Project Visions and Visioning

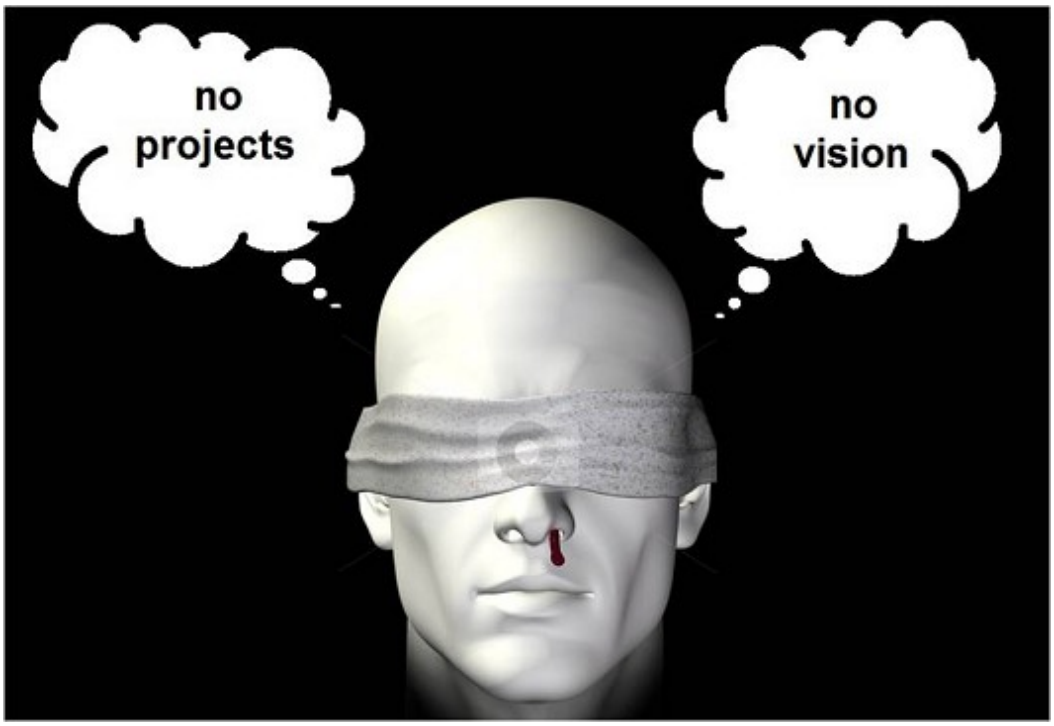
This article is developed within the scope of the **Project Visions and Visioning**, an effort to enhance Foresight learning through collaborative work.

Visionary Project is the third lecture from a module on Visions and Visioning, first taught to graduate students from the Communication Faculty of the National School for Political and Administration Studies (Romania).

Contents

- 1 No Vision, No Projects
  - 1.1 project management - a troubled discipline
  - 1.2 cross-fertilization
- 2 Temporary Social Systems
  - 2.1 temporary organisation
  - 2.2 some features of TOs
  - 2.3 communalities & variables
  - 2.4 interorganisational TOs
  - 2.5 trans-national European projects
  - 2.6 ITOs organizational dimension
- 3 Shrinking Time
  - 3.1 life in the dromosphere
  - 3.2 strategic information systems
    - 3.2.1 vision failures
    - 3.2.2 step 1: conception
    - 3.2.3 step 2: interpretation
    - 3.2.4 step 3: intention
    - 3.2.5 step 4: synthesis
    - 3.2.6 step 5: integration
    - 3.2.7 step 6: implementation
  - 3.3 what about the nature of projects?
- 4 Concept
  - 4.1 probing the future
  - 4.2 concept vehicles

No Vision, No Projects



project management - a troubled discipline

- optimization school - how to plan a project?
- factor school - what determines a project?s success?
- contingency school - why do projects differ?
- behavior school - how do projects behave?
- governance school - how are projects governed?
- relationship school - how are projects generated?
- decision school - why do projects continue to live?

cross-fertilization

- a simple and clear-cut definition of project and project management would be a difficult feat
- projects are defined as complex sets of activities, complex tasks, organizational structures, organization processes, transactions, networks, large-scale investments
- some overlap and shared ideas are discerned regarding project definition, such as temporarity, complexity, and interdisciplinary

Temporary Social Systems

temporary organisation

- the time dimension is reflected by various concepts that are being used: temporary work, temporary systems, projectification and temporary organisations

- groups of people collaborating to accomplish a joint task with the duration of the collaboration explicitly fixed, either by a specific date or by the attainment of a predefined task or condition

some features of TOs

- a set of diversely skilled people working together on a complex task over a limited period of time
- limited in duration and membership, and in which people come together, interact, create something, and then disband
- structures of limited duration that operate within and between permanent organisations.
- bringing together a group of people who are unfamiliar with one another?s skills, but must work interdependently on complex tasks
- separate legal and financial entities set up for a specific task and dissolved upon its completion

communalities & variables

- four common elements:
    - limited duration
    - one or more tasks to achieve, which are the reason for which the TO is set up
    - one or more teams interacting and working on the task(s)
    - the production of change through action and the completion of tasks(s)
- variables:
    - the complexity of the tasks
    - the level of uncertainty as to whether the objective will be met
    - the interdependence of team members
    - limited resources (time, instruments, budget)
    - the degree of red tape within the TO
    - leadership style
    - methods and styles of communication
    - levels of complexity of intra- or inter-organisational TOs level of isolation and/or interdependence of the TO with respect to the organisational contexts

interorganisational TOs

- composed of independent and sovereign organizations collaborating mainly to contribute to a common task characteristic elements:
    - partnerships
    - team structure
    - goals
    - roles
    - responsibilities
    - products
    - paperwork
    - assessment criteria

trans-national European projects

- pre-project - the preparation and planning of the project proposal and the establishment of the consortium
- implementation, monitoring and on-going evaluation of the project work-plan
- reporting ? sets out and clarifies achieved, on-going and final results and deliverables and their consistency with planned aims, objectives, defined resources and timing.
- exploitation and mainstreaming - criteria in assessing the projects? effectiveness and results

ITOs organizational dimension

- micro: core partners - information, decision-making, co-ordination flows, work flows are most stable over time
- meso: partner?s consortium - competences and roles are defined during the bid preparation stage
- macro: stakeholder network - fragile with respect to external stresses

Shrinking Time

life in the dromosphere

- in this new world of accelerated reality, traditional planning becomes in many ways a contradictory effort
- planning requires a model that structures the world and allows change to be studied in a context that is assumed to remain stable
- planning works best when the dimensions of the problem remain the same

strategic information systems

- IS developed with the intention of furthering or enabling a specific strategy
- most important SIS applications are those which enable an organization to form its future relationship with its environment
- the challenge is to break the rules of the past and structure IS to meet a variety of changing information requirements, some of which cannot even be known before the systems are built

vision failures

- the problem is that, by modeling processes and structures as they are at present, SIS developments are failing to take into account future requirements
- detrimental effects:
    - the organisation's SIS development effort will be diverted or wasted
    - the SIS will not support the organisation's long-term strategy
    - the organisation's strategic flexibility may be compromised

step 1: conception

- creative, generative mental process, probably with a high degree of originality and with relatively little formality or routine

- potential techniques may support the process:
    - ♦ creativity methods ? ?blue-sky thinking?, ?brainstorming?, ?world caffe?
    - ♦ abstractization ? SWOT, TOWS, STEEP, PESTE analysis

step 2: interpretation

- abstract and intuitive qualities of vision are at odds with the precision which is necessary for analysing, specifying and designing information systems
- support:
    - ♦ focussing techiques ? SODA (Strategic Options Development & Analysis), SCA (Strategic Choice Approach)
    - ♦ giving meaning - semantic analysis techniques

step 3: intention

- interpretation of the abstract vision onto achievable objectives, define targets and levels of performance
- techniques for:
    - ♦ objective-setting ? Strategic Options Generator, ICA model
    - ♦ target-setting ? CSF (critical success factor analysis)

step 4: synthesis

- contributions of the various participants and the various strategic options which have been identified at the previous stage are synthesized into ?a single ambition?
- practices
    - ♦ participation ? soft systems methodology
    - ♦ consensus-building ? Delphi technique

step 5: integration

- communicating the agreed values, norms, behviours and having them accepted as the ?cultural norm?
- components:
    - ♦ communication techniques
    - ♦ inspiration - inspiring the participants to accept and follow the vision; team-building techniques

step 6: implementation

- the information system would be designed as it should be, not as it is presently
- architectures and models are based largely on normal analysis and design techniques such as entity-relationship models, data flow diagrams and a variety of referential matrixes
- the approach may be forward-looking, but the techniques for developing requirements don?t support it

what about the nature of projects?

- the structural relation between project and vision crumbles, as the vision implodes into a project that is both determined by the vision and its container

- the project is re-shaped into an evolutionary endeavor, in which even the word ?project? is recursively re-imprinted
- the reason for ?project? proves to be internal, rather than external, while dissatisfaction is revealed to result from alienation, rather than stress factors

Concept

probing the future

- a concept car is a car prototype made to showcase a new vehicle?s styling, technology, and overall design before production
- they are often shown at motor shows to gauge customer reaction to new and radical designs which may or may not have a chance of being produced

concept vehicles

- Toyota Concept Car
- Mercedes Concept Car
- BMW Concept Car
- Chevrolet Concept Car
- Dacia Concept Car