MUTUAL LEARNING PLATFORM

Regional Foresight Report

REGIONAL FORESIGHT - BOOSTING REGIONAL POTENTIAL

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Committee of the Regions

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Prologue:

The role of Strategic Policy Intelligence Tools (SPI) in policy-making and regional development, and this report as part of the integrative approach of the Mutual Learning Platform (MLP)

The increasing need to apply – and combine – SPI tools

The complexity and uncertainties about the impact of Research, Technology and Innovation (RTDI) policies are increased by the following: 1) the growing importance of science and technology-induced innovation; 2) new forms of knowledge and their application; 3) complex exchange processes; 4) the increasing speed of change; and 5) the distributed nature of innovation. This, together with the growing empowerment of citizens and their subsequent expectations and capabilities to influence the design of their future societies, may be problematic. This makes it difficult to implement systemic policies if decision-makers rely only on traditional approaches.

Strategic Policy Intelligence can be defined as the set of actions to search, process, diffuse and protect information in order to make it available to the right person at the right time so as to make the right decision.

SPI tools include foresight, technology assessment, evaluation, benchmarking, territorial quality process, etc. They are used in order to provide decision-makers and stakeholders with comprehensive, objective, politically unbiased, independent and, very importantly, forward-looking information.

A territory's strategic intelligence capacity's function is to support, with customised intelligence, the decision-making process on RTDI, among others. It is to also facilitate innovation and learning processes in innovation systems or in societies as a whole.

This strategic intelligence capacity includes:

- the timely identification of fresh alternatives for territorial development, governance structures, societal relationships and the roles of the stakeholders and actors (territorial foresight), as well as new technologies and areas of application. These would help in being better able to anticipate developments in science and technology (technology foresight);
- the explicit learning of policy aimed at stimulating science and technology, applying it at the level of individual instruments and integrating it in innovation systems (policy evaluation, policy monitoring). An important goal is to stimulate processes of policy learning and to attain the capacity for timely adjustment and/or refinement of the policy mix;
- the introduction of the user perspective when the co-production of innovations is involved. Technology Assessment, e.g., becomes a form of 'anticipatory intelligence', a policy instrument for shaping the interaction and dialogue between the actors, especially S&T experts with potential and existing 'investors' and 'users'. This would initiate social innovation and learning processes vis-à-vis the deployment and use of science and technology, thus facilitating supported innovations and sustainable economic growth.

Policy learning and development are reinforced by combining these tools. There is, however, no "blueprint" for the combination and integration of SPI tools, as this depends on the objectives and the scope of the decisions in question. Furthermore, it depends on the state of information of the topic, on the focus taken by the decision-makers (narrow, wide) and on the stakeholders involved. This distributed nature of up-to-date information needed for decision-making is often the main

obstacle for effective and efficient policy-making.

SPI can play a crucial role in the management of modern innovation systems which are less hierarchical, more user-friendly and "fuzzier" than before. Several suggestions are made to improve the quality of SPI and the related infrastructure needed, thus systematically enhancing the input SPI can give to support policy-making and decision-makers:

- the different SPI tools need to be better integrated, used more comprehensively and synergies must be developed. Mere discussions of the definitions and boundaries of the methodologies do not add to the usefulness and understanding of these tools.
- The quality of SPI tools needs to be improved. This could be done by establishing networks and quality controls therein.
- Finally, an interface needs to be established between SPI providers/sources and users. For users to actually be able to use these tools effectively, they must learn to apply them first. A support network would make this possible.

Four basic principles for the effective use of Strategic Intelligence that can contribute to making RTDI policies "more realistic, efficient, relevant and democratic" include:

- participation: incorporate a multitude of perspectives in policy-making processes;
- objectivisation: SPI makes policy-making more objective by supplying appropriate tools, analyses and information;
- mediation and alignment: the mutual learning and understanding by the stakeholders in question being facilitated. This makes understanding and consensus-building easier;
- decision support: SPI provides adequate tools to facilitate decision-making and, more importantly, to implement these decisions.

Nevertheless, in concrete application cases, the existing SPI tools need to be modified and combined in various and flexible ways. This is especially true in the regional context where SPI tools are a rather new element in decision-making.

The integrative MLP approach

Motivating and enabling regional actors to use and combine SPI tools successfully will be enhanced greatly if the necessary information is also provided in an integrative perspective. From the beginning, the Mutual Learning Platform (MLP) was designed in such a way that it pulls together a number of existing Community initiatives for greater coherence: 1) regional foresight activities; 2) the European Innovation TrendChart and Scoreboard; and 3) the Regions of Knowledge pilot actions. It structures the related knowledge in the three working groups: Regional Profiles, Regional Benchmarking and Regional Foresight.

The following report, therefore, is written from this perspective, as well. It will not pretend that Regional Foresight will solely and automatically solve all problems. What Regional Foresight can do, however, is to generate the strategic knowledge for new development options AND the commitment of the actors to work together on their objective (if professionally guided and related to the other SPI processes in the territory).

Introduction: Regional Foresight

What is foresight?

Foresight is an independent, dialectic and rigorous undertaking, conducted in a cross-disciplinary and collective manner. Foresight is designed to shed light on questions about the present and the future. It considers them in their systemic and complex framework, as it presents itself today and as it might develop over time, from the past to the long-term future.

There are various dimensions to consider if this challenging approach is to be successful. As an exploratory process, foresight allows us to discern evolutionary trends, identify continuities, ruptures and discontinuities of environmental variables (players and factors), and determine the range of possible futures. As a normative process, foresight allows us to build visions of desirable futures, elaborate on possible collective strategies and intervention rationales, and improve the quality of the decisions to be taken.

A foresight exercise has two main outcomes. The interactive process of collective intelligence and mobilisation of the players can create, in itself, consensus and commitment for the action that will be undertaken. This is especially true when identifying common stakes and developing a shared vision. Additionally, foresight should lead to a strategic phase that will give precise answers to the long-term challenges identified and to an action programme potentially capable of attaining that vision. To be credible, the programme will have to: 1) be as explicit as possible; 2) address the key constraints identified; 3) identify the actors and the means to carry out the actions; and 4) pay special attention to budgetary choices. The action programme will also have to include guidance of the implementation and follow-up, along with the process' evaluation and exercise's products.

What is Regional Foresight?

In general, "Regional Foresight" is the application of foresight to territories, whatever their size and governance structure. In the European context, Regional Foresight (i.e. regional territorial foresight) is normally used in contrast to National Foresight. The regional dimension is then understood in the broad meaning of the term, in the same way, for example, as the Committee of the Regions which covers the entire range of activities of the regional and local authorities of the European Union.

Therefore, the concepts of territory and region comprise all the areas described in the Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), developed by Eurostat in 1961: the UK and Belgian regions and the German Länder (NUTS 1), the French regions, Counties and the Belgian provinces (NUTS 2), the arrondissements, departments and Kreise (NUTS 3) as well as the former NUTS 4 and 5, the local administrative units embracing the 112 000 municipalities of Europe of the 25 (LAU 2), and the higher level administrative areas (LAU 1). In this sense, regional foresight covers levels both regional and infraregional.

Key to the concept is the importance of closeness and relatedness. Therefore, supraregional or even hybrid area approaches (involving regions with different statutes as well as national States, cf Vision 2020 of the Large Region) could also fall under this category.

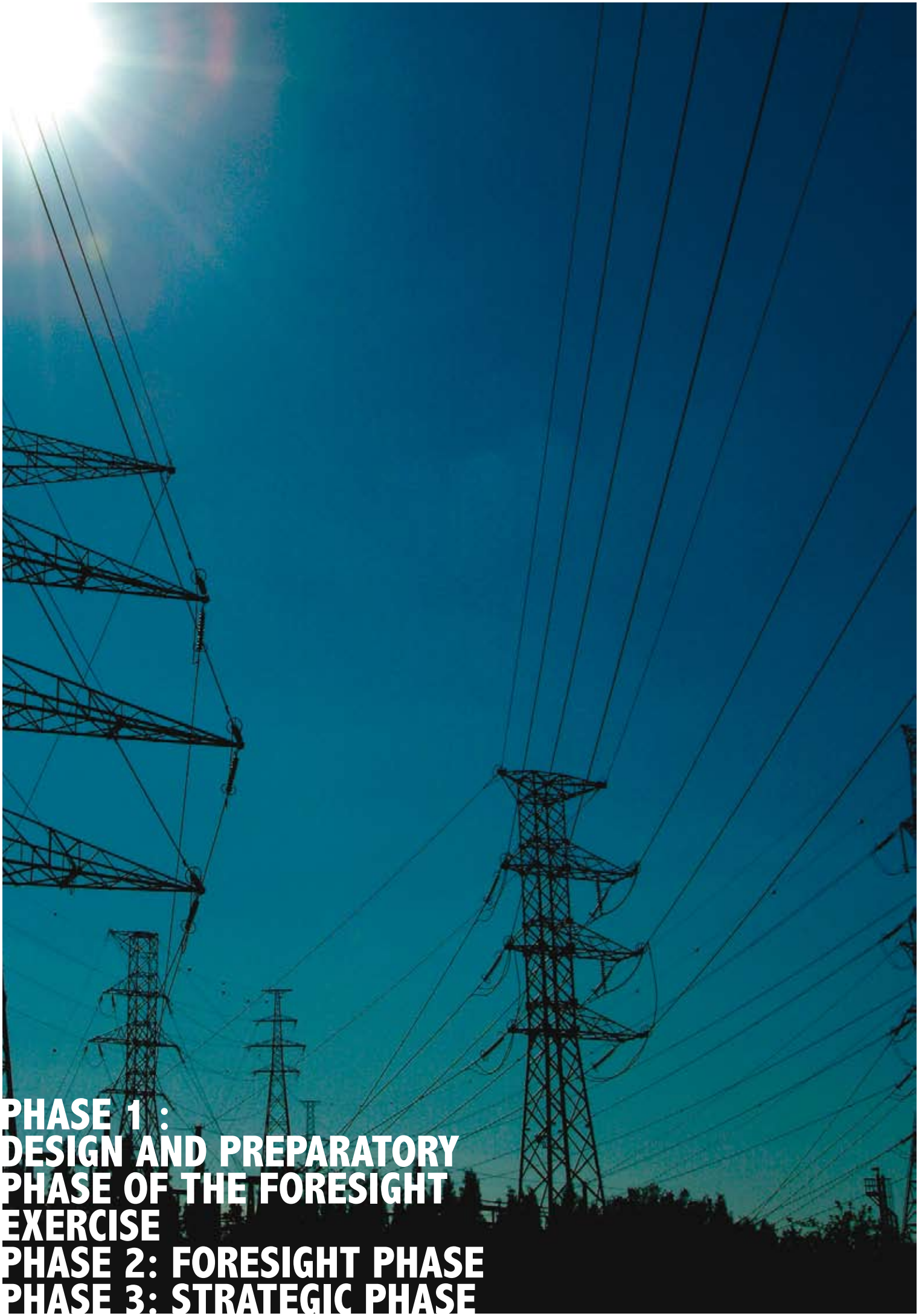
While globalisation has an impact on territories, and this includes broadened spatial horizons in their deliberations, foresight has become a major instrument of regional governance. This is especially due to its virtues of pedagogical, organisational and societal learning as well as its potential to achieve sustainable development.

Stages, processes and questions pertaining to regional foresight

Any attempt to present a guide or a one-off frame, valid for all foresight exercises, for all territories and for each and every circumstance, would be an impossible task. Every experience and every territory has its own distinctive characteristics, which are subject to the circumstances and players involved.

Every foresight exercise is shaped as it develops whatever the methods, tools and experts sought. As a step towards establishing dialogue with regional actors, the following document synthesises and structures some experiences in the field, and capitalises on European initiatives such as the FOREN, FOMOFO, eFORESEE and FORETECH projects, the Country Guides to Regional Foresight, the Handbook of Knowledge Society Foresight, the Blueprints for Foresight Actions in the Regions and the FOR-LEARN platform.

We have chosen three foci to inform on regional foresight. First, we focus on the key phases and sequences one would find in most exercises. Our approach is structured around three phases and seven sequences. The second focus is on crosscutting processes and broader developments. It is here that we should pay particular attention to ensure the success of the foresight exercise; they are the long movements and breathing rhythms of the exercise. Finally, we highlight the specific context issues that must be taken into account.



PHASE 1 : DESIGN AND PREPARATORY PHASE OF THE FORESIGHT EXERCISE
PHASE 2: FORESIGHT PHASE
PHASE 3: STRATEGIC PHASE

I. Phases and sequences of regional foresight

Three phases are essential for the realisation of any foresight exercise. The first is that of detailed design and preparation of the exercise, namely clarification of objectives, 'boarders" and time horizon. The second is the foresight phase that defines the long-term challenges and the development of a common vision from a common information base. The third phase is devoted to the strategy that prepares, precedes and accompanies action.

1. Key phases and key sequences of the Foresight process

Design and preparatory phase
(Clarification of objectives, perimeter, timescale, desire, etc.)

Foresight phase (Analysing, thinking and debating the future)
1. Identification (actors and factors) and foresight diagnosis
2. Setting up the long-term issues
3. Building the common vision

Strategic phase (Shaping the future)
4. Definition of strategic axis
5. Measurement and choice of the concrete actions
6. Steering and monitoring the implementation
7. Evaluation of the foresight process and outputs

PHASE 1 : DESIGN AND PREPARATORY PHASE OF THE FORESIGHT EXERCISE

Definition of the objectives of the foresight exercise

The objectives of the exercise must be defined in conjunction with the main parties involved. They must determine the tasks that are to be shared by the different partners, not mistake them for the ultimate aims or goals to be reached by the territory itself. The tasks could be written down in a charter presenting some of the rules of the game. These objectives are fundamental because they concretise the participants' expectations and will be used to evaluate the exercise. They must therefore be precise, clear and comprehensible for everyone. These objectives will also define the dimensions of the examination of the territory, in cases where the foresight limits itself to a single specific question or sector.

Positioning of the foresight exercise in time

A foresight exercise needs to pay special attention to various horizons and their development over time, e.g.:

a. the vision's time horizon;
b. the horizon's retrospective analysis;
c. the strategic horizon.

a. The vision's time horizon

The choice of the vision's time horizon is based on two requirements. The first consists of spelling out the short-term contingencies' assessments, and therefore on the participants' mandates, careers and personal stakes. The second concerns the possibility of allowing oneself enough time to implement the major projects. Steps for this include the setting up of new infrastructure, the introduction of social and/or educative restructuring, etc. A generation span also corresponds to these changes quite well.

b. The horizon's retrospective analysis

By and large the horizon's retrospective analysis on which the diagnostic and research will be based must correspond with the measure of time required to reach the horizon's vision. However, this time allocation must be adjusted in terms of the events that have marked the territory's history (ruptures and turnings), especially the sectors under scrutiny (institutions, demography, society, economy, technology, etc.).

c. The strategic horizon

The strategic horizon is where the exercise plays a key role, particularly for a successful end and product delivery. The choice of date is extremely important because it must take into account the pace of the territory's economic, social and political life and look for the most appropriate moments for these events. What is the point, for example, of producing a strategic plan for the territory when nobody is interested in it any longer because the context has changed?

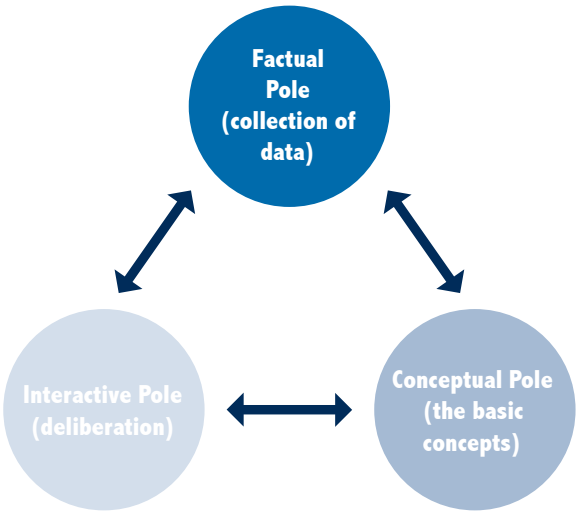
Positioning of the foresight exercise in space

Fernand Braudel maintained that the value of geographical observation lies in the density of its duration. Space must be perceived on the basis of its internal and external dynamics and tie in with the realities of the people who were born, live or work there. The territory demands an appropriation process from the start of the foresight exercise. A challenge to this process and discussion of its limits are undoubtedly beneficial because they force spatial representations to emerge and reveal the players' ambitions. With the arrival of multilevel governance, the regional scales of foresight exercises are essential. Mapping is crucial because it allows us to review the different visions of the territory and above all to identify the direction and breadth of views in terms of the problems raised.

Setting up the steering structures of the foresight exercise

In order to be operational, the steering structures of the foresight exercise will have to satisfy: 1) the need for heuristic capacities (factual Pole for collecting the data); and 2) capacities that are deliberative (interactive Pole) and conceptual (conceptual Pole to produce the basic principles). These are in line with the three poles described in Discours de la méthode créatrice by Thierry Gaudin.

The Creative Method by Thierry Gaudin



Discours de la méthode créatrice, 2003.

The geometry of these worksites varies. The collection of data is entrusted to a number of experts but can also include the interested parties, even citizens, because the knowledge and perception of these data is multifaceted. As many citizens as possible need to participate in the data gathering to ensure a solid contribution and broad understanding of the data.

In the same way, the collective intelligence, discussions and deliberations must involve the players as a whole. Lastly, the summary, intermediate and final reports will be designed by a smaller group of people. However they should be representative of the parties concerned and made up of reporters and experts, if possible. The relevance and quality of their work will finally be judged by the extent to which it is appropriated by the greatest number of people.

A project team, charged with the daily management of the exercise, relies on a Steering Committee bringing together the parties concerned and regional sensibilities. This Committee can be expanded to form a working party of twenty to thirty people in order to legitimise the "production" achieved during the conceptual stages.

Programming of the foresight exercise

A foresight exercise usually lasts between nine months and three years. Even if the programme has to be regularly adjusted as a function of the results of the evaluations of the various phases and stages, the complete programme must be elaborated and presented to the participants from the outset. A programme that is elaborated gradually, without any strict deployment plan, would lose all credibility in the very eyes of the participants.

It is best to run the exercise on the basis of a "Gantt chart", spelling out the timetable of the phases and sequences, and making it available to the participants. This document can be adapted during the exercise. Thus, the focus can be specifically on the development of the process, and above all to try and avoid the "sinkhole effects" that can arise at the end of an exercise when time may well be running out as the closure date approaches. The closure date is often planned to coincide with a communication event and the finalisation of the strategic programme. Undue speeding up can harm the participants' proper appropriation of the results.

Budgeting and financing of the foresight exercise

The financial resources constitute one of the differentiation factors. Previous experience shows that the financial means required to realise a foresight exercise may be limited. This is especially true when the mobilisation capacity is strong and a minimum amount of expertise exists at regional level. In fact, the will to launch the exercise is a more decisive factor than any financial constraints.

The cost of an exercise depends mainly on: 1) the distance between the activities' sites; 2) the fields covered; 3) the size of the project management team; 4) the organisation of events; and 5) the approach chosen.

The following items may put a (more or less) serious strain on the budget:

- remunerations and operating costs of the project team;
- organisation of Steering Committee meetings (rental of rooms, meals, etc.);
- meetings of working parties (rental of rooms, meals and the like);
- external animators and experts;
- inaugural events, restitution and/or dissemination;
- invitation and communication expenses;
- etc.

Development of the communication plan of the foresight exercise

Before anything can begin, it is important to define communication, as it is an essential aspect in the entire process. The objective underlying the implementation of the project must be expressed clearly and the information to be communicated must be targeted towards the public concerned.

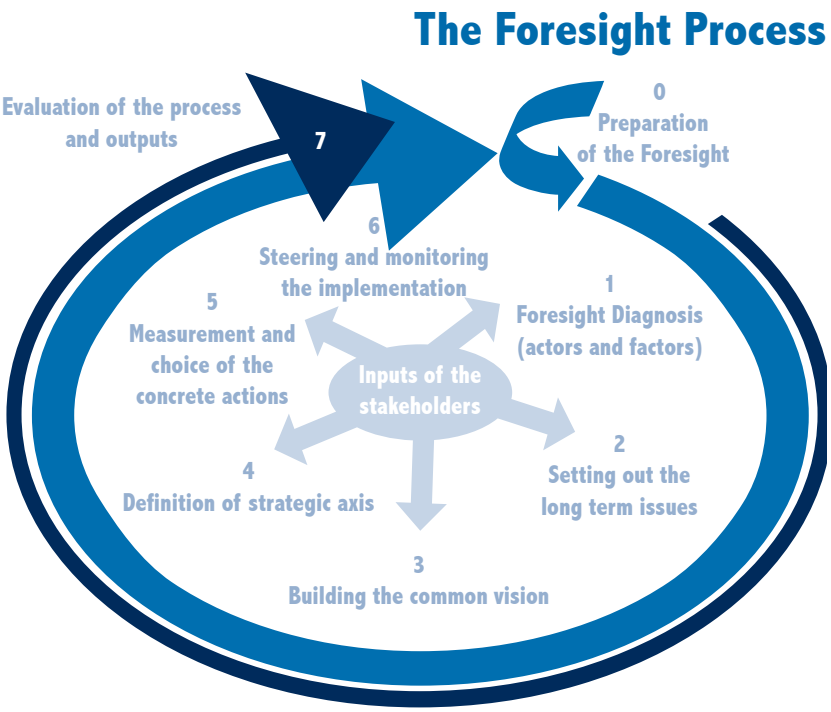
Communication has several purposes: it is a tool to inform the territory's population about the advancement and final achievements of the exercise; it is a means to raise awareness among the players and then mobilise them; and it is a guarantee of good governance and democratic transparency.

The facilities provided by the Internet have greatly expanded the communication capacity that is related to a foresight exercise. Websites, discussion fora, wikis and other communication tools must be used in order to increase the number of players engaged in the foresight exercise.

Results expected from the preparatory phase:

- framework and the objectives of the exercise (method, expected products);
- work programme;
- balanced exercise budget;
- steering structures;
- list of the key players to be associated with the enterprise;
- outline of a networking system for the gathering of information;
- communication plan.

PHASE 2: FORESIGHT PHASE



Sequence 1: Identification (actors and factors) and foresight diagnosis

In the first working sequence of the foresight exercise, the question of the identification with the territory by its inhabitants will have to be answered. The territory will then have to be matched up with the foresight developments in time and space.

Identification of the territory (actors and factors)

We have to answer the question Who am I? Knowledge of the territory constitutes the preliminary stage of any foresight exercise, whatever the angle of study. Therefore, as much key information as possible on the territory's variables must be collected. Not only must we get to know the territory's history (retrospective), geography (landscapes), economy, culture, society, but its inhabitants and their perception of themselves which can also prove essential. The informational underpinnings built up in this way will provide all the reference information to be fed into the assessment and considerations behind the initiative (existing studies, observatories, and so on) and be used there as qualitative and quantitative support material. This analysis will also include a time of capitalisation and shared appropriation of both the earlier studies and the strategic projects on the territory, in whole or in part.

Foresight diagnosis

The foresight diagnostic is a collective, crosscutting analysis that ensures a finely honed knowledge of the state of the territory, in particular the developments of regional variables in the long term. The analysis will cover not only the present, but it will also be a retrospective and foresight exercise. It will describe the changes in the actors, regional factors and territory, framed in a broader environment i.e. on a national, European and global scale. The foresight diagnosis will reveal the internal and external evolutionary trends, the turnings, ruptures, opportunities, potential risks and weak signals. In fact, all the positive and negative possibilities that may have an impact on the territory will emerge. Both the task of identification and the foresight diagnosis should be a collective undertaking so that they can be validated, shared and appropriated by all the players and participants.

Many methods are at hand to help identify a territory and carry out a foresight diagnosis: foresight workshops, evaluation, benchmarking, players' games analysis, analysis Assets / Forces / Opportunities /Threats, etc.

Results expected from sequence 1:

– knowledge and understanding of the territory and how it has developed;
– setting-up of the working parties (networking and mutual learning).

Sequence 2: Definition of the long-term regional issues

Here, we have to find out and weigh the main long-term development issues with change potential to determine the correct strategy. The formulation of the issues will draw on the results of the foresight diagnosis. This is especially true for the analysis of the internal and external trends that are exerting pressure now and on the territory in the long term.

A number of tools can help to collectively determine the regional issues in play, specifically foresight workshops or the MICMAC method, developed by LIPSOR.

The use of a control matrix (importance / influence matrix) will help to fix the hierarchy and combination of issues.

Results expected from sequence 2

– networking of the participants and mutual learning;
– list of the key regional issues drawn up by the participants.

Sequence 3: Building the common vision

This vision is the culmination of the process' foresight phase. It is a picture – shared and described in precise terms – of a desired future. The vision is made up of ultimate aims and objectives that can point to its long-term direction and that must guide the collective strategy of the political decision-makers, the parties concerned and the citizens.

Michel Godet shows how a foresight vision can consist of four elements:
– the ultimate aims or the general goals thought to be possible and pursued energetically (idea of process and ideal);
– the major projects that portray the future. These are the effects anticipated from the actions and main worksites when they have been completed satisfactorily (idea of result);
– a system of shared values. These are the values expressed in words that bind the parties concerned, and allow them to manage their differences, go down the vision-traced road and start work on their strategic pivotal points.
– the collective will to achieve objectives. This will conveys the unity of the parties concerned and their determination to commit themselves to the task at hand. They appear in the vision.

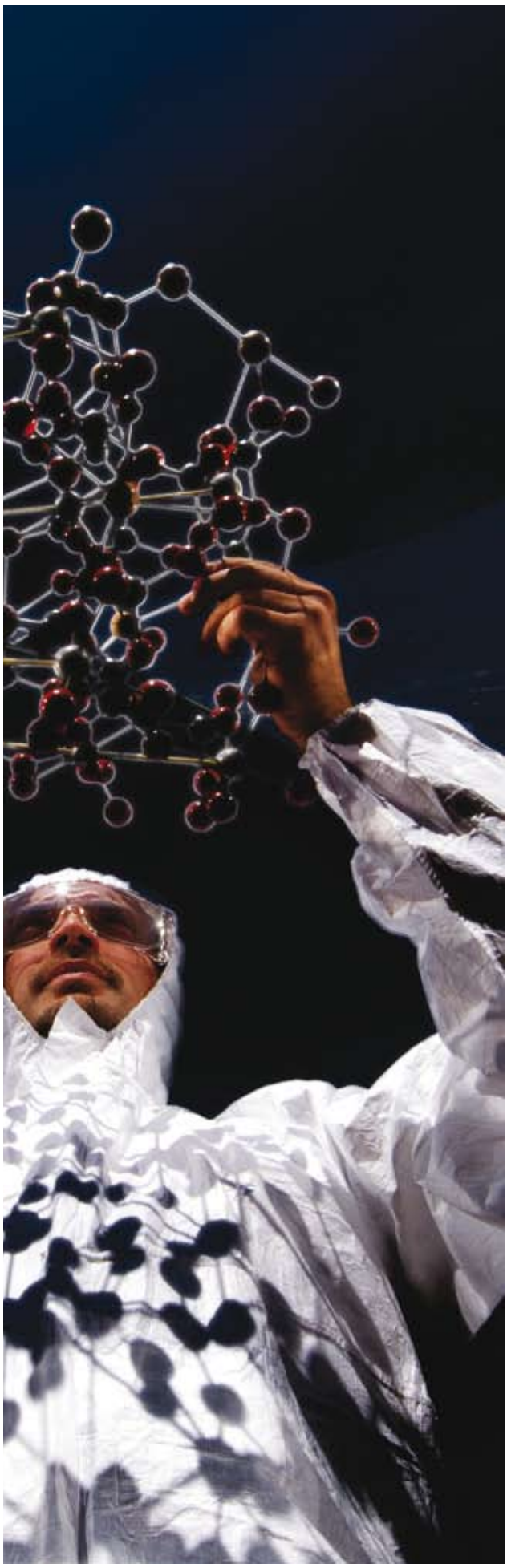
The wording of the vision relies on the long-term issues identified beforehand and is subject to their consolidated answers. Foresight workshops, round tables and citizen fora are ways of tackling each issue by means of questions, deliberations and shared answers.

Participants may vary in number, but it is always a good approach to combine local actors with university experts, and others from the social sector or neighbouring territories, particularly the cross-border areas.

The sequential construction of the common vision may take many forms. For example, a vision consisting of the desired outcomes identified collectively (ten or fifteen of them) or scenarios illustrating various aspects of the regional situation, etc.

Results expected from sequence 3

– definition and aggregation of the desirable futures;
– elaboration of a common vision based on these elements;
– control of the sharing-out of the common vision.



PHASE 3: STRATEGIC PHASE

Sequence 4: Definition of the strategic axis

These are the strategic pivotal points that map out the road allowing the territory to accomplish the vision etched on a given time horizon. They also satisfy – as closely as possible – the issues that have been identified collectively. These strategic axes are the structural frame of the regional project to be implemented in the short and medium terms. They rest on the desired outcomes that were proposed, sorted and reorganised in the preceding phase. The proposals are then subjected to a pertinence/feasibility analysis permitting the move from the desirable to the realisable.

The actors taking part in the enlarged steering structures are usually charged with this strategic section, provided they are representative of the different private, public and associative sectors involved.

Results expected from sequence 4:

– succinct strategic plan specifying the stages on the road to a given horizon.

Sequence 5: Measurement and choice of the concrete actions

Each of the strategic axes is embodied in concrete actions that are part of the strategic environment defined for the territory. They take into account the ability of the decision-makers and other regional players to act. The participants, and the experts if necessary, will describe the actions as accurately as possible. They will also focus on the time needed, the launch and end times of their implementation, the actors they propose, the budgetary means required and the origin of the funds. As budgets are always limited, a proper balance must be found between the expectations of the different groups so that the entire project is both credible and supported broadly.

These actions will develop from the proposals put forward during the different phases of the exercise. They will be discussed within the actors' working parties and selected on the basis of precise criteria, of their coherence with the strategic axis and on their operability. The number of priority actions will, in all cases, be limited in number.

Result expected from sequence 5:

– pluriannual action plan expressed in precise terms and budgeted to fit the strategic axis.

Sequence 6: Steering and monitoring the implementation

This sequence will elaborate an ongoing steering system for the whole project. It is designed to stimulate the strategic programme, monitor implementation and facilitate evaluation. It will ensure the connection of the regional parties that are concerned with these operations.

The setting up of a steering and monitoring system takes into consideration the partner's operational and governance capacities. It will be a matter of pushing ahead with the implementation of the strategic programme, ensuring global coherence between the actors, the objectives assigned them and the actions to be undertaken. The steering system will also have to encourage the decision-making process through the speedy

dissemination of reliable, relevant information.

It would be more effective if the same steering and implementation system is used by all the regional operators that will contribute to the concrete realisation of the strategic programme. This would ensure cross-referencing stimulation and a better system performance.

Results expected from sequence 6:

– a system for handling and monitoring the strategic actions, with information on the players, the measures and the means necessary, the implementation stages, the observable indicators of execution and results;
– ongoing steering system of the project in conjunction with the actors.

Sequence 7: Evaluation of the process and products of the exercise

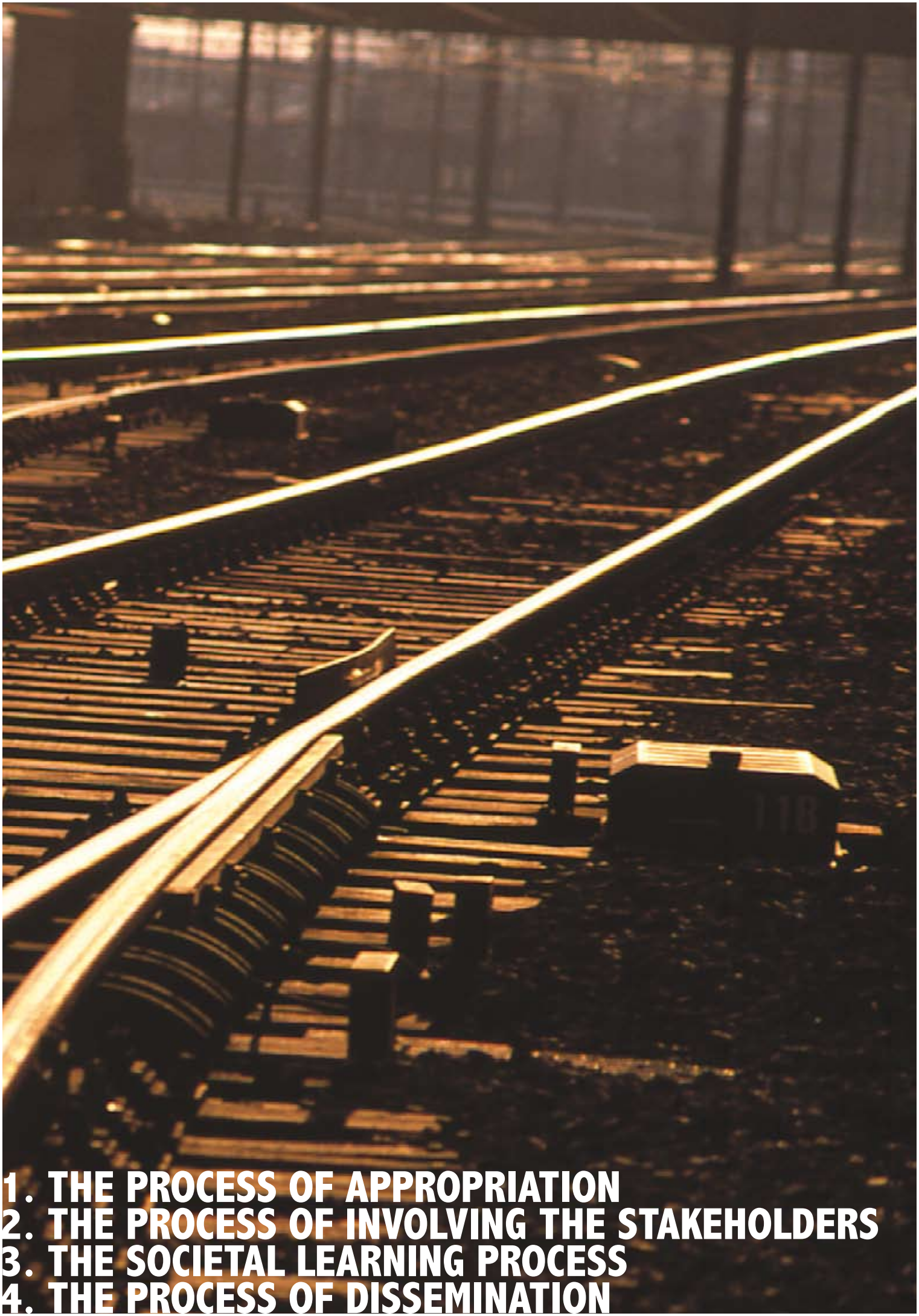
An accompanying evaluation informs the actors, during each sequence, if objectives have been achieved. The evaluation also enables them to learn lessons from the conduct of the exercise, to define complementary actions and to envisage follow-up or remedial steps. Evaluations also give the opportunity to participants to express their points of view on what has worked, in keeping with the common charter, and/or which problems they have observed.

The evaluations also make it possible to judge the adequacy of the exercise's initial objectives, its evolution and results. The quality of its methodological management — particularly the ethics and transparency of its governance — along with the interactions between the process and the territory are also assessed.

The evaluation itself will certainly have to be adapted according to the experiences of the process and its outcomes at each stage: ex-ante, intermediary and ex-post.

Result expected from sequence 7

– analysis of the efficiency and performance of the foresight from the point of view of the actions implemented, the processes of governance, and cultural and societal changes.



1. THE PROCESS OF APPROPRIATION
2. THE PROCESS OF INVOLVING THE STAKEHOLDERS
3. THE SOCIETAL LEARNING PROCESS
4. THE PROCESS OF DISSEMINATION

II. Crosscutting processes and broader developments relevant for successful outcomes

The following processes must be paid attention to throughout the entire foresight exercise: 1) thorough involvement of the participants; 2) learning in a very broad sense; 3) appropriation that results in ownership; and 4) dissemination to facilitate the action and improve its impacts.

Four Crosscutting processes

1. THE PROCESS OF APPROPRIATION

Ownership at the heart of a foresight exercise

For the most part, political decisions are taken in a social environment where agreement has already been attained on the idea behind the decision. The exception to this is when some innovative decisions are made by someone who is highly charismatic or has strong leadership abilities and can go against the tide of public opinion. Henceforth, it is crucial to extend the base of stakeholders and citizens who will be called on to support both the strategy and its implementation. This effort must be conducted from the very start of the process. Usually, it is easier to build a consensus on the values, aims and public will that form the vision than on the strategic lines, concrete actions, or budgetary choices. It is by creating adhesion around the foresight that the strategy is appropriated and the implementation of the recommendations is facilitated and supported.

The appropriation process

Michel GODET, Creating Futures, 2001.

The foresight method is based on the idea that the iterative and collective work accomplished by the stakeholders is an efficient tool to mobilise energy and intelligence. Not only is it done right through the process, but it's also around the result of the exercise. This approach therefore ensures the strategic phase's final product: the regional project. Ownership results from the understanding, assimilation and sharing of the results of the process. Indeed, ownership internalises in each stakeholder both the path leading to the result of the foresight approach and the result itself. Michel Godet has shown how this ownership is both intellectual and emotional (1). It reinforces the cohesion of the group involved in the exercise and its ability to come up with a strategy. When the exercise is appropriated it turns all the stakeholders into actors who are aware of the issues at stake, motivated by the responses developed, and determined to participate in implementing the action programme that was produced collectively.

Stimulating ownership

The stakeholders and citizens associated with the exercise will appropriate the approach and its results in so far as they have been actively involved in developing the exercise. Thus, it is

not a passive consultation approach soliciting opinions on options already set down, but a true participation in giving shape to ideas. This method implies the definition of strict playing rules:

– recruiting the broadest range possible of stakeholders by defining them in the widest sense of the term, as citizens are the primary stakeholders in policies to be conducted in their territory;

– true mechanisms and skills to foster listening, speaking, exchange of ideas, and the culture of debate and deliberative democracy;

– an educational logic to clarify and explain the objectives, goals and issues at stake so that stakeholders understand them;

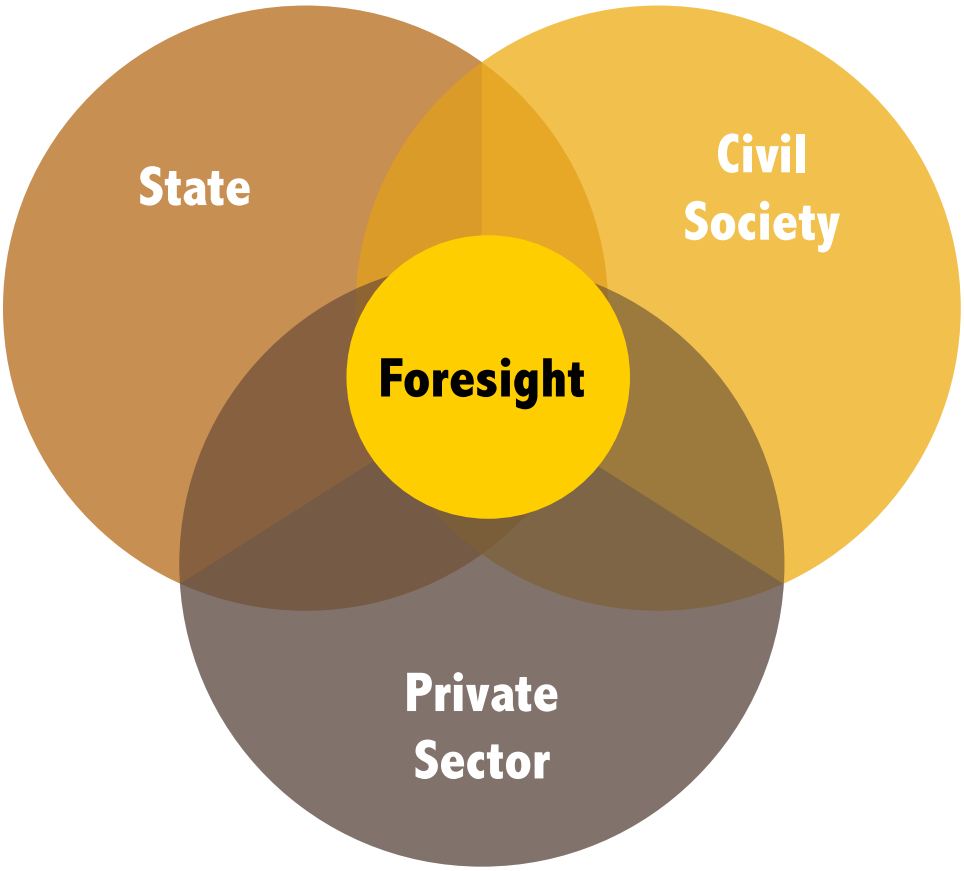
– a process of reflection in which actual experience takes precedence over general theories, even though expertise in "regional sciences" is a crucial resource.

2. THE PROCESS OF INVOLVING THE STAKEHOLDERS

Choosing the people who will participate in the foresight exercise is essential. This action clearly goes hand in hand with the effort to identify key regional actors and it must take place during the diagnosis phase. Indeed, it is hard to see how those piloting the exercise can succeed in the ownership process unless they associate the key actors or stakeholders in the approach.

Because foresight is a forum for close interaction in the

(1) Michel GODET, *Manuel de prospective stratégique, Une indiscipline intellectuelle*, p. 1-16, Paris, Dunod, 1997. – Michel GODET, Creating Futures, *Scenario Planning as a Strategic Managemnt Tool,* Paris, Economica, 2001.



territory among the various levels of governance, it is crucial to associate the representatives of the different spheres of society: private, public and civil society.

Although the latter group is generally the most ready to participate in the work, involving political and administrative circles or local businesses is often a more delicate task. As regards the political realm, it is important to ensure plurality, especially the presence of the minority in the debates and fora. It is equally important to ensure that the political leadership – whether held by a person or a group – does not weigh too heavily on the relations among the actors. As for the businesses, although it is generally hard to mobilise them throughout the whole exercise, their involvement is essential given that their role is to ensure the territory's competitiveness.

Associating the stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement comes in several shapes and forms, and the methods can vary during a foresight exercise. The sequence where the issues are defined may bring out concerns for which the key actors are not represented in the exercise (such as life sciences, pre-school, services for the elderly, etc.). These stakeholders therefore must be brought on board during later phases, either by associating them directly as participants or by inviting them as privileged witnesses or experts in fora or seminars. They also must be guaranteed, a follow-up of information beyond this one-off participation. It is also a good idea to associate actors who are sceptical or opposed to the exercise, not only in the attempt to involve them, but also to take their opinion into account. This helps to anticipate any future resistance that might arise when the strategy is due for implementation.

3. THE SOCIETAL LEARNING PROCESS

In addition to foresight's objective to support strategic reflection, one can also highlight its cognitive aspects in terms of individual, collective and organisational learning. In this respect, a foresight exercise has educational virtues. It is a process of growing awareness and an intellectual conquest of the regional environment, the society and the world by their inhabitants.

The cognitive approach to learning is based on the idea that the perceived world is a mental construct of reality rather than its true reflection. A distinction is made between passive information as material, and knowledge as an active construction that contains a measure of subjectivity which gives it its meaning. Knowledge thus appears as a result of a constructed process, elaborated after information is filtered and reorganised, and transformed into mental representations. Hence, the creation of knowledge presupposes the ability to represent what is real, to establish a solid link between the subject and the object, and to seize the complexity of phenomena (2).

Foresight, which touches on the complexity of reality and rejects determinism, is thus invested with a real capacity to foster forms of double-loop learning. In other words, those that transform guiding values are thus the source that creates knowledge.

Fostering societal learning

In expressing their concepts of the territory and the issues at stake, the foresight exercise participants establish the bases of information that are useful for societal learning. These concepts can be brought together during foresight workshops or by opinion polls. They will then be subject to a collective confrontation with elements of the actual reality, especially through use of the informational underpinning of the foresight diagnosis and/or by enlisting experts. At the same time – and in parallel with the learning process – there occurs a process of de-learning, questioning sound certainties that are often erroneous and the myths that govern notions of the territory. This is to the benefit of governance that is more transparent, closer to reality.

Not only will the foresight exercise expand the knowledge an individual has of the territory, but it will also expand the participants' knowledge of the world. It is essential that a common understanding of the various concepts and issues be built progressively in order to stimulate talk on the vision of the future and on the strategy.

4. THE PROCESS OF DISSEMINATION

Several needs can be addressed when the deliberations and results of a foresight exercise are disseminated, as broadly as possible, throughout the entire process:
– transparency of the exercise is ensured, as is its understanding by all observers;
– the involvement, imputability and cohesion of the actors and participants in the exercise are enhanced;

(2) Jean-Philippe BOOTZ, *Prospective et apprentissage organisationnel*, dans *Travaux et recherches de prospective*, n°13, Paris, Futuribles international, LIPS, DATAR, Commissariat général du Plan, Janvier 2001.

– stakeholders outside the territory are kept informed of the progress made (for example: neighbouring territories, the State, Region, European Commission, etc.);
– implementation of the vision and the strategy can be launched and pursued.

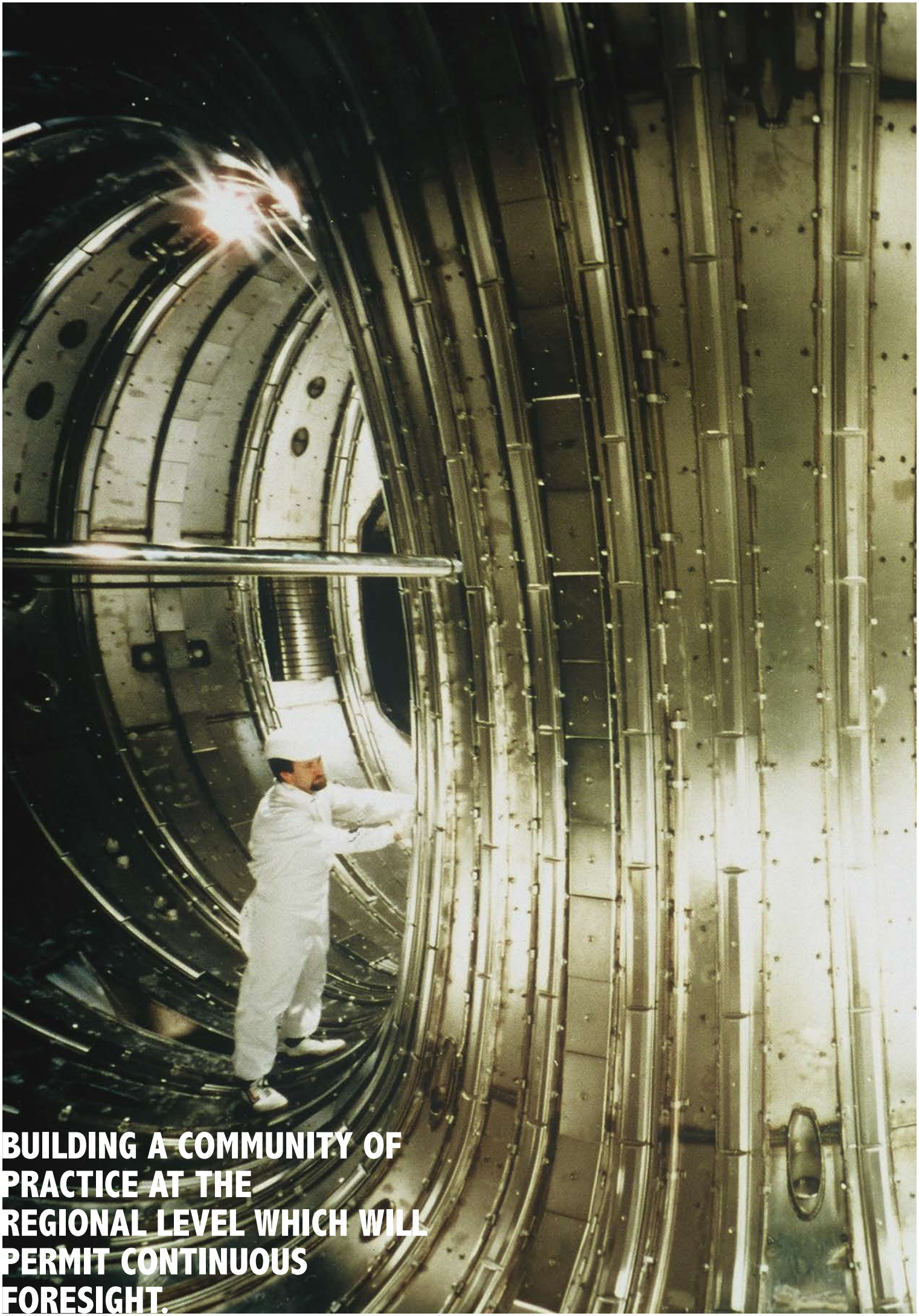
Optimising the work dissemination

A solid communication strategy is central to any foresight exercise. On the one hand, it is based on traditional channels: press conferences at significant steps (launching and presenting the vision, and presenting the project, etc.), alerting the local and regional press, radio and television, specialised reviews, etc. On the other hand, it uses Internet resources.

In fact, it appears necessary – if not obligatory – to build a website so that each actor, at any time, can discover: 1) the ongoing process; 2) the objectives of the exercise; 3) results of the various sequences achieved; and 4) the later phases planned.

Dissemination or discussion lists drawn up for the various operational levels – steering committee, participants overall, working groups – foster the exchanges and interactions at all these levels.

It is vital to publish and widely diffuse the exercise's major documents, and, if necessary, to translate them into languages used by external stakeholders (cross-border dynamics, European Commission involvement, etc.).

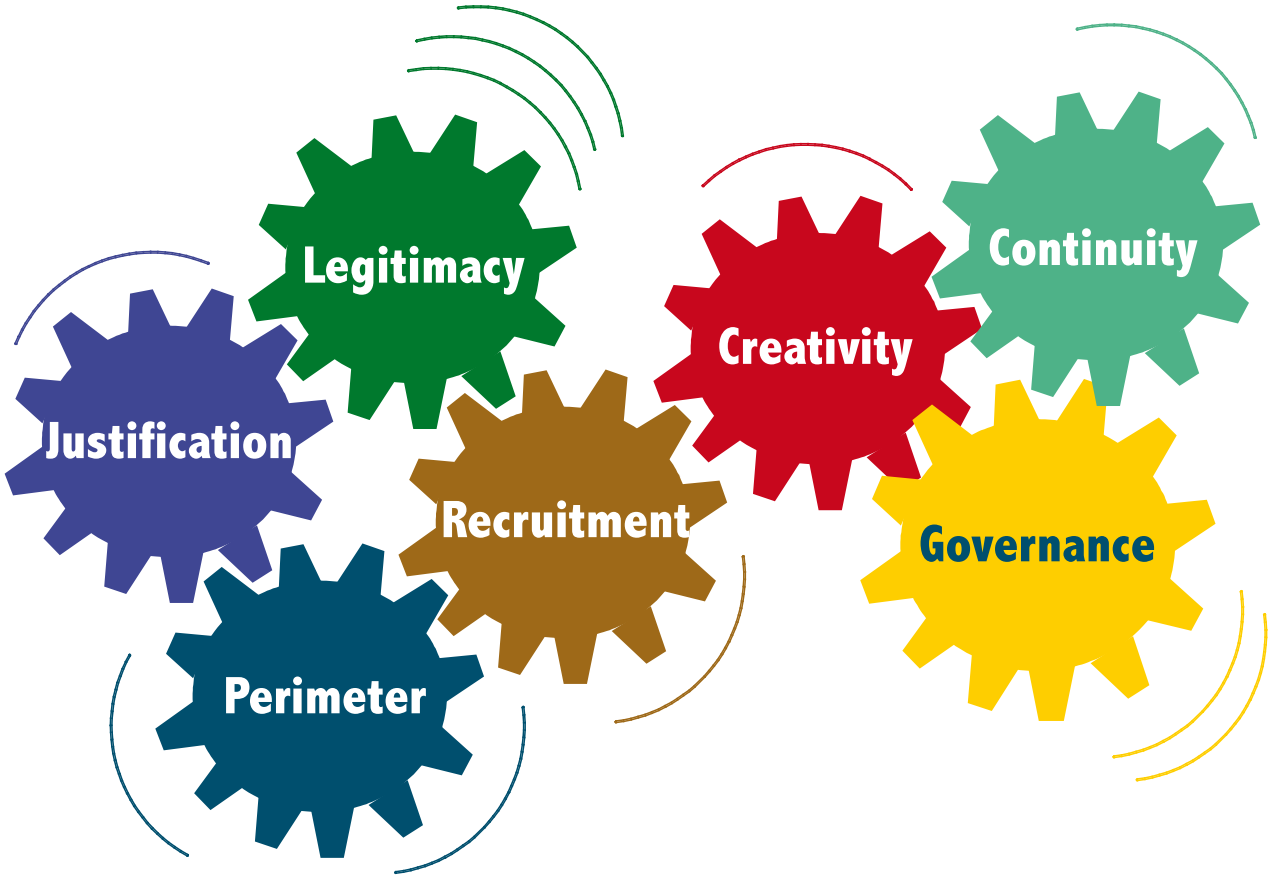


BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL WHICH WILL PERMIT CONTINUOUS FORESIGHT.

III. Questions regarding the context of regional foresight

In order to ensure the success of the exercise, the implementing body has to appropriately address the following issues regarding the context of regional foresight: circumscribing the context (perimeter), legitimacy and trust in the implementing body, emerging creativity and managing innovation, recruitment of the stakeholders and actors, justification for foresight, governance of the exercise; and building a community of practice at the regional level which will permit continuous foresight.

Questions regarding the Context of Foresight



1. CIRCUMSCRIBING THE CONTEXT OF THE EXERCISE

There is no area pre-defined for a foresight exercise. The situation is fairly clear-cut if the territory is a recognised political or administrative district and the initiative is taken by political or administrative officials. A foresight dynamic, however, can also develop in a zone with less defined boundaries, emerging from the actors themselves – citizens, associations, municipalities, businesses, etc. – in an endogenous logic. We should simply bear in mind that a relevant territory is, above all, one in which the actors have the ability to: 1) organise themselves in networks; 2) project themselves into the future; and 3) draw up a common development project. The participants in the exercise will define its perimeter during the process; it would be better if it is done as early as the foresight diagnosis, if possible.

To the extent that it is vital to carefully define the perimeter of a foresight exercise, it is equally important not to limit the reflection to this perimeter. Inherently systemic and holistic, foresight must consider all the regional articulations, integrating at the same time the territory's components and those at broader levels: cross-border, interregional, European, global. This approach implies taking into consideration the issues, visions and strategies of these areas within the regional boundary and beyond. The focus is to analyse the impact that global trends and issues can have on the territory and the means to address them. From the methodological and practical point of view, it is often useful to associate stakeholders from these territories in the foresight approach: local actors, European administrators or elected officials, representatives of multinational companies, members of international organisations, etc. This participation beyond the territory fosters hybrid dynamics that instil creativity and innovation. In all cases, the presence of those outside the territory disrupt the usual interplay between the actors, as the latter will focus more on the image they convey in the discussions.

2. LEGITIMACY AND TRUST IN THE IMPLEMENTING BODY

The issue of the implementing body's legitimacy and the trust he/she instils is important in so far as it will determine: 1) the implementing body's capacity to mobilise actors around the project and 2) the legitimacy of the proposed project.

In fact, except when the foresight exercise is part of a regulatory measure, whether regional, national, federal or even European, there is no criterion to determine the quality of an implementing agency or group. This said, its standing in the society or territory will influence their legitimacy and the confidence people will have in them. The keys to this question can most likely be found in four criteria: regional governance, representative democracy, experience in public administration, and competence in foresight.

2.1. Regional governance

It is necessary for the implementing body to be positioned at the centre of governance and also be able to interact among the three spheres of society: private, public and civil society. This standing not only implies recognition -- by businesses, public officials, associations and citizens – of its qualities of independence, transparency, acquaintance with actors, but it also hints at its ability to form partnerships with them.

2.2. Representative democracy

This criterion is multi-faceted. It can be the strong leadership of an elected official who appears to be above the fray, either because he/she holds or has held important offices, or because he/she appears to stand for the general interest. In a clearly identified administrative territory, this may be the head of the executive body: president of the Regional Council, mayor of a large city, president of an urban community, etc. At the regional level, especially in federal states or in regions with constitutional or legislative power, the Parliament should be a privileged option as a base for regional foresight. This is so because both the legitimacy and the conditions for good governance (transparency, pluralism, etc.) should be strong.

2.3. Experience in public administration

A private or public entity, already well-placed and recognised in one of the other fields of regional public administration, such as assessment – including technological assessment, quality approaches, strategic dialogue, etc. – could build on the legitimacy and trust acquired in these often participatory approaches. It could also act as the foresight implementing body. Universities can also meet this criterion in certain cases. The essential factor for the participants is the conviction that the process will attain its objectives. The results will be considered as forces for change and proposals for the transformation of society.

2.4. Competence in foresight

Competence in foresight is a determining factor. The implementing body may have acquired this competence in two different ways. On the one hand, this may be the ability to lead the overall foresight process single-handedly. In other words, to sufficiently master the concrete methods and techniques of

group moderating, reflection and research. On the other hand, this may be the ability to guide an expert or group of experts (consultants, university figures, etc.), and to maintain control of the process, the interface with the Steering Committee and the territory's actors.

3. EMERGING CREATIVITY AND MANAGING INNOVATION

Practising foresight means learning to think beyond the usual frameworks in order to propose innovative alternatives for a territory's future direction. Several factors boost creativity and innovation: tensions between cultures, confronting ideas; and encounters between differing profiles. It is a question of placing the participants in a situation where they move beyond their traditional scenarios and ways of thinking. They enter a place where they find solutions to new problems and focus on future issues that are hanging in the balance.

As Pierre Gonod has said, beyond the fruit of the unbridled imagination, creation in foresight can be a heuristic process and employ the structured mental processes that multiply, by opening up the classic question, "what if?"(3)

Accordingly, at each step of the foresight exercise, this means employing methods that encourage the participants' individual and collective creativity. Doing so enhances the role of the imagination and senses to further develop ideas: role playing, constructing models, scenarios for change, etc.

In particular, creativity must be in play in the conceptual phases. It forms representations of the regional system, as much during the foresight diagnosis, as when the vision is constructed or when defining the set of strategic axes. The axes must align and relate all the constitutive elements.

We must bear in mind that *a collection of micro-explorations has never added up to a thought*. The most significant effort, after documentary research and participative interaction, is to bring out the structuring concepts that have an innovative, imaginative, and creative analytical core. (4)

(3) Pierre GONOD, *Dynamique des systèmes et méthodes prospectives*, p. 35-36, coll. *Travaux et recherches de prospective*, Paris, Futuribles international - LIPS - DATAR, Mars 1996.

(4) Thierry GAUDIN, *Discours de la méthode créatrice*, p. 35 et 81, Gordes, Ose-Savoir-Le Relié, 2003.

4. RECRUITING STAKEHOLDERS AND ACTORS

The success of a regional foresight exercise depends on the intense and high-quality participation of the territory's actors. To avoid turning this recruitment process into one of "rounding up the usual suspects", the call for participation should be based on a precise analysis of the territory's stakeholders. A personal and detailed letter should be sent to potential participants who can then be contacted again individually. This approach does not preclude wider calls, through mailings or the press. It explains that the foresight exercise is to become a tangible and incontrovertible event in the territory.

In addition to these individual contacts, structuring organisations in the territory should also be approached and they may become partners in the initiative: chambers of commerce, employer's organisations, labour unions, democratic political parties, environmental protection associations, teaching establishments or universities, etc. These partnerships are intended to encourage the individual participation of their members. It is indeed important during the foresight process to avoid any corporatism, lobbying and other collective strategies, which would only reproduce the usual patterns in the territory.

The recruitment of foresight actors is thus an iterative process that will continue throughout the exercise. This is for two reasons: it will take time before some actors understand the importance of their participation and decide to join the exercise. Furthermore, the list of actors needed, especially experts, will become more precise as the exercise unfolds, particularly after the sequence that determines the long-term issues at stake. Those who join the exercise at a later period will be asked not to call into question prior steps that are already achieved. This is to ensure that the process does not become "2 steps forward, one step back".

5. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR FORESIGHT (WHEN TO LAUNCH THE EXERCISE)

We can consider that the only condition truly necessary to launch a foresight exercise is a need felt by the stakeholders to do two things: confront the future of their territory, and ask questions about its future and that of the society they live in. Methods, financial and human resources, and the organisation are a bonus.

This need is profoundly linked to the history of the territory, often the result of a reflection process having matured, particularly by a core group that will take the initiative: groups of elected officials, administrators, economic operators,

associations, simple citizens, etc. It generally arises from a double awareness: on the one hand, an issue that needs to be addressed (European enlargement, closure of one of the territory's base firms, effects of globalisation, construction of a new motorway or high speed train line, etc.) and on the other hand, reviewing possibilities to conduct a new form of policy (economic upturn, development programme for which the territory may be eligible, etc.). These elements can act as catalysts.

What comes next is mobilisation around the idea, but also setting the necessary target of the exercise. The point at which the result must be delivered to the actors of the territory must be determined. This can have an impact on the agenda of its governance. A clear strategy must be set in place to establish what can constitute a time of discontinuity in the path taken by the territory. The timescale must then be drawn up and methods need to be chosen in view of this timescale. These actions will help determine when to launch the exercise. The time chosen must take into account the time needed for the idea to mature before the event gets off the ground.

6. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE EXERCISE

Whether it is launched by regional authorities or by another actor (chamber of commerce, association, university, etc.), the foresight exercise will inevitably interfere with the system of actors in the territory. To mitigate any harmful effects, the process must ensure that its governance is as clear and transparent as possible. Reports on missions and precise structural description – functional office, steering committee, development council, etc. in which the actors can recognise their place and feel represented – can make this possible.

Involving elected officials and major actors throughout the whole process is vital to the success of the exercise. It is an illusion to think that once the foresight work is achieved, political or economic authorities will automatically be capable of appropriating the conclusions for themselves, as if it were a mere study. We have already stressed that in the logic of collective intelligence, the work must be appropriated throughout the process. Therefore, the actual presence of these authorities must be ensured at each step. It is their presence that will motivate the participation of other stakeholders, who will be convinced that the results, and thus the strategy, will take ground at the highest levels. This interaction is essential in securing a successful end for the exercise.

Likewise, the organisers will take care to safeguard the philosophical and political pluralism of the process, in particular by not letting it become a tool for electoral campaigns, serving a special few.

7. BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AT REGIONAL LEVEL: CONTINUOUS FORESIGHT

A "foresight territory" is not built in one day; experience must build over the years with different angles of approach and prisms. The actors must adopt a prospective attitude in their daily life, get to know each other and anticipate the positions taken by one or the other.

The hardest task is possibly to bring members of the three spheres of governance to work together. Occasionally, it will be useful to reiterate the experiences in each of these spheres before attempting a common exercise which would be the completion of the first initiatives.

The results of the exercises, programmes, strategic plans and visions have limited shelf life. And the issues that structured the exercises evolve and are regularly renewed. All these elements justify setting up a continuous foresight, which is composed of successive exercises, interspersed with periods of internal maturing and monitoring of external developments. This dynamic, which is particularly beneficial for the territory, requires a permanent and independent foresight team or unit. It is the "thinking cap" of a network of the territory's major actors that is constantly connected with European and world foresight networks.

These permanent teams could be the object of initiatives by regional parliaments and regional assemblies. They could also be independent units that are financially supported and anchored in the economic or associative spheres.

1. PRACTICAL GUIDES TO REGIONAL FORESIGHT
2. BLUEPRINTS FOR FORESIGHT ACTIONS IN THE REGIONS
3. FOR-LEARN
4. EUROPEAN FORESIGHT MONITORING NETWORK

IV. Existing Support Aids for the Application of SPI Tools

1. PRACTICAL GUIDES TO REGIONAL FORESIGHT

Based on the results of the FOREN project, a group of experts from EU Member States developed "Country Specific Practical Guides to Regional Foresight" for their countries in 2002 [5] . In the language(s) of each country, and tailored to its specific governance structures, these "Country Guides" explain how Foresight can be used, especially in regions and sub-national territories. They set out different approaches to Foresight, and when and where their use may be appropriate. In particular, they discuss how local conditions have to be considered in the design of a Foresight process. In the Annex to all Country Guides, a general methodological overview is given and a broad selection of foresight methods is explained in some detail.

Initiated by the DG Research - S&T Foresight Unit, the aim was to support regions in undertaking foresight activities. Therefore, it expands the strategic use of this tool in Europe's regions. The Country-Guides provide a comprehensive set of Questions and Answers to support the planning and conducting of a foresight exercise, as follows:

Question	Summary answer
Q1.1: What is Foresight?	Foresight is a systematic, participatory process, involving the gathering of intelligence and building visions for the medium-to-long-term future, and is aimed at informing present-day decisions and mobilising joint actions.
Q1.2: What is Regional Foresight?	Regional Foresight is the implementation of Foresight approaches to anticipation, participation, networking, vision & action at smaller territorial scales. This means that proximity factors become more critical.
Q1.3: Why is Foresight important for my region?	Regions face profound changes in their environments. However, inclusive and forward-looking policy institutions to cope with the new challenges are still underdeveloped in many regions.
Q1.4: What experience do we have of Regional Foresight?	Long-term thinking has been developed unevenly across territories, largely because of the lack of familiarity and confidence amongst regional actors. However, numerous EU-supported initiatives is causing this picture to change.
Q1.5: What does Foresight bring to future-oriented thinking?	Foresight creates links between forward planning and policy, and between network building and social participation. It also expands the more limited varieties of future studies.
Q1.6: What are the limitations of established planning approaches?	Most planning approaches inadequately deal with longer-term prospects and similarly fail to draw on the views of multiple stakeholders.
Q1.7: How can Regions use Foresight to do things better?	Foresight can help regions to break down barriers, to articulate long-term visions and to explain their present-day implications.
Q1.8: Which regional features influence the approach to Foresight that it might adopt?	Regions vary in terms of inter alia, modes of governance, social and institutional capital, economic structures and business postures.
Q1.9: Why and when should a Regional Foresight be undertaken?	Foresight can be a proactive effort to shape the future. It can also be more of a reactive response to a special combination of circumstances.
Q1.10: When should Regional Foresight NOT be used?	Foresight is only worthwhile when it can be linked to action.
Q1.11: How can Foresight be used at Regional level?	Foresight can be used to inform policy-making and build networks, so as to enhance local capabilities in tackling long-term issues.

(5) http://cordis.europa.eu/foresight/cgrf.htm

2. BLUEPRINTS FOR FORESIGHT ACTIONS IN THE REGIONS (6)

In 2004, DG Research commissioned an Expert Group to develop "blueprints" for how to effectively initiate foresight processes in regions facing different types of challenges. Five blueprints targeting foresight practitioners (i.e., regional stakeholders championing or initiating foresight) as well as a synthesis report summarising the blueprints and providing a contextual framework have been produced by the group.

The five blueprints were applied in and can give support to the following regional circumstances:
– Regions that have already formulated, or are in the process of formulating a regional innovation strategy, i.e., RIS/RITTS projects (the FOR-RIS blueprint).
– Regions formerly dominated by traditional heavy industries and that need to and often have begun to re-position their economies (the UPGRADE blueprint).
– Regions with well-developed economies and support structures that could become global players by developing trans-regional innovation support systems (the TECHTRANS blueprint).
– Historically and culturally close neighbouring regions separated by national borders (the TRANSVISION blueprint).
– Rural regions in transition from economies largely based on agriculture, fishery and forestry and associated with traditional low value added processing industries (the AGRIBLUE blueprint).

The Blueprints are practical guidelines to support the planning, design and execution of foresight exercises. They are manuals or roadmaps, not foresight exercises in themselves. The blueprints have been designed as a step-by step decision-making tool for practitioners. They contain a collection of recommendations , examples and best practice tips from experienced managers of foresight programmes.

For instance, regions wanting to conduct a foresight exercise in the framework of the RIS/RITTS project, can find in the FOR-RIS blueprint answers to the following questions:

- How to identify the region's specific needs for foresight?
- How to define the scope of a foresight exercise?
- Who should be the initiator and which stakeholder groups should be included?
- Where to find financial resources?
- Which factors influence the selection of the main approach and methods of foresight?

In addition, case studies described in each of the five blueprints exemplify the methods and contents of the already realised foresight projects.

(6) http://cordis.europa.eu/foresight/regional_blueprints2004.htm
(7) http://forlearn.jrc.es/index.htm

3. FOR-LEARN (7)

The FOR-LEARN activity is carried out in the context of the European Foresight Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP). The KSP is implemented by the DG Research and aims at better interconnection and support of foresight programmes, initiatives and institutions in close co-operation with all relevant actors in Europe. When necessary, it orients them towards common issues, at inter-regional, trans-national or European levels.

FOR-LEARN is carried out by the DG Joint Research Centre (Institute for Prospective Technological Studies). The project intends to support "mutual learning" among foresight managers, practitioners, users and stakeholders of policy-making organisations in Europe. By contributing to the codification, assessment and dissemination of the existing foresight knowledge, FOR-LEARN aims to make information on how to carry out foresight more accessible.

Specifically, the activities of FOR-LEARN include:
– an analysis of the existing literature;
– a query system;
– an Online Foresight Guide;
– several mutual learning workshops.

The analysis of the existing literature aims to identify critical points within a foresight exercise, as well as interviews with experienced foresight practitioners and academics to identify gaps in current foresight knowledge.

The FOR-LEARN team also set up a query system that has been established to get a clearer picture of current needs for information especially among foresight novices. There is a systematised procedure to deal with each individual query and the team either answers the questions directly, refers the person to a suitable source or advises contacting experienced practitioners. This service targets people who are starting or planning to start a foresight exercise and need support on aspects such as:
– Why embark in foresight?
– How to design a foresight exercise?
– How to run a foresight exercise?
– How to follow-up foresight outcomes?

Based on its own analysis, and in co-operation with the foresight experts from the European Science and Technology Observatory (ESTO) network, the FOR-LEARN team develops an Online Foresight Guide. The guide aims to provide information about foresight, practical guidance and advice on how to carry out an exercise, It also offers examples illustrating the information with experience from previous exercises. This guide is being continuously updated on the basis of feedback from foresight experts and other users.
Furthermore, a series of mutual learning workshops is organised to address issues where a special need to improve the knowledge has been identified.

4. EUROPEAN FORESIGHT MONITORING NETWORK (EFMN) (8)

The European Foresight Monitoring Network (EFMN) is a network of policy professionals, foresight experts and practitioners, as well as analysts of science-, technology- and innovation- related issues. EFMN is supported by the European Commission in the framework of the European Foresight Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP). The network primarily deals with the monitoring and analysis of foresight initiatives and policy issues of potential relevance for the European foresight community.

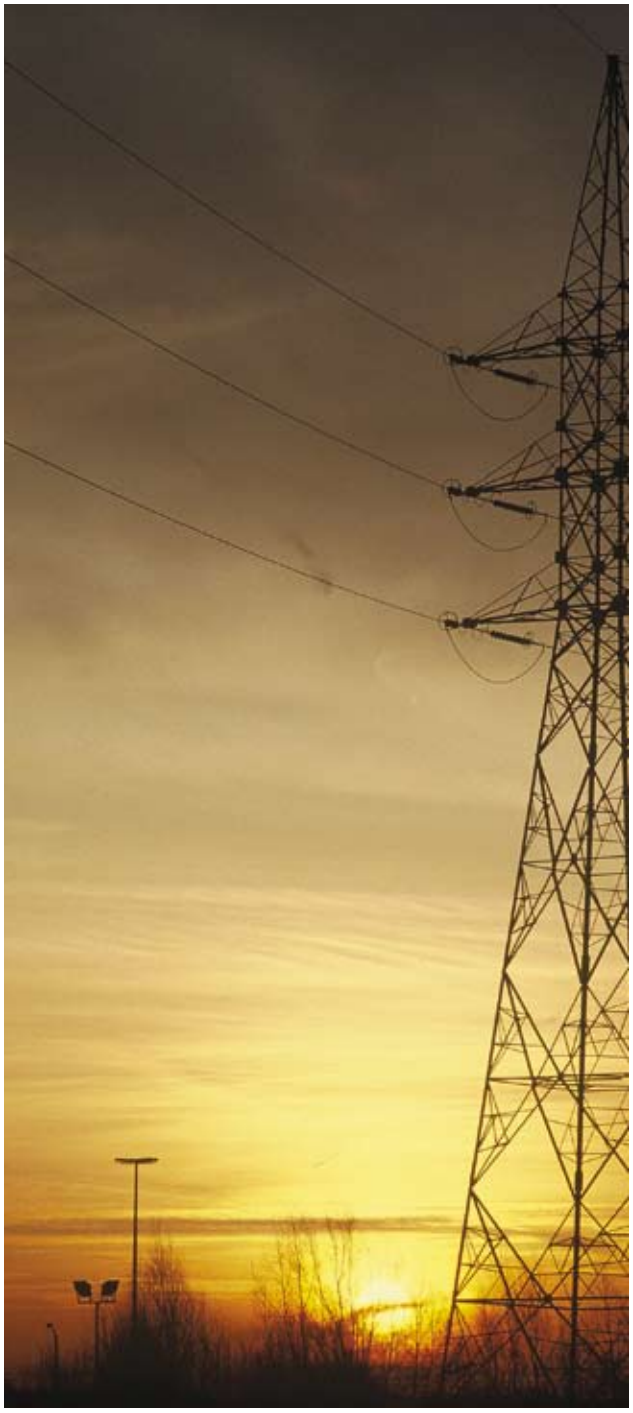
The goal of EFMN is to grow to a community of more than 10 000 policy- and foresight- related professionals over the four-year life-time of the EFMN initiative. Membership of the network is free and some members play more active roles as correspondents. Working with the members of the consortium, they identify interesting new initiatives to be described in the foresight briefs, emerging policy issues to be addressed using a foresight approach, and upcoming events of interest to the foresight community.

The EFMN provides:

– Foresight Briefs: four-page documents that are quick and easy to read and that focus on specific foresight-related topics. About 160 of such briefs will be produced over the lifetime of the project. The briefs summarise the results of recently terminated or ongoing foresight activities and examine potential breakthroughs in implementation, such as the embedding of foresight in policy development processes.
– Annual Country Mapping Report: The mapping of ongoing or recently finished foresight activities, from anywhere in the world as long as they have potential interest for European experts and practitioners. In particular, this will provide practitioners with perspectives on international trends in the use of foresight as a policy tool. Furthermore, it will help them to identify peers with whom they might consult on the development of their own initiatives.
– Annual Issues Analysis Report, published after a related Workshop: Support the needs of those involved either in policy development or programme execution to anticipate and respond to issues of public importance.
– Website with a search engine, resources, event calendar and mailing list.

(8) http://www.efmn.info

Conclusion - Looking forward

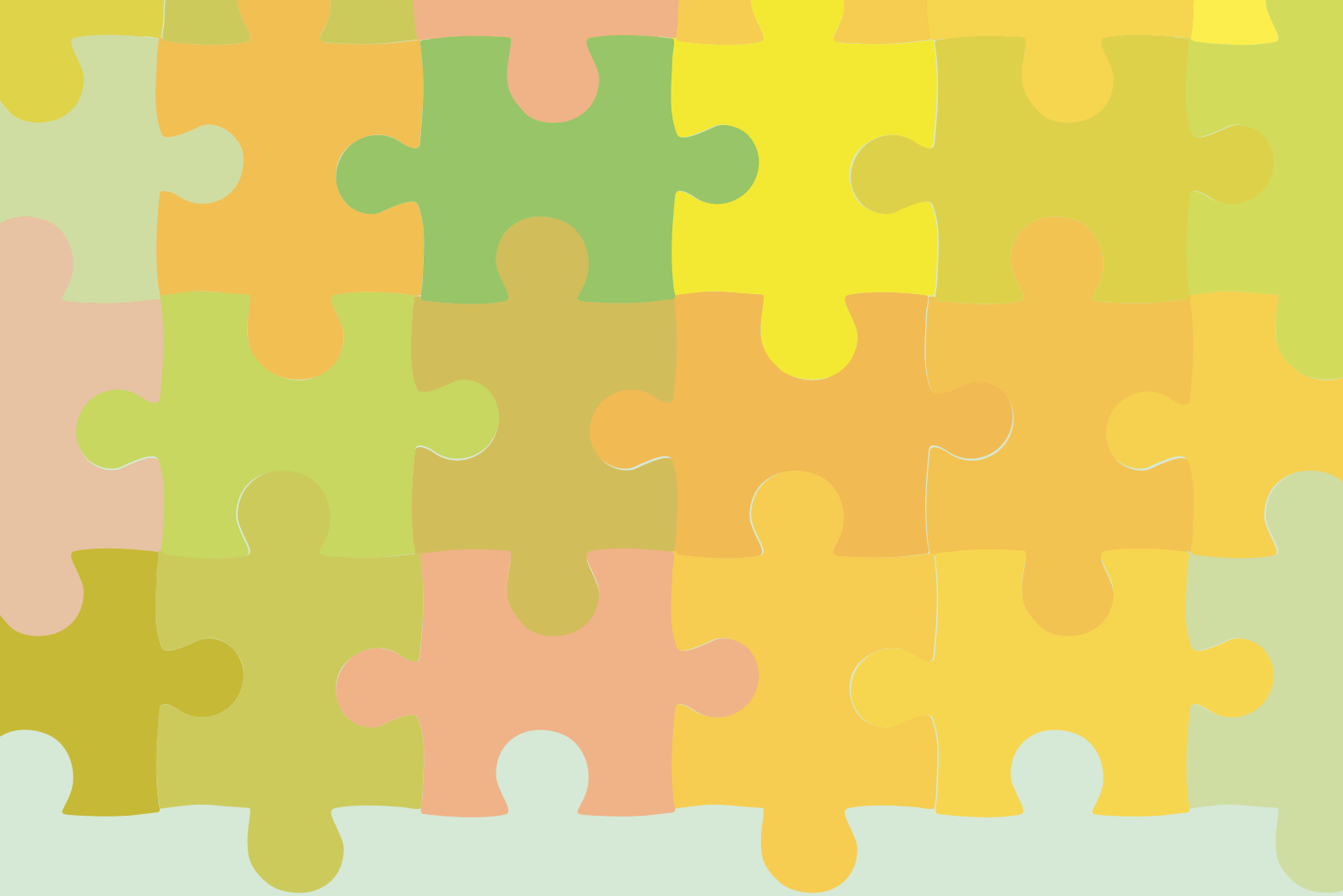


The Regional Foresight

Each foresight exercise is unique and should find its own path, taking into account specificities of the territory, the established processes, and the diversity and roles of its actors. Moreover, let us remember that the challenge of each foresight is directly linked to the long-term issues of the region and to its capacity (innovation, creativity, will, etc.) to address these issues. So, there is no miracle receipt, only day-by-day learning guided by anticipatory discussion and simulation, and an enthusiastic work that should be done by the common people together with the experts.

As mentioned above, the MLP was designed in an integrative perspective in order to motivate and enable regional actors to use and combine Strategic Policy Intelligence (SPI) tools successfully. Although this was an ad-hoc exercise, with relatively limited resources, it has shown that there is a need for such an approach and that positive effects in various EU policy fields can be generated.

To increase impact and European added-value, a possible future endeavour in this field could consider the following:
– Systematic integration of earlier and current conceptual work (at the EU level, e.g. the activities of earlier Framework Programmes – SAST, FAST, MONITOR, etc. –, or the current INNO, Regions of Knowledge and other projects, the different national and regional approaches);
– Structured learning from earlier successful implementations;
– Linking the different subgroups conceptually before commencing training and completing a full SPI tool-set (especially including Evaluation);
– Focusing on selected application areas;
– Supporting the steps – from training to pilots to policy-making;
– Transversal efforts to link the appropriate tools to the different regional issues and needs.



More information on Mutual Learning Platform, including:

- Workshop reports,
- Presentations
- Reports for Investing in Research and Innovation in European Regions

    - "Blueprint on Regional Innovation Benchmarking"
    - "Regional Foresight - Boosting Regional Potential"
    - "How to Make Regional Growth Poles Work"

can be found on MLP website: http://www.innovating-regions.org/mlp

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