



PASTORAL CARE OF HUMAN LIFE

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PLANNING PASTORAL CARE

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The background of the entire cover is a painting. It depicts a serene scene on a body of water. In the foreground, a dark wooden boat is positioned horizontally. Inside the boat, a figure in a reddish-brown garment is seated, facing away from the viewer. To the right of the boat, a second figure in a blue garment stands in the water, looking towards the horizon. The water is a deep, vibrant blue, and the sky above is a lighter, clear blue. A large, bright, glowing sun or moon is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Design Pastoral Plans

Innovative, Virtuous,
& Holistic Methodology

Michal Vojtáš

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1. Introduction: Why do we design pastoral care?¹

A welcoming smile, a questioning glance, a word of comfort, a spontaneous movement of the head that approves, a cold and distant exposition of catechesis, or a testimony that makes us feel close to God... these are all actions and activities of which our pastoral work is composed. Yet, the single simple actions we do every day can be understood above all within a tradition in which they fit and a vision towards which they tend. They can be routine actions learned long ago, conscious decisions and even exceptional gestures of sacrifice and commitment.

Be that as it may, there is always an explicit or implicit reason why we act the way we do. In pedagogy, we speak both of an *explicit*, verbalised and clear curriculum that structures subjects and learning methodologies, and of a *hidden* curriculum, made up of mindsets, values, reactionary styles, beliefs and widespread convictions that have a great influence on how individual actions are carried out. The explicit and implicit levels are not always in harmony, and one can go so far as to say: 'How can anyone believe you? What you are is in total contradiction to what you say...'

¹ Adaptation from a broader study, M. VOJTÁŠ, *Reviving Don Bosco's Oratory: Salesian Youth Ministry, Leadership and Innovative Project Management*, STS Publications, Jerusalem 2017, available in <https://www.academia.edu/35144145>

In pastoral care, both the tangible plans and the internal beliefs of individuals shape the practice. By expanding our understanding of design to include these elements, it becomes clear that designing is an inherent part of pastoral work. We are always designing - either consciously improving or unknowingly being shaped by our own mental frameworks.

Planning in the post-conciliar Church

In the times before the Second Vatican Council, the Church experienced a certain detachment from the world (more mental, however, than operational), and its great or small traditions guided concrete gestures by placing them within a fairly compact, shared and clear vision. Traditions were understood within a framework of neo-scholastic theology, catechesis had its textbooks with a traditional and clear structure, manuals of moral theology specified the goodness of actions with much (even too much) concreteness, the excellence of the Christian life was outlined by narrative hagiography, etc. One understands how in a mindset of these traditions there would have been no need to design pastoral plans: it was enough to fit into the broad outlines of the tradition.

In post Vatican II times, a paradigm shift has taken place. Juan Edmundo Vecchi, the superior general of the Salesians and 'father' of educative-pastoral planning, expresses it in a brief summary: 'In the last 40 years there has been a consistent novelty: education as a projection towards the future. A dimension that was previously less relevant'.² This is where planning comes in: with the disappearance of traditions and hierarchies, the future had to be planned in a democratic way. This operation entailed several risks: one often started from a *tabula rasa*, one wanted to make everything explicit, one naively trusted in the effectiveness of projects, one overestimated the role of the experts, etc. As an example, we can mention a summary taken from the widespread *Dictionary of Pastoral Care* edited by Karl Rahner:

By means of technology and science, man today is able to design the environment and society within himself, to manipulate them, to change them [...] These means are also at the Church's disposal, so that it can consciously exercise planning for the future and develop its own strategy [...] What concerns everyone must also be decided by everyone. In accordance with this legal basis in principle everyone is competent with regard to the pastoral plan [...] The task of experts and leaders is to enable these people to plan the necessary changes themselves and implement them.³

The emphasis on the importance of expert scholars was in harmony with the Council's openness to the scientific discoveries of *Gaudium et Spes*, with a special emphasis on pedagogy, sociology, political science and social planning.⁴

Crisis and difficulties with projects

After a period marked by enthusiastic development of diverse and abundant pastoral projects, the Church now seems to be experiencing a phase of disenchantment concerning the effectiveness of such plans. This disenchantment manifests in various ways, highlighting a growing unease with the design

² J.E. VECCHI, *The guardians of dreams with their finger on the mouse. Educatori nell'era informatica*, Rettore Maggiore dei Salesiani di Don Bosco interviewed by Carlo di Cicco, LDC, Leumann (TO) 1999, p. 21.

³ N. HEPP, *Pastoral Plan*, in K. RAHNER et al. (eds.), *Dizionario di Pastorale*, Queriniana, Brescia 1979, pp. 567-568.

⁴ Cf. P. SCABINI, *Creativity in the Spirit and Pastoral Planning*, in 'Orientamenti Pastoral' 46 (1998) 5, p. 22.

and implementation of pastoral strategies. The key challenge identified is the difficult transition 'from paper to life', where the success of these plans appears to depend more heavily on the quality of leadership than on the plans themselves. The exaggerated multiplication of interconnected but uneven projects at various levels (e.g. national, diocesan, parish, oratorian, school) or sectors (pastoral care of life, catechesis, economics, etc.) makes it impossible to synchronise contents and activities. There are also practical problems related to project implementation times being too short, or difficulties due to a lack of project mentality on the part of the operators, who often work as volunteers and personalise their commitment to a great extent. All in all, it seems that, for our post-modern sensibility, the predominantly technical perception of planning no longer arouses enthusiasm as it did in the immediate post-conciliar period.

The difficulties could be well illustrated with the words of Jesus harshly addressing his contemporaries: 'But woe to you, Pharisees, who pay the tithe of mint, rue, and every herbage, and then transgress the righteousness and love of God. These things must be cared for without neglecting others' (Luke 11:42). In pastoral practice we often experience that it is easier to design and evaluate the rules for "tithing" and instead neglect the foundational values of justice and love of God because they cannot be designed directly. In this sense, for example, instructional designs, sequences of pastoral activities, mass events, grandiose fundraising projects... are so carefully planned and the accompaniment and training of catechists, young families, or volunteers is neglected (leaving each one responsible for his own training). The Gospel is preached superficially as if knowledge of it did not count or was automatic. And perhaps the pastoral organisational models embody more competition, the mentality of merit or of affiliations to power groups than a style of co-responsibility, frankness, shared accountability and transparency.

What alternatives?

How can we respond to the difficulty with pastoral projects, if we consider them as signs of the current 'permanent organisational crisis'? I think we can identify five choices commonly adopted in pastoral practice. Often they are not conscious choices but are styles imposed by necessity that condense different mentalities, paradigms or models:⁵

1. We adopt a *pro forma* design that produces drafts written by a single person, usually the person in charge of the shift, compiling a synthesis between commonplaces and the latest magisterial documents. Formal or linguistic criteria are then used as criteria for the correctness of the project;
2. We choose a *divide and conquer* corporate design in which the project is conceived as a pure instrument of power dividing roles, responsibilities and task execution. Subsequently, the project is used to verify task fulfilment and to draw consequences, both formal and informal rewards and punishments;
3. We prefer a *tout court abandonment* of planning out of powerlessness. We replace it with highly individualised pastoral action, and in making choices we adopt a situational logic. This is often connected with a micro-management style, in the sense that the person in charge has to decide every detail and the others execute what is commanded;

⁵ For the different models of youth ministry see G. CAVAGNARI, *Models of youth ministry. Assumptions, characteristics and contextual perspectives*, in "Note di Pastorale Giovanile" 51 (2017) 7, pp. 6-10. For possible reductionism cf. *Meeting with the responsible bishops of the C.E.L.A.M. on the occasion of the general coordination meeting. Address of the Holy Father Francis*, Sumaré Study Centre, Rio de Janeiro 28 July 2013 in <https://goo.gl/k1pcc4>.

4. We refuse to plan because of a *traditionalist* option: design plans and projects would be a mistake linked to the era of post 1968 contestation. We take refuge in pre-conciliar traditions and a besieged fortress mentality. Obviously the choice of “tradition” will be very selective: certain authors, certain liturgical or ethical issues, external forms, obedience to the pope (if that is to our taste...). It is a postmodern traditionalism because we are used to personalising everything, even tradition.
5. We separate ourselves from design logic in favour of *Pentecostal* logic. These are positions of an emotional spiritualism that relies on the Holy Spirit in everything, neglecting a balanced intelligence of faith. On a personal level, they often fail to distinguish between emotions and the motions of the Spirit, and between 'charismatic leadership' and manipulation techniques on the management level.

The different choices, which are real clues from pastoral practice and also different organisational models, point us in a direction for reflection. It seems that the difficulties with planning stem above all from the anthropological model and the planning paradigm that inspired the methodology in the post-conciliar period. In the following section we focus on a critical comparison of a model and the proposal of alternatives.

2. The Basics: The Concept of Man as the foundation of a design method

Each planning method makes choices in order to leverage certain capacities of the man acting according to that particular method. For example, the pre-conciliar educational-pastoral model, in its main lines, emphasised the importance of tradition, the exemplarity of excellent persons (of the saints) and the rational and volitional capacity of the man who recognises his limits and submits himself with obedience to authority, guardian of Tradition.

In the period of the 1970s, the Church opened up to the 'new way' of looking at man, society and pastoral care that influenced the way of thinking of educators and pastoralists: 'New levels of demand for education and instruction and a new way of posing educational problems in a society that tends to be urban, with post-material needs, dominated by the scientific and technological spirit, which gives more importance to becoming than to remaining, to existing rather than to being, to man as project rather than as subject'.⁶ There have been prestigious authors who have attempted to elaborate practical syntheses for balanced planning. But it must be acknowledged that generally in concrete and contextualised pastoral work there have been simplifications that practically only presented the 'fashionable' theories. It seems that, in its origins, pastoral care applied rather the methodology of curriculum design or social change; that is why we focus on the underlying anthropological model.⁷

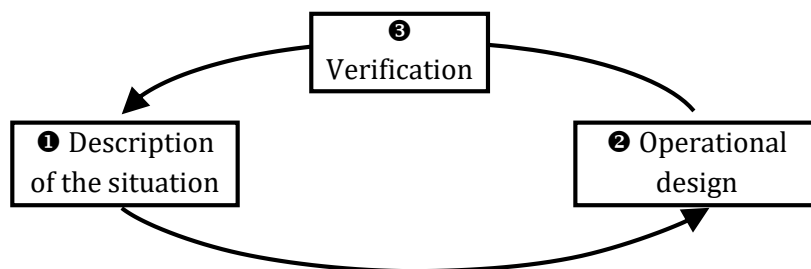
The modern man who plans by objectives

⁶ J.E. VECCHI, *Pastorale, educazione, pedagogia nella prassi salesiana*, in *Il cammino e la prospettiva 2000*, series Documenti PG n. 13, SDB, Rome 1991, p. 20.

⁷ Cf. the more in-depth analysis in M. VOJTÁŠ, *Reviving Don Bosco's Oratory: Salesian Youth Ministry, Leadership and Innovative Project Management*, STS Publications, Jerusalem 2017.

Pastoral planning in the 1970s wanted to overcome both the shoals of bureaucratism and the inconclusiveness and wishful thinking of spontaneism. Hence the invasion of curricular plans and the clinging to the methodologies of pastoral projects. The design process normally had a linear three-step structure around seeing - judging - acting. In educational design, the verification was also implemented:

1. *description of the situation* (the condition of the people, the needs of the area, etc.)
2. *operational planning* (establishing objectives and consequent activities)
3. *verification* (checking the achievement of objectives)



A study of the authors who inspired this model of pastoral planning suggests that the image of man underlying the method has fairly strong dependencies with management by objectives.⁸ Peter Drucker, the most significant author of management by objectives at the time, defines his method as a philosophy that transforms objective needs into objectives of action. Man is conceived simply as a free and rational being who decides to implement an objective that is not imposed by others but reflects a real need. The subsequent realisation of the goal occurs primarily through the instrument of self-control.⁹

The basic idea behind the design-by-objectives concept was to involve the actors in the decision-making process of the formulation of objectives made as a group, going beyond the traditional loyalty to the tasks undertaken and obedience to hierarchies. This tendency felt in secular organisations found strong agreement with the ecclesiastical world of the 1970s, which was reacting to the traditional approach based on loyalty, discipline and obedience.¹⁰

Criticism of design by objectives

The rationalist-voluntarist anthropology underlying planning by objectives has entered a crisis both in the lay organisational world and in the field of church pastoral work. I think it is interesting to take up the criticism and some developments of organisational models to enlighten us on the choices to be made and the Christian anthropological coordinates to be recovered in the pastoral field.

⁸ See the more in-depth analysis in VOJTÁŠ, *Designing and Discerning*, pp. 113-149.

⁹ Cf. P.F. DRUCKER, *Management. Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, Truman Talley Books, New York 1986, which takes up many instances from his earlier important publication *The Practice of Management*, Harper&Row, New York 1954.

¹⁰ The rhetoric changed from time to time, but the substantial idea was traceable to the rationalistic-voluntaristic model. For example, according to Pope Francis, the *see-judge-act* model used in the context of social pastoral work "suffered from this temptation in the form of 'asepsis'. The 'see, judge, act' method was used, and this is fine. The temptation lay in opting for a totally aseptic 'seeing', a neutral 'seeing', which is unfeasible." in *Meeting with the Bishops in charge of the C.E.L.A.M. Speech of the Holy Father Francis*, at <https://goo.gl/k1pcc4>.

The globalisation of the world, the increasing complexity of everyday life, the end of grand narratives, weak democracy without values and the individualisation that leads to the compartmentalisation of everyday life are some of the most important causes of the crisis of planning by objectives. Even the 'founding father' of management by objectives had to admit: 'Management by objectives is just another tool. It is not the great cure for the inefficiency of management [...] Management by objectives works if you know the objectives: in 90% of the cases you do not know them'.¹¹

The delirium of omnipotence of the planners of the past, who thought they could describe and plan 'the future as such', has turned into a defeat. One of the earliest critics of management by objectives put it this way: 'The planner has become the victim of planning; its creation has defeated him. Planning has become so extensive that the planner cannot integrate its dimensions. It is so complex that planners can no longer keep up with it.'¹²

Fortunately, the contemporary debate does not only challenge the model of modern man, understood as a rational agent, but offers some avenues for reflection in a logic of broadening horizons in the organisational sciences that recognise design:

- systemic-holistic and not just linear-analytical thinking (Deming, Senge);
- transformational and not just transactional change (Tichy, Devanna, Mezirow, Scharmer);
- participative organisational culture (Schein, de Geuss, Wenger);
- the importance of excellence instead of effectiveness (de Pree, Bennis, Gardner);
- the multiplicity of 'intelligences' (Polanyi, Agor, Mintzberg, Argyris, Gardner);
- the relevance of spirituality in design (Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, Benefiel).¹³

Holistic Christian anthropology

In the area of pastoral care, one can - and must - make scientific considerations that illuminate its foundations, articulate different modes, subjects and places of pastoral action and offer criteria for pastorally significant activities. But pastoral action in its concreteness, similarly to educational action, is never an 'application' of science to reality, it is not an applicative 'technique'. It is rather an art... and I think that the metaphor of an artistic masterpiece can better illuminate the perspective of integral planning.

If we see the pastoral like a masterpiece of representational art, it becomes important to be clear about the desired 'product' of the creative effort: what is to be depicted, how will the characters be arranged, what emotions are to be aroused, in what environment will the scene be set, etc.? Up to this point, however, there is nothing new, the answers to these questions are the objectives of what one wants to portray (**product paradigm**). For a work to be a masterpiece, equally important are the artist's style, technique, method and artistic processes that guide the entire itinerary that brings the work to completion (**process paradigm**). Last but not least - rather first - it is essential to observe the person of the artist-educator who stands in front of the blank canvas, his inner worlds, his past, the

¹¹ T. HINDLE, *Guide to Management Ideas and Gurus*, The Economist, London 2008, p. 122.

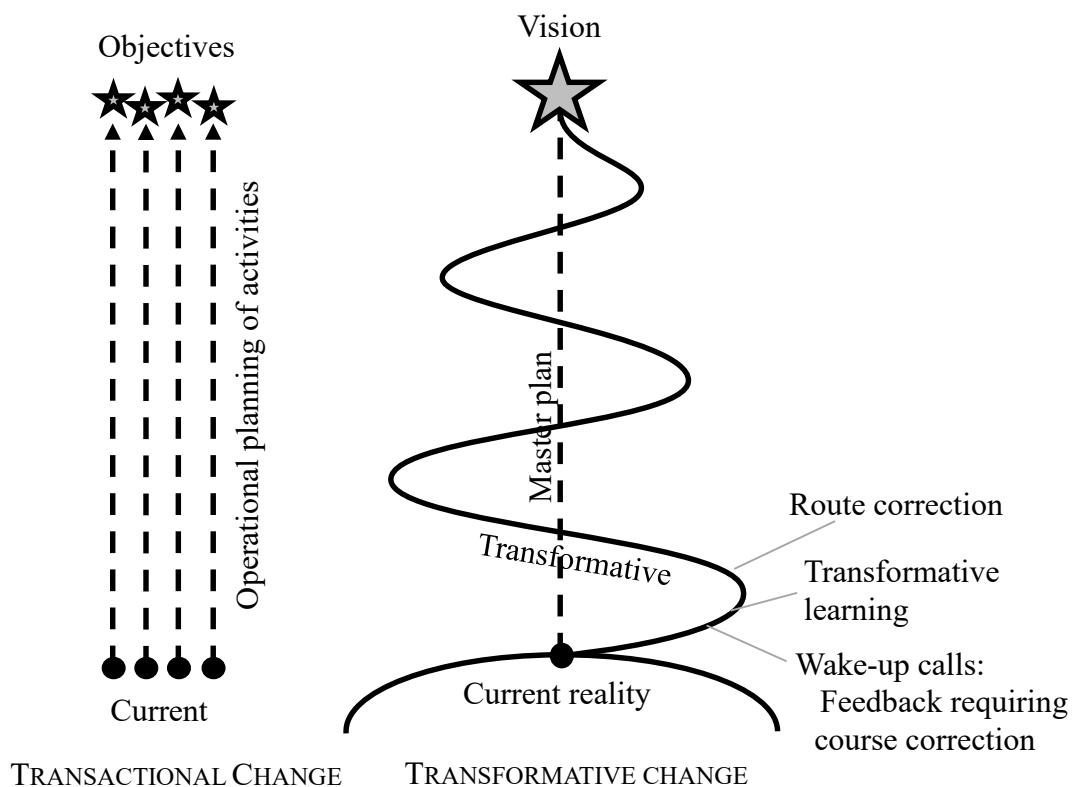
¹² A. WILDAVSKY, *If Planning Is Everything, Maybe It's Nothing*, in 'Policy Sciences' 14 (1983) 4, p. 127.

¹³ Cf. the references in VOJTÁŠ, *Planning and Discerning*, pp. 150-161. Both the lay organisation scholars mentioned and Catholic authors such as A. Darmanin, C. Lowney, C.S. Galbraith, A. Havard, J.C. Eckert, J. Vallabaraj, G. Tacconi and R. Gesing, who cover the areas of pastoral, formation, discernment and organisational aspects of consecrated life.

traditions that have influenced him, his motivation, the spirituality that blends values, his dilemmas, weaknesses, questions and above all the roots of his vocation as an artist (**paradigm of identity**).

When a work of art is a masterpiece, there is not only symphony between different parts, but there is a profound unity between the artist, the process and the product. In the end, nothing is missing and nothing is superfluous. Each part is not only in its place, but its placement reinforces both the logic of the whole and the sense of placement of the other parts. If we want to rethink design, it is necessary to realise that we are not masters of the whole, we do not know how to describe a person in his or her entirety, we do not possess the totality of all knowledge, not even about the smallest aspect of human reality. That is why design must be humble... because it is realistic.

The logic of the Gospels does not align with the logic of planning by objectives. The apostles at first do not have a plan, but simply respond to a *vocation* that determines their **identity** as disciples. Subsequently, they enter into Jesus' *vision* of the Kingdom of heaven and thus begin the **process** of participating in his *mission*. They are not the masters of the vision-mission, but its servants. The concrete **product** of their apostolate was not foreseen from the beginning, and too much concreteness



of purpose was more a cause of conflict than operational convergence. The whole picture only begins to make sense after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is only after the death of the old way of seeing that they stop (partially) projecting their expectations and recognise the real Jesus Christ. After the transformative moment brought about by the presence of the Spirit, who introduces them into the full truth, they begin to walk with courage. An aspect not to be underestimated is the ecclesial dimension: the whole process with its ups and downs is experienced by the *community* of disciples.

A Christian anthropology is transformational (not simply transactional). The end result of a pastoral project therefore does not depend on the rational clarity of objectives divided into dimensions, on the choice of activities towards the precise objective, and on the strength of will that pulls everyone towards the goal. Transformational pastoral design has some innovative features that outline the course of the following paragraphs. The first important aspect is the *planning process*,

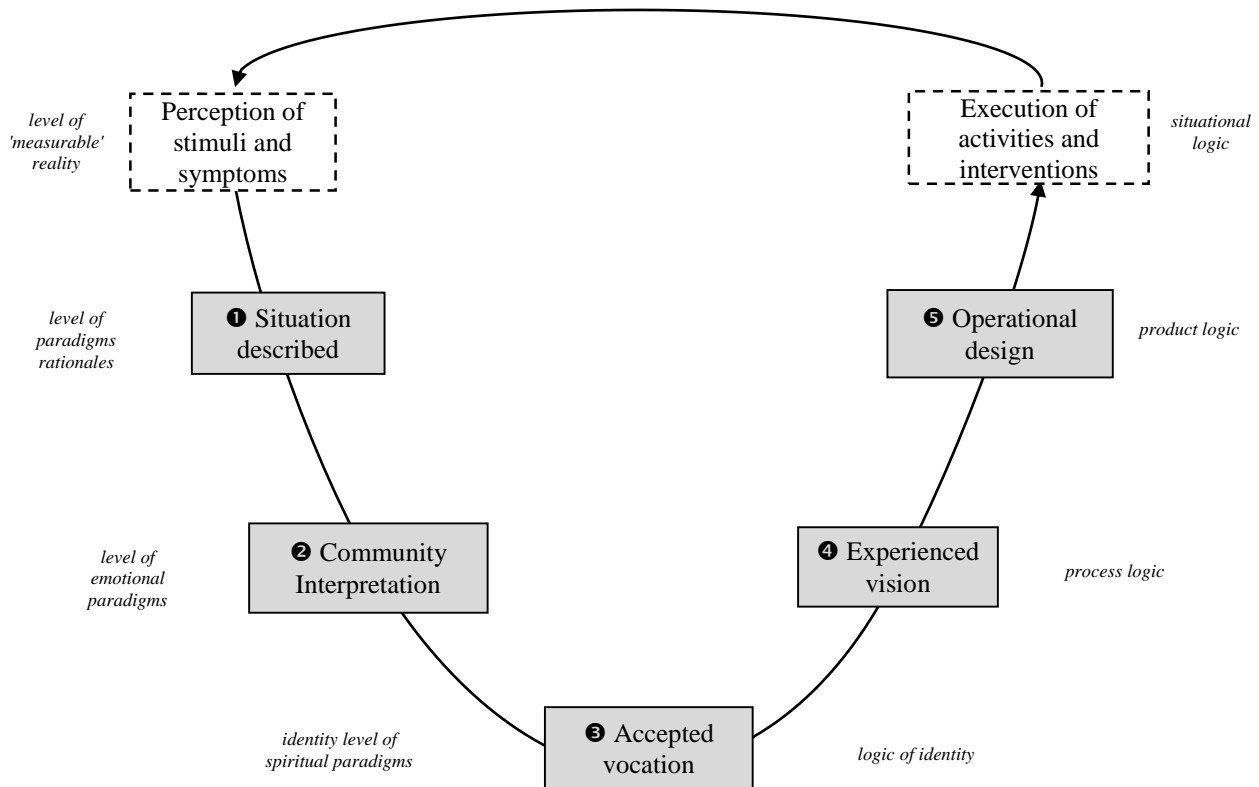
which must be rethought in an integral logic (n. 3). Immediately afterwards it is important to delve into the identity of the planner, his or her *virtuous dispositions* so that a transformative process can take place (n. 4). Finally, I think it is appropriate to offer some practical pointers: to move from the logic of performing activities to a logic of co-responsible discipleship.

3. The process: The steps of trans-formative design

The fact of conceiving the actual project as an integral reality, partly written and explicit and partly hidden in mentality, attitudes, relationships, has practical implications for the design process. The aim is not only to come to an agreement on objectives, activities, roles contained in a written project; rather, the main purpose is to set up a process of transformation of the designer. In this way, design implies a series of steps to embrace the vocation for conversion of mindset and actively put oneself in the service of a transformative and transforming vision.

In the method linked to the logic of objectives (we have seen this) there are three design moments: *situation analysis*, *operational design* and *project verification*. In the logic of transformational discipleship, on the other hand, there is an emphasis on *community* and *vocation* that determines a *vision* of the future in which a *mission* is inserted. The two perspectives certainly have very good reasons to affirm their coherence and importance for the pastoral care of the Church. The importance of the concrete intentionality of the objectives is not only not opposed to but reinforced by a vision rooted in the identity of the persons who plan and act in a community of disciple-pastors.¹⁴ Starting from this integrative basis, one can think of the steps of a transformative design: situation described; community interpretation; vocation welcomed; vision experienced; operational design.

¹⁴ Here I understand the community as a communal whole of all pastoral co-workers: young people and adults, parents and educators, consecrated persons, priests and lay people, who in the exchange of gifts, in differences of formation, tasks, charisms and degrees participate in the evangelising and educative mission of the Church.



The situation described

The starting point for planning is contact with pastoral reality as it is at present. We do not want to start from the office mentality of a management textbook, which often implies an aseptic organisation, perfect on paper, detached from the world and animated by bureaucrats. Rather, let us think of Jesus, the Word made Man, who walks the streets, sees the concrete situations of the people he meets, and understands them from the encounter, not from statistics (which in any case - in concrete pastoral situations - is useful, but not as a starting point).

The dynamics of the design meeting at this point should favour the involvement of all working or interest subgroups within the community. Participants' motivations vary and may be related to curiosity, pressure to solve a problem, relational components, duty to participate, etc. Attention to the different motivations is especially important on the part of the facilitator of the entire design process.

The moment of describing the situation is aimed at bringing out the various types of knowledge concerning reality. In the past, scientific, statistical, sociological knowledge about the condition of the territory and the present challenges has been emphasised (even over-emphasised). We consider it important to integrate knowledge tending towards a certain objectivity with other types of knowledge held by members of the community, with their experiences and different points of view. It is desirable not to 'criticise' the different contributions, but to collect them and 'bring them together'. Since we are still in a descriptive brainstorming phase, it is advisable to avoid interpretations, attribution of blame and excessive self-referentiality. The following sources and types of knowledge can be valorised:

- *historical* knowledge of the environment, the pastoral structure of reference (parish, oratory, school, etc.), which includes resuming the *verification of* previous projects. Alongside the

verification of the results achieved, it becomes important to also pay attention to people's growth processes;

- knowledge not only of the *challenges* but also of the present (and missing) *resources* in the community. It is important to take a realistic perspective and accept the principle that, due to limited resources, we will not be able to meet all the challenges in the area;
- "*Learning journeys*" to other pastoral realities hitherto unknown to most people can open up new horizons;
- it becomes significant to also receive feedback from other educational *institutions* in the area (stakeholders) as they can bring dissonant visions and fresh looks;
- *sociological* and demographic analyses;
- coordinates and current *cultural* trends influencing pastoral care;
- educational and pastoral *policies* that influence *institutionalised* pastoral and educational processes;
- *intuitive* knowledge about causal connections in pastoral reality;
- *narrative* knowledge of success and failure stories that impacted on pastoral reality.

In the moment of situation description, as in all moments of planning, there is a balance to be maintained between the focus on the result and the focus on the process. At the moment of analysis, the greatest danger lies in overdoing the quantity and diversity of content, interdisciplinary complexity and the associated loss of motivation on the part of those involved. The members of the project team, and especially the project facilitator, should therefore assume the principle of the basic imperfection of all knowledge that accepts the limits of all types of knowledge, without wanting to arrive at a perfect, safe and exhaustive analysis. It is preferable to go through several design cycles with increasing quality, than to strive for a 'perfect' design by losing touch with people's experience and motivation. We recommend that each person bring a limited number of reflections into the process that have generative potential and are not just information. Remember that both the absence of meaningful information and the overloading of superfluous information are typical ways of manipulating design.

There are certain barriers to overcome in the process of description. The first barrier is "not recognising what we see", due to cognitive or ideological selectivity. The second barrier is "not saying what we think", due to lack of self-esteem, fear of being judged or punished, etc. The third barrier prevents us from grasping the link between action and perception, so that we 'don't see what we do'. When we are overloaded with activity, we do not 'reflect in action', we act almost as automatons by implicit personal or community tradition.

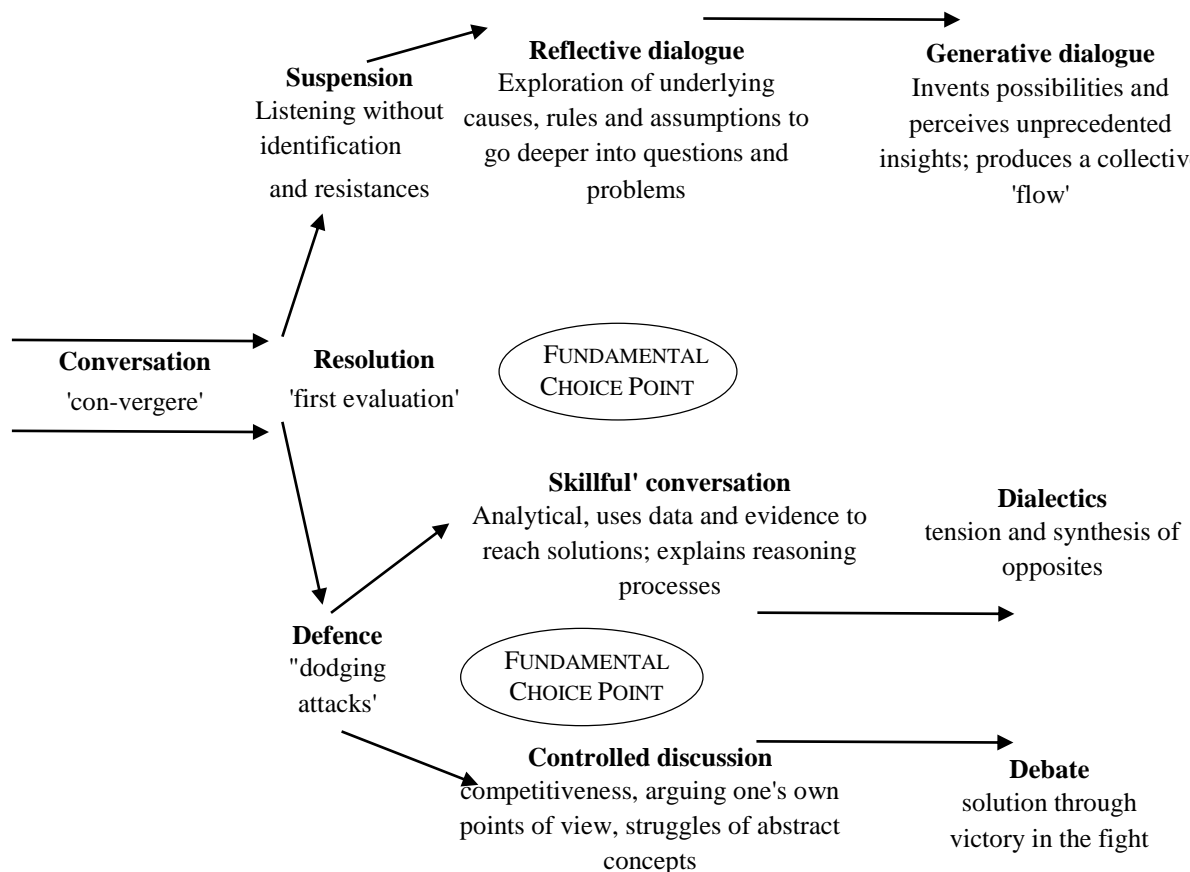
Community Interpretation

After the description of the situation, its interpretation in the planning community follows. In the previous step, we gathered various *inputs* on the situation, the community, the resources, but remained mainly in a cumulative phase of 'data'. The second step of interpretation relates back to the hermeneutic model of design. The questions, challenges and problems arising from the analysis of the situation must be read in the light of the God event. Tonelli states: 'We must use faith as the key

to interpretation. It cannot replace descriptive sciences. But these cannot do without faith when they want to tell us what man needs, in the depths of his existence'.¹⁵

The interpretation can be seen as a reading of facts and situations in the light of faith and with the criteria of the Gospel and the Magisterium. However, it is also desirable to strengthen attention to the emotional involvement of people, to their vulnerability, since interpretation touches on ways of seeing, speaking and doing that are often implicit and connected to people's emotional experience. Their understanding and sharing is crucial because without a change in people's paradigms of reference, there is no transformative change, only transactional change.

To be able to interpret the situation and analyse the paradigms, a twofold movement is needed: cognitive and emotional. First a distancing from one's perceptions and then a new approach to pastoral reality. In the distancing position, one tries to clarify the fundamental questions and intentions. Subsequently, it is useful to move from simple rational understanding to a new gaze, which is able to wonder, in order to bring people to a more enlightened awareness of the situation that will bring clarification or a possibility of change in the matter.



In an atmosphere of genuine communication and trust, a 'reflective' dialogue can be created in the sense of 'seeing and thinking together'.¹⁶ For this type of dialogue to emerge, the planning group must move from 'skillful' non-confrontational conversation to dialogue through an initial crisis. Thinking together is characterised by a balance between the presentation of one's own views and their motivations, and the suspension of judgement and empathetic effort in confronting the ideas of others.

¹⁵ R. TONELLI, *Per fare un progetto educativo*, in "Note di Pastorale Giovanile" 14 (1980) 6, p. 61.

¹⁶ Cf. W. ISAACS, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, New York, Doubleday 1999.

This brings into play the conceptualisation of tacit knowledge, which could hardly appear in the *brainstorming* of the previous phase, the description of the situation.

The community and the facilitator of the process will have to contend with the emotional frustration associated with the loss of certainties. Ideas and beliefs begin to cease to be absolutes, there is no clarity either in the direction to be taken, theories to be adopted, or people to be given specific roles. Frustration is, however, a price to be paid in order to create community at deeper levels, which involves trust, risk, imagination, creativity and collaborative leadership. This moment is the time 'between Emmaus and Pentecost', in which the disciples experience the interconnection of their experiences around the event of Jesus' death and resurrection, but do not yet have the clarity of vision and mission that is the result of the descent of the Holy Spirit.

The accepted vocation

At the moment of the “embraced call”, the importance of the identity aspect of the persons involved in transformational design grows further with respect to the focus on process and result. The moment of vocation welcomed, in the accentuation of the passive moment in planning, is the processual translation of the principle of the primacy of God, who is the author of vocation and mission. The deeper dynamic of community discernment is the recognition of the primacy of God, and planning accordingly through the two modes of passive action. The first step is the 'letting go' of superfluous elements, barriers between people and paralysing ideas about reality and the future in order to enter the second step of 'letting go' of a new future that emerges in the convergence of the community to welcome this new vocation.

At the level of dialogue in the community, the moment of welcoming the vocation requires a transition to the third level of generative dialogue. The participants are called to think as a community, i.e. each one expresses himself as a part of the whole with a new empathic sensitivity, finding red threads of discourse neglected before and generating new perspectives or scenarios, without trying to find the "solution" or the affirmation of his own point of view. The quality and depth of the dialogue, at a very high level of trust, helps the participants to cross through a "crisis of collective pain", in which each one strongly perceives his or her own separateness from the others built up over the course of life, the imperfection of every proposal and every discourse, and the poverty of words and signs.

The net of words cannot be fine enough to capture the subtle and delicate understandings that begin to emerge; people can fall into an embarrassed silence. But silence is not a void without content, it is a fullness of richness. Words may also emerge at this stage, but it will be a discourse that envelops the meaning by going beyond the individual words that are mere markers towards it.

Generative dialogue at this level goes beyond the linear logic of goals and achievements. Within a process of spiritual and pastoral transformation, the aim is to let a new awareness of the whole emerge in the community and to let a new inner condition mature in each person. Welcoming the vocation helps to strongly link the identity of the community with the pastoral mission that goes beyond each of its members.

One can be invited to tell... no longer the ideas, interpretations and analyses of paradigms, but deep stories of personal transformation. The linguistic elaboration of a vision, however, only comes in the next moment. The community needs to pause for a moment in the new identity and the new paradigm of an emerging future, i.e. in 'meta-logical' communication, without having to take notes in a record, formulate concepts and tasks precisely. There is a need to maintain physical, temporal and relational spaces of deep listening, which encourage a slowing down of the reactive impulse to act immediately.

Example of organising a day of community discernment

1. Spiritual retreat on the issues raised in the interpretation of the situation.
2. Silence, prayer, contemplation and personal discernment.
3. First round of sharing insights from personal discernment without feedback from others.
4. Second round, in which each takes a proposal from the other and explains it in their own words.
5. Seeking convergence (and any other turns...).

The vision experienced

In the fourth moment of planning, the community concretises the vocation, elaborating the vision and doing small practical pastoral experiments in the direction indicated by the emerging vision. The vision describes how the community would like to be, not what it should do. It is important that the vision of the community, connected to the transformative vocation, is not something intellectually cold, but something that excites the members of the community. It is at the same time something that attracts them, stimulates them and has the traits of realism. It responds to the desires and expectations of the community, and at the same time points to future possibilities that may result from synergetic efforts.

The step of formulating a vision can move along two tracks: storytelling and experimentation. Once the paradigm of technical design has been overcome, the implementation of the various languages and modes of expression in the formulation of the vision becomes a logical consequence. The moment of the experienced vision accentuates the emotional component, works with images, evokes strong stories, expresses a 'dream' and is therefore placed in the intermediate place that connects vocation and operation. Artistic, visual and narrative expressions are therefore favoured to create a whole interpretative context in which the vocation for change is placed.

The focus should not be on the correctness of the formulation of the vision, following the principle of 'it does not matter what the vision is, but what it does'. The explanation of principles is always illustrated through real-life stories or stories of excellence related to the principle. The stories create the context within which the fairly general management principles are placed. The vision formulated is thus not just a document, but a whole 'ideal environment' built from narratives, stories, symbols and theories, which also implies an organisational culture. At this point, it is worth recovering the hagiographic tradition often forgotten under the weight of historical-critical biographies that can arouse doubts but are aseptic, do not inspire discipleship, and do not spur the energies of creative imitation.

The link between narration and experimentation is offered by some innovative design theories. The vision is not only narrated, but must be 'crystallised' in pastoral practice. The emerging vision is experimented with in a small way, initial feedback is gathered and the necessary consensus with the strategies implemented. It is advisable to create small, protected 'microcosms' for praxis and theory to interact, before operationally designing the large structures. It is important that the experiments are not complex and designed with too much rigour, as short implementation times, flexibility of structure and the possibility of presenting the experiment in different stages of evolution are required. Experiments serve more for the learning process than for the actual change of the pastoral condition on a large scale.

World Café' method in search of generative dialogue

- Create a cosy space: tables for 5-10 people.
- Ask important questions and decisive topics for each round.
- Encourage both the leaders of each table and the group members to write, scribble or draw ideas on the paper tablecloths.
- At the end of the initial round of conversation, ask the contact person to remain at the table while the others move into the role of 'ambassadors of meaning'.
- Ask the table host to welcome the newcomers and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions already discussed. Encourage guests to link and connect ideas from previous conversations.
- By giving everyone the opportunity to move through different shifts in conversation, ideas, questions and themes begin to connect and link up: to 'cross-pollinate'.
- Sometimes a new question that helps further exploration is proposed for the third round.
- After several rounds you can start facilitating a conversation involving the whole group together' to share discoveries and insights.

Attentions to have: maintain a family atmosphere; clarify the purpose; encourage everyone's contribution; listen to insights and share discoveries; connect different perspectives.

Operational design

The most typical moment of planning, understood in the traditional sense, is operational planning, focused more on the desired 'outcome'. It is necessary to establish the general objectives which are realised in the process series of interventions, events or activities. A clear statement of the target group, the responsibilities of persons and teams, the deployment of resources and the scheduling of time is very useful.

Given the highly variable and "liquid" context, our more integral perspective also emphasises the process components of project realisation. The linear operability that realises activities to reach a goal is indispensable, but it must be balanced with the alignment of organisational systems according to the vision created earlier. There is little point in doing a lot of activities if our organisational, communication, training, economic, motivational systems are dissonant with the vision. It is almost useless to do only a series of *Lectio Divina* on contemplation if the organisational system only drives us to activism. It would be equally paralysing to hold gatherings with the goal of co-responsibility with the new vision, if the communication system is set "from the centre to the periphery" (I tell you the vision, you just have to listen), etc. Often explicit organisational systems conflict with hidden but

very real ones. Thus it happens, for example, that a fake pastoral democracy is only the façade of a proceeding by groups of influence, hidden alliances and opaque dynamics.

Operational planning is not just about deciding on objectives, interventions, synergies and system alignments. It is not enough to decide once on what to do and then stop thinking and learning. As we have seen in the diagram comparing transactional and transformational change, there is a substantial difference in conceiving this step of operational design. In the transactional paradigm one designs operationally, then simply follows the execution and finally comes the evaluation of the results. In the transformational paradigm, operational planning creates an 'outline plan' that should also be detailed and well-structured. This guides the subsequent pastoral action, but it never frees us from the responsibility for continuous discernment, adjustment and learning that are necessary for adaptation in the implementation phase.

The close link between the outcome (having a project that clarifies objectives, activities, roles, tasks and resources) and the process (day-to-day implementation) can be reinforced by various tools. We propose 'triage' meetings as an interesting tool, because it uses a dynamic of mutual accountability. In 'triage' meetings, held weekly or monthly, each group member gives a brief account of the vital issues in his or her area of responsibility, preferring the aspect of importance over urgency. Next, synergy is sought together in the third alternative emerging from reality in the making and the path of realisation is paved to facilitate the achievement of the goals associated with the vision. Finally, people take responsibility to the group and report back to it at the next meeting.

4. People: The operational virtues associated with design

Planning is a process, and we have described it in the previous paragraph. But it would be a mistake to close the proposal at this point, because the process is only a road and concrete persons must walk on it. On their qualities as disciple-pastors will depend the pastoral fruit of planning. Here we would like to enhance the great contribution of leadership theories: the inseparability of who we are as persons and how we act by design. The challenge is to be (we) the change we want to create.¹⁷

The formation of the planners is therefore connected with the outcome of the pastoral design. If we opt for participatory planning, the same people will both plan and implement the project. Therefore, it is not only opportune but necessary to train through planning. And this at various levels: the deep convictions, the quality of the cognitive-emotional character and the operational skills.

In this sense we propose six operational virtues that characterise human action at different levels of depth, capable of overcoming rationalist-voluntarist anthropology and concretising the qualities necessary for a process of profound change. The first three virtues are called 'personal' and the next 'prosocial', as we believe that change in personal action must precede pastoral and design change in the community. Transformative design then requires the person to have the right mindset, both in the

¹⁷ See e.g. P.M. SENGE - C.O. SCHARMER - J. JAWORSKI - B.S. FLOWERS, *Presence. Exploring Profound Change in People, Organisations, and Society*, Currency New York, Doubleday 2004, p. 147.

process of seeking and in the ability to act operationally. This set creates the symmetry of the six operative virtues.

	<i>personal virtues</i>	<i>prosocial virtues</i>
mentality	1. creative fidelity	4. abundance mentality
research process	2. personal discernment	5. generative accompaniment
operability	3. operational consistency	6. synergetic integration

Creative fidelity

The virtue of creative fidelity is the mindset - and the related attitudes - of a person who is bent on knowing reality and themselves in the complexity of their being, inserts themselves into the various traditions and searches for the spaces for possible creative intervention. Fidelity and creativity are the two poles that describe virtue. Fidelity is to be understood both in authentic relationship with the world (fidelity to reality) and in continuity with the good operational dynamics of the past (fidelity to tradition). Creativity is also to be understood in two ways: in terms of the ways of knowing the situation, using all forms of integral knowledge (cognitive creativity) and as the search for possible future pastoral interventions (operational creativity).

Fidelity and creativity are not two opposite poles between which a compromise or a middle way must be found. Rather, virtue brings together the forces of tradition with creative adaptation to new demands. In this integral sense one can interpret the actions of the holy pastors in the history of the Church. Their creativity is not creation from 'nothing'; it is a creative synthesis, which is the hallmark of works of genius. Creative synthesis, because the originality, the beauty, the greatness of creation does not reside so much in the novelty of the particulars, as in the discovery of that idea, which sums them up and merges them into the new and proper life of a whole.

In a more project-oriented language, we could speak of creative fidelity as a mentality of interdependence that differs both from the mentality of dependence (which repeats the patterns of the past in an absolute loyalty) and the mentality of independence (which isolates the individual in the fiction of pure creativity). Creative fidelity is an interdependence that recognises the freedom of the mature person embedded with strong bonds in a concrete context with real people, with their authentic life stories and provocative challenges.

What are the fruits of this virtue that make it recognisable? Creativity finds its place within a cognitive mindset (not yet operational) of healthy realism, recognisable by the ability to listen, inner solidity, humour that relativises rigidity, and security in realising the choices made. In it experience, intuitiveness, docility, sagacity, discernment, foresight, circumspection and a realistic sense of risk come together.

To give concreteness to what has been said and to facilitate a training design, we propose - in a very synthetic form - some tools for growth:

1. *Listening to one's language.* By using the tool of listening to language, one can become more self-aware of one's mental patterns. Two types of language can be distinguished: reactive and creative

language. In reactive language, the emphasis is placed on describing the external influences of human action, one perceives oneself in the deterministic paradigm, one uses expressions such as 'I must', 'I cannot', 'if only', etc. In creative language, on the other hand, the emphasis is placed on one's own decisions, we envisage visions, make ourselves more conscious of our motives and use expressions containing 'I want', 'I choose', 'I can', etc.

2. *Cultivating different types of knowledge concerning both the situation and oneself*, such as analytical-rational knowledge in empirical study, reflection in action, intuitive knowledge involving imagination, narrative knowledge and tacit knowledge. The aim is to hold diversity together in order to grow the attitude of tolerance towards the complexity and variety of reality.

Personal discernment

Discernment is the virtue of a profound look at reality and at oneself, which enables the person to discover calls and vocation. We are not only talking about a vocation that gives a unitary and harmonising direction to one's life, but also about the small calls of concrete situations that challenge us to respond to and concretise the 'great' vocation. The profound harmony of the whole is understood in the aesthetic sense, as beauty, but the cognitive dimension must also be perceived, in that the whole is thought of with all the intelligences (in Gardner's sense). It is to be perceived also in the operative sense, the whole transmits a call, a vocation, a direction that orients operational choices. In discernment, the passive component of planning is accentuated, insofar as man listens to a reality that surpasses him and through which the Holy Spirit speaks.

The first virtue mentioned above - of creative fidelity - creates the cognitive mindset of multiple types of knowledge within which pastoral challenges and opportunities are interpreted. Personal discernment, which emphasises the direction-seeking component, interprets information, data and the various types of knowledge to bring out and foster the arrival of a life-unifying vocation in the journey towards a *vision*. Third is the virtue of operational coherence, which operationally concretises the strategies of vision pursuit.

In transformational planning, as we have seen, it is necessary to correct the concrete direction of everyday actions. There is an outline plan, but it must not only be executed but adapted to changing and evolving situations and people. Discernment is sensitive to the various feedbacks that come from reality and 'call' towards a learning that recognises reality as a whole, relates it to the vision and corrects the course of action. Discernment is thus a constant disposition in both the planning and execution phases.

Some leadership theories go beyond the absoluteness of the idea of *effectiveness*, which is not enough in an increasingly complex world. *Excellence* is proposed, which is the result of discernment that finds one's own vocation and inspires others to find theirs. Vocation, in this sense, is the innermost part of each of us: that specificity that manifests itself when we face the greatest challenges and which leads us to the height of them. Vocation is the area of intersection between talent (strength, gifts, charisms received), passion (that which gives us energy, stimulus, motivation and inspiration), needs (the needs of the people and context that challenge us) and conscience (that calm inner voice that shows us what is right and incites us to do it concretely). Following the calling makes the difference between transformational leadership, which lasts sustainably, and transactional or simply situational leadership.

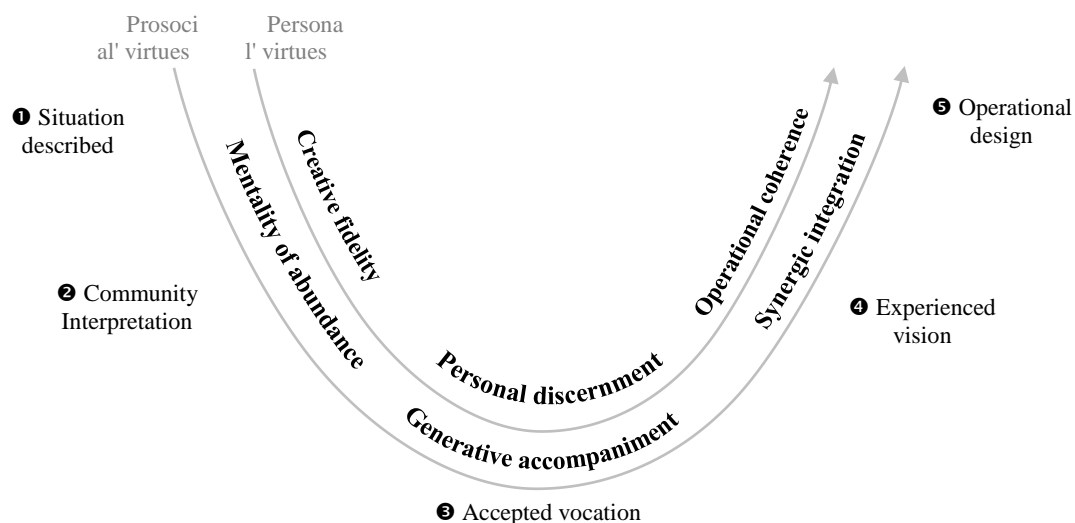
Creating space and time for the daily silence and listening required to form an authentic and enlightened vision is the basic tool of discernment. Within our pastoral practice, it is important to overcome the mental division that has sometimes been created between planning and contemplative prayer. This involves creating a physical, temporal and intentional space that allows one to immerse oneself in the depths of experience, to shift attention from the manifestations to the source, and finally to open the heart, understood as the centre of the person. In addition to the daily practice of discernment, other dynamics can also be exercised in a communal sharing mode on:

1. *Personal vision building by analysing one's own goals*, asking oneself why that goal is there, to rationally and emotionally discover whether it is a true goal or just a means to another goal. If it is only a means, one continues with the analysis. The purpose of the chain of questions is to arrive at the last intrinsic desire that builds the basis of the implicit personal vision. This vision is to be connected with talents, passion, needs and consciousness.
2. *Creating the personal vision by visualising the future*, imagining one's own retirement, or various anniversaries in life, in a kind of 'good death' exercise. What we would like to hear at the end of our lives from the relevant people for the various roles is the basis for our current personal vision.

Operational consistency

So far we have analysed the cognitive mindset of creative fidelity, which creates a necessary precondition for change, then the aspect of personal research summarised in the virtue of discernment, which is the basis for the creation of a vision. As the third and final step of personal transformation we now delve into the virtue of operational coherence, which results in the implementation of the vision in everyday reality.

Operational coherence, understood as the harmonisation of current life around the vision, fits into the space created by the tension between the vision and current reality, and involves the concretisation of lines of action, interventions, strategies and activities. It is important to emphasise that this is a 'tension' and not a simple linear translation of the vision into the smaller operational units (strategies, courses of action, activities, intentions). The three virtues of personal operativeness are indeed



'virtues', i.e. they are rooted deep within the person, and should therefore be present in all moments of planning (with different emphases).

The internal dynamic of operational coherence has practical day-to-day implications. We could, for example, differentiate different 'generations' of time planning:

1. The simplest and most straightforward tool is a written to-do list.
2. The second generation of planning implements the to-do list with the calendar.
3. A third way takes a leap forward by creating to-do lists organised according to priorities and divided into long-term, medium-term and short-term objectives implemented in the calendar.
4. The fourth generation of time planning proposes two improvements: thinking and planning for resource care (because of sustainability); distinguishing between important and urgent tasks (in order to have a correct criterion for action).

It is a paradox that in pastoral work we plan activities with great care, and often neglect caring for the most valuable 'resource': quality formation and accompanying people. People care is in fact an important but not 'too' urgent process. By concentrating on activities in a stopgap logic, we sacrifice people to objectives by conveying a bad non-verbal message.

It is convenient at this point to elaborate on the distinction between 'urgent' and 'important'. Urgent activities have their flywheel in social pressure, stereotypes, ingrained mental models and prior commitments. Important activities, on the other hand, find their impetus in values linked to vocation and embedded in personal vision. The perception of the 'important' linked to vocation enables us to break out of instrumental, impersonal and technical management. Some concrete exercises can help to exercise the virtue of coherence between vocation and daily life:

1. *Shifting resources from the realm of urgency to the realm of importance*, which is basically an exercise in assertiveness. It means saying 'no' to environmental pressures, organisational stereotypes, reactive mental models and manipulative people. Saying a firm and sustainable 'no' can only be done by virtue of a previous 'yes' to the personal vision that unites the important elements of life.

2. *Turning our attention to the important not the urgent*: investing resources in planning, caring for relationships, studying new opportunities and training pastoral agents means being pre-emptive and having the time, relational and economic resources ready to face the challenges of the uncertain future.

The mentality of abundance

Just as the virtue of creative fidelity creates a mindset necessary for personal transformation, so the mindset of abundance is the pro-community and collaborative virtue. It is defined as the mindset - and related attitudes - of a person who recognises the interrelationships between different people and in diversity sees an opportunity for synergy. The abundance mentality stems from a deep inner sense of personal worth and security. From a paradigm of faith, according to which we are preceded and accompanied by Providence, springs the attention to the possibilities noting that there is more than enough for everyone. The mentality of abundance is contrary to the mentality of scarcity, which sees the other as a competitor in a world that struggles for survival, recognition, success, etc. The latter induces reactive and exaggeratedly competitive behaviour.

In pastoral care, the mentality of abundance underlies the concepts of sharing, co-responsibility, service, which are linked to the term 'generosity', communion and ecclesial community. In this logic, the community created around the pastoral project is an organic communion, living in the diversity of gifts and services as a complementary reality, lived in mutual reciprocity, at the service of the same mission.

Systemic generosity is a mindset that sees the interrelationships between people, sees wholes, communities, and therefore views the world with the paradigm of possible synergy and mutual

benefit. Between creative fidelity and systemic generosity there is a strong link: the integral vision of reality. Creative fidelity applies in the cognitive realm of the person, stating that fidelity to multiple knowledge can foster creativity in the pursuit of a single vision. Systemic generosity applies the holistic vision in the sphere of interpersonal relationships, seeing their systemic complexity as fostering generosity in the search for solutions that benefit the community and all individuals (win/win paradigm). In the first case, one goes beyond the cognitive paradigm of analytical-linear knowledge and in the second, one goes beyond linear competitiveness (win/win paradigm). Creative fidelity goes beyond the apparent dilemma of mutual negation between tradition and creativity, and systemic generosity goes beyond the apparent dilemma between I and Thou. The mindset of systemic generosity can be exercised and grown on many occasions. We offer only a few suggestions:

1. *Growing in multiculturalism and historical sensitivity*, creating the prerequisites for understanding other people's positions and paradigms. This mainly involves the study of contexts and eras other than one's own, or topics perceived as 'uninteresting' or 'challenging', in order to escape the temptation of confirmation of one's own implicit mental models.
2. *Building mutually beneficial relationships within the community*, growing in mutual trust is an expression of the abundance mentality. A few small things can be observed: understanding each other, minding the little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations, showing personal consistency, apologising.

Generative accompaniment

A generative dialogue is exercised when communication between two or more persons goes beyond the mere exchange of information and generates a transformative change in the paradigms and motivations of those who communicate. Generative accompaniment is the virtue that brings into play a constant generative dialogue involving a high level of consideration for the other combined with an equally high level of courage in proposals.

Consideration for others is concretely translated into the ability to listen and the courage to clearly express one's points of view. Dialogue emphasises the research aspect in the community construction of the vision; the operational aspect, on the other hand, will be emphasised more in the subsequent virtue of synergetic integration.

Generative accompaniment occurs when we listen empathetically, proposing the universal principle of 'diagnosing before prescribing'. Basically, it is a listening that seeks to understand the other person in an integral manner and avoids the four autobiographical modes of communication:

- *evaluation* that accentuates one's agreement or disagreement;
- *inquisition* questioning from their own point of view;
- *board* offering proposals based on their experience;
- *interpretation* that explains the other's behaviour and motivations from one's own position.

In planning, it is important not to consider accompaniment only as a reality of two persons, the accompanying and the accompanied. Without marginalising the personal model, let us broaden the perspective towards community accompaniment. In the various meetings, necessary for planning, a "mutual enquiry" could be encouraged, in which each person makes his or her thoughts explicit and subject to public scrutiny. This creates an atmosphere of genuine vulnerability: I do not merely investigate the reasoning behind the views of others, but express my views in such a way as to reveal the assumptions of my reasoning and invite others to investigate them.

Accompaniment as virtue and art has a privileged moment of its unfolding in community discernment. In it, the focus shifts from a *debate* or reflection on pastoral topics towards a *reflective dialogue* in an atmosphere of mutual trust and vulnerability to arrive at a *generative dialogue* that synergizes personal listening to the voice of the Spirit with sharing in community in the search for convergence. I suggest some tools that reinforce one aspect or perspective of the dialogue:

1. *Listening empathically by giving feedback*, using both hemispheres of the brain, both the logical-analytical and the emotional-creative part. The effort to understand the other person is realised in the gesture of verbal feedback that communicates both the perceived feeling and the reformulation of the content.
2. *Analysing our reasoning using the so-called 'inference scale'*. This tool helps to examine - in six steps - the generalisations, simplifications and hasty inferences that occur spontaneously in the cognitive process: observation of a certain reality; choice of data; attribution of meanings; generation of hypotheses; assignment of conclusions; adoption of beliefs; action on the basis of beliefs.

Synergic integration

The virtue of synergic integration is the ability to create a sustainable pastoral organisation by aligning organisational systems according to a logic of synergetic reinforcement. By system we mean the overall way of setting up a dimension of pastoral or organisational action:

- communication system (ad intra and ad extra, face-to-face, paper, digital);
- motivational system (formal and informal incentives),
- system of government (hierarchical, democratic, charismatic, situational, etc.),
- financial system (transparency, reporting, fundraising, etc.)
- system of inspirational theories (pastoral, philanthropic, anthropological models);
- content system (materials, aids for catechetical or training courses, etc.),
- other formal or informal subsystems.

The way to achieve these integrations is sustainability, that is, the ability to bring into play lasting strategies of balancing many activities and resources, having in mind the main resource that is the pastorally trained people. The logic of integration is synergy, that is, it requires thinking of the good of all, not just making compromises, but creating third solutions that are better than the previous alternatives. Synergy is not only a *surplus of quality* in project implementation, but a real necessity in many situations of resource scarcity. As a methodological basis, emphasis is placed on the mentality of abundance that creates basic trust, on the generative accompaniment of processes between different groups and pastoral agents, and on the virtue of creative fidelity that opens horizons to arrive at synergetic third solutions.

Synergy does not only work at the level of maximum systems, but also at the level of groups (prayer, catechism, voluntary work, pastoral care of life...) or structures (diocesan centre, school, parish, oratory, social centre...) that consider themselves autonomous within a pastoral reality. Let's imagine a simplifying example: there are two pastoral managers: one coordinates the training courses for young people and the other is responsible for the project for middle school drop-outs within the social centre. Both are short of resources: the first does not know what to do beyond the usual catechism meetings that no longer attract them; the other lacks staff. The action of the coordinator who knows them both could go in two directions: compromise or synergy.

The compromise: we count how many trained people we have available and divide them up to support the two activities. One half will help with the catechesis of the young people, and the other will accompany the young people on a path back to school. The problem is that we often don't have people available, so we load up the usual available volunteers and motivate them to a higher performance: each coordinator with his typical incentive style. In the end we expect things to be solved quickly and effectively.

The synergy: The coordinator will accompany the two leaders, some volunteers and young people from the training group in the planning of a youth volunteering course for drop-outs. In the planning, care will be taken to ensure that the volunteering experience is educational and interesting for the young people and of effective help to the drop-outs. In this sense, it will be necessary to accompany the young people in their volunteer activity by making them grow in their identity, in their faith motivations, developing their talents and dialoguing on the questions that arise along the way. The drop-out manager must monitor the process and accompany the young people to ensure the quality of the project. Synergy requires more time, open-mindedness, patience and accompaniment. One does not have the 'managerial' perception of having solved the problem, but a 'pastoral' perception of the humble accompanier of the seeds of good that grow in people

Preferring a 'ubiquity strategy', which does not create new activities but rather prefers to implement a new synergetic mindset in existing activities and structures, we propose two operational tools:

1. *Seeking third alternatives.* The integration of the various points of view in a planning meeting can be done in three steps. In the first step, the willingness of the interlocutors to open up and enter into the interaction is checked (abundance mentality); in the second step, a real effort is made to understand all the points of view of those present (generative accompaniment); and in the third step, new and innovative third solutions are proposed (synergetic integration).
2. *Operational meetings for mutual reporting.* In project collaboration groups there are often monthly or weekly operational coordination meetings. It is desirable not only to enter into the logic of quick and superficial *problem solving*, but to report on vital issues concerning the project and previous commitments by creating a learning pastoral community.¹⁸

5. In conclusion (and to initiate anew): Implementing the pastoral project

Our reflection started with a deeper understanding of the actions and activities of which our pastoral work is composed. These simple actions that we do every day can be understood within a tradition into which they fit and a vision towards which they tend. And pastoral planning works precisely in the interweaving of tradition and a vision of the future.

Yet the strong conviction remains that the individual action cannot be designed. Each situation and person involved in it are unique and it takes a lot of situational intelligence, empathy, intuition and practical wisdom to realise the project. It is also for this reason that we have opted for a design model that is formative and transformative not only at the level of results, but at the level of the people designing.

¹⁸ See *triage* meetings, proposed for the operational planning step, as a concrete way of managing the meeting.

A classic objection we often encounter is that "it cannot be done in our reality!". It is often true that the full potential of pastoral planning cannot be developed here and now, but applying the principle "the best is the enemy of the good" we propose to do something rather than wait for the perfect moment. It is better to create a group of interested people and propose to them the design of their sector, group or activity, enthuse them about the transformative potential of pastoral work done as transformative discernment. Then the good will grow and, keeping in mind the criterion of gradualness, more can be done in subsequent planning cycles. It will probably be more important to cycle through the planning with checks done well than to have too high expectations of a mega-project. Goodness spreads in the manner of wave circles: there is a person who believes and listens to the voice of the Spirit, then there will be a first group, then from this group will perhaps arise a community 'animating nucleus', then the different pastoral sectors will be inspired, etc.

Humility as a virtue in the planning process is irreplaceable: without it there is no genuine sharing, no lifelong learning, and our self-centredness ends up creating too many enemies, etc. Accompanying the weekly or monthly meetings of councils, work or formation groups also requires vocation, dedication, humility and patience. In this sense, various experiences suggest that at the beginning it is worth considering whether to start with 'formation' (emphasis on people) or 'planning' (emphasis on doing). If we convert our design mentality, the transformative potential of discernment and life around a pastoral project can be stimulated with the possible fruits of spiritual conversion, deepening in faith, growth in communion as well as the desired pastoral convergence.