

Second, the concept of immanence provides another entry point into the praxis of futures thinking. Praxis, as a “space” between theory and practice, implies, as Freire (1972) noted years ago, the intersection of both the individual and a context. This context is the immanent process context of heterotopia and is both internal – shaped by the conceptual and emotional networks that are the individual’s source of meaning – and physical, being a context in a culture, a time and amongst institutions. Praxis demands of the practitioner a grounded and pragmatic approach to all teaching contexts (Lather, 1986). Thus Inayatullah, as Ramos (2003, p. 50) notes, has developed CLA as a form of social pedagogy precisely because of his “practise orientation”.

Adorno’s work pushes such praxis into the critically epistemological domain because he acknowledges “the immanent nature of consciousness” (O’Connor, 2000, p. 57) as a precondition for action. O’Connor (2000, p. 55) points out that such a shift disconcerted many of his contemporary Marxists who sought to situate praxis as a purely political intervention. Adorno’s placing of praxis in an immanent context foreshadowed the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 40), who focus extensively on the prephilosophical nature of immanence as a plane of potentiality. Immanence, in the Deleuzean sense, implies both the possibility of inversion and the ground on which any philosophising occurs. May (1994, p. 36) thus acknowledges that Deleuze’s planes of immanence “indicate that there is no source beneath or beyond the plane that can be considered its hidden principle”.

Returning to Nandy’s metaphor of the shaman it is possible to see the immanent in the moment and thus allow that beyond strategic self interest there is presence and spirit (Senge *et al.*, 2004). It is not enough to predict an outcome, an event or even a possibility. What is central to this kind of “shamanic” futures thinking is subjective openness to possibility and the realisation, in both individuals and collectivities, that hope can be strategic and that ability to respond to change is more lasting when it is affective instead of strategic (Zournazi, 2003).

### Box 5. Immanence

Process of the multiple embedded in the singular; plane of potentiality; prephilosophical; process context for heterotopia.

We need to ask, What is present in context that moves us beyond strategic self interest?

Immanence enriches futures thinking by positing the possibility for inversion present in any moment. This is a source of hope but also a summons to engage the present as a field of being that is shamanically alive to alternate trajectories.

## 6. Hybridity

Hybridity (Box 6) is the result of encounter between heterogeneous processes and formations. It has been of interest to a range of poststructural and futures thinkers such as Serres and Latour (1995), Latour (1991)[10], Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Judge (2008b), Saniotis (2007). Hybridity offers framework for thinking about the creative process that accounts for cross over, transgression and emergence. As such, it is a witness to what Foucault called those “dangerous coagulations”[11] (Baker and Heyning, 2004) that have the ability to combine and recombine the possible. In this way we encounter in a shamanic futures space epistemological hybrids that transgress disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

Sensitivity to hybridity makes the present remarkable in that it abounds in hybrid novelty. Thus it reveals the cultural processes that determine the experiential dimension that frames agency and determines the focus of shamanic inquiry. The field of futures studies through its intercivilisational awareness fosters hybridity and affirms the layered, multiple and “coagulated” space of the life world. Furthermore, hybridity is of great import to any reflection on the social, and on our ability to transform what Gough and Price (2004) call the “it-ourselves” category[12]. Such an approach implies:

... that “things” exist in a real sense but are neither the same as each other nor are they strongly separate, rather they are “mutually” constituted, distinguishable but not strongly dichotomised. Despite its ontological realism, this approach also assumes epistemological relativism; how we come to know reality is fallible, always in process and dependent on who is looking and the spatio-temporal context (Gough and Price, 2004, p. 27).

This link between ontological realism (this is real for me within the discursive context of my meaning making) and epistemological relativism (my way of knowing is grounded in my history, culture and subjectivity as is yours and they are different) is key to the it-ourselves consciousness that hybridity alerts us to. This is another modulation of the agency-structure, difference-repetition[13] motif that dominates not just futures thinking but much of the philosophical thought of the twentieth century on the nature of personal transformation and social change. The response of shamanic futures thinking is to focus on context: both the forces shaping it and the actors invested in it.

## Conclusion

These six “shamanic” concepts futures augment Inayatullah’s (2008) trio of six pillars, questions and concepts. They have wide application and sensitise futures practitioners to the non-tangible dimension of futures work. They are shamanic in that they alert us to the relational dimension of futures thinking in which the other, that which stands beyond the dominant frame of reference (Nandy, 2007, p. 179ff), is central to a rethinking of the present. The emphasis is on process as a defining function of the between, the functional space between individual and structure, and though this is distributed unevenly throughout the six concepts – geophilosophy and heterotopia are less dynamic than the rhizome, intercivilisational dialogue, immanence, and hybridity – all have import for understanding how transformative praxis can be engaged and new categories for opening up the future developed and deployed.

### Box 6. Hybridity

Bears witness to the creative possibilities of heterotopia, immanence, intercivilisational and transdisciplinary dialogue; product of rhizomic processes; inhabits context.

Salient questions are: How can we affirm the new, hybrid arrangements that emerge? How can we move beyond fear? How can we see ourselves as hybrids?

## Notes

1. Tony Judge's work on the powerful nature of the prefix helps our understanding of the process nature of meaning production. Thus he notes "A useful indicator . . . is offered by the pattern of prefixes in English and the manner in which they influence the appreciation of what is considered appropriate" (Judge, 2008a)
2. In this is similar to Castoriadis' (1997, p. 185) "logical fibres" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that produce a "fantastic logic" and lead us beyond words.
3. This is important because there is a degree of reification in the concept of discourse that tends toward a passive reading of the term. The rhizome brings dynamicity to the concept without in anyway detracting from its inherent insight into social praxis.
4. These authors note: "These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 9). For Deleuze and Guattari the rhizome is the most effective analogy for defining the creative potentiality of social space – the life-world. As the world has globalised so it has drawn more divergent material into its pool of potentiality. Each is a line of flight, something deterritorialised (removed from its endemic context) and reterritorialised (naturalised in a new context). This "organic" conceptualisation of system allows for flux, surprise and creative emergence while recognising the limits of knowledge and the strategic.
5. It should be noted that if we were to follow Levinas on this the other is ethically more important.
6. The use of the word dialogue, of course, evokes the work of Buber (1970). This has been developed as a form of political action by Israeli critical existentialist Haim Gordon who has worked for many years with groups of Israelis and Palestinians seeking to locate, inhabit and maintain an accepting dialogical space (Gordon, 1986).
7. They see these future people as immanent in the social, cultural and psychic structures of the present – They are "becoming-people": "The people is internal to the thinker because it is a "becoming-people," just as the thinker is internal to the people as no less unlimited becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 109). This is fascinating in that it alerts us to a becoming-critical that is immanent and embodied like Giri's definition of criticism as "life itself."
8. It is interesting to note that what Hetherington and Marin see as a neutral space of between-ness is for Foucault and Deleuze the space of creative ferment where existence is far from neutral in nature.
9. Gur-Ze'ev's (1994) wording here is remarkably similar to Deleuze's when describing the immanent ethical dimension of transcendental empiricism.
10. What Latour (1991, p. 30) sees as the tension at the heart of modernity is a paradox: "Here lies the entire modern paradox. If we consider hybrids, we are dealing only with mixtures of nature and culture; if we consider the work of purification, we confront a total separation between nature and culture".  
So, for Latour hybrids are what constitute our social reality: we as human cultural products are the product of the eternal play between physical reality and our semiotic structures; hybrids are the chimeras that populate this shadowy world of process. Thus he asserts: "Now hybrids, monsters . . . are just about everything; they compose not only our collectives but also the others, illegitimately called premodern" (Latour, 1991, p. 47). In this context he is able to argue that all human culture – the illegitimately modern/premodern - is an expression of hybridity.
11. Foucault observes: "disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies of elements to be distributed. One must eliminate (i.e. purify) the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusual and dangerous coagulations . . ." (Baker and Heyning, 2004, p. 4).
12. It should be acknowledged that the category ruptures that the issue of hybridity represents pose interesting theoretical challenges; not least because they can seduce us into superficial borrowings from traditions without deep reflection on the nature of our social and psychological being. We can fall victim to a metaphorical conflation in which the genius of the machine-metaphor of the assemblage proposed by Deleuze and Guattari can ease us into a playful, comfortable, mischief making without really engaging the deep problems of the world and the civilisational and transdisciplinary dialogue such problems demand.
13. Another such dichotomy is Heidegger's being-time.

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### Corresponding author

Marcus Bussey can be contacted at: [mbussey@usc.edu.au](mailto:mbussey@usc.edu.au)

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