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.

Overt Storytelling™ — the art of expository modelling — seeks understanding of structure and function in narratives (e.g. regarding relations and causality), and the resulting Storytelling Maps™ (e.g. RBP, CPD, DCD) 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

![Workflow diagram](image)

*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 (1H)**
- 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 (1H)**
- Shared experiences
- Applicability issues

4 Technical notes

**METHODS**
- Qualitative simulation — QSM[M] (Figure 5)

**TECHNIQUES**
- Text mark-up — TMU[T]
- Reverse blueprints — RBP[T] (Figure 2)
- Concise process diagrams — CPD[T] (Figure 3)
- Descriptive causal diagrams — DCD[T] (Figure 4)

**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)

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*a* v. Perdicoúlis, 2014b
*b* v. Perdicoúlis, 2014a
*c* Required to some extent; to be reinforced in the workshop
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 should bring their own material (e.g. stories, accounts) in (human) memory or documentation (e.g. digital or printed media).

**Software** Systems Planning diagramming can be carried out manually, with pencil and paper. Optionally, participants are welcome to use their own diagramming software, such as *Graphviz*[^1], *LibreOffice Draw*, *OmniGraffle*[^2], or *Visio*.

References and further reading


[^1]: v. starter file (Perdicoúlis, 2011b)
[^2]: v. stencils (Perdicoúlis, 2011c,d,e)