

## **CONCEPTUAL LENSES** (USP Senior Sequence, Pezzoli 2008)

*Examples of narrative devices (conceptual lenses) you could use to frame your study*

- Integration (knowledge management, transdisciplinarity, epistemic cultures, PSS/ DSS)
- Science communication (research translation, science-society linkages)
- Globalism (grand challenges—regionalization of MD Goals, transborder comparative frames of reference)
- Diversity and Justice (challenges of multiculturalism, demographic shifts)
- Governance (planning theory re civic engagement, power and democracy)
- Networks and flows (network theory, public policy networks, new forms of social activism)
- Social Change (planning strategies re advocacy, social movements, activist networks)
- Innovation (source of, process, collaborative models)
- Sustainability (the three E's economics, equity, environment)
- Imagination (role of story/narrative in planning, framing)

### **Research writing is a bit like story telling: Using narrative devices.**

- Research story telling has a narrative structure based on evidence and concepts (arranged in ways that meet accepted scientific standards). As a story, you might try and think first of all what kind of story you want to tell. Is it a story about entrepreneurialism, innovation, empowerment, science communication, environmental justice, sustainability. These are broad brush categories. A good story depends on a meaningful narrative that is digestible (not jam packed with too many characters, moving parts, ideas, etc). So you want to think of a lens that can help guide your approach to research and writing. Below I list just three examples:

#### 1. Entrepreneurialism

- You have identified a really neat case study where good things are happening –e.g., a new approach to environmental planning. Now what? You know it is very difficult to break out of the inertia of mainstream planning. Innovation is difficult. One way to think about your project is as a process of innovative planning that involves a union of social and technical elements. But how does this work? For instance, in the case of the innovative approach to Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Planning, who put together that approach? It involved novel collaboration arrangements among competing interests. Who advocates this type of planning? why? how? Often you will find an individual or group of individuals that are the driving, charismatic force behind the new approach. But there is more to it than that. De-personalize it. Can your case be characterized as innovative entrepreneurial planning for sustainability? Does it measure up as some kind of new model? What lessons are those engaged in its advocacy learning about the barriers and bridges to planning of this sort?

#### 2. Framing

- You might look at how your study involves “framing.” This goes beyond how the principle players pitch their project to important stakeholders. You can examine their criteria to justify the project in social, economic and ecological terms. There may be a new metrics at work (e.e., ecological economics, sustainability indicators, new ways of thinking about risk and regional security). There is a growing literature on the significance of framing in the context of science communication and in the linking of knowledge to action. A good place to start for info on this see: [http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org/projects/strategic/simple\\_framing](http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org/projects/strategic/simple_framing)

### 3. Integration.

- See the attached diagram ([Information Integration diagram, click here](#)). Integration—for instance, across agencies, disciplines, scales, etc.—is a major challenge in many projects. In the project you are investigating, what is the strategy for integration? (e.g., for relating science, technology, regulations, plans, business, etc.)? Those who do science and technology studies often use the concept of socio-technical systems. When trying to deal with complicated problems from a planning perspective, the integrated concept of socio-technical systems is useful. Much effort is spent trying to integrate new science (e.g., new biology and integrated understanding of coupled human-nature ecosystems) with the practical realities of our socio-cultural, and legal-institutional realms. This can be a useful way to organize the larger narrative structure of your research story.

### Four Traditions of Planning Theory

You may also find it useful to think in terms of the four traditions of planning theory.

Understanding the difference between these traditions may help you decide on how to approach the question/issue you have in mind.

A summary of Friedmann's work by Roseland (2000, 89)

**1. Social reform:** includes the disciplines of sociology, institutional economics, and pragmatism. It recognizes the state as the vehicle of social action. Planning is a scientific endeavor to make state action more effective. The economy can be adjusted to serve representative needs through business-cycle analysis, input/output analysis, economic policy models, and others.

**2. Policy analysis:** includes the disciplines of systems analysis, welfare and social choice, and policy science. It concentrates on decision making as a means of identifying the best possible courses of social action. Planning is a decision process which emphasizes stages that begin with the identification of goals that will structure the decision and ends with program analysis, which evaluates the correctness of the decision. This is the rational model participated in by technical planners who view themselves as social engineers serving the existing power base.

**3. Social learning:** includes the field of organization development. It is an effort to minimize the contradictions between what we know and how we act. Planning attempts through social experimentation to change social behaviour. This is accomplished by doing: knowledge is validated practice, and theory is enriched from lessons learned from experience. Planners and client actors are involved in nonhierarchical exchanges of information to further learning.

**4. Social mobilization:** includes neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt School (of critical theory), and a category Friedmann calls utopians, social anarchists, and radicals. It is a view of the primacy of action from below. Planning is a political activity which attempts to change the status quo of oppression and alienation under capitalism. Social mobilization emphasizes the politics of disengagement and confrontation. The planner's role is one of community organization, advocacy presentation and interpretation of data, and representation within and cooptation of the decision-making process.