

BLUE ECONOMY DISCOURSES

Are we speaking the same language?

**What do we mean by
discourses, *and***

Why are they important ?


What are these discourses?


- 🌐 Verbal and written communication, discussion, conversation, debate -
- 🌐 The Humanities and Social Sciences are interested in how humans interact and construct and exchange meaning
- 🌐 How the language of the discourse – narrative and metaphor - influences human thinking, understanding and perspective-taking.


Humans are a storytelling species

“Man is always a teller of stories; he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything in terms of these stories and he tries to save his life as if he were recounting it.”

Sartre, J.P. 1964. Life as Narrative. In Bruner, J. 2004. p18.
http://ewasteschools.pbworks.com/f/Bruner_J_LifeAsNarrative.pdf. Accessed on 3/10/2015.

 Humans are 'hardwired' for stories that allow us to understand the past, make sense of the present and plan for the future

 Our imagined realities/shared narratives/ fictions are important to human survival

 Stories serve an evolutionary purpose

- 🌍 Scientists need to realise that humans are born biologically prepared for stories
- 🌍 Humans ‘think’ in stories and are therefore not necessarily swayed or influenced by ‘hard’ scientific evidence
- 🌍 There is a ‘plot’ and ‘inner logic’ to the story that unfolds

The sociobiologist, E. O. Wilson, proposed how science and the humanities may be reconciled because innovators in both domains are essentially “dreamers and storytellers.” He observed that the early stages of the creative process begin as a ‘story’ in the mind of both scientists and artists.

[Maria Popova, 2014. Brain Pickings.](https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/11/04/e-o-wilson-the-meaning-of-human-existence/)

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/11/04/e-o-wilson-the-meaning-of-human-existence/>. Wilson, E.O. 2014. Dreamers and Storytellers: On Art and Reconciling Science and the Humanities

Intractable conflict

But competing and contested stories and narratives -

historical and contemporary discourses -

are major contributing factors and causes of intractable, destructive conflict in societies.

The

'Blue

Economy'

storyline

The *blue economy* metaphor is powerful in shaping imagined realities, influencing our world-view and perspectives – humans can unlock the vast untapped potential of marine and coastal resources to extract major benefits that enhance human well-being and socio-economic development

**What are the
competing and conflicting
discourses that underpin
this *blue economy*
storyline ?**


Onwards and Upwards

***Human march of
Science and Technology***


- 🌐 Humans are a superior species, set apart from other animals and the animal kingdom
- 🌐 Through human advancement and progress - scientific knowledge and innovation - we can control the environment and solve all ecological problems
- 🌐 Humans can control their destiny

Counter narrative

***The 'illusion' of Human
Progress***

 Humans are a predatory, rapacious and destructive species that are now too numerous in number for the planet


 Human advancement always coincides with ecological devastation/degradation


 Climate change is impacting the planet and especially vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems


Post-truth political discourses

- 🌐 *Trump effect* – ‘*alternative facts*’
- 🌐 Globally we have seen a pushback against climate change and scientists in a post- expert/ post- statistics political climate i.e. Brexit
- 🌐 Makes it convenient for ignoring evidence of climate change that constrains and constricts socio-economic imperatives



**The narrative
of South African
*exceptionalism***

 South Africans have perceived their country as different from the rest of Africa and more like the developed world in many respects.

 Research suggests that South Africa has seen itself as even 'superior' to other African countries (Nic Cheeseman 2017, <https://theconversation.com/south-africans-are-learning-that-theyre-not-that-exceptional-after-all-75884>)

 On many levels and in various fields – politics, economics, science and technology etc. Are we an offshoot of the West ?

Exceptionalism, a myth?

-  Political analysts now point to South Africa displaying the patronage networks, corruption, clientelism and capture of natural resources by state/ non-state actors that have detrimented the developing world – we must look to Africa for our lessons.
-  This together with a fragile economy, poverty and deepening inequality has, and will have, an effect on the vulnerable marine and coastal environment.

Conflicting ‘*imagined realities*’ in the blue economy narrative

Anthropocentric Demands

With the compelling need for pro-poor development and job creation in a fragile South African economy there are a multiplicity of heightened expectations and demands on increasingly vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems.

A fine balance

Finding a balance between coastal stewardship and human development in highly unequal societies - where accelerated economic growth is demanded as crucial for sustainable peace and stability - has several critical aspects.

Powerful influences on the scientific agenda

“Ideological, political and economic forces have shaped physics, biology and sociology pushing them in certain directions while neglecting others”

Yaval Harrari (2014: 306), *Sapiens: A brief history of mankind*, Random House: UK.

Trans-disciplinary, social-ecological discourses for global problems

Recognising that narrow, restrictive human-centred development and resilience discourses, especially in fragile democracies can obscure the urgency for wider trans-disciplinary, social-ecological global discourses and approaches to sustainable livelihoods and peace.

Robust multi-stakeholder dialogue

Dismantling disciplinary silos and building collaboration and cooperation amongst stakeholders – scientists across disciplines - economists, policymakers and civil society - requires interrogation of blue economy discourses and an understanding of competing narratives.

Research shows that **robust democracies**

- with vigorous debate and dialogue - can counteract the effects of climate change on the environment
- prosperous countries with low unemployment and equality are dealing better with climate change
- politically corrupt countries, deepest inequality and poverty are doing the worst

(Charles Ferguson, 2016. *Big Think*. <http://bigthink.com/>)