

Project Visions and Visioning



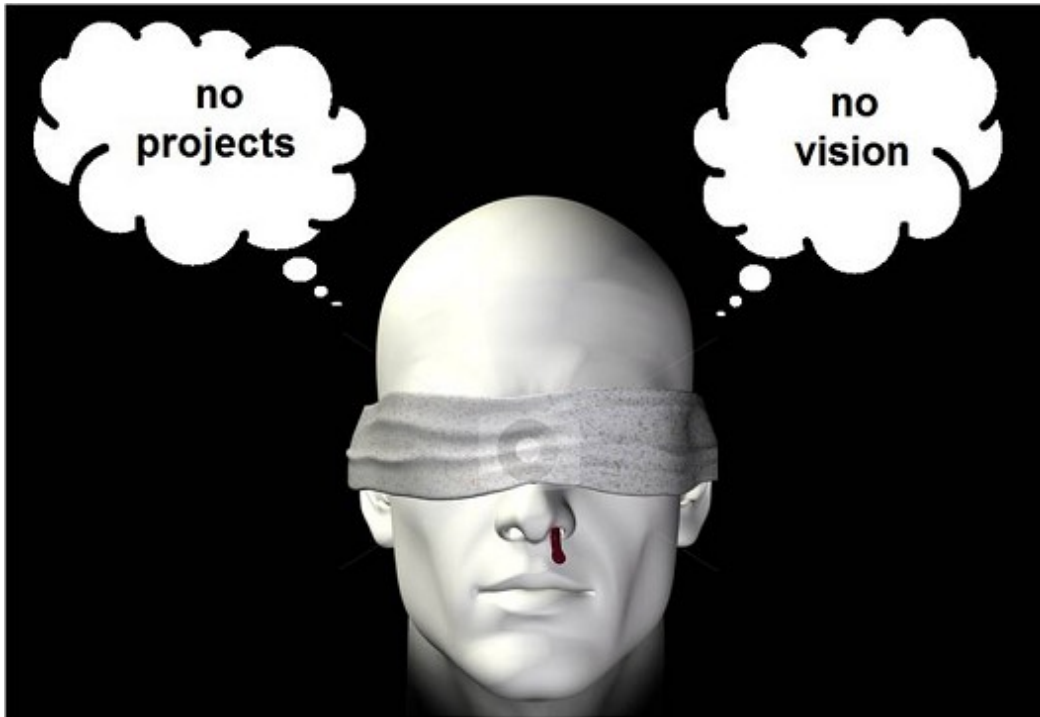
This article is developed within the scope of the **Project Visions and Visioning**, an effort to enhance Foresight learning through collaborative work.

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).

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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 temporality, 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

Visionary_Project

- 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

Visionary_Project

- 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 techniques ? 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, behaviours 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

step 1: conception

Visionary_Project

- 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