

Introduction to Narrative For Futures Studies

Vuokko Jarva
University of Helsinki
Finland

Abstract

This article is inspired by Michel Godet's recent comment about the gap between scenarios and action. In sections two to six I study narrative's dimensions as tool for filling the gap between anticipation and action. Finally I comment on the tellability of future and why narrative has great potential. I conclude with an emphasis the importance of taking into account the different views and languages of the copartners and close with the idea that, that futures studies should be deliberative, negotiation based, in order to bridge the gap.

Keywords: narrative, narrative influence, future narrative, story, storyworld, narrative discourse.

Introduction: filling the gap between scenarios and action

After working for more than three decades with scenarios in public administration, grassroots level and with students, there remains a pestering voice in my mind: what next? Most scenarios were buried in the archives of history and forgotten. They never incarnated in real world action. That's why the comments of Michel Godet, a pioneer of the French *la prospective* school of futures studies, caused a strong reaction in me. The point was sharpened with following quote:

“Even though I introduced methods into the field of futures studies, I think that scenarios are overdone. Making scenarios is fine, but so what? Once a scenario is drafted, what do we do to take action, to make whatever we want to happen or not to happen? We should really be turning them into a project-based approach. The tools should be used appropriately.” (Godet 2012, n.p.)¹

Godet points to the same problem I could not find a solution to: the gap between scenarios

and action. This problem concerns most other types of futures images. In the Futurist interview, from which the quote is taken, he concludes that: "Good forecasts are not those that occur but those that lead to action."

To fill the gap between scenarios and real world action, Godet extends the role of *the prospectivist* (or futurist) to cover entirely from the creation of scenaric future images to planning and action. Thus, the specialist should not leave copartners at the crossroads where the scenario is completed, but rather continue on towards the realization of the vision or the preventing of the threat.

The word method (Greek: μέθοδος) itself contains the metaphor of proceeding on a road. On this road, Godet (2012, n.p.) describes the role of *a prospectivist* to be a coach, who "provides rigorous techniques for collective thinking and decision making." Godet uses the term construct or build in reference to the futurework on this road.

Godet proposes a participatory approach in creating scenarios and complains that "Many people reject methods because they don't understand them." His message is to make methods understandable through the participation of the stakeholders as partners in the project. For Michel Godet, this is nothing new. Already in his 1994 English version of "From anticipation to action. A handbook of strategic prospective" he presented "the Greek triangle" where rational anticipation gives expression to prospective thought or rationality, "passion" or strategic will activates motivation and appropriation as ones own—or collective—goals leads to action. The emphasis is on the collective mobilization. (Godet 1994, pp. 3-4)

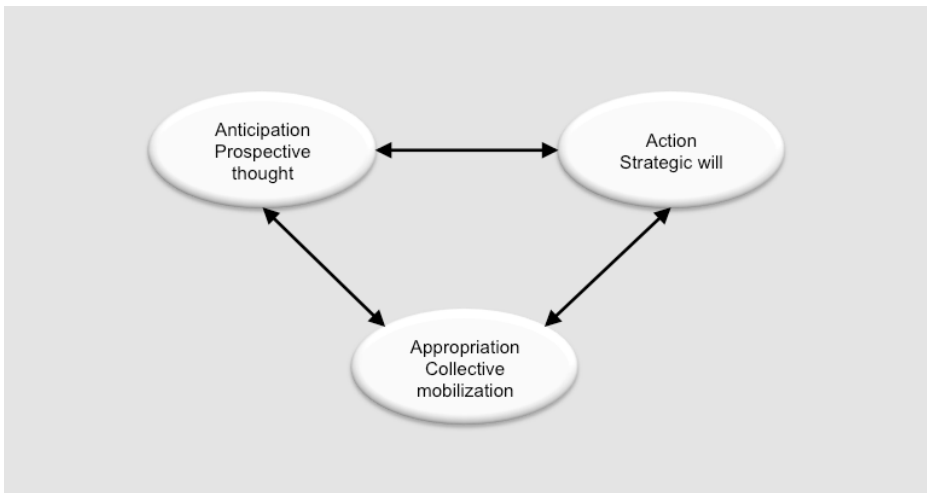


Figure 1. The Greek triangle: prospective gives content and direction to collective mobilization. (Godet, 1994, p. 4)

Godet's three pillars of *la prospective* become: participation of the copartners, futures specialist's (*prospectivist's*) participation extended to planning and real world action, and his/her role as a coach. As a coach futures specialists provide futures theory and methodology, as well as facilitate and participate in the process. Godet's extensive idea of futures specialist also requires their skills in the planning and real world action stages. (Godet, 1994, pp. 1-6)

In this article I examine how the narrative approach can help in realizing these

three pillars. In section two I discuss the characteristics of narrative as presentation, and provide examples how it has been used in futures studies. In section three I study three other focal aspects of narrative: mode of thinking, social process, and metaphor for life. In section four I present research results on narrative influence and narrative transportation. In section five I study a special type of narrative; *future narrative* and its relation to the process oriented participatory approach. In conclusion I draw together the narrative's influential potential.

Narrative as diegesis – presentation

Since times immemorial story has been the main vehicle of mediating meanings to others and educating new generations. In futures studies Herman Kahn created the scenario method by borrowing the idea of film scenario, the manuscript of the film. However, in his use—and even more later on—the original idea has been transformed more to follow a different tradition, the scientific convention. Scenario in futures studies has become a combination of mathematical and statistical methods, political analyses and management science doctrines—though preserving a touch of creative innovation and imagination.

In this article I do not further the critique, but rather concentrate on examining the potential of narrative for filling the gap between futures images and action.



Figure 2. Frontispiece woodcut from the 1489 Spanish edition of Aesop's Fables (Fabulas de Esopo) depicts Aesop surrounded by images and events from the Life of Aesop by Planudes. (Source:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aesop_woodcut_Spain_1489.jpg)

Before the invention of the term narrative, the stories were studied in literary theory as two genres of literature: the epic and the drama. In the first decades of the 20th century, the new mode of presentation, film, resulted in the formation of a new discipline: film theory. In formalist film theory the storytelling mode of film got its theory of the film manuscript, scenario. (Balasz, 1949; Lawson, 1949; Pudovkin, 1928; Vale, 1972)

The story mode was studied especially in semiotic and rhetoric. The division of a presentation to *story* and form of telling it (*narrative discourse*) finally produced the multidimensional term *narrative* and a discipline of *narratology*, the study of the narrative, in late 1960s. The coiner of the term *narratology*, Tzvetan Todorov, defined it as theory of structures of narrative, the parts of the whole, their functions and relationships. (Todorov, 1969: p. 9; Cited in Jahn, 2005, n.p.)

Manfred Jahn (2005) traces the roots of narratology back to Plato's and Aristotle's distinction to '*mimesis*' (imitation) and '*diegesis*' (narration). He describes the difference so, that *mimesis* copies or reflects the world as it is while *diegesis* creates a meaningful story and may even act it. The word narrative has its roots in Latin *narrativus*, telling a story. The etymology of the word gives a rough picture of what narrative is. At the earliest phase of narratology the term referred only to written texts. Jahn defines:

“...all narratives present a story. A *story* is a sequence of events which involves *characters*. Hence, a narrative is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters. In *verbally* told stories, ... we also have a *story-teller*, a *narrator*.” (Jahn, 2005, n.p.)

Later on the term has been extended to cover any stories told by any media, for example story-based computer games, which are a new mode of narrative discourse. Computer games deviate from the abovementioned forms in that they are distinctively interactive. The interactive aspect has lately won ground also for example in play — and in futures studies. The interactive aspect I study in section five.

Narratives are spread among many forms of presentation in art, everyday life, politics and science. Jahn comments the subgenres of the narrative being omnipresent in the human history in varying forms:

“... indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds [...]. (Barthes 1975 [1966]: 237; my emphases)” (Cited in Jahn 2005, n.p.)



Figure 3. Lana Jones (right) and Amy Harris, *The narrative of nothing*, by Graeme Murphy 2012. Photo Jeff Busby. Courtesy of Australian Ballet. (Source: <http://michellepotter.org/reviews/infinity-the-australian-ballet>)

Was a narrative written, acted, film or mediated by any other media, the first thing to notice is, that something happens, something changes. Sociologist Matti Hyvärinen (2008, p. 45) considers, that change is constitutive to narrative presentation: “Narratives are about some change, about some temporality, and without a connection to this change, any content statements remain outside of the narrative context.” There are *events* which can be *incidents*, which just happen (like e.g. rain or car accident) or they can be *action* of some characters. Action covers in narrative even internal, mental action of the characters, thinking and imagining.

Some events or incidents can even be the threat of something undesirable, like in the Halal-Marien Megacrisis scenario:

“With the foundations of the old global order shaken badly, the threat of growing climate change, looming food and energy price escalation, huge government deficits, terrorism, and a host of wild cards now form a complex interplay of destructive forces that are straining old systems to the breaking point. These multiple threats now appear as interlocking elements of a failing global order that looks like a train wreck in slow motion.” (Halal-Marien, 2011, p. 66)

Halal and Marien drafted four action scenarios on a pessimism-optimism axis. The action scenarios were partly anticipative responses, to this threat, partly reactions when it had realized as global Megacrisis or how the Megacrisis was even avoided as result of relevant proactive decisions and deeds. (Halal-Marien, 2011, pp. 65-84)

Storyworld or chronotope

It is apparent, that nothing can happen outside place and time. In phenomenology the unity of human existence and its time-place is very basic: there cannot be action without a time-place. Heidegger uses expressions being-in-the-time and being-in-the world nearly as synonyms (Backman, 2009, p. 50). There is a unity of *action and scene (stage)*. Not even incidents can happen in emptiness, they require some time-place.

David Herman (2002) called the time place of a narrative *storyworld* because in addition to the sequence of events there are whole imagined worlds. One could also ask about which kinds of storytime a narrative presents. Russian literature philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term *chronotope*, which combines storyworld and storytime. Bakhtin writes:

“We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, “time-space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. . . . What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space) Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.” (Bakhtin, 2008, pp. 84-85)

In Bakhtin’s writings, place is much more than simply a geographical location. It is the holistic historical, socio-cultural, and spatial situation of the people. In addition, time is not only chronological time, but covers the experienced time and *kairos* (καῖρός), time in the sense of the right moment in a person’s life.

Bakhtin considers a chronotope to be primarily a metaphor, but Roberto Poli goes even further. He claims that the unity of time and place exists in the real world, and gives this connected unit a name: *chronotopoid* (Poli 2007, pp. 3-4). To him the storyworlds in a futures narrative would be chronotopes, which either do or do not describe real world chronotopoids.

In the case of futures studies, however, a narrative must deal with an entity called future. Because there are lots of possible futures, the narrative is free to describe different alternative futures. To distinguish between science fiction and futures research, time intervals in futures studies are usually restricted to a few decades, but exceptions can be made. In contrast there is no restriction to the spatial or social extension of the storyworld, and thus narratives from personal futures (Wheelwright) to global futures are created.

Halal’s and Marien’s storyworld is the whole globe, but they do not give a definitive time to the actualization of the Megacrisis. However, the text implies, that the threat potentially already exists for the reader.



Figure 4. Storyworld of city cultivation is already real in some places

Source: <http://kaupunkiviljely.fi/projektit/keski-pasila/?show=gallery>

Verne Wheelwright provides guidelines for creating personal narratives:

“From the information you have developed, write a story for each scenario about your life near the end of this future life stage. Spend some time and use your imagination to make each story fit together in a logical manner. Keep in mind that what you are doing is making educated guesses about the future, and, by creating a narrative you are developing an understanding of what must happen to make your scenario work.” (Wheelwright, 2012, n.p.)

He places no restrictions on the time interval, but prefers to leave it up to the person in question. Neither does he give the spatial extension of the narrative, but he gives the substance objects: Activities, Finances, Health, Housing, Social, and Transportation (Wheelwright, 2012, n.p.).

Loibl and Walz report the scenario process of one rural village:

“Local stakeholders in an Alpine village in the Montafon region contributed in workshops to achieve the final results: participant teams conducted system analyses of the regional system to explore key elements of the region. Narrative scenarios described possible positive and negative development trends and indicated the critical issues controlling future development; 3D-images of landscape transition simulations show the consequences of certain development directions. Alternative development directions supported the local stakeholders to elaborate regional development strategies.” (Loibl-Waltz, 2010, p. 2)

These narratives were created in 2005 and the time extension was up to 2030. The special characteristic of both Wheelwright's and Loibl-Waltz narratives is that they are genuinely participatory.

For different approach, Vahid V. Motlagh's (2010) "Asia's Exotic Futures in the Far beyond the Present" is the result of one person's imagination and expertise. He leaves the spatial extension experience to the reader's image of Asia and vaguely labels the time-interval "far beyond". His adjective "exotic" emphasizes this distance. This interesting technique of alienation liberates the reader from the constraints of present day images of Asia.

Basic type of *narrative progression in time* can be traced back to Aristotle's division to beginning, middle and end. Usually the sequence of events progresses in chronological time, but in narrative fiction there are lots of deviations. The progression of the narrative in space remains undefined and free.

In futures studies, the progress is usually described in proceeding order. A version of this is backcasting, which first defines the end state, and then describes the path from now until then. Many narratives also describe only a crosscut of the state of the future on defined or undefined future time.

Kenneth Burke's pentad and narrative discourse

Narrative would not be a narrative without *characters*, humans or human-like beings who's actions are an essential part of the progress of events in time-place. To distinguish genuine agents and their action from either on natural forces or quasi(abbreviation)-agents like trends, gives narrative a special tool: characters as agents can have goals and direct their action towards them. They also utilize *means* to reach their goals. Agents can also be collectives from local group to anonymous mass movements.

So far, I have identified five constitutive elements present in a story, *Kenneth Burke's (1945) pentad: scene, act, agent, purpose and agency*. But the narrative is not exhausted by identifying these. This is because narrative is not only a story, but a communicative act of telling the story. Story refers to the *content* and narrative discourse to the *form* of the narration, was it then told orally, written, filmed or performed. One cannot exist without other and thus they cannot be analyzed separately. (Clarke, n.d.; Jahn, 2005, n.p.; Hyvärinen, 2008, p. 47)

To identify the next layer of the narrative, we have to recognize, that the elements of the form, the narrative discourse, are often more discreet and not so easily traceable. There are several ways by which the author, the *narrator* can project and hide his/her voice in the story. When the narrator explicitly shows, that he/she is speaking, he/she is *overt*. When the narrator hides behind a character or equivalent, the narrator is *covert*. The narrator can also be collective like participants of a conversation (Jahn, 2005, n.p.; Hyvärinen, 2008, pp. 1-2). The *addressees*, the audience, may remain unclear.

Most commonly, the narrator is covert and expressed in the passive form:

"This paper introduces a new futures method, Scenario Art, which involves the use of visual representations of future scenarios to support decision-making towards sustainable development. Based on preliminary investigations it is proposed that Scenario Art has the capacity to increase a person's level of empathy, creativity and responsiveness to risk; and on this

basis has great potential to facilitate decision-making processes and outcomes that demonstrate sustainable thinking.” (Lederwash, 2012, p. 25)

Plot and *dramatic construction* are structural elements of narrative discourse. Plot describes the progress of the story either in chronological time or more complicated chronotope. Dramatic construction refers to the way the events are distributed along the progress of the story and what kind of tensions the narrator builds. It is presented by plot.

Schultz, Crews and Lum (2012, p. 137) express their goals as the facilitators of a futures narrative creation process with the following:

“Our goals in designing this process were three-fold: 1) to create a participatory, integrated futures process that digs more deeply into organizational cultural assumptions and blind spots; 2) to produce scenarios inductively by interconnecting impacts of multiple variables to mimic more closely the turbulence of real-world change; and 3) engage participants in creating their own richly detailed, vivid, and dramatic stories about possible futures. Feedback from the clients during the process suggests we achieved those goals.”

In the project they gave the participants a plot of Figure 5. They then completed the narratives.

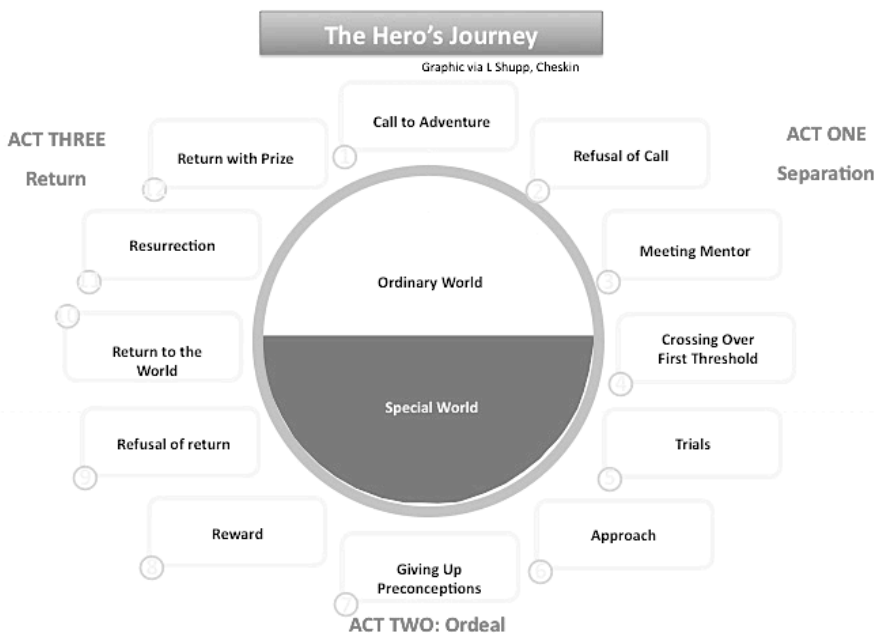


Figure 5. The plot of “The Hero’s Journey” (Schultz, Crews and Lum, 2012, p. 129)

The characteristics of the story, and the characteristics of narrative discourse, together form the whole of a narrative and its ambience. In literature science, there are many characterizations of sub-genders, which also can be read as ambience descriptions, like tragedy, comedy and even Schultz et al.’s “hero’s journey” applied

from Joseph Campbell (1973).

In Figure 6 below I have collected principal characteristics of the narration on one side and principal characteristics of the story on the other. They can be included in a narrative and analyzed from it. However, in a well constructed narrative they form an indivisible whole, one could react to a specific single characteristic or, the reaction could be influenced by the whole ambience.

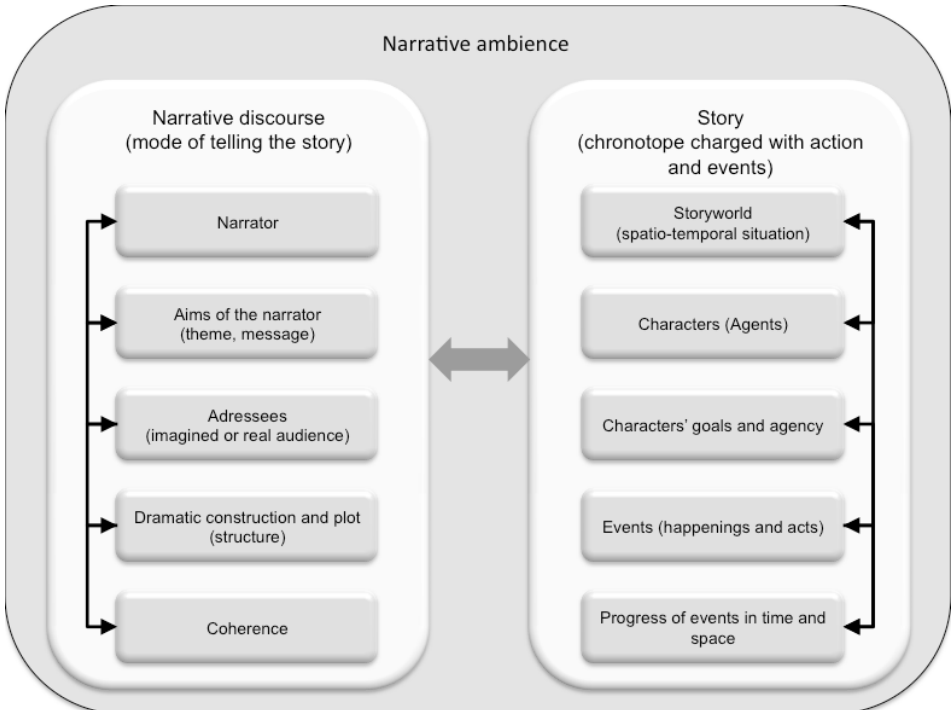


Figure 6. The whole and elements of a narrative presentation

Narrativity

The idea of *narrativity* concerns if there is more or less for example imbalance or disturbance, suspense in the story, turning points and creation of expectation concerning the future flow of the events. Often there is an ordeal, threat or problem to be solved. Narrativity is often treated as identifiable and analyzable forms in the story.

Abbot defines narrativity as an adjectival noun, which describes a felt quality, which may have different degrees and may inspire a narrative response. (Abbott, 2011, p. 5)

The responsive term concerning real world is *tellability*, which Raphaël Baroni (2011, n.p.) defines as “noteworthiness”, things and events an author considers worth of telling. Tellability of the futures is discussed in section 6.

Specialist of education William E. Doll sees the whole idea of narrative to be a creative process in which the audience participates in the creation of the meaning of the narrative. The reception of the narrative is not only reception but a performance:

“It is the ‘performance of meaning’ which is so exciting about story and

which gives it such curricular and educational power. The reader (of fiction or non-fiction) participates in evoking meaning from the text. Meaning is cocreated, as the text and the reader perform their duet. With its emphasis on performance—an important point for both Iser and Bruner—the reader does not merely receive the text nor discover the text’s main point(s); the reader and the text negotiate moving together through their intellectual *pas de deux*.” (Doll, 2003, p. 6)

The Greek triangle of rationality, passion and appropriation is most efficiently employed when the copartners or stakeholders are allowed to choose the storyworld, set the goals and plan the action. Futures specialists then provide narrative and other futures-tools, suitable for this group, and coaches and guides their utilization.

Three more dimensions of narrative

Narrative has not been studied as simply presentation. Its modes have been identified to be more collective and culturally tied than merely the result an individual’s free composition. Most radical approach is Jerome Bruner’s, who describes it as a different mode of thinking than the rational paradigmatic. He goes as far as to study life as a narrative, which persons tell themselves and others.

Narrative and paradigmatic thinking

Jerome S. Bruner, American psychologist, with a career in education, restored the value of the narrative as a mode of knowing. He defined two basic, to each other irreducible modes of knowledge: the *paradigmatic* and the *narrative* (Bruner, 1986).

Historically Bruner’s division is a late interpretation of the different ideas of knowledge, represented by Plato and Aristotle. Plato considered that knowledge (episteme) as opposite of everyday opinion (doksa) was the only way we can gain reliable information about reality. Plato was very critical in relation to figurative language, in which figure joins figure and the connection with reality disappears. Aristotle on his part accepted, that rhetorical and poetic expressions have an informative value. They represent a different way of knowing and have value as such. (Tolska, 2002, pp. 89-91)

Bruner also defined methodological conventions for these two ways of thinking and knowing. The paradigmatic, logico-scientific knowing is verified by empirical data. The narrative “leads instead to good storied, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts.” He emphasizes that it deals with human or human-like intention and action. Thus, it deals with concrete particulars, while paradigmatic creates abstractions and loses its explanatory values concerning particulars. (Bruner, 1986, pp. 11-13)

As mode on knowing paradigmatic is much more restricted than narrative. Bruner states, that a human has three different ways to represent reality: enactive, iconic and symbolic. Enactive is a practical way of knowing based on how the things are done, like for example walking. The second way works through mental images: an experience or a thought is presented as images and spatial models. The third way is to form representations with meaningful signs, symbolic representations. The paradigmatic mode of thinking is able to utilize only meaningful signs like letters and numbers. The narrative is free to utilize all three types of representations. Bruner considers, that we utilize paradigmatic way of thinking when explaining phenomena

of the physical world. We utilize narrative mode of thinking when explaining psychological reality and human action. Narrative constructions cannot be verified and true in the way the paradigmatic can be, they can only achieve verisimilitude with the real world (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). (Tolska, 2002, pp. 80-83, 91-98)

For Bruner the narrative is the basic mode of thinking, natural to humans. It is based on four inborn cognitive abilities:

- cognition directs the interest to human action and interaction,
- a human forms consecutive order of events through thinking,
- a human distinguishes unusual events from usual or canonical and
- a human forms a landscape of consciousness, which means that we always have some perspective while observing events. (Tolska, 2002, pp. 49-55)

Bruner emphasizes, that it is not relevant how the narrative text is constructed but how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality. Its non-mirroring relationship to reality means that narrative remains open and predisposed to the creation of the meaning in connection with the receiver-cocreator.

Because the knowing follows different logic in paradigmatic and narrative knowing, their conventional ways to present also are different. Here I employ the classic division of rhetoric into expository, argumentative, descriptive and narrative. Figure 7 describes the constitutive modes of presentation of each two. Typical for paradigmatic presentations are *expository* and *argumentative* and they dominate even when descriptive (e.g. in anthropology, history, medical diagnosis) type is employed. Constitutive type of narrative presentation is *narrative*, usually combined with *descriptive*. Expository and argumentative are also widely used in different subgenres of narrative, but they are submitted to the narrative type.

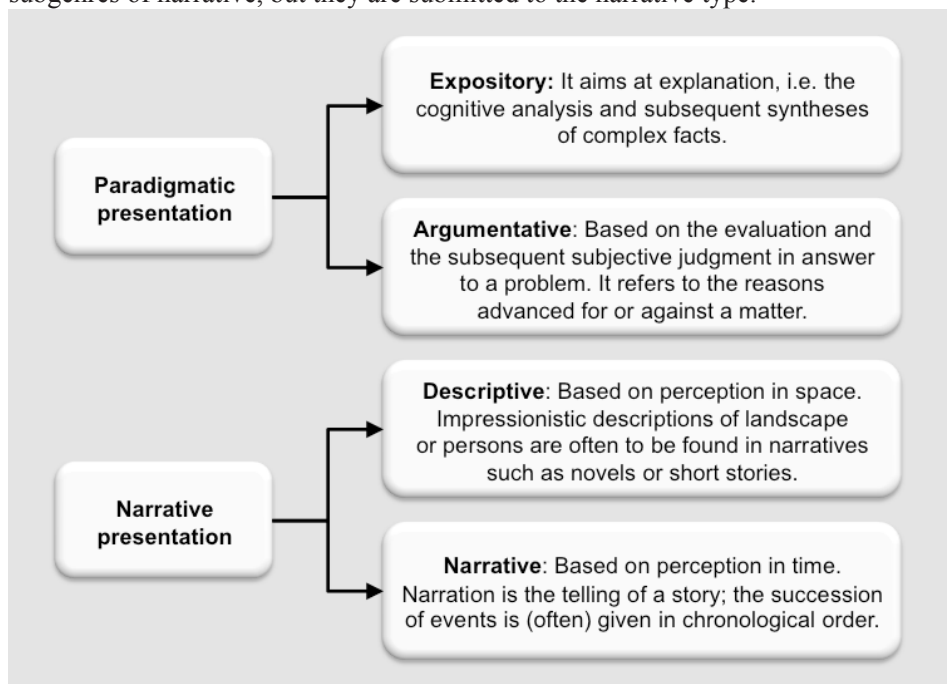


Figure 7. Typical text modes of paradigmatic and narrative presentation

If Bruner's ideas are accepted, then it remains as the role of a futures specialist to present and translate paradigmatic ideas into the narrative form to make them understandable to those, who are not familiar with paradigmatic thinking.

Narrative as positioned and social

I have earlier commented, that narratives have one or several narrators. The narrator does not exist outside the author's chronotope, situation in time, space and culture. Narrative rejects the idea of objectivity, an independent truth. The narrator is a subject, whos point of view opens from his/her both physical and socio-cultural position. Every cultural unit has developed specific means and tools to cope with the reality. A narrator can only utilize those means and tools of narration, which he/she has learned on the life path possibly moving inbetween several cultural units. Bruner comments:

“An individual's working intelligence is never ‘solo’. It cannot be understood without taking into account his or her reference books, notes, computer programs and data bases, or most important of all, the network of friends, colleagues, or mentors on whom one leans for help and advice.” (Bruner, 1991, p. 3)

The narrator creates an artifact by compiling particular details into a whole, which he/she communicates to others, but the words and images the narrator uses did principally exist before him/her. So do the basic types of story as well as the ways to tell the story. Mikhail Bakhtin considers that in the text of a novel, one can always hear many more voices than the one of the narrator. He names this phenomenon *heteroglossia*, multivoicedness (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 263). Thus narratives have to be understood as *cultural practices*, and their analysis has to locate the cultural and social conventions in them, not only the individual and subjective meaningmaking. Narratives are always *comments*, often on the deviations from the social convention, embedded in habitual scripts. Narratives, are not only mirroring but performing, acting upon the world. They always have a *mission*, a message to deliver. (Hyvärinen, 2008, p. 51, 60; 2009, p. 3)

By the analysis of *narrative environment*, the positioning can be revealed: what is the subculture of the narrator, who are his/her authorities, to which convention he/she conforms and even to whom he/she addresses the narrative. (Hyvärinen, 2009, p. 5)

In a narrative, the individual characters or collective actors (like a firm or administrative body) can openly present different interests and strategies. They may even speak different languages. In science, the positioning of the author is usually given by academic degree or affiliations. In addition the details of the subscriber and financier of the report are also given. However, they do not always give sufficient information of the positioning of the author(s). I still remember what Romesh Thapar said to me in the Club of Rome Conference 1984: “I am a WOG, a Westernized Oriental Gentleman.”

Narrative as life and reality construction

“... in fact, everything, in my opinion, is a story. Let's try cosmology. You can calculate all you want about black holes and the big bang and what

have you, but you still have to tell the story, even if you weren't there. There is no other way that I know of, and I think there's that balance between the two, that once language comes, there is a whole universe of possibility, including science itself, but they don't sit exactly on top of each other." (Edelmann, n.d., n.p.)

Neuroscientist and Nobelist Gerald M. Edelmann's view of a story is much more all encompassing than the view of narratologists. Jerome Bruner considers that narrative is the constitutive way of life. Narrative is a way of **doing life** and **doing communities** in our everyday existence.

"The heart of my argument is this: eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life. In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. And given the cultural shaping to which I referred, we also become variants of the culture's canonical forms." (Bruner, 2004, p. 693)

Bruner does not actually hold life and narrative identical, but claims a strong connection and intertwining of them. The life and our telling about it to ourselves and to others cannot be separated. (Hyvärinen, 2008, pp. 263-264)

As has been discussed earlier in connection with narrative mode of thought, it is not only our own lives, we tell ourselves in narrative form, but narrative is a tool to understand and tell the other aspects of reality as well. The sphere of human action is a natural scope of narrative construction, but since times immemorial narrative has been applied to describe anthropomorphically also the action of animals (Like in Aesop's fables), natural forces, mythological beings, and even machines (e.g. Isaac Asimov: Robot dreams).

Literature professor Hamid Dabashi describes even the formation of the concept of the 'Arab spring' as a narrative editing process. He equates the montage of the Arab Spring to the montage of film director Elia Suleiman in his work 'Divine Intervention' 2002.

"Here I wish to offer that the key sequence in leading Palestinian filmmaker Elia Suleiman's cinema as a visual simulacrum is the same as the manner in which we read the Arab Spring: a mode of narrative *montage* in which we sequence and edit specific historic events in the Arab world and give them a rhetorical consistency that banks on our dreams and thrives on our hopes. That act of creative and critical *montage* is what makes the Arab Spring both plausible and meaningful.

. . . In this transfusion, we do the *montage* – creatively, critically and hopefully – with Elia Suleiman and Sergei Eisenstein implanted inside our mind's eye. What we call the Arab Spring is the mental editing of a succession of shots that demand and exact a reading and a recreation to render things meaningful. The individual shots produce a sequence with significance, and the sequence gives a teleological meaning to otherwise disparate shots. From all the recent and current incidents in the Arab world, distinct occurrences of histories proper to each nation-state have morphed into a regional narrative

that we have come to call the Arab Spring.” (Dabashi, 2011, n.p.)

With this framework, Verne Wheelwright’s idea to create a personal narrative is a kind of future biography, or life story. Narrative is used not only to create biographies, but also in world events. Religions tell of salvation stories, politicians of policy stories, economists of economy stories, and so on. For example, Nobelist Joseph Stiglitz (2011, n.p.) describes present policy as ‘gambling with the planet’. Another economist Radharam Rajan (2012, n.p.) identifies two dominant economy narratives, which he considers to be in crisis.

Narrative influence

David Herman emphasizes the influence a narrative has on the receiver:

“Narrativity is a function of the more or less richly patterned distribution of script-activating cues in a sequence. Both too many and too few script-activating cues diminish narrativity” (Herman, 2002, p. 91, Cited in Abbott, 2011, p. 42; Hyvärinen, 2009, p. 3)

This is similar to Sergei Eisenstein’s view concerning film: for him film was only a line in the dialogue with audience. (Andrew, 1976)

Herman uses expression “script-activating”, which is based on behaviorist psychology and is commonly used in discussions on computer technology and artificial intelligence. He defines it as:

“Indeed, the concept of script, i.e. a type of knowledge representation that allows an expected sequence of events to be stored in the memory, was designed to explain how people are able to build up complex interpretations of stories on the basis of very few textual or discourse cues (Schemata)”. (Goffman, Erving, 1974; Cited in Herman, 2011, p. 12)

The concept of cognitive script activation does not exhaust the relationship of the narrative to a member of the audience. Mar et al. have studied the emotional influence of narratives in written texts. They divide it to several phases. It already influences which narrative one chooses. When the receiver then starts reading, the narrative evokes and transforms emotions, and these emotions can transform the experience of the narrative. While reading, these emotions can continue influencing after the completion of reading. (Mar et al., 2010, p. 818)

They list the following emotions: sympathy, identification, empathy, relived emotions and remembered emotions. The first three concern the characters in the story, while the last two concern the receiver’s earlier emotional experiences. (Mar et al., 2010, pp. 822-827)

They refer to mood-management theory, which claims that viewers Choose media “that will promote or maintain positive moods, or those that will help to reduce or circumvent negative moods.” (Mar et al., 2010, p. 819)

Keith Oatley comments that Richard Gerrig used the expression ‘being transported’ as one way of experiencing a narrative. The reader is in a way transported to another time and place. (Oatley, 1999, p. 105)

Mar et al. propose an even more complicated view of emotional responses, the creation of “mental models” and their reactions.

“The author tells the reader what a character’s goals, plans, intentions, and action are, and the reader enters them into his or her own processor. This process can be thought of as an extension of the idea of mental models.” (Mar et al., 2010, p. 824)

This aspect concerns the emotion based motivation, or strategic will. People have dreams, visions, fears, beliefs, and many various minor futures images, which do not seriously influence their behavior. The degree of influence depends on the weight a person gives to a futures image—in this case narrative—and the commitment he or she is willing to make to reach that goal. The commitment is realized in everyday decisions, through which they create their futures (Bell, 2002, p. XII).

John Dewey previously recognized the importance of attachment to *self-set goals*. He commented that people set goals, which they set out to reach, and then they want to find a means of realization (Siitonen, 1999, p. 103).

In a futurework process, dealing with constructing futurepaths, not only the narrative raises emotions, but the interactive group process as well. It becomes a story the participants tell themselves and others. It recreates the ambience of the process, which for its part influences people’s emotions concerning the process.

Future narrative and participation

German linguist Christoph Bode has given a special meaning to the term ‘future narrative’. In 2009 he started the project “Narrating futures”. The first book, “Future Narratives. Theory, Poetics, and Media-historical moment” by Christoph Bode and Jeffrey Kranhold was published in August 2013. The project’s description defines:

“future narratives in the sense of this project are narratives that preserve the characteristic feature of future time, namely that it is yet undecided, open, and multiple, and that it has not yet crystallized into actuality. We do not yet have a grammar, a logic, or a poetics of future narratives in this sense.” (Narrating futures, 2012, n.p., n.a.)

Future narrative then has multiple continuities, different options and open endings. They exist in addition to and outside of literature, for example in computer games and films. (Wedlich, 2011, p. 1) Thus they represent several scenarios included in one narrative whole. The receiver has an active role as a participant in the narrative process. The receiver participates in the “performance of meaning” as William E. Doll (2003, p. 6) stated. The meaning is cocreated.

The writer of the “Narrating futures” project description (probably Bode) considers narratives to have unique power:

“Narrative’ can be claimed to be the new foundational category of the Humanities, because it is only through narrative processing that we experience or recognize a mere sequence of events as meaningful. It follows that any kind of future scenario that retains the openness of forked-path or feedback or cross-impact models can only be mediated and communicated to decision-makers and to the public as well, if it relies on open- and multiple-narrative techniques and devices.” (Narrating futures, 2012, n.p., n.a.)

However, there are limitations. Future narrative defined in this way can be a whole created by somebody outsider of the receiver's world. Thus, their storyworlds may not be relevant from the point of the stakeholders of actions in the real world. Choices can be limited, as the receiver is led to accept only one of the alternative solutions.

Deeper participation can be achieved when the copartners of a futures project create the future narrative, its storyworld, characters, goals, and means, as well as action plan and also realize the action. The end of the story can then be the state of the future on some point in time, possibly years from the start of the story. The narrative can live alongside the action and it can change when the situation changes.

What makes the tellability of futures?

Future does not necessarily exist in the real world, however it does exist in peoples' minds as passive and active (motivational) futures. Because it has been shown that future is a constitutive part of our constructing our living, it is a real world influencing force.

Narrativity has earlier been characterized as imbalance or disturbance, suspense in the story, turning points and creation of expectation concerning the future flow of the events. Future as not-yet-being offers an inexhaustible source of narrative elements. Tellability, the noteworthiness of future events and action, has been strongly defended by futures researchers. However, in psychology, it has been shown to influence our everyday life — not to speak about large-scale strategic decisions. We set goals, anticipate future events and plan our future action. (Jarva, 2011, pp. 99-111)

The filling of the black hole between scenarios and action, which problem Michel Godet posed, offers a vast field of operations for narrative futures studies. To develop a scenario into a real 'shooting script' (film theory) or action plan is a challenge the narrative futures images often give a more solid basis than the more complicated and abstract methods of futures studies.

Conclusion

In this article I have studied the potential of narrative to fulfill the criteria of the Greek triangle presented by Michel Godet: rationality, motivation and appreciation.

However, if I have emphasized the two non-rational aspects of the continuum from futures scenarios to action, I consider that a futures specialist has to be an expert in theory and methods of futures studies and planning widely. Not only expert of narrative. The role as coach proposed by Michel Godet implies that one has to be specialist in the subject in which one coaches others. Thus, I propose a combination of paradigmatic and narrative thinking. The emphasis of each can vary according to the copartners in a futures project.

There is at least one more aspect which has not been discussed: heteroglossia or multivoicedness. To be exact, Mikhail Bakhtin describes with the term heteroglossia the – in his view – constitutive trait in using language: there exists a dialectic controversy of centrifugality and centripetality of language. This means, that some power possessors pursue to unify and standardize the language, but at the same time different classes and groups of people create their own version of language, free from restrictions. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 263; Holquist, 2008, p. xviii)

That futurework project can become empowering to the copartners, the differences between participants must be respected. This primarily means that a futures specialist has to be able to hear the different voices and understand the different social languages of the copartners. Narrative can be a powerful tool for deliberative, negotiation based futures studies, if the Greek triangle is understood and applied respecting the different views and different positions represented in a futures project.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Kevin Sullivan and Jose Ramos for inspection of the language. mistakes are naturally my own.

Correspondence

Vuokko Jarva
Carrer de la Torre Alta, Edificio Fluoromar II, Planta 214
43840 Cap Salou (Tarragona)
Email: jarva@me.com

Notes

- 1 Godets interview has been retrieved from Internet and the file does not have specific page numbers. In this article I use expression n.p.(no page) in similar cases. If the year of the source is not given, I mark it as: n.d. (no date). If the name of the author is not given, I mark it as n.a.

References

- Abbott, H. P. (2011). Narrativity. Retrieved on May 7, 2012, from <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Narrativity>
- Andrew, J. D. (1976). *The Major Film Theories*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Asimov, I. (1986). *Robot dreams*. New York: Byron Preiss.
- Backman, J. (2009). *Complicated presence. The Unity of Being in Parmenides and Heidegger*. Philosophical Studies from the University of Helsinki 26. Department of Philosophy, Department of Social and Moral Philosophy, Helsinki: University of Helsinki
- Bakhtin, M. M. (2008). *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Michael Holquist (Ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Balazs, B. (1949). *Der Film. Werden und Wesen einer neuen Kunst*. Wien:Globus Verlag.
- Baroni, Raphaël. (2011). Tellability. In *The living handbook of narratology*. Retrieved on August 14, 2012, from <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Tellability>
- Bell, W. (2002). Foreword: Preparing for the future. In David Hicks. *Lessons for the future. The missing dimension in education*, xi-xvi. London and New York: Routledge/Palmer.

- Bode, C., & Kranhold, J. (2013). *Future Narratives: Theory, Poetics, and Media-Historical Moment*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The Narrative Construction of Reality. *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Autumn 1991). Retrieved on March, 15, 2012, from www.semiootika.ee/sygis-kool/tekstid/bruner.pdf.
- Bruner, J. (2004). Life as Narrative. *Social Research*, 71(3), 691-710.
- Burke, Kenneth (1945). *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Campbell, Joseph. (1973). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (3rd printing). New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Clarke, Richard J. (n.d.). Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives. Retrieved on December 14, 2012, from <http://www.rlwclarke.net/Courses/LITS3301/2011-2012/04ABurke,AGrammarofMotives.pdf>
- Dabashi, H. (2011). Imagining the Arab Spring: A year later. Retrieved on December 7, 2011, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/2011125132335754716.html>.
- Doll, William E. (2003). Modes of thought. Proceedings of the 2003 Complexity Science and Educational Research Conference. October 16–18, Edmonton, Canada, pp. 1–10. Retrieved on August, 13, 2012, from http://www.complexityandeducation.ualberta.ca/conferences/2003/Documents/CSER_Doll.pdf
- Edelmann, Gerald M. (n.d.). Frontiers profile: Gerry M. Edelmann. Retrieved on March 26, 2012, from <http://www.pbs.org/saf/1101/features/edelman.htm>
- Godet, M. (1994). *From anticipation to action. A handbook of strategic prospective*. Paris: Unesco. French original: De l'anticipation à l'action: manuel de prospective et de stratégie, Paris: Dunod 1991.
- Godet, M. (2012). To predict or build the Future? Reflections on the Field and Differences between Foresight and La Prospective. *The Futurist*, 46(3), 46-49. Retrieved on May 4, 2012, from <http://www.wfs.org/futurist/may-june-2012-vol-46-no-3/predict-or-build-future-reflections-field-and-differences-between>
- Halal, W., & Marien, M. (2011). Global Megacrisis: A Survey of Four Scenarios on a Pessimism-Optimism Axis. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 16(2), 65–84.
- Herman, D. (2002). *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Herman, D. (2011). Cognitive Narratology. *Living Handbook of Narratology*. Retrieved on May 10, 2012, from http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Main_Page.
- Holquist, M. (2008). Introduction. In Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin. Michael Holquist (Ed). Seventeenth paperback printing. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Hyvärinen, M. (2008). Narrative form and narrative content. In *Methodological Challenges in Childhood and Family Research*, Irmeli Järventie & Miia

- Lähde (Eds.), Tampere University Press, Childhood and Family Research Unit Net Series; 4/2008, 43-63. Retrieved on May 11, 2012, from <http://tam-pub.uta.fi/childhood/978-951-44-7585-6.pdf>
- Hyvärinen, M. (2009). Narrative analysis. Retrieved on May 11, 2012, from http://www.hyvarinen.info/material/Hyvarinen-Narrative_Analysis.pdf
- Inayatullah, S. (1998). Causal Layered Analysis: Post-Structuralism as Method. *Futures*, 30(8), 815-829.
- Jahn, Manfred. (2005). Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative. English Department, University of Cologne. Retrieved on March, 14, 2012, from <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm>
- Jarva, V. (2001). Gender Sensitive Scenariodramas in Local Level Communities. In *The Quest for the Futures: a Methodology Seminar in Futures Studies*. Selections from the Methodology Seminar in Futures Studies, Turku, Finland June 12-15.2000. 2001. Tony Stevenson, Eleonora Barbieri Masini, Anita Rubin, Martin Lehmann-Chadra (Eds.). Turku: Finland Futures Research Centre.
- Jarva, V. (2002). Scenariodrama as a Gender Sensitive Tool for Learning from Futures. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 6(4), 91-115.
- Jarva, V. (2011). Consumer education and everyday futures work. *Futures*, 43(1), 99-111.
- Lawson, J. H. (1949). *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting*. New York: G. P. Putnam.
- Lederwash, A. (2012). Scenario Art: A New Futures Method that Uses Art to Support Decision-Making for Sustainable Development. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 17(1), 25-40.
- Loibl, W., & Waltz, A. (2010). Generic Regional Development Strategies from Local Stakeholders' Scenarios - an Alpine Village Experience. *Ecology and Society*, 15(3), 3. Retrieved on February 15, 2013, from <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss3/>.
- Mar, Raymond A., Oatley, K., Djikic, M., & Mullin, J. (2010). Emotion and narrative fiction: Interactive influences before, during, and after reading. *Cognition & Emotion*, 25(5), 818-833. Retrieved on August 17, 2012, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2010.515151>.
- Motlagh, V. (2010). Asia's Exotic Futures in the Far beyond the Present. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 15(2), 1-16.
- Narrating futures*. (2012). Retrieved on November 28, 2012, from <http://www.anglistik.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/nafu.html>
- n.p.n.p.Oatley, K. (1999). Why Fiction May Be Twice as True as Fact: Fiction as Cognitive and Emotional Simulation. *Review of General Psychology*, 3(2), 101-117. Retrieved on November 8, 2012, from [http://faculty.weber.edu/eamsel/Research%20Groups/Fiction/Oatly%20\(1999\).pdf](http://faculty.weber.edu/eamsel/Research%20Groups/Fiction/Oatly%20(1999).pdf).
- Poli, R. (2007). Three obstructions: forms of causation, chronotopoids, and levels of reality. *Axiomathes*, 17(1), 1-18. Retrieved on June 5, 2012, from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10516-007-9007-y>.
- Pudovkin, W. (1928). *Filmregie und Filmmanuskript*. Berlin: Verlag der Lichtbühne.

- Rajan, R. (2012). *A crisis in two narratives*. Retrieved on February 1, 2012, from <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/rajan25/English>
- Schulz, Wendy L., Crews, C., & Lum, R. (2012). Scenarios: A Hero's Journey across Turbulent Systems. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 17(1), 129-140.
- Siitonen, J. (1999). *Voimaantumisteorian perusteiden hahmottelua*. Doctoral dissertation. Oulu: University of Oulu.
- Stiglitz, J. (2011). Gambling with the planet. Retrieved on April 8, 2011, from <http://english.aljazeera.net/opinion>
- Suleiman, E. (2002). Divine intervention- A Chronicle of Love and Pain. Film. The scene analyzed retrieved on April 8, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME-myk5OIk>
- Todorov, T. (1969). *Grammaire du Decameron*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Tolska, T. (2002). *Kertova mieli. Jerome Brunerin narratiivikäsitys*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitoksen tutkimuksia 178. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.
- Vale, E. (1972). *The Technique of Screenplay Writing*. London: Grosset & Dunlap.
- Wedlich, S. (2011). Looking at tomorrows (and tomorrows and tomorrows . . .). In *insight LMU RESEARCH*. Retrieved on November 28, 2012, from http://www.en.uni-muenchen.de/news/insightlmu//2011/01_01.pdf
- Wheelwright, V. (2012). Four Scenarios: Creating plausible future. Retrieved on December 14, 2012, from <http://www.personalfutures.net/id68.html>

