



Lecture 5: Civic Ecology Praxis

Episode 1: Collaborative Inquiry

Prof. Vicente Lopes
Professor of Environmental Studies
Texas State University, USA

 Universität Bremen

ZMML
Zentrum für Multimedia
in der Lehre

DBU 

Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt





Introduction

“Our planet is so diverse, from all points of view, that its problems can be tackled effectively only by dealing with them at the regional level, in their unique physical, climatic and cultural contexts.”

- Rene Dubos, Celebrations of Life (1981)



Overview of the Lecture

Episode 1: Collaborative Inquiry

Episode 2: Adaptive Management

Episode 3: Case Study



Learning Outcomes

- The relevance of methodological pluralism in civic ecology praxis
- Civic ecology's approach to developing connected understanding and action
- A collaborative approach to inquiry



Structure of Episode 1

1. Foundation of Civic Ecology Praxis
2. Learning Through Collaborative Inquiry
3. Conclusion



Proposition (1)

- Human and natural systems exist as interdependent co-evolving social-ecological systems with complex interactions between human decisions and ecosystem functioning.
- Because of these linkages, human-environment systems are more than merely the sum of their parts, but rather Gestalt systems whose nature and structure is defined by the interactions between its components.
- Humans are an integral part of nature - human and natural systems are interlinked and cannot be managed separately.



Proposition (1)

Traditional management sciences divorce users from management:

- Stakeholders not involved in analysis and decision-making;
- Management strategies based on land capability rather than on the capacities and needs of people.

Management strategies based on partial perspectives of scientific disciplines; lack of a framework for integration.



Proposition (2)

Successful transitioning to a sustainable trajectory rests on three capacities of human systems:

- Collaborative inquiry
- Adaptive management
- Transformative change



Civic Ecology Praxis

- Civic ecology praxis is a multi-perspectival process incorporating methodological pluralism, collaborative inquiry and adaptive management to promote social change and connected action.
- **Methodological pluralism** is the view that different methodologies are necessary to attain a more complete understanding of the world.
- **Collaborative inquiry** is a participatory, democratic process concerned with bringing together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others (Source: Reason & Bradbury 2006).
- **Adaptive management** is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs (Source: Armitage et al. 2008).



Methodological Pluralism

- Methodological pluralism has its philosophical foundation in “constructivism,” which holds that “realities” are constructions of the human minds that represent the outside world.
- People with different experiences may very well construct different visions of reality.
- Thus, there are many ways of knowing or gathering knowledge about human and natural systems, including both traditional and scientific approaches.



Methodological Pluralism

- Because all forms of knowledge are context-dependent, they are partial; that is, no one understanding is complete.
- An exclusive method applied widely will impoverish our vision of reality and exclude alternative solutions that may be more relevant in a given context.
 - Different kinds of knowledge are needed to address complex human-environment relations.
 - Identification of needs and decision-making requires collaborative learning and participation - those most affected by a decision should have the most say.
- Civic ecology praxis builds upon this view.



Collaborative Inquiry

- Collaborative inquiry was designed by John Heron (1996) and later expanded with Peter Reason (Source: Reason & Bradbury 2006).
- Collaborative inquiry is way of working with other people who have similar concerns and interests, in order to:
 - Understand their world, make sense of their lives and develop new and creative ways of looking at things.
 - Learn how to act to change things they may want to change and find out how to do things better.



Collaborative Inquiry

In traditional social research, the roles of researchers and subjects are mutually exclusive:

- Researchers only contribute the thinking that goes into the project, and the subjects only contribute the action to be studied.
- Decisions are made on behalf of subjects who are rarely consulted and often boycott these decisions as they do not see them as relevant and useful...



Collaborative Inquiry

- In collaborative inquiry, all active subjects are fully involved as co-researchers in all research decisions regarding to both content and method.

All participants:

- Are involved in the design and management of the inquiry.
- Get into the experience and action that is being explored.
- Are involved in making sense and drawing conclusions.
- Can take initiative and exert influence on the process.





Collaborative Inquiry

- Knowledge is a living, evolving process of coming to know rooted in everyday experience
- We draw on at least four interdependent ways (forms of knowing) as we encounter and act in the world.





Collaborative Inquiry

Experiential knowing

Knowing that emerges through direct face-to-face encounter with person, place or thing; it is knowing through empathy and resonance, and is almost impossible to put into words.

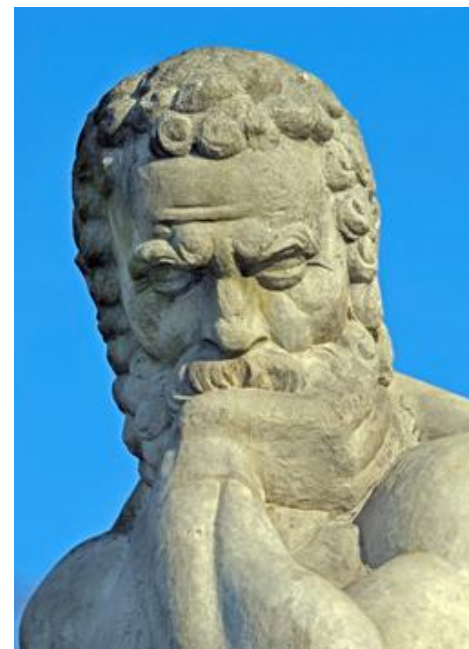




Collaborative Inquiry

Presentational knowing

- Knowing that emerges from experiential knowing, and provides the first form of expression by drawing on expressive forms of imagery through story, drawing, sculpture, movement, dance and etc.
- Metaphoric or aesthetic imagery clothing experiential knowing.





Collaborative Inquiry

Propositional knowing

- Knowing that is expressed through ideas and theories (in conceptual terms) expressed in informative statements.
- Which theory or theories resonate the best with the problem?
- Which methodology would suit it well?





Collaborative Inquiry

Practical knowing

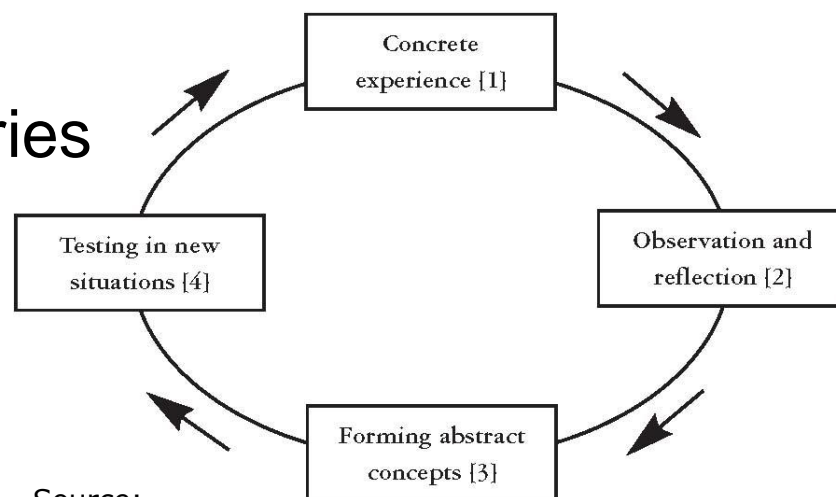
Knowing acquired through action in the world (demonstrated in a skill or competence).





Collaborative Inquiry

- In collaborative inquiry, knowing will be more valid if these four ways of knowing are congruent with each other (combine together)
- (i.e., knowing that is grounded in experience, expressed through stories and images, understood through theories which make sense, and expressed in worthwhile action).



Source:
http://www.frontiersjournal.com/issues/vol8/vol8-08_montrose.htm



Collaborative Inquiry

Phases (Heron & Reason):

- 1) Reflection phase** – involving propositional (conceptual) knowing.
- 2) First action phase** – involving practical knowing.
- 3) Second action phase** – results from phase (2) can lead to new understanding. This phase involves primarily experiential (face-to-face) knowing.
- 4) Second reflection phase** – reflection of experiences and the data collected in phases (2) and (3) may re-frame the original ideas (phase 1). This phase involves primarily presentational knowing.



Collaborative Inquiry

Relevance to civic ecology praxis:

- Research and development reflect the different views and objectives of local stakeholders.
- Focusing on the interactions of humans with each other and with their natural environment rather than exclusively on natural resources.
- Stakeholders become experts, instead of being mere receivers of expert opinion.



Collaborative Inquiry

Relevance to civic ecology praxis:

- Stakeholders included in all phases of the management process.
- Decisions achieved through a dialectic process involving all stakeholders.
- Experimental results interpreted through interactions and owned by stakeholders.



Collaborative Inquiry

Challenges:

- Stakeholders need to embrace a collaborative dialectic process of decision making, experimentation and evaluation.
- Scientists, local officials and stakeholders must all be willing to learn skills outside their area of expertise.
- New language must be developed to facilitate communication across disciplines and social backgrounds.
- Institutions must change modes of operation.



Conclusion

- Collaborative inquiry is about community, democracy and the natural world within which we exist and interact.
- Engaging people into active learning within communities of practice; thinking, acting and learning together, in order to:
 - Understand their world, make sense of their lives and develop new and creative ways of looking at things
 - Learning how to act to change things they may want to change and find out how to do things better.





Exercises for Self-Study

1. Why are natural resources collapsing in spite of the existence of a highly developed theory of resource management?
2. What three capacities of human systems are needed for a successful transition to a more just and sustainable society? Justify.
3. How does collaborative inquiry facilitate stakeholder participation and enhance decision making?