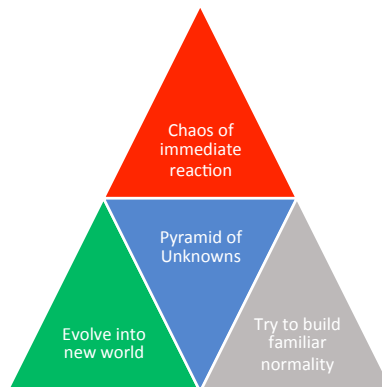


POST COVID-19 WORLD DYNAMICS AND WHAT NEXT FOR CONSERVATION



COVID-19 has completely re-set familiar political, social and economic conditions. Every activity in every country has been touched. The pandemic has triggered a Pyramid of Unknowns based on three conditions. These revolve first around chaos, as countries, governments, businesses and people react to the immediate shock of COVID-19. The second focuses on attempts to rebuild a familiar normality. The third points towards a difficult new world where change is constant as fresh challenges from climate and humankind test every aspect of life. Great danger lies within this Pyramid, but so does opportunity.

Some political, social and economic entities will remain trapped in the chaos of the immediate reaction. Others will find comfort, temporary or otherwise, in trying to build a familiar normality. Some will adapt more quickly, evolving into the new world by recognising the opportunities. The pace and nature of change will differ within countries, businesses and traditional alliances. New champions will emerge as old orders decline. Uncertainty and increased risk will inevitably become normal. The post-colonial model for Conservation was failing before the pandemic. It now faces even more complex challenges.

The ways and means by which government, business and people act will also change fundamentally. Smaller and more agile structures that are network-enabled will become more effective in the new world order while top-heavy institutions and bureaucracy are increasingly redundant. Conservation will be no different as this applies to non-profit, foreign-led organisations with high overheads.

Managing such change is a challenge in itself given the risks and uncertainties. The Military has much to offer in this context having developed the capability to operate in extreme environments where unknowns are normal and 'no plan survives first contact with the enemy'. COIGNE (Community Oriented Investment Generating New Enterprise) has adapted and applied two core military processes that provide increased clarity and rigour to counter unseen shock. First is **Outcome Analysis**, a foundation process to understand 'what is to be achieved and why'. In this new world, objectives change over time or in circumstances that force change. This in turn demands a continuous review of more subjective, uncertain and unquantifiable factors that pose unexpected risk. Consistent and familiar assumptions will become rare. Outcome Analysis is a continuous process to reassess tasks, resources, boundary conditions and accountability – designed to anticipate unknowns and mitigate shocks.

The output of Outcome Analysis is delivered by the **Leadership Framework**. This the second core process, where people understand their role within a higher intent. They are empowered to act quickly and purposefully in change and uncertainty because accountability has already been delegated to those best placed to act. In a world that has been so long driven by data analysis, these

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two COIGNE processes are more applicable and complementary than ever. They have been tried, tested and found vital in extreme uncertainty.

To give an example, after the Bosnian war in 1996, the NATO peace enforcement mission required a different approach. The country was in ruins and tension was boiling between communities. **Outcome Analysis** revealed the need for quick implementation of a series of inter-connected projects to restore businesses and promote social cohesion. The aim was to create a durable peace. This clear outcome allowed soldiers to interpret what local community needs were greatest and deliver projects in support of the overall intent, without reference to higher levels. The **Leadership Framework** empowered teamwork and produced imaginative and radical actions at high tempo while providing overall accountability. The processes applied challenged traditional military thinking yet delivered rapid, measurable success.

What does this mean for conservation and are such processes valid? COVID-19 has accelerated the decline of wildlife conservation. Using Outcome Analysis on post pandemic conservation, it points to a significant reduction in funding as the Western Aid Nations and High Net Worth Individuals look inwards due to economic challenges. Furthermore, large foreign-led NGOs are increasingly absent, ineffective and distrusted. In parallel, there is a lower demand for raw materials with a subsequent decrease in government revenue, leading to more unemployment and inequality. Despite many successful and localised conservation projects, these remain largely uncoordinated as people coalesce around communities for sanctuary. It is clear that the post-colonial conservation model is broken, indigenous communities are largely excluded and there is a duty to fill the void.

Outcome Analysis indicates clearly that conservation needs to be durable to withstand shocks with local communities taking control of their environment. This inverts the pre-existing global conservation model. The COIGNE model does this with commercial community investment based on a **Regional Saturation Strategy**. Entering the target market with a scale and capability to gain influence, communities can now engage with national players from a position of advantage – bypassing normal conservation, commercial and NGO protocols and practices. The aim is to rollout COIGNE by country, and then saturate regionally with an interconnected portfolio of community-based projects (350+) based on scalability and commercial potential for both communities and governments. There are no donations, self-perpetuating protectionist cabals or competing interests. Most community-led enterprises will prosper although some will fail. The challenge for communities and governments alike is to demonstrate that Africa can leapfrog forward from this pandemic given their valuable natural resources, willingness to grasp new technology and young entrepreneurial population with strong tribal bonds.

Some will doubt whether any of this is achievable. The Leadership Framework provides the governance and transparency to deliver projects by identifying and mitigating against malpractice and corruption. It reinforces the opportunities for communities and governments to maximise strengths where their mutual interests intersect. COIGNE monitors and measures delivery as well as manages stakeholder expectations. It provides commercial oversight and, using Outcome Analysis, identifies the faint signals that begin to unmask new unknowns and potential shocks.

The Pyramid of Unknowns is here to stay with its associated risks. With uncertainty comes opportunity. Post COVID-19, it is time for Conservation to shed the shackles of 'good causes' with African communities taking control of their environments, harnessing natural capital assets and making conservation durable. This is a commercial activity where philanthropy remains welcome and needed. But the onus lies with indigenous people to keep profits local and build wildlife-enabled economies at scale.