## Causal Layered Analysis

## Futures module

Causal Layered Analysis (also known as the Iceberg Model) is a tool for exploring complex challenges by examining them at multiple depths—from surface events to the underlying beliefs that shape them.

In your group, use the canvas to explore the different underlying causes of your focal societal challenge.

Time: 20 minutes

**Events** This is the surface layer - what you

> can **see, hear, or experience**. Events are the **visible symptoms** of the challenge: news stories, public reactions, or lived

**Patterns** At this level, look for **repeated** behaviors or trends over time.

experiences.

Patterns show that the challenge isn't just a one-time event, but part of a longer-term dynamic.

**Structures** These are the **systems and** institutions that shape how things work - often invisible but powerful.

> Structures include laws, policies, technologies, economic models, organizational norms, and decision-making processes.

**Mental models** This is the deepest layer: the beliefs, values, and assumptions that people or societies hold.

> The mental models **shape the** structures, which then create patterns and lead to visible events.

Depopulation example

I am prioritising doing well in my things I want to do before I have

**Example:** education, career and doing all the children.

**PATTERNS** 

**EVENTS** 

What's happening right now?

What events or situations

are directly connected to this

challenge?

Has this happened before?

What keeps repeating across time, people, or places?

**Example:** 

People are having children later in life than they used to.

**STRUCTURES** 

What systems are enabling these patterns and events?

What roles do policies, infrastructures, or power dynamics play?

MENTAL MODELS

What assumptions or worldviews are driving the system?

What cultural beliefs are keeping things the way they are?

**Example:** There is limited financial and social support for families which places a big burden on parents e.g. parents paying for private kindergarden.

> Individualism - the responsibility of raising children is predominantly up to

**Example:** 

parents.











