Graphical Narrative™

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Abstract

Graphical Narrative™ turns stories or accounts into appropriate diagrams — e.g. situations (RBP); courses of action (CPD); plots (DCD) — and thus facilitates the understanding of dynamic structure, function, causality, *inter alia*, which provides a richer experience with the narrative.

1 Professional value

Stories — from mythology to literature, to news features — narrate action: they contain actors and passive elements, and often communicate 'states' of interest, such as to 'what happened in the end'. Writing or telling a story is an *art* but, curiously, involves much 'hidden' structure about systems, processes, and intents — often expressed in the form of plans. For an effective communication, at least in a technical context, all this must be made visible and shared widely.

To attain good understanding of narratives (e.g. regarding relations and causality), Storytelling Maps™ turn stories or accounts — commonly of descriptive nature — into appropriate and complementary structured diagrams: *situations* ('element–relationship'), *processes* ('action–state'), and *plans* ('concern–intent–action–outcome').

2 Workflow

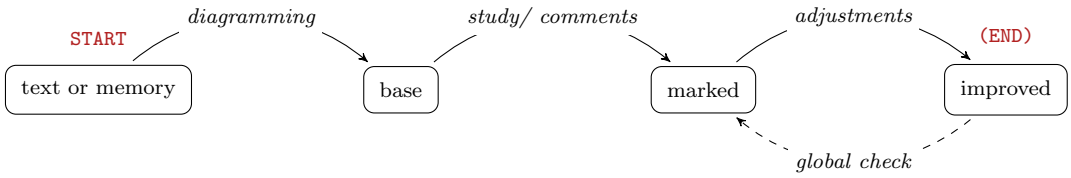

FIGURE 1 The work to be carried out over four (4) hours; a number of 'loop' iterations may be necessary to achieve a satisfactory model (RBP, CPD, DCD)

3 Programme

Introduction (1.5h)

- The objects of interest: situations, processes, plans (Figure 2)
- Exploring the narrative; initial model (RBP, CPD, DCD)
- Study, simulation/ check, iterations

Work Session (4h)

- Work in groups (2–4 people)
- Interactive assistance

Presentation, Discussion, and Conclusion (2h)

- Shared experiences
- Applicability issues

4 Technical notes

Audience

- *Journalists*
- *Novelists*
- *Essayists*
- *Teachers*

Competences

- Identify and get to know elements of interest (e.g. 'indicators')
- Identify and get to know causal relationships between elements
- Distinguish between causal and computational relationships (e.g. in 'indices')
- Think clearly and explain how some elements may affect others
- Register and communicate this efficiently
- Identify information in existing documents regarding causal explanations
- Identify where action takes place in the system
- Think of the limits or boundaries of the system (e.g. 'closed' or 'open' type)
- Start thinking of 'special' elements (e.g. as points of concern or intervention)
- Think how to structure a problem (e.g. 'XYZ' format)
- Identify the tasks and stages of a process (e.g. along a timeline)

Techniques[a]

- Text mark-up — $\text{TMU}_{[\text{T}]}$
- Reverse blueprints — $\text{RBP}_{[\text{T}]}$ (Figure 2)
- Concise process diagrams — $\text{CPD}_{[\text{T}]}$ (Figure 3)
- Descriptive causal diagrams — $\text{DCD}_{[\text{T}]}$ (Figure 4)

Methods[b]

- Qualitative simulation — $\text{QSM}_{[\text{M}]}$ (Figure 5)

[a] v. Perdicoúlis, 2014a
[b] v. Perdicoúlis, 2014b

5 Protocols

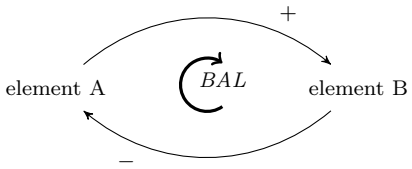

FIGURE 2 Generic Reverse Blueprint (RBP) representing a *balancing* feedback loop

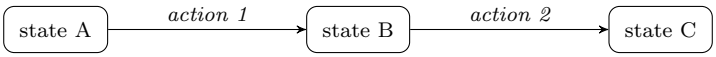

FIGURE 3 Generic Concise Process Diagram (CPD)

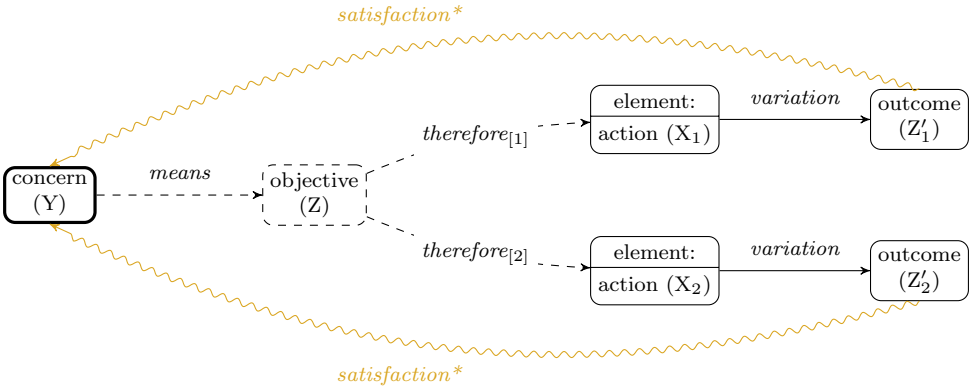

FIGURE 4 Generic Descriptive Causal Diagram (DCD); feedback and assessment in gold

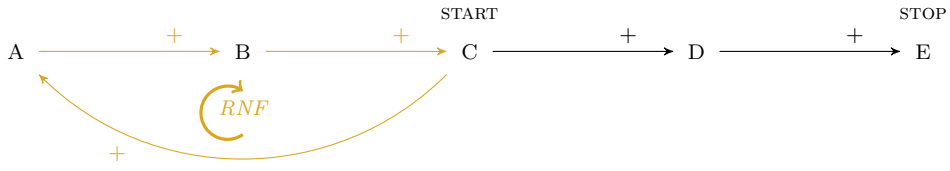

FIGURE 5 Qualitative simulation on an RBP: starting at element C will only stop at element E, but also involves a reinforcing feedback loop (marked in Gold)

6 Materials and preparation

Case-study/ Work material Participants are welcome to bring their own support material (e.g. stories, accounts) in (human) memory or documentation (e.g. digital or printed media).

Software Diagramming can be carried out manually, with pencil and paper. Optionally, participants are welcome to use their own diagramming software, such as *Graphviz*, *LibreOffice Draw*, *OmniGraffle*, or *Visio*.

Stencils

Perdicoulis, A. (2011d) *OmniGraffle* stencil for CPD [`.graffle`]
Perdicoulis, A. (2011c) *OmniGraffle* stencil for DCD [`.graffle`]
Perdicoulis, A. (2011b) *OmniGraffle* stencil for RBP [`.graffle`]
Perdicoulis, A. (2011a) *Graphviz* node-and-edge starter file [`.dot`]

References

Perdicoúlis, A. (2014b) *Methodology*. Perdicoulis Publishing: Folio Division, Technical Collection.

Perdicoúlis, A. (2014a) *Language*. Perdicoulis Publishing: Folio Division, Technical Collection.

Perdicoulis, A. (2016) The Fox and the Grapes. *Fables*, **3**.

Perdicoulis, A. (2014) The Spendthrift and the Swallow. *Fables*, **2**.

Perdicoulis, A. (2011) Application Manual for 'Systems Thinking and Decision Making in Urban and Environmental Planning'. *Systems Planner*, **2**.

Perdicoúlis, A. (2010) *Systems Thinking and Decision Making in Urban and Environmental Planning*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.