

3 Theories & Perspectives

Lesson 01: Social and Cultural Sciences & Paradigms

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Where are we?

Episode 1.1: Social & Cultural Sciences & Paradigms

Episode 1.2: Communication on an individual level

Episode 1.3: Communication on an organizational level

Episode 1.4: Communication on a social level, communication as culture



Learning outcomes

Learning outcome 1:

Describe the diverse nature of contemporary practices of sustainability communication on an individual, organizational and societal level, the relationship of strategic communication practices to other public communication practices, the role of stakeholders and publics and the communication practitioners in and outside of organizations (corporate, NGO, political and educational institutions etc.)

Learning outcome 2:

Develop comprehensive and well-founded knowledge in sustainability communication as field of study, an understanding of how other disciplines relate to the field and an international perspective on the field.

Learning outcome 3:

Understand the key elements of communication theories, strategies and tactics, and, thus, the character and operationalization of best practice sustainability communication planning frameworks.

Learning outcome 4:

Advance your understanding of social and civic responsibility and develop an appreciation of the philosophical and social context of sustainability communication. Advance your knowledge and respect of ethics and ethical standards in relation to communication of, about and for sustainability.

Learning outcome 5:

Anticipate and Interpret current issues and challenges of a world in transformation and social change. Develop a deep understanding of and skills to create change, develop advocacy, leadership and authorship in and for sustainability communication.

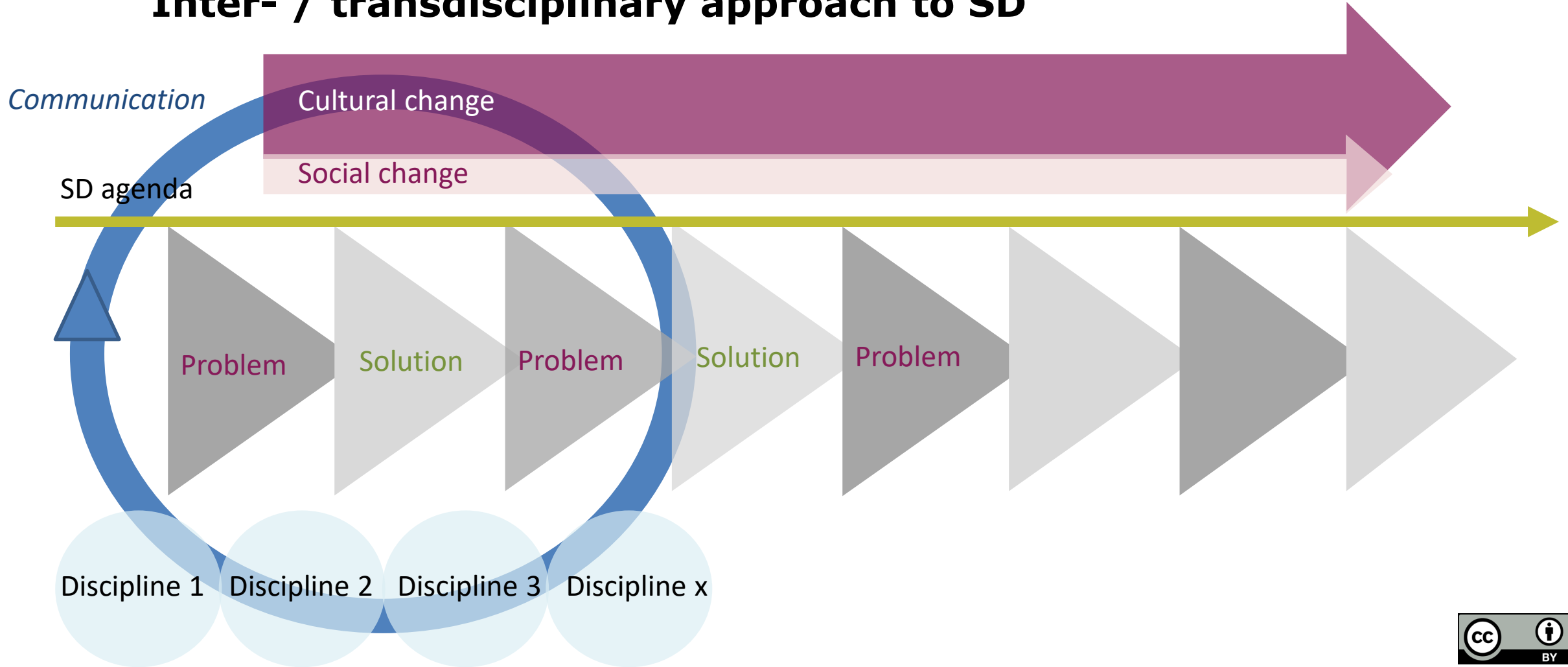


Recap



Recap

Inter- / transdisciplinary approach to SD

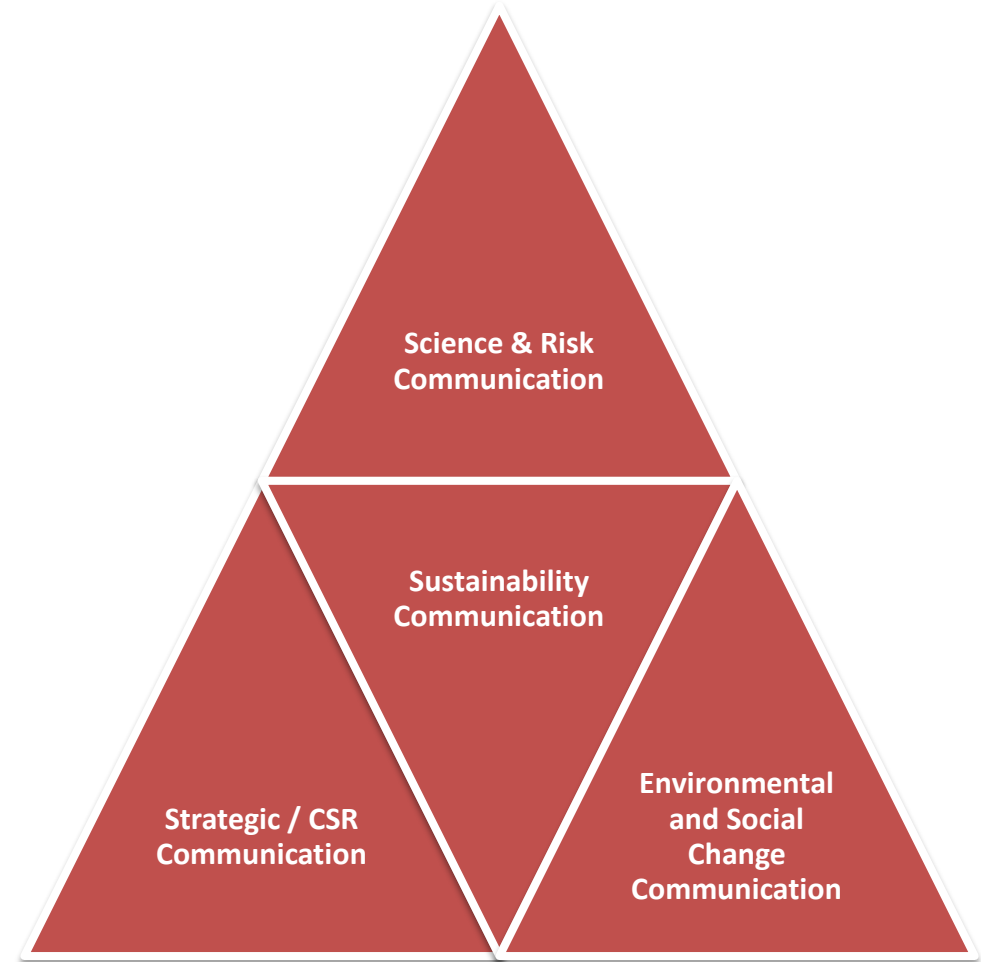
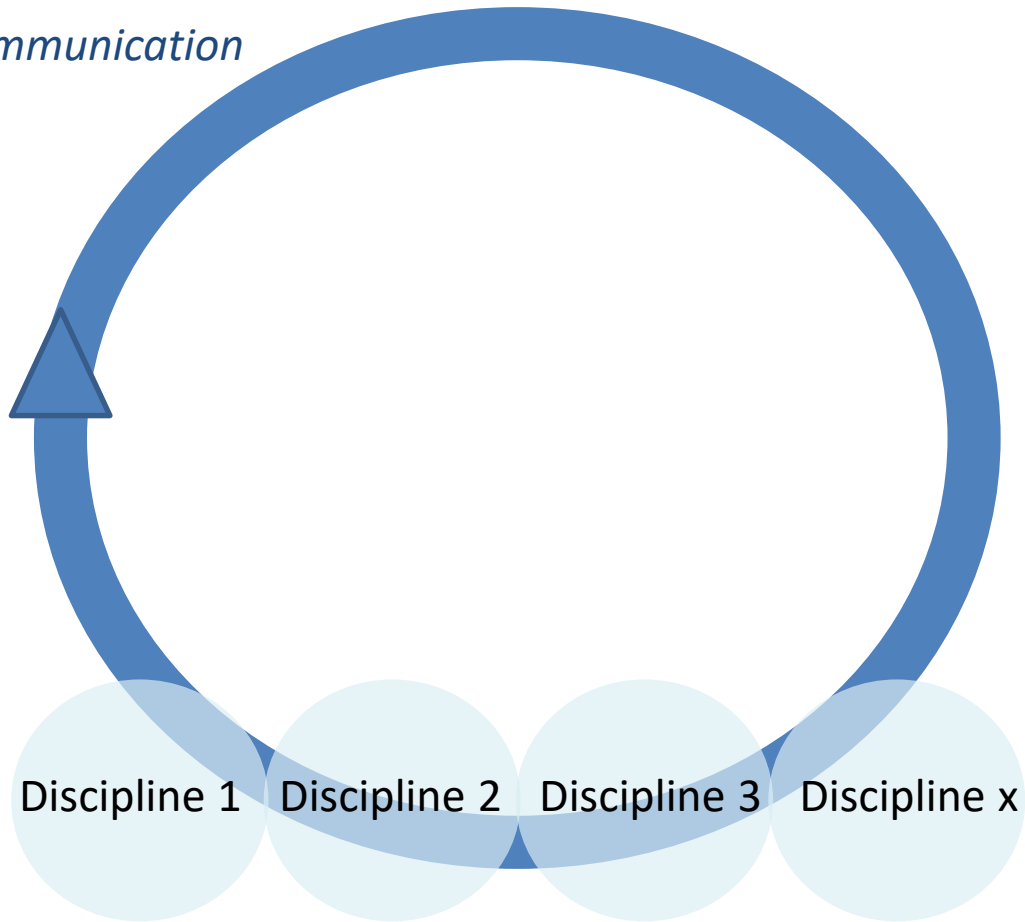




Recap

Disciplines

Communication





Recap

Perspectives on Sustainability

Science / CC Communication:

Sustainability as counter narrative (solution?) to climate change

Environmental Communication:

Sustainability as (moral) principle of change

Sustainability as principle of restoration / regeneration

CSR Communication:

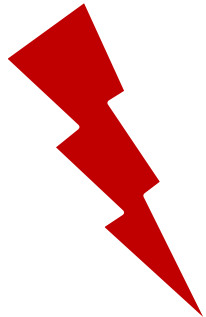
Sustainability as principle (moral compass) of action

Sustainability as label for “good behavior”, “used” in communication



Recap

Challenges



Communication about & of environment, risk, CC, CSR

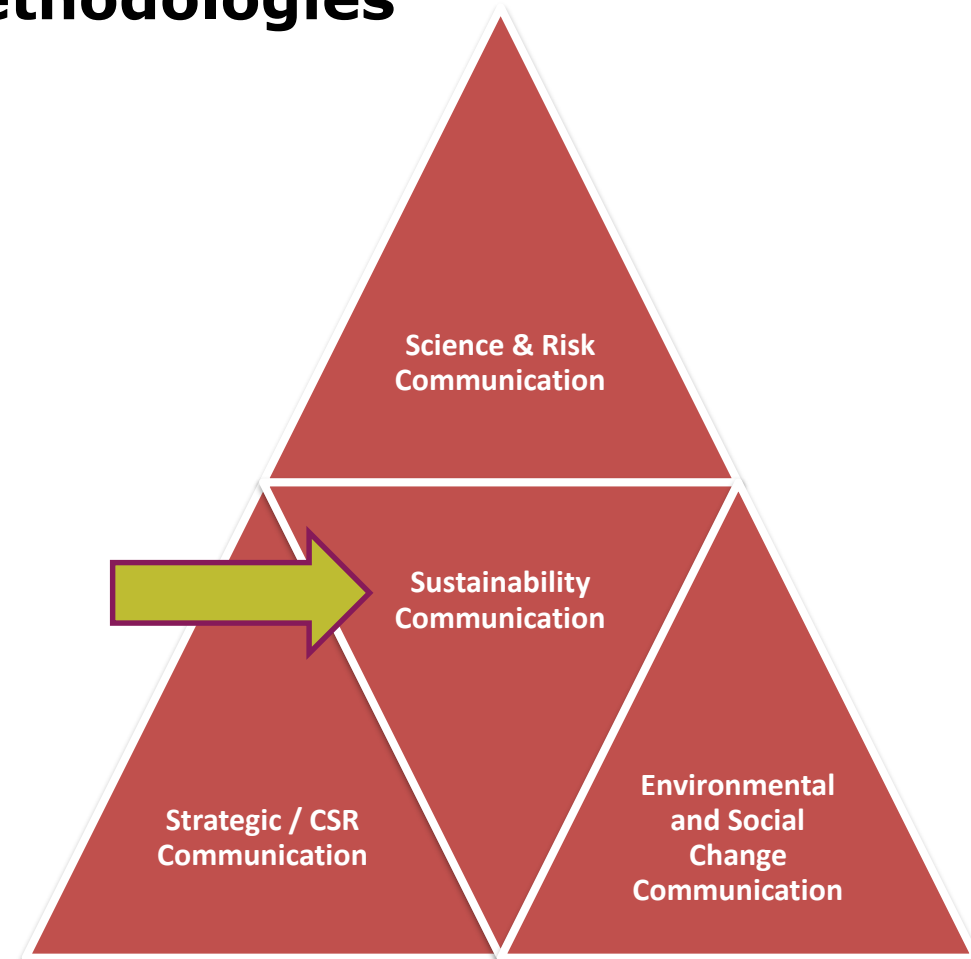


Communication *for* transformation



What is needed?

Media & communication perspective & theories, concepts, methodologies





Where are we (again 😊)?

Episode 1.1: Social & Cultural Sciences & Paradigms

Episode 1.2: Communication on an individual level

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Episode 1.4: Communication on a social level, communication as culture



Overview

- A. Science Theory
- B. „Theories“ – what for?
- C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

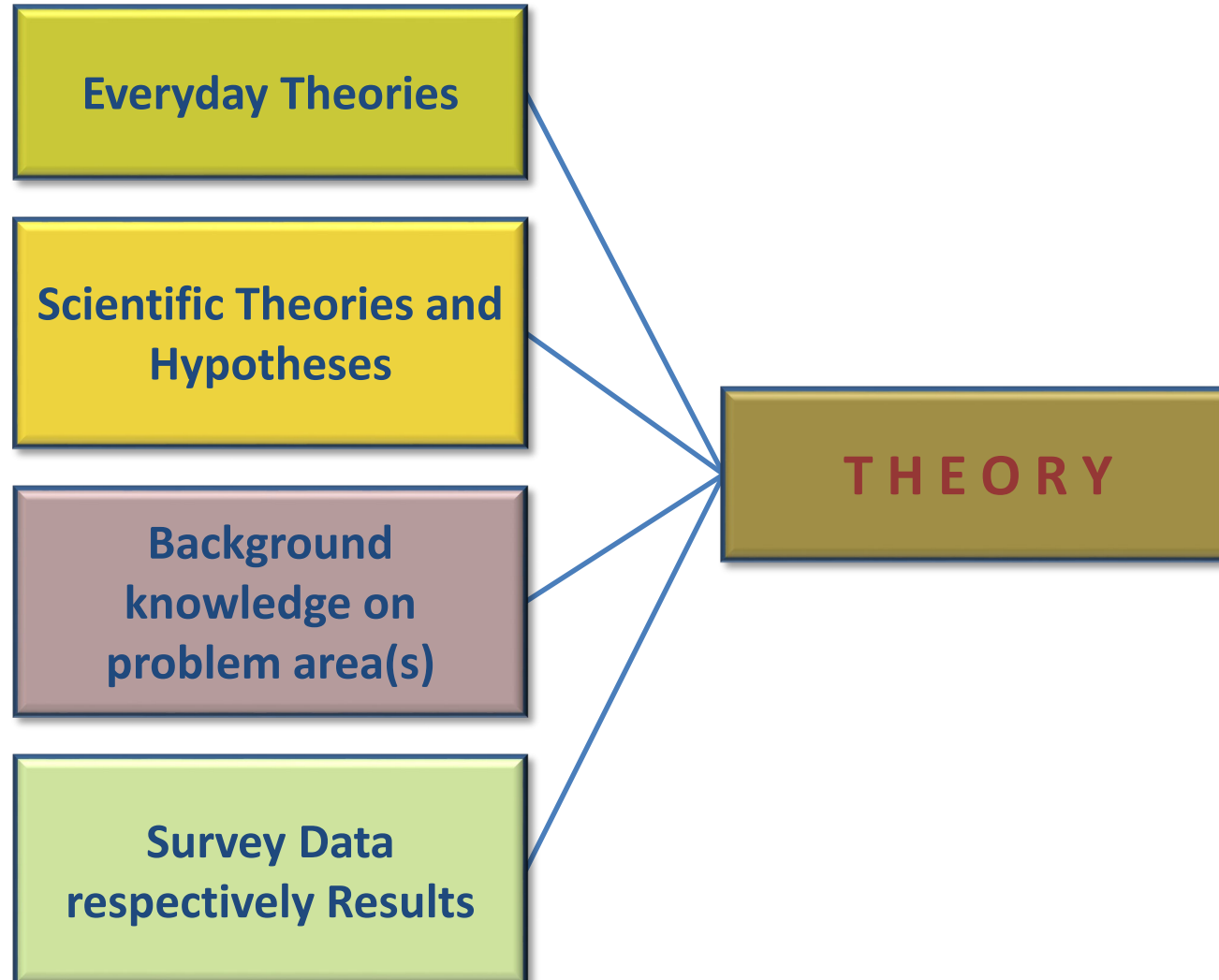


A. Science theory

1. Ontological exploration (How is it?)
2. Phenomenological (What happens?)
3. Causal (Why is it like that?)
4. Normative (What should we do? What has to be done?)
5. Critical (What can be changed – and how?)
6. Prognostic (What will be the future? How will xx develop?)
7. Pragmatic (generating practical knowledge, „work knowledge“, knowledge for education)



B. Theories





B. Theories

Theories are ...

Greek: „*the*“ = look at, „*theoria*“ = scientific examination

The act of seeing, beholding

„To understand & explain something by looking at it or examining it“



B. Theories

- Theories shape our reality
- They can determine how we perceive reality
- Theories provide a ‚lense‘ through which we can interpret/make sense of our reality/experiences

The biggest question:

What ‚lense‘, in our words: which tools will we select?

Which tools help to understand sustainability, sustainable development and all related phenomena?



B. Theories

... are

- thinking about ideas
 - extracting regularities
 - reducing complexity
 - structuring ideas
-
- Theories can **explain** how/why things are the way they are
 - Theories help us to **understand**
 - Theories can **predict** how things might be in the future
 - Theories can **effect** social change and empowerment



B. Theories

Some theories ...

- are based on research and are the product of carefully-designed studies of phenomena, e.g. theories of media effects
- Others are philosophically derived, e.g. – semiotics – a philosophical theory of the functions of signs and symbols

On the other hand ...

- Is most of the research based on theory – the theory produces a way of working, a methodology
- then research tests and challenges the thesis, hypothesis
- and – maybe – develops (new) theory



B. Theories

So a theory is

- a) a framework that helps us structure our own behaviours as well as society more broadly
- b) an abstract system of **concepts** with indications of the relationships among these concepts that help us to understand a phenomenon (West & Turner, 2004)



B. Theories

- **Paradigm** – a way of viewing the world; an intellectual tradition with its own values, goals, research approaches
- **Grand theories** – all instances (abstract, theorising in which the formal organisation and arrangement of concepts takes priority over understanding the social world)
- **Mid-range theories** – specific group (moderately abstract and inclusive but are composed of concepts and propositions that are measurable)
- **Narrow theories** – certain people, certain situations (not abstract, context specific – precise, measurable)





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

Two ,poles`, two distinct approaches in theory

objective

pragmatic

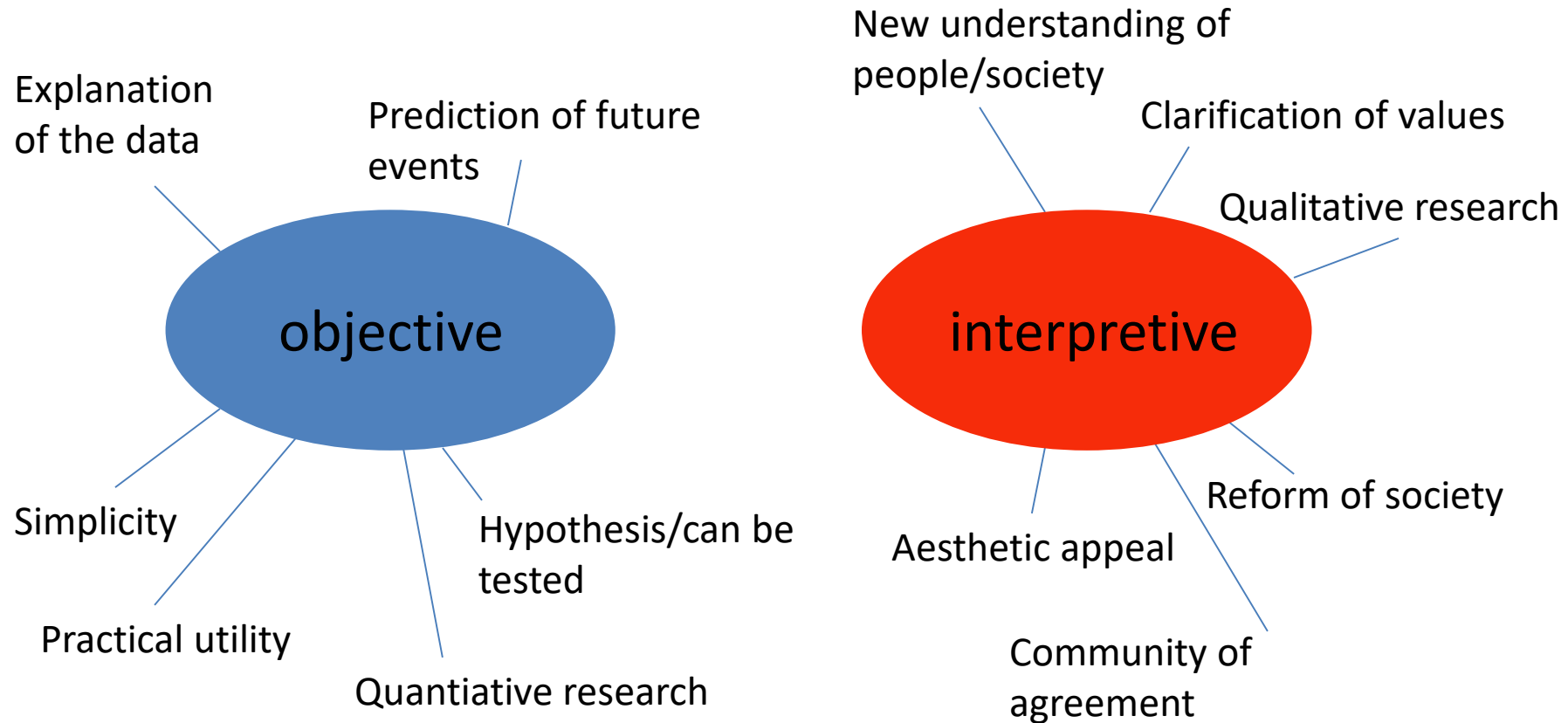
interpretive

constitutive



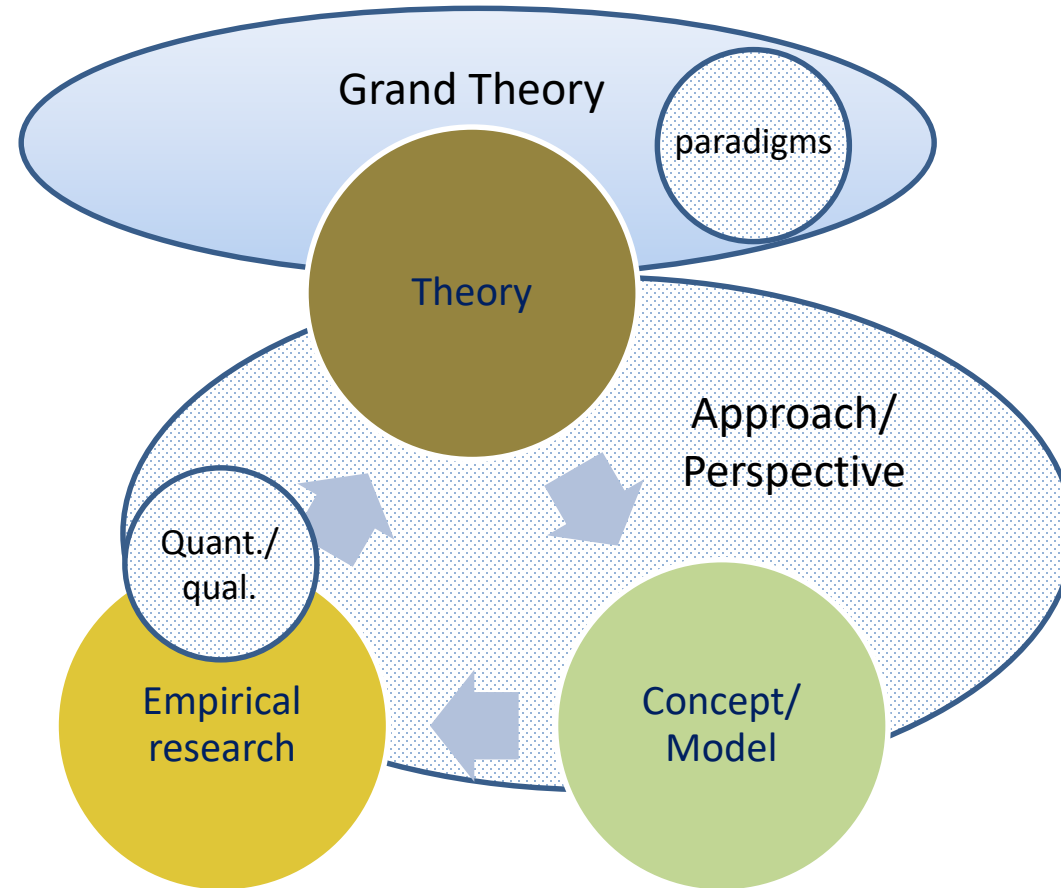
C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

Differences





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



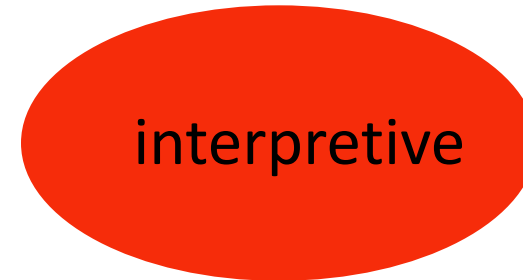
Media &
communication
studies



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



pragmatic



constitutive



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

Communication

_act of developing meaning
among individuals,
groups and organizations
and in wider public discourses
through the use of sufficiently mutually understood signs, symbols,
and semiotic conventions.



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

Communication



Objective: techno-scientific understanding of communication (which has yielded a number of complex transmission models)



Critical: the social and human science description of communication begins with face-to-face contact: Communication as human and technology based activity of the reciprocal use of signs and the reciprocal interpretation of signs for the purpose of successful understanding, coordinating action and shaping reality

Communication as:

- Social practice &
- Social process, +
- Sustainability as principle of societal organization



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



„Sustainability Communication“ as structure;
as transmission of:

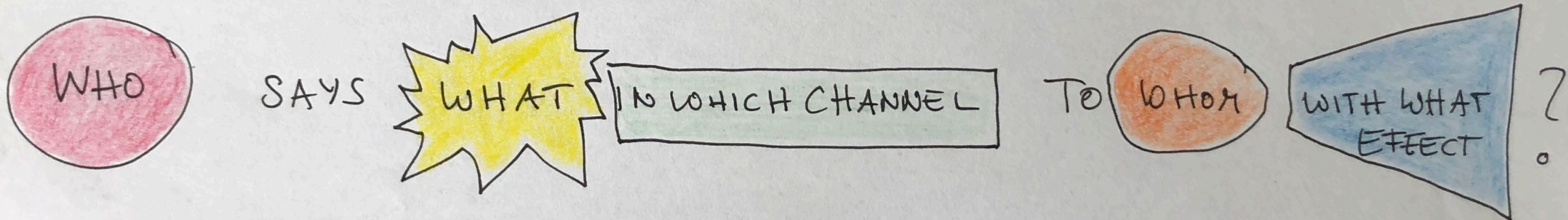
- signals
- messages
- structures
- symbols
- meaning



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



_who says what to whom in
what channel with what effect?
(Harold D. Lasswell)





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



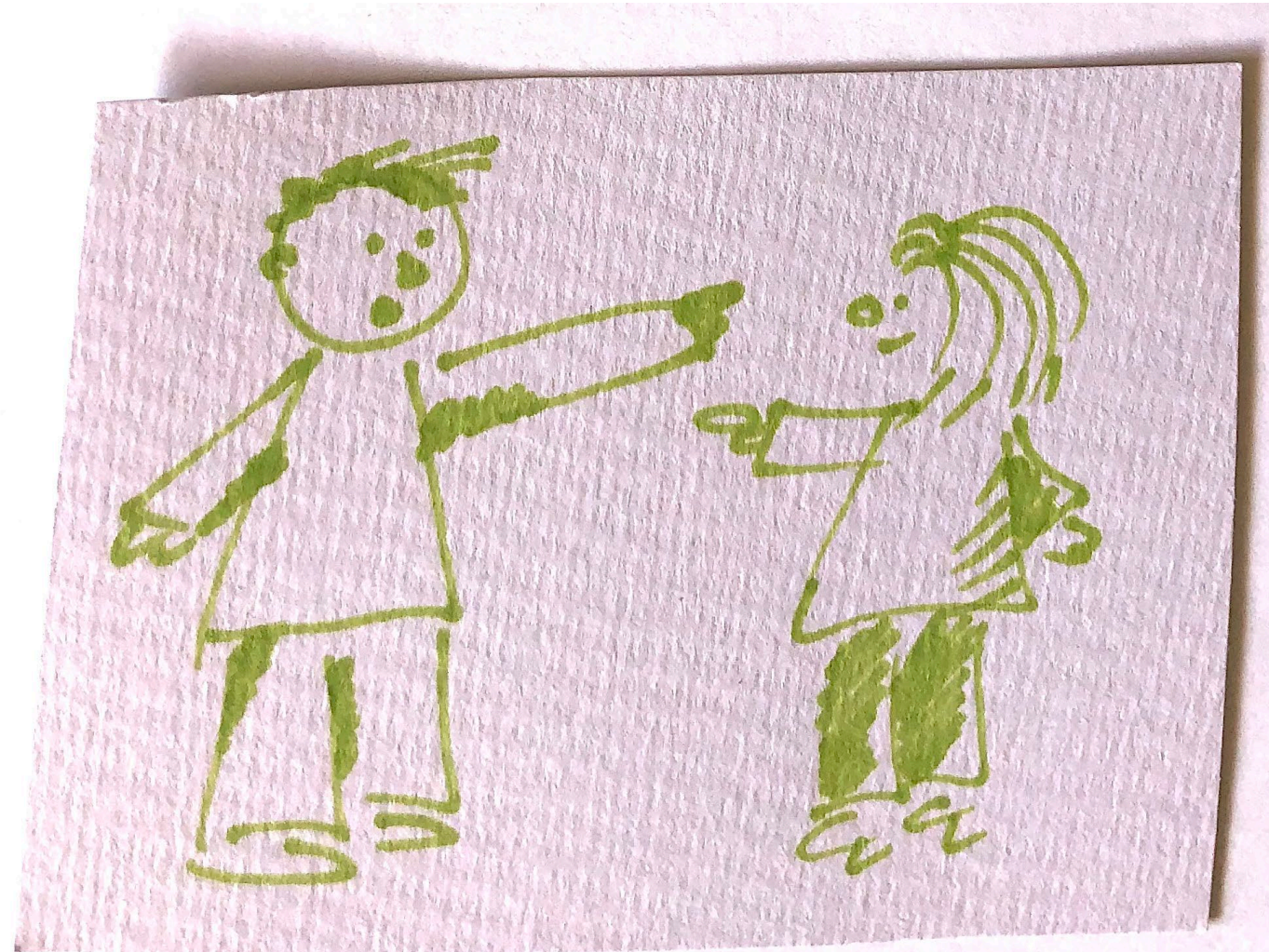
Sustainability Communication as process & practice of...

- understanding
- exchange
- participation
- relationship
- social practice
- social behavior
- interaction



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

_you can not not communicate
(P. Watzlawick)





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication

_communication always aims at understanding (consensus) (J. Habermas)





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



Paradigms

- **Pragmatic** (communication as structure; information, education, instrumental sense of communication, functionalist/structural perspective, description of reality)
- **Constitutive** (communication as process; symbolic action, social constructivism, sense making, define sth as problem, creates attention, evokes values, orientation, activates/stimulates engagement, exploration)





C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



Lens 1: *objective/pragmatic*: the transmission model,
the social scientific perspective

- Who is the sender?
- Who is the receiver?
- What is the medium?
- What is the message?
- What is the purpose of the text?
- What potential “noise” is there?
- What potential feedback is there?



C. Paradigms of Sustainability Communication



Lens 2: *interpretive/constitutive*: the constructivist, critical, cultural view

- Who are the actors in this drama?
- What is the purpose of this text?
- How does this text create a culture?



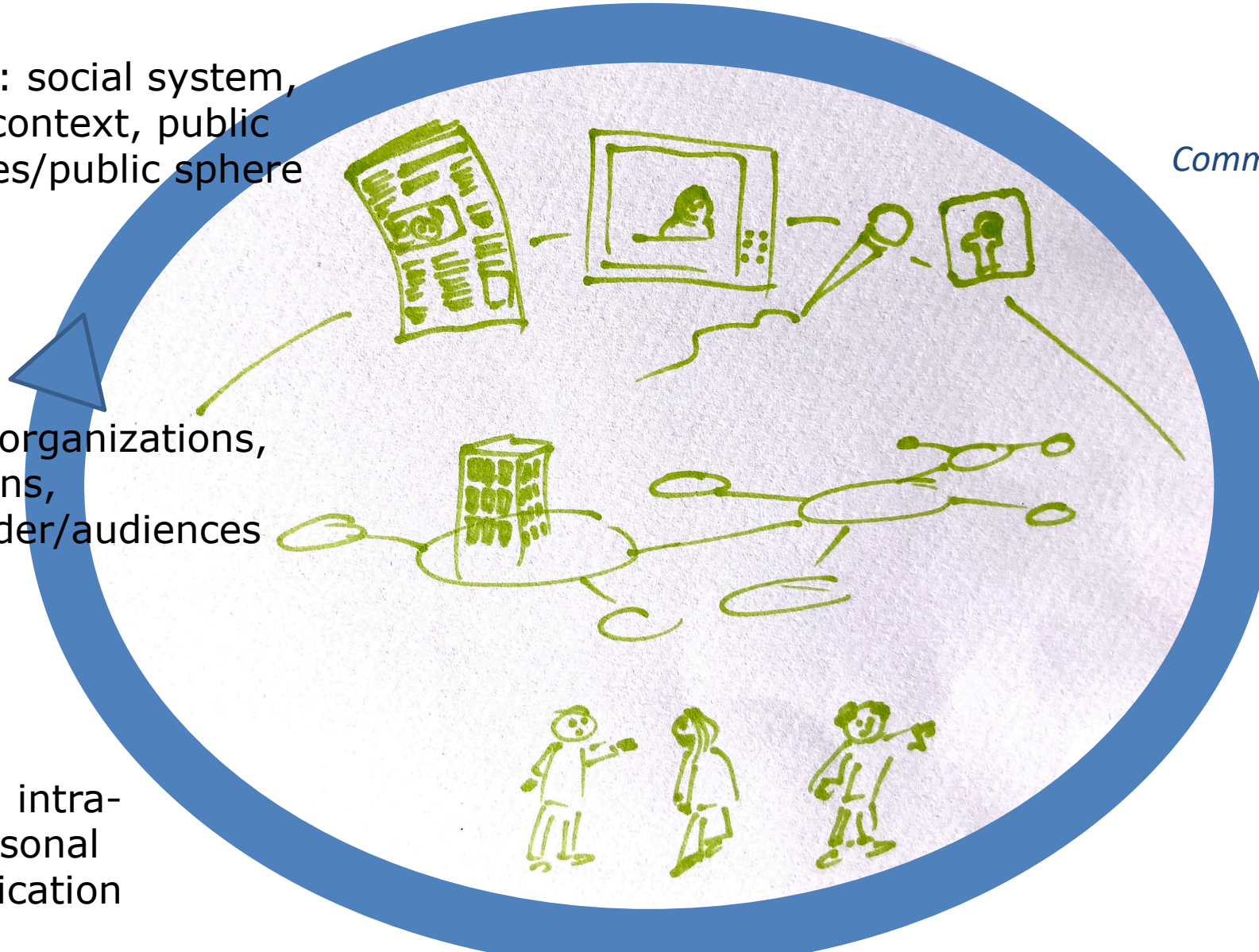
Outlook

_MACRO: social system,
cultural context, public
discourses/public sphere

Communication

_MESO: organizations,
institutions,
stakeholder/audiences

_MICRO: intra-
/interpersonal
communication





Reflection

1. Try to use your sustainability communication examples (media, products, advertisement) and look at it from both paradigmatic perspectives; ask yourself:
 - Who is the sender?
 - Who is the receiver?
 - What is the medium?
 - What is the message?
 - What is the purpose of the text?
 - What potential “noise” is there?
 - What potential feedback is there?
2. Answer the following questions:
 - Who are the actors in this drama?
 - What is the purpose of this text?
 - How does this text create a culture?