Analyzing Frames

The Art of Discovering Underlying Assumptions and Values in Frames
Naming and Framing the Energy Problem

- **Unreliable Sources**, Reduce Our Dependence On Foreign Energy
- **Emissions Warning**, Get Out of the Fossil-Fuel Predicament
- **Curb Our Appetite**, Reduce Our Demand for Energy

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs about the world
  - X thousand people use Open Courseware each year.
  - Democracy improves the quality of life.

The first type of assumption is situational
The second type of assumption is theoretical

If a belief is tacit in our thinking we name it “assumption”, once it is made explicit it becomes a “hypothesis”.

What Are Values?

• **Values are criteria** that we use for deciding if a situation is desirable or undesirable, or if an idea is a good one or a bad one:
  – being secure or insecure (security)
  – being treated fairly or unfairly (justice)

• Every time we frame or evaluate situations we apply values. Frequently values are tacit.

• In the example “Emissions Warning, Get Out of the Fossil-Fuel Predicament” “the protection of the environment” is a value.

• In the example “Unreliable Sources, Reduce Our Dependence On Foreign Energy” “energetic independence is a value”.

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Frames, Assumptions and the Thinking Box

- Every time we frame a situation we base elements of our frame in beliefs about the world; but we are not aware of them.
- The discovery of assumptions is easier when we are “out of the box”, but the box is invisible for us.
- People who disagree with our frames are more acute for identifying our assumptions.
- The discovering of assumptions is a kind of reverse engineering that disturb our beliefs.
Discovering Assumptions

- Assumptions are beliefs that are behind the causal relations of our frames.
- If “assumption A”, then “B” generates “C”.
- A possibility for discovering assumptions is to go through the components and the causal relations of the frame asking “why” they are stated in that particular way.
- **The assumptions should be falsifiable.** It means that it should be possible to get information for verifying if an assumption is real or not.
If a situation is framed as a problem generated by a group of factors and a scenario that is resulted from the problem, then the exploration of assumptions may go back through the causal relations of the frame.
Questions for Exploring Assumptions

- Why the scenario, or one component of it, is generated by the problem or a component of it?
- Why the factor A contributes to the problem?
- Which conditions are required for the work of causal relations?
Questions for Exploring Values

• Why do you think it is a problem?
• Which values are threatened by the problem or by the scenario?
• Which motivations are behind the way the situation were framed?