Shared Action Learning: Conceptual Elements Overview

Connecting	Planning	Acting	Observing	Reporting
Connecting is about the many ways that people meet and interact around community development projects. **Social Actors**: Connecting occurs among a wide range of "actors": WPI (self, team, advisors, librarians); Community (sponsors, co-researchers, residents, shop owners, leaders, etc.); Others (government agencies, NGOs, media, etc.). People can inhabit different roles depending on social context and their individual predilections. Connecting occurs first within the WPI team (e.g., developing team dynamics and clarifying roles and working processes with advisors and others). Later, students typically engage with sponsors, community members and many actors, and all these actors have complex relationships among themselves that can often impact project design and development.	*Planning includes any significant effort to foster visions, strategies, understandings and/or agreements for collaborative future action.* **Background research *planning*** overlaps with broad contextual learning but is more project-specific, involving the systematic effort to understand and strategize in light of what others have learned about key project dynamics and issues, in your area and elsewhere. **Field Phase Planning** can drive project activities (e.g., *planning for* a community meeting) or result from them (e.g., plans for a facility that came from a community meeting). Planning can often be thought of as a cycle of posing, then answering, a series of strategic questions, which lead back to deeper, more insightful questions to be wrestled with.	*Acting is the effort to advance meaningful change in response to perceived opportunities to enhance community well-being. Acting typically involves* analyzing *a situation or* implementing *some sort of program, activity, demonstration, construction project, or other initiative.* Acting typically arises out of a planning process and leads to observation, reflection and new cycles of planning and action. **Analytical Action**: IQP projects almost always involve analysis, often of an existing situation and the opportunities to make directed change. The "action" phase of analysis is typically the implementation of particular research methodologies: interviews, field observations, and the like. Similarly, design-focused projects may involve mostly planning, with only limited "action," (e.g., to test design ideas with others). **Implementation Action**: IQPs, despite tight time constraints, sometimes involve pilot programs or small construction projects.	*Observing is the first-order effort to perceive and record accurately key developments arising from project activities. Observing can be thought of as the discipline required to capture important phenomena as completely and objectively as possible, so that later rounds of reflection can best reveal their meanings, and future plans and actions are well-informed by previous experience.* Observing begins in preparation with the effort, for example, to carefully "hear" what others in the form of authors, advisors, and experts have to say about issues related to your project, and to look beyond one's initial preconceptions and reactions to "see" how team dynamics are evolving. Later on, it will be important to carefully capture what sponsors, community members and others tell you, and to be especially attuned to differences and contradictions that reveal complexities. Also, self-critical observation of the consequences of one's efforts is also essential.	*Reporting includes any significant effort to communicate about project undertakings and outcomes, and can include both formal and informal approaches as appropriate for various purposes and audiences.*
Methods: Greetings, meetings, interviews, focus groups, social activities (eating, games, community events), exchange (of food, gifts, money)…	**Methods:** Discussions, meetings, mapping, drawing, facility or program design efforts, IRB applications, action research planning methods for interviews and focus groups, field observation data collection planning, etc.	**Methods**: highly varied.	**Methods**: note taking, field measurements, photography or video, empathetic listening, etc.	**Methods:** Project development blog, executive summaries, presentations (oral and multi-media), posters, meeting presentations and minutes, websites, community Q&A session, etc.
Key Dynamics: Excitement, cooperation, conflict, confusion, negotiation…	**Dynamics**: planning, revising, tedium,		**Dynamics**: alertness, attention to detail and nuance, complexity, …	Brainstorming, revising, arguing, revising, anticipation, performing, etc.
Reflecting, Sharing & Learning				
Context: Social, Cultural, Ecological Context shapes people and projects and is a subject of ongoing research and learning at multiple levels				