



2. What is a project?

2.1 Project management is not ...

Project management has become the cornerstone of youth organisations development but not the only way to run and manage an organisation or institution! It is one of the tools for organising tasks and pursuing concrete objectives and can be compared with and distinguished from:

- **Strategic planning:** longer term orientation and definition of policies, activities and organisational development. Implies a capacity to foresee and to prepare for structural change or adaptations over a relatively large period of time. Strategic planning usually affects or takes into account structural and infra-structural changes (or triggers them).
- **Tactical planning:** very similar to project planning, tactical planning refers to the various steps and processes to reach strategic planning goals or, generally, to steer the organisation with a shorter period of time, namely by adapting and reacting to unforeseen changes or progress.
- **Cyclical or recurrent planning:** managing and dealing with regular events or foreseeable in a regular basis (e.g. activities during the holiday period, General Assemblies, etc.)
- **Daily planning:** dealing with actions that need to be done immediately or in a very short time frame.
- **Contingency planning:** measures and actions taken or foreseen to respond to unforeseen situations, if and when they occur.
- **MBO – Management By Objectives:** an approach to management of tasks and teams consisting in focussing on objectives to be reached, often leaving room for the teams to decide on the best way to achieve them (but sometimes leaving also too little room for flexibility and adaptation!). It is referred to in contexts of a relatively high degree of autonomy of employees, workers or volunteers and

it is supposed to stimulate their creativity, commitment and productivity (it is assumed that the objectives are agreed together). It refers more to a style or approach in management.

- **MBWA:** an abbreviation created by Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert comic strip about management and business nonsense. MBWA stands for Management by Walking Around until something eventually happens. It stands as the probable antithesis of management, because the latter implies some kind of action or at least planning...
- **Crisis management:** concerns dealing with one crisis after another which, as MBWA, is not exactly a very efficient way of management. Management should ultimately allow those in charge to anticipate and prevent crises. Crises management tends to lose a medium or short-term perspective and, therefore, influence on the course of events. In a more positive sense, crises management refers also to a way of dealing with exceptional and unusual crises or catastrophes.

2.2 A youth work project is ...

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “project” as “An individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned and designed to achieve a particular aim: [e.g.] *a research project /a nationwide project to encourage business development*”.

Youth workers who are asked this question at the beginning of project management training courses come up with a broad range of answers. Here are some of them:

- “promoting an idea, structuring a series of ideas, reconciling various action proposals”;



- “envisaging, planning and defining a course of action one wishes to pursue to achieve a specific future situation”;
- “describing, at a specific time and in a specific situation, the processes of change one needs to initiate to create a new situation at a definite time in the future”;
- “a process which involves setting up a comprehensive scheme, which takes account of the various aspects of one situation, for the purpose of arriving at another”;
- “a dream, a process, an instrument which one can use to project oneself into the future, to set oneself goals and objectives”;
- “drawing on the present to envisage the future (tomorrow). A destination worked out together.”

Origins and meaning of the word:

The word “project” was first used in or around the sixteenth century and derives from the Latin *projicere* (= throw forward). The Latin root thus suggests movement, a trajectory, a certain relationship with space and time. The implied process involves:

- a point of departure ...
- used as a base, from which ...
- one throws oneself forward ...
- towards a goal.

Historically, the word and concept were first used by architects. In the fifteenth century, Filippo Brunelleschi made two innovations in the architectural practice of his time:

- work on Florence Cathedral had been interrupted in the fourteenth century, and Brunelleschi was given the task of completing it by adding a dome. Before starting, he produced a drawing (*progetto* or plan) of the dome, using various perspectives to provide a geometrical representation of the future structure, as he envisaged it; through the interplay of these perspectives, the dome itself was supposed to say something about the city’s historical and political context.

Florence aspired to be a city open to the world, and so the dome comprised two shells, one external, one internal.

- Brunelleschi rationalised architecture and gave it a new temporal perspective – an approach which made it possible to separate planning and performance, project and implementation.

His example suggests that we should rethink the term “project” and see it as a ***concept which serves to organise action***.

Projects in education and youth work:

It was the American thinker, John Dewey (1859-1952), author of the famous “learning by doing” theory, who did most to develop the concept of projects in education.

For him, a project has four prerequisites:

- a communal reflection process, which shapes its growth and development;
- observation of the conditions in the environment where it is devised;
- knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past;
- an approach which synthesises observation of the present and knowledge of the past and so identifies their meaning.

From all of this, we should note that a project:

- is a method which enables us to move from idea to action, structuring the various stages in that process;
- sets out to alter the (social) environment in which it is to take place;
- takes shape in a certain social, spatial and temporal context;
- has an educational dimension and enables people to learn by experiment;
- is the product of collective activity;
- necessarily involves evaluation, which establishes a link between idea and action.

This means that projects have various typical features.



Characteristics of projects

Projects have a purpose: projects have clearly-defined aims and set out to produce clearly-defined results. Their purpose is to solve a “problem”, and this involves analysing needs beforehand. Suggesting one or more solutions, it aims at lasting social change.



Projects are realistic: their aims must be achievable, and this means taking account both of requirements and of the financial and human resources available.

Projects are limited in time and space: they have a beginning and an end, and are implemented in a specific place and context.

Projects are complex: projects call on various planning and implementation skills, and involve various partners and players.

Projects are collective: projects are the product of collective endeavour. They are run by teams, involve various partners and cater for the needs of others.

Projects are unique: all projects stem from new ideas. They provide a specific response to a need (problem) in a specific context. They are innovative.

Projects are an adventure: every project is different and ground-breaking; they always involve some uncertainty and risk.

Projects can be assessed: projects are planned and broken down into measurable aims, which must be open to evaluation.

Projects are made up of stages: projects have distinct, identifiable stages (see Chapter 3: The project: step by step).

The following, on the other hand, are not projects (in the youth work sense of the term):

- past activities which are repeated in exactly the same way on a regular basis;
- activities with no clearly defined goals;
- activities which can be repeated or transplanted anywhere at any moment;
- ongoing activities.



2.3 Project models

To embark upon a project is to opt for action, for controlled change over time. "A project is not a dream ... but a dream that comes true can be a project".

The project method is the frame within which the dream can take shape and become reality.

Learning from the chameleon (Mali)

The chameleon is a really good teacher.

Watch it closely.

Whatever direction it takes, it sticks to it.

Do the same. Have a goal in your life and don't let anything distract you from it.

The chameleon's head never moves, but its eyes are moving all the time. They miss nothing. That means: find out all you can. Never think you're the only person in the world.

Wherever it is, the chameleon adopts the colour of its surroundings. This is not hypocrisy. It means being tolerant and it also means having social skills. Confrontation gets you nowhere. Nothing constructive ever comes out of a fight. We must always try to understand others. We exist – and we must accept that others do too.

When the chameleon moves, it lifts its feet and hesitates.

This means walking carefully.

When it moves, it holds on with its tail – if it loses its footing, it can still hang on. It protects its rear. So do the same – don't act rashly.

When the chameleon spots its prey, it does not leap on it, but it uses its tongue. If it can catch it with its tongue, it does. If it can't, it can always pull in its tongue, and no harm is done. Whatever you do, go carefully.

If you want to do something that will last, be patient, be good, be human.

There you have it. When you're in the bush, ask the ones who know what the chameleon can teach you.



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There are various project models, reflecting different definitions and developments in methodology over time and in different fields of application. Each model is also tailored to certain factors – context, target-group, available

resources, etc. Nevertheless, all projects follow a similar pattern. This section proposes a number of models; we shall try to identify recurrent features and use them as a basis for our own project implementation plan.

Structuring the project along questions to ask before launching the project

Main issues	Questions to ask before launching the project
Defining aims, objectives, context and target group	In what context will the project take place? What changes will it entail? Why carry out this project? What is the expected result? Who is the project designed for? What are the issues at stake?
Content of the project	What is the theme and content of the project? What is the chosen approach (methodology)? What activities are involved? What is needed for the project to go ahead?
Where and when	Where will the project be implemented? How long will it last? When does it start/end?
Practicalities	What logistics are required? What practical matters must be dealt with?
Funding	What is the overall cost? (planning/ implementation and evaluation), Where will the necessary funding come from?
Partner	Who are the partners? What is their role? What are the arrangements for co-ordination?
Means of action	Does the project qualify for any financial assistance? Can it use existing facilities?(conditions?)
Communication	Internal communication: how does information circulate within the project team? External communication: does the project need media coverage? (Why? How? Which aspects?)
Evaluation and follow-up	How and when should it be evaluated? Which aspects? Why? What follow-up is planned?



Structuring the project along “W-questions” (inspired from the Laswell method)

Use questions to identify individual elements of the project and how they interrelate. Your answers will give you an overview of the project and let you see how its constituent parts are linked.

WHO? – FOR WHOM? – WITH WHOM?

- identification of project partners or target groups
- their roles and relationships in the project
- their views on the project
- strengths and weaknesses rooted in these relationships and views

WHAT?

- the main project activities – spontaneous, organised and institutional
- social, economic, cultural, political and educational dimensions
- the project’s impact on these dimensions

WHY?

- needs and wishes satisfied by the project
- motivation and interests of participants
- main objectives of the project
- project funding options
- relationship between participants’ objectives and institutional objectives

WHERE?

- social context of the project and situation of participants

WHEN?

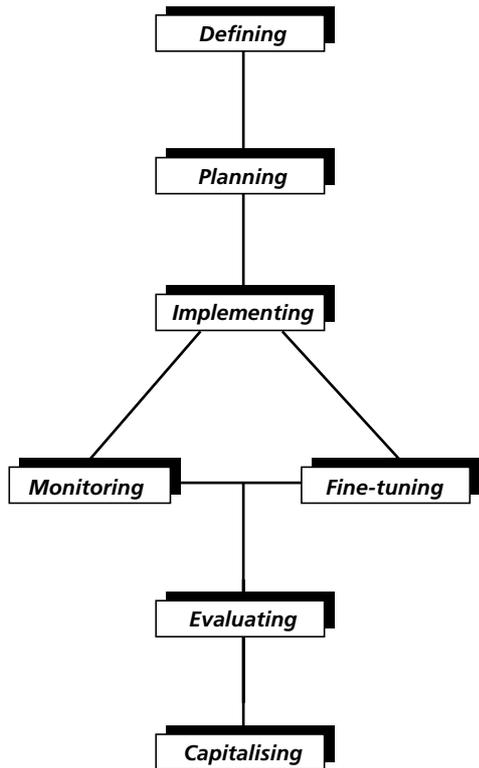
- what period is being focused on (past, present, future)?
- short, medium or long-term?
- background of participants as it affects the project

HOW?

- how was it done? Organisation and participation process
- techniques and instruments used
- input of participants’ experience, theories, other projects, etc

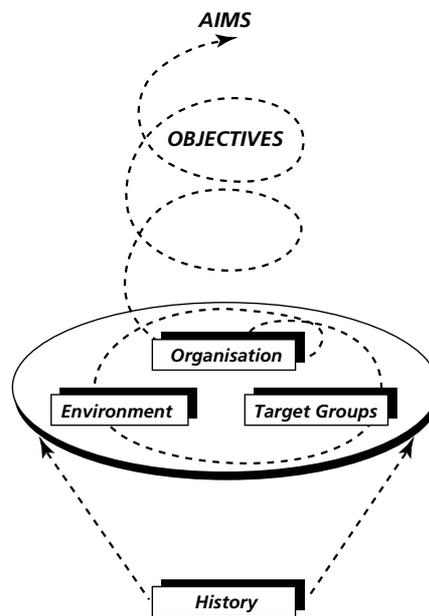


Structuring the project along the different phases



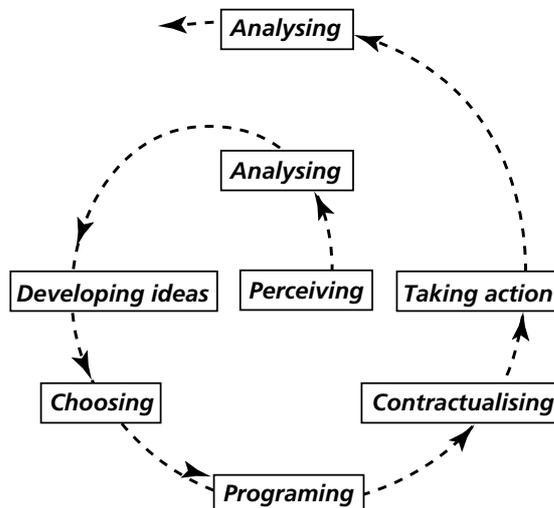
Spiral model

(from Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education Populaire (INJEP), - *La crise de l'organisation scolaire / Document 48, Guide méthodologique pour la direction de projets. Formation au Diplôme d'Etat de Directeur de projet d'animation et de développement sous la responsabilité de Annette Coulon, CREPS, Chatenay-Malabry 1991*)



Spiral model

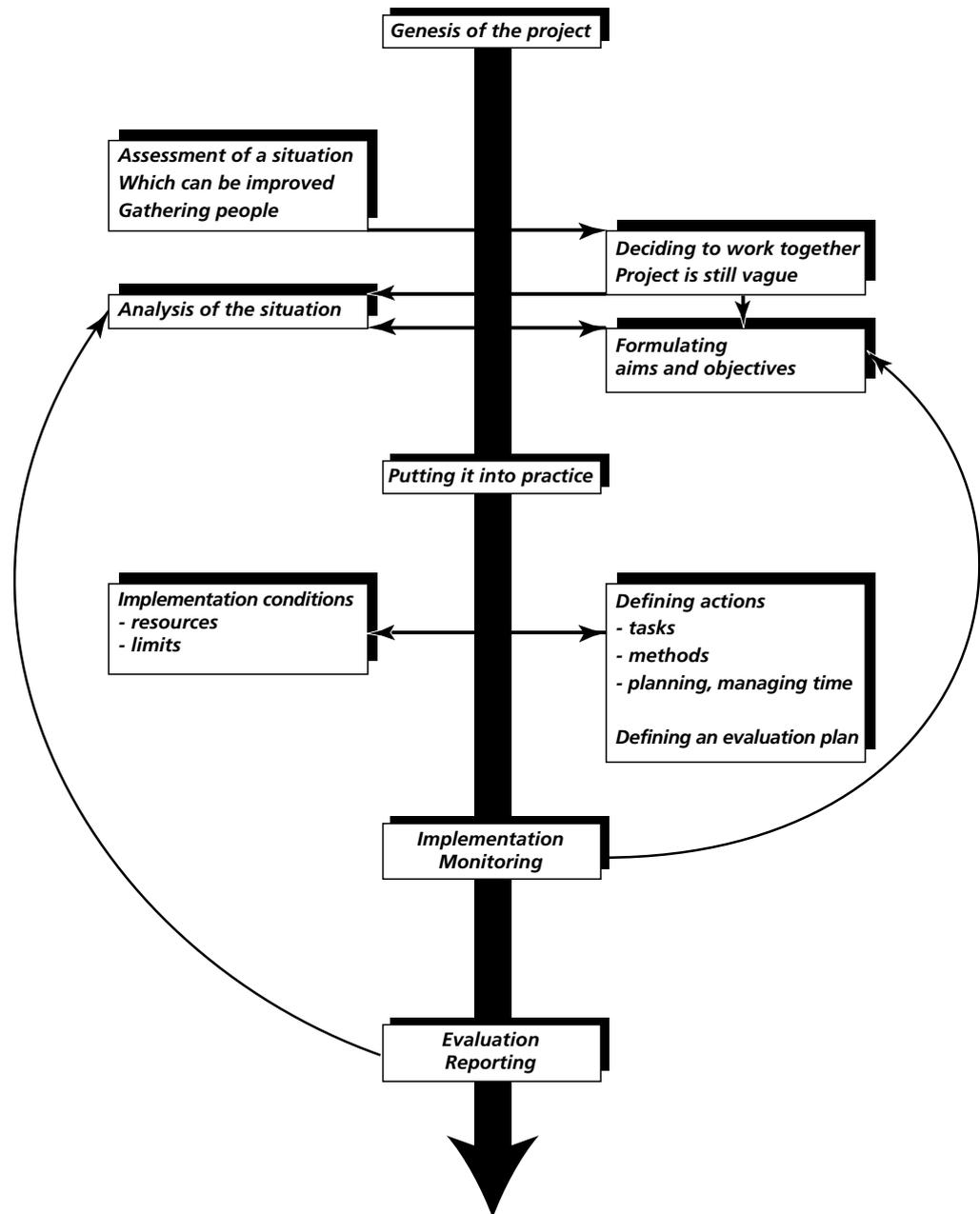
Spiral model (from Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education Populaire (INJEP), *Elaboration d'un projet d'établissement - démarche générale en spirale / Document 47/MAFPEN, Rennes 1988*)

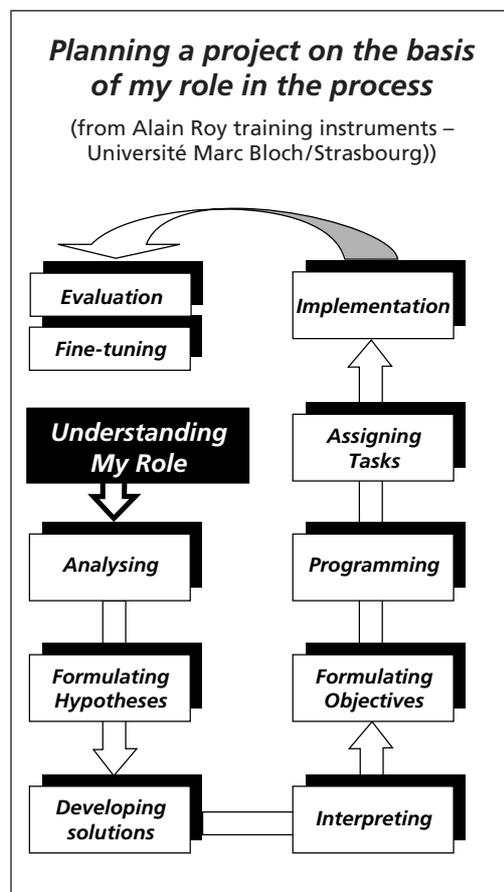
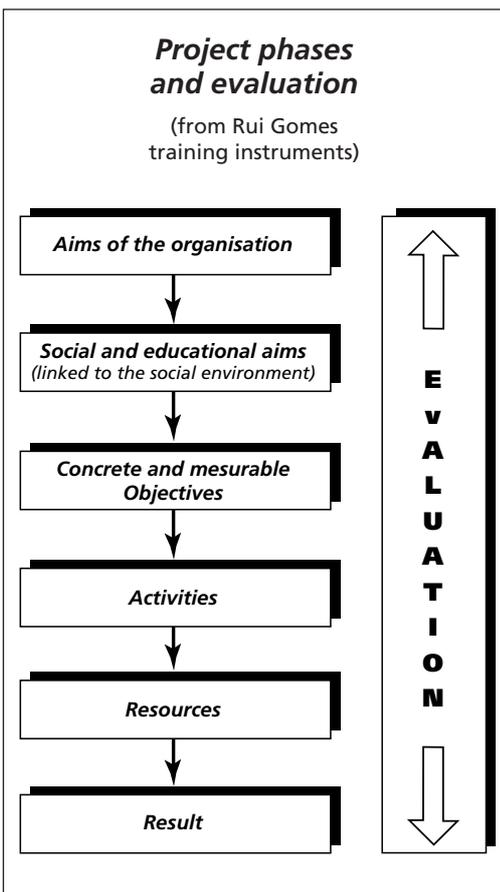
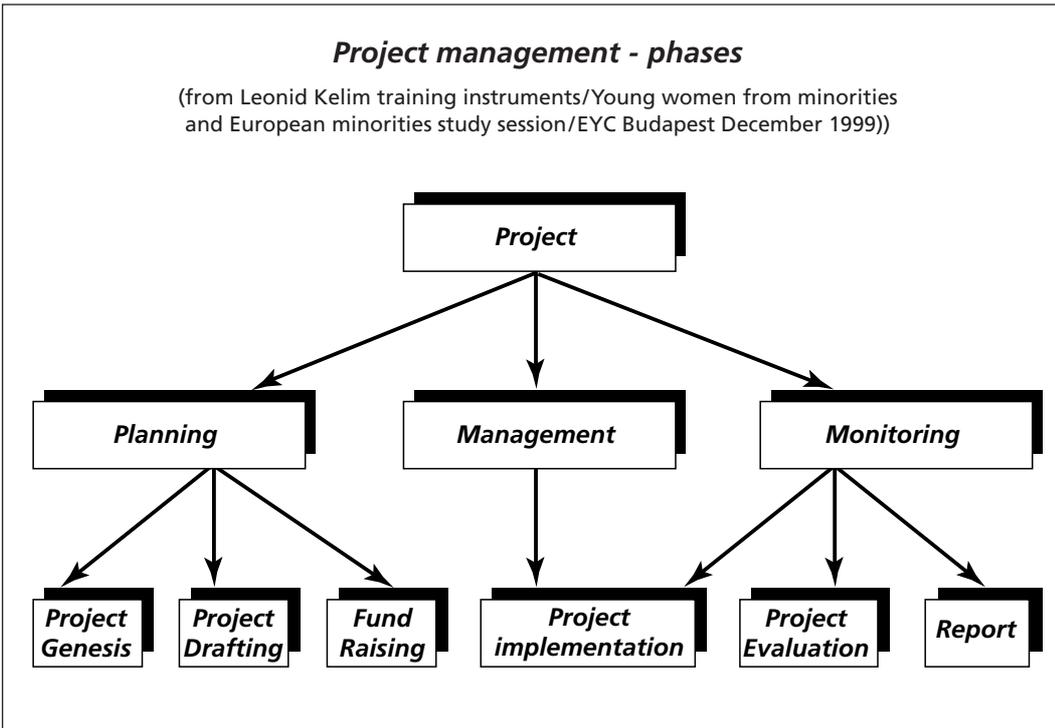




Diagrammatic representation of project planning stages

(from Institut National de la Jeunesse et de l'Education Populaire (INJEP), *Méthodologies de projet / Document 46* – Direction des Lycées et Collèges, 1990)

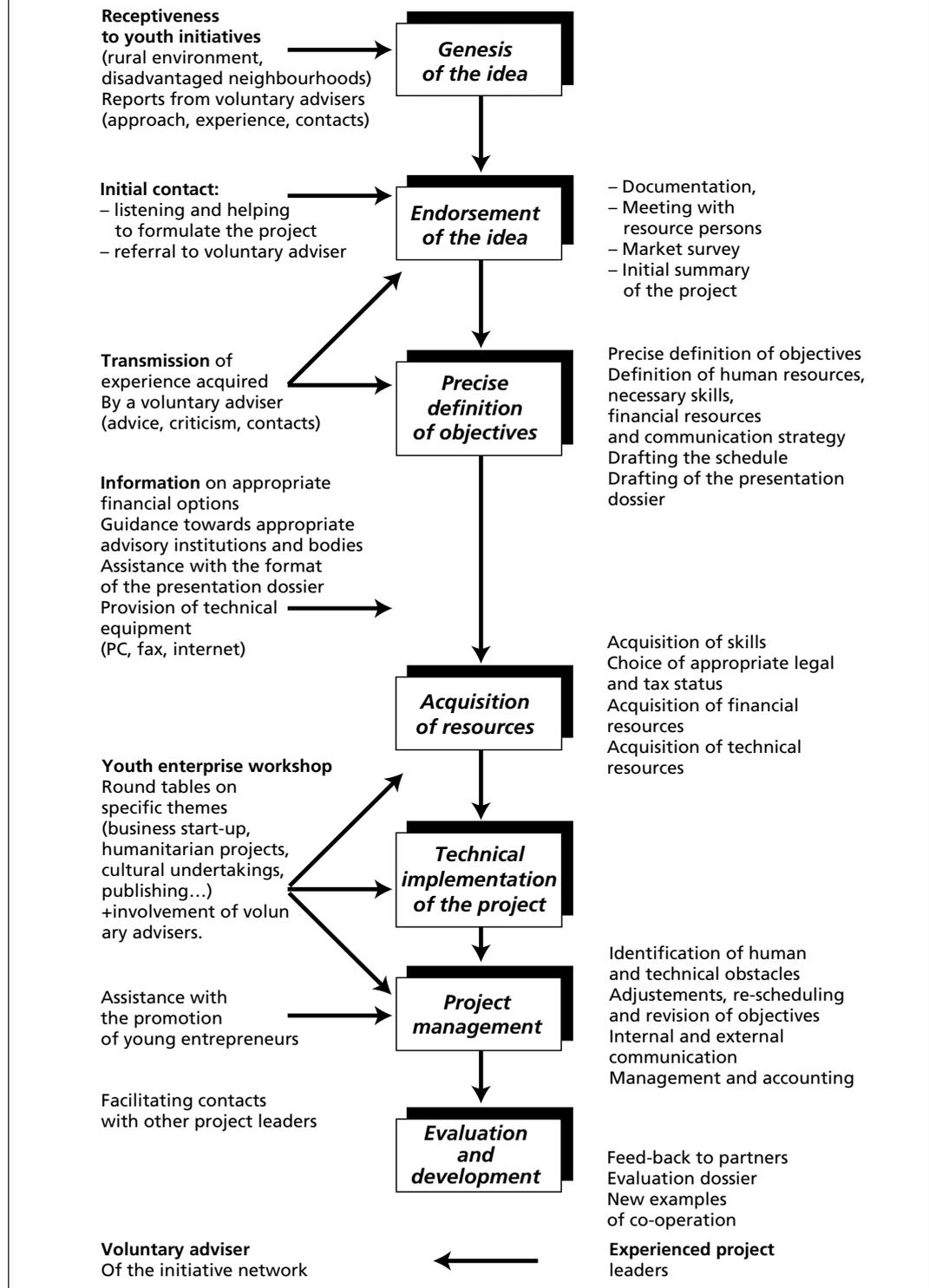






Phases in setting up a project

(model produced by the "Initiatives de la région Midi-Pyrénées" network (France) for a training course for youth project monitors)





The above models have been used as training instruments for future project leaders in a variety of contexts – amenities projects, youth work projects and school projects. Some are more detailed and complex than others, and terminology may differ, but in general they have the same structure, and each comprises the following stages:

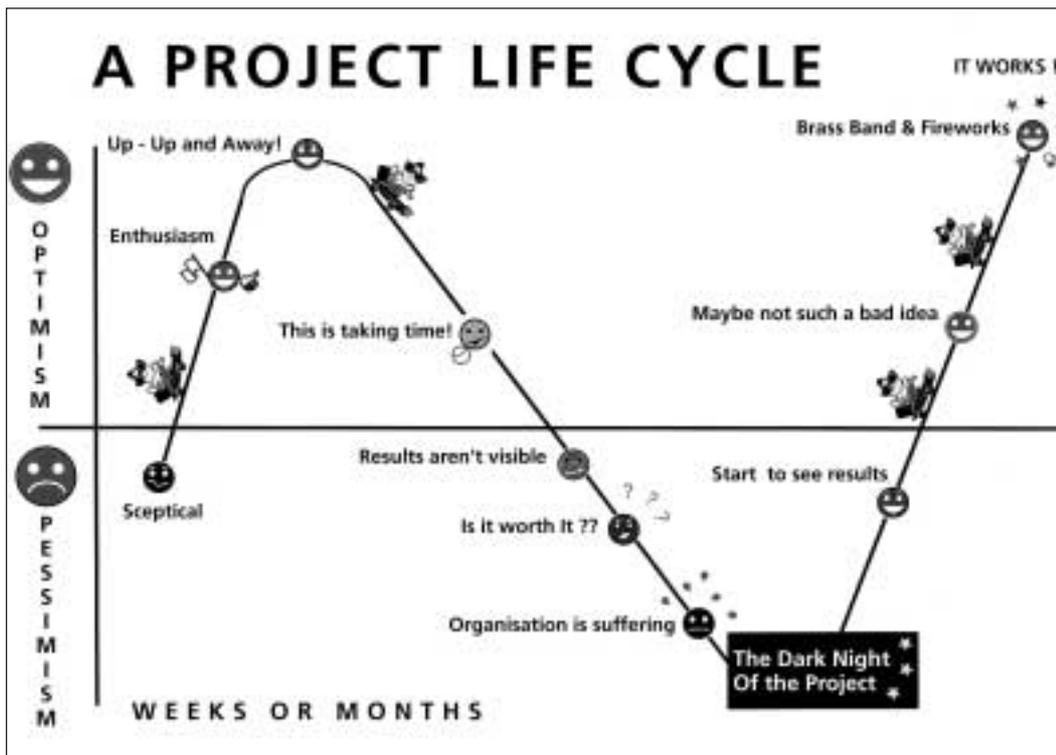
- 1) **“Genesis of the project” and definition**:
 - definition and background, environment,
 - organisation, aims of the organisation,
 - target groups
 - perception – analysis, assessment of the situation, social aims
 - project gestation, genesis and endorsement of the idea
 - developing, choosing, defining aims and objectives,
 - formulating practical and measurable objectives, formulating activities, evaluating the resources, formulating actions, planning
 - evaluation plan.
- 2) **“Implementation”**:
 - carrying out, implementation,
 - planning, assigning tasks, taking action,

- management, monitoring, regulating, fine-tuning,
- management of resources

- 3) **“Evaluation”**:
 - evaluation,
 - analysis-evaluation
 - assessing the results
 - capitalisation-evaluation,
 - reporting
 - development prospects.

The dividing lines between the various stages are not absolute, and may vary in practice, depending on type of project, context, target group, etc.

Managing a project means conducting it from the initial idea to final completion, adapting to reality, managing resources and people throughout the different project phases. This is not an easy process requiring concentration and a certain amount of endurance throughout the life of the project ... see the graphic below!



Source: from Els van Mourik and Danny Hearty *Knowing me knowing you: an intercultural training resource pack*, Léargas, 1999

