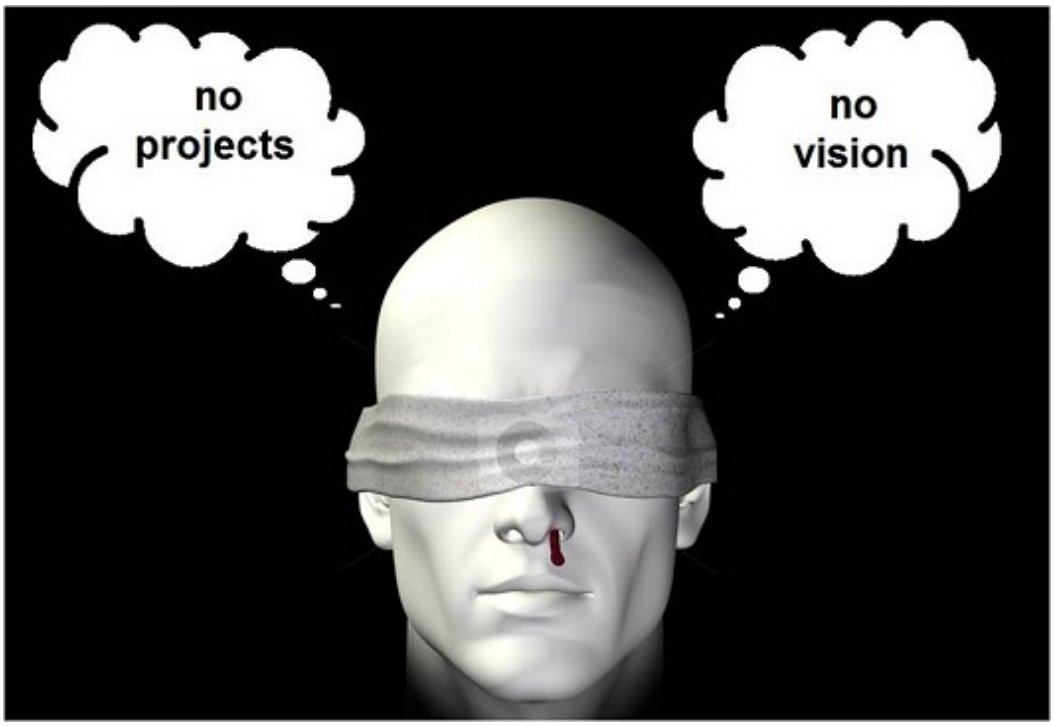
Project Visions and Visioning

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

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