

Tool

SYSTEMIC INTEGRATION MANAGEMENT (SIM)

Area of Application	Development of systems (enterprises, organisations, institutions, value chains, service systems)
Objective	Profound system development using a holistic approach (taking into consideration all the essential dimensions, i.e. strategy, structure, actors and communication, culture and vision) and cross-linking hard and soft factors, with an orientation on sustainability

1. Context

New development concepts and models are being based on the systemic approach. It is now possible to see a shift from linear innovation models to more systemic innovation models.

The SIM (Systemic Integration Management) model is also based on this principle. It provides a framework within which long-term system development can take place. In this context a system can be an enterprise, an organisation or an institution, a value chain or a service system. It is important to define the limits of the system.

The essential elements for the development of a system can be described as follows:

- the triangle of the system development with the dimensions of strategy, structure, actors and communication, and culture, the element, which influences all aspects of the system
- the process of vision-building
- the contradictions arising in development processes (e.g. maintaining the status quo, and change) will be integrated as part of the process;
- when communication processes are being designed (e.g. for large group intervention), symbolism and analogous intervention forms play an important role. Analogous interventions such as sketches, role-plays or story-telling ensure deep rooted changes in role models and patterns.
- The instrument of reflection makes self-monitoring processes possible and accelerates development on different levels

Systemic integration management is a dynamic, vision-driven process carried forward by common reflection. The system develops as the participants shape the strategy, structure, communication and culture. Integrating system contradictions is seen as a common task to be performed through leadership and consultation.

2. Description of the tool

A systemic approach and the need for the actors to be fully responsible for the process are seen as basic principles in this model. Another important factor is the experience that contradictions within the system can create positive energy.

The intention is to reveal the general context and to think about the effects on the other components of the model and the surroundings, and to believe in the strength and the power of continuous reflection as a principle in self-monitoring - in particular in diverse groups. This is what constitutes the new quality of this model in practice.

The SIM model combines several elements:

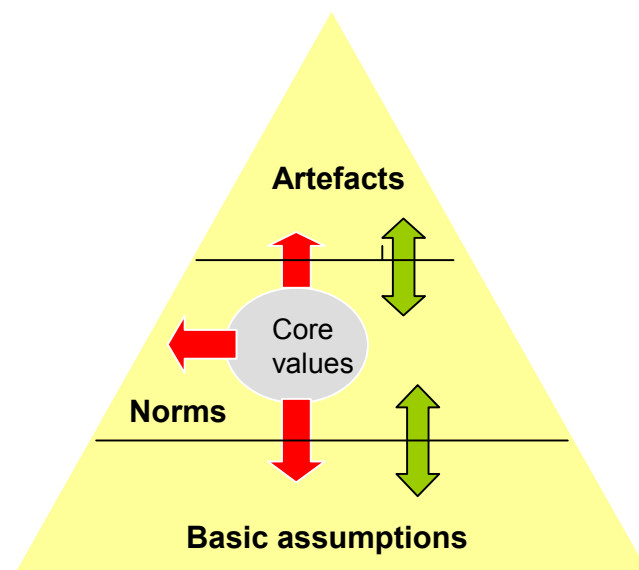
The triangle strategy includes structure, actors and communication. The culture is in the middle of the triangle as the central factor for development, with links to all dimensions. Further elements form the power of vision-building and the reflective, dynamic process loop.

The triangle of system development

The first element is the triangle of strategy, structure, actors and communication, along with culture, the element within the triangle which influences all aspects of the system. It is the key to success in long-term system development.

The different elements are to be aligned both conceptually and operationally. A strategy is as good as its (cultural) implementation, and new structures are only as good as they are mentally put into practice. In today's information and knowledge society the actors and their communication are the fundamental dimension determining the design of development processes of systems.

At the same time the dimension of communication is frequently neglected during change processes. Therefore it is particularly emphasized in this model even if, strictly according to Luhmann, social systems consist of communication.



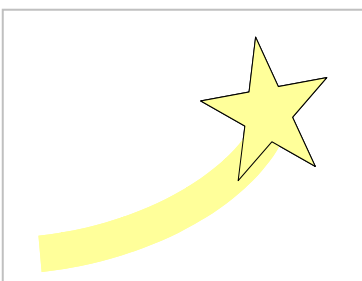
The model of the perception of culture serving as the basic model here originates from Edgar Schein (1985). It differentiates three levels of culture within a system, all affecting one another. The first level consists of the artefacts, i.e. everything which is visible (products, technology, clothes, architecture, furniture etc.). The second, deeper, level is that of standards and values. They determine the behaviour of the actors belonging to the system in the sense of right/wrong (standards) and good/bad (values). The third and most difficult level is that of the basic assumptions, or philosophy of life. These assumptions are not immediately accessible, often hidden in the unconscious. They are basic questions of existence. Taken from anthropology and transferred to systems is the idea that these basic assumptions correspond to points of view and behaviours which have been learned in the course of time, because they worked satisfactorily and led to success or even secured survival in the past.

The advanced form of the model contains what are called core values of the system, i.e. 4-6 inner convictions, which are embodied on a long-term basis and defended consciously in the system. Such values are normally not negotiable, because they are functional and secure the survival of the system. If it is clear that these core values still continue to be functional, it is helpful to integrate them as such into the change process. The crucial point in this case is not the values themselves, but the consequences they trigger within the system in visible and understandable mechanisms. If it turns out that they are no longer functional under today's conditions and have to be changed, it is absolutely necessary to work on this. This is very challenging and a huge task to fulfill but it is the sine qua non for a successful implementation of the SIM-model.

Culture can be influenced, in the form of routines which become self-evident, as well as internalised stories and images. People must be made aware of them and call them into question. Culture is dynamic and adapts to the environment - it learns (VG Clifford 1988). The core values hold the system together on a long-term basis and define identity.

Culture is perceived with all five senses, and the sixth sense, that is the intuition, often gives valuable references. The more intensive the focus is on cultural dimension of a system, the greater the energy of the change process and the higher the number of conflicts. Since the culture represents the key to success, the change process has to start with a careful diagnosis of the culture of the system.

Working on development by working on vision-building

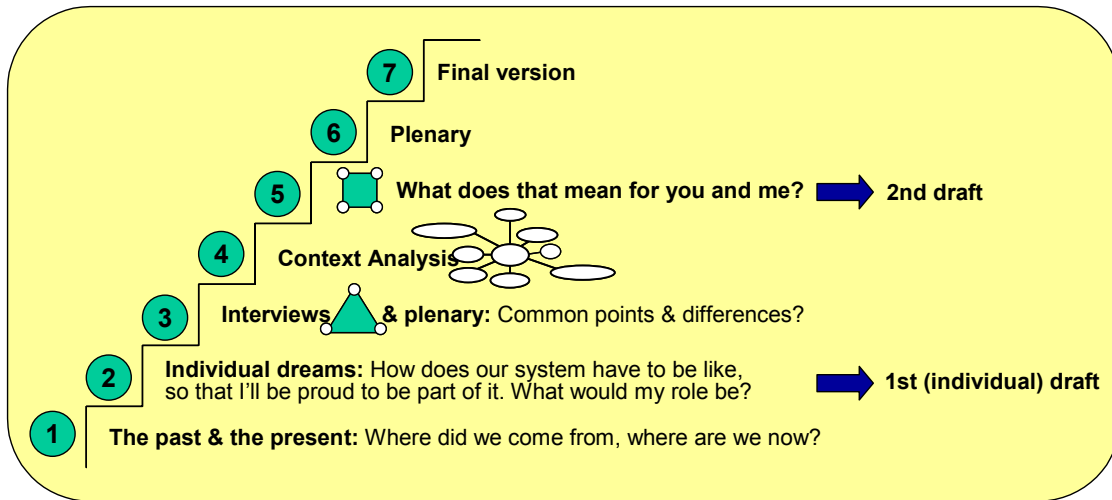


Vision-building is the second element of the SIM model. This is the fundamental driving force behind development processes, interweaving the past, the present and the future. As a "lode star" it points the way ahead. Experience shows that visions are the sources of energy for development. They have to be ambitious and provocative - almost unattainable. In the SIM model the vision work is more important than the final formulation of the vision. Only dispute about the ideal, the dreams and the potentials can start the process. All actors have to be involved in

this process.

The communicative linkage of the different perspectives is the additional value-creating aspect of the vision work. It requires talent and experience in shaping appropriate process architectures. If the vision is imposed from above it does not reach the hearts of the actors. If it is formulated democratically at the grass roots, it is often not powerfully implemented. Innovative concepts are important for the implementing process. A joint motivating process can be designed in meetings with dialogues or vision teams, such as sounding boards, conferences or customer parliaments.

Interventions - The Vision Staircase



Situation:

- Relatively little time for building a vision
- More than only top - down
- Energise people's emotions

Objectives:

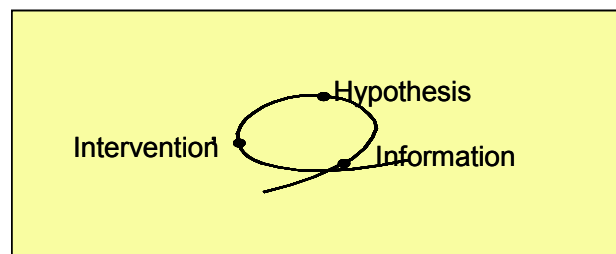
- Building a vision collectively
- High degree of identification (the bigger the group, the better)

The dynamic process loops

Another element of the SIM model is the comprehension of the reflective process. The questions at this stage are as follows: How do the actors in the system interact? What rules exist, and how were they arrived at? What values and/or goals are defined and how are they defined? Who is involved in decisions and at what time?

This has to do with the conscious shaping of decision-making and communication processes as the trigger and motor for development.

The process loop stands for bringing together all the significant actors who are taking part in the development. One exchanges information, forms hypotheses about the current situation and derives interventions from it.



The model is based on the learning capacity of the system due to self-monitoring reflection, which helps to integrate the contradictions arising and to combine them (in the Hegelian sense).

One basic thesis reads: in order to drive forward sustainable development and cause changes of patterns, these basic patterns of thinking and acting must be recognised and this is only possible within a process of thinking, analysing and observing, which means consistent self-reflection.

Very often such reflective processes have to be redesigned so that they will always correspond to current situations and conditions of the change process (methods can include standard workshops, project reviews etc.). The more complex the situations are, the more contradictions will arise and the more leaders and decision makers must be able to integrate these contradictions.

Reflection is not simple at all. It is very difficult to be both actor and observer at the same time. That presupposes that one has the capacity of introspection and differentiation, and is able to accept that there are contradictions. In particular the formulation of hypotheses (see process loop) is not easy because it is much more comfortable to have simple and linear explanations, to speak about fate, to search for a scapegoat, or to delegate responsibility to higher authorities.

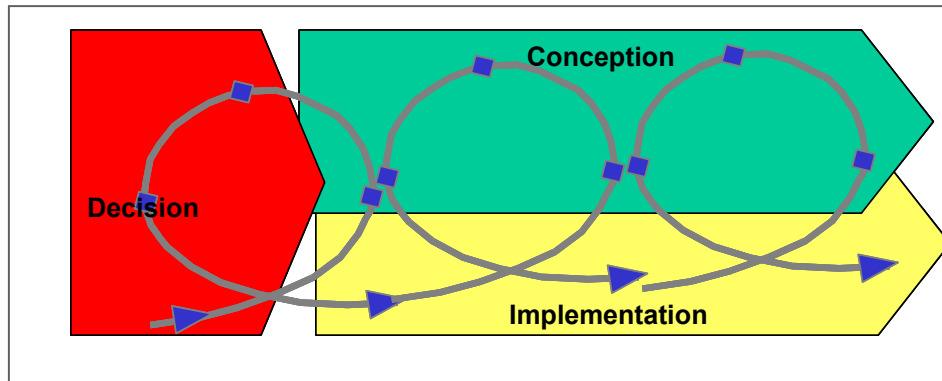
(Self)-reflection is hard work and means assuming responsibility. The great difficulties of meta communication are one's own feelings, interests and involvements. These should not be ignored, but instead have to be taken into consideration as subjective tendencies. Applying Systemic Integration Management often affects people's hearts, even if the focus is on "hard" facts, suppressed feelings which block creative forces if they are held back may appear. It is therefore extraordinarily important to guarantee the spatial and temporal conditions for reflection, e.g. in workshops which enable the actors to distance themselves from everyday life and thus promote a different way of thinking and problem solution quality. Reflection and self-reflection need a lot of time. Only if there is enough time for this kind of exercise an appropriate reaction is ensured – that is, acceleration by deceleration.

Reflection has to be part of system development. It aids participant/actor orientation and can relieve the pressure of work; it promotes creativity and courage, generates self-confidence and leverages implicit knowledge. To achieve these effects the SIM model makes use of the power of symbol-supported communication and analogous interventions.

Analogous interventions work at deep mental levels. They affect the sensitive points of a system. These interventions can take the form of role-plays, sketches, story-telling or rituals. They bring up taboo and dormant subjects and also integrate unconscious qualities (e.g. fears and longings) with rational, conscious insights. They unblock energies, consolidate polarities and thus accelerate the change of patterns. They work from heart to heart. They are an indispensable element of the SIM model.

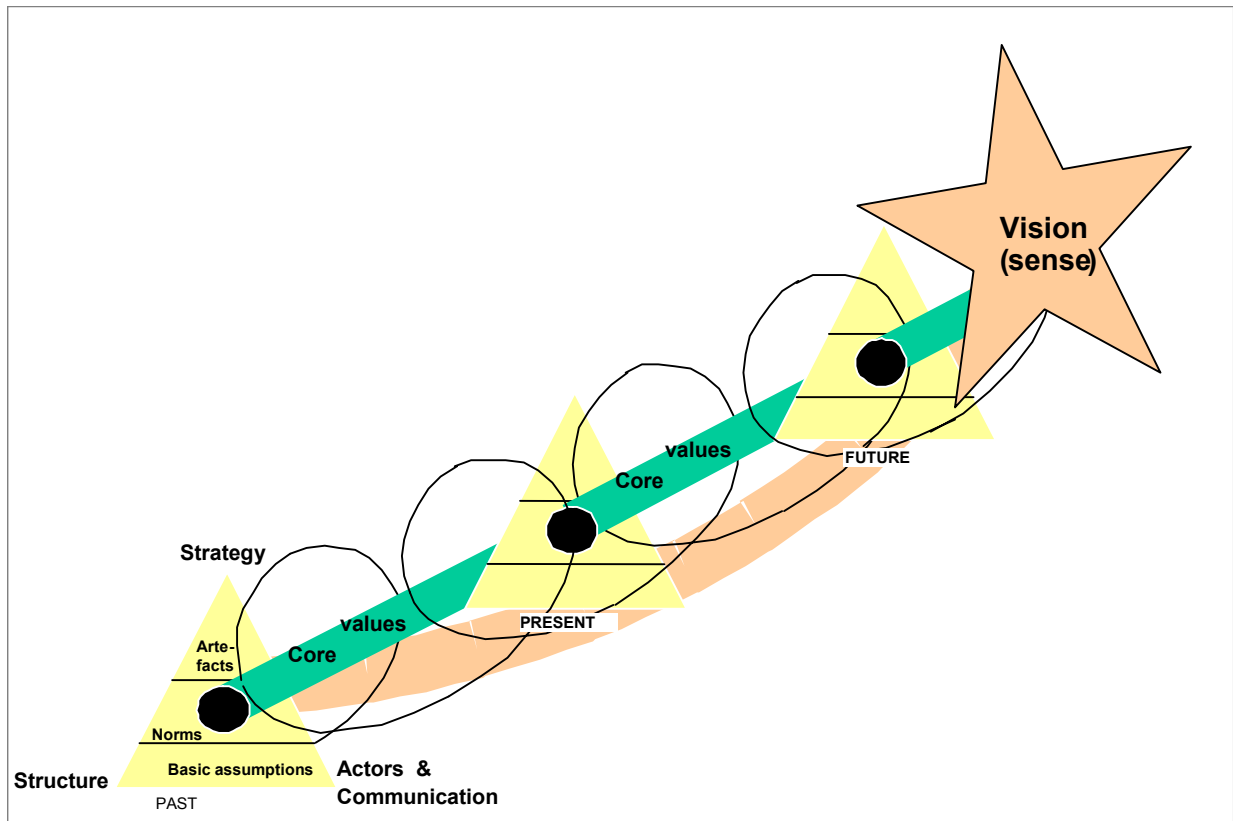
Another important component of the SIM model is the promotion of open processes regarding the approach, procedure, and in particular the actors involved. This means that conception and implementation cannot be separated. Both phases run in parallel. In sequential loops ideas are tested in practice, evaluated and developed until they correspond to the previously defined requirements. The implementation begins with the first conceptual steps. In this view the decision to start the process is at the beginning of the process. Once started, a change process cannot be stopped.

If it is a very complex system it will make sense to form a steering committee. It should consist of decision makers, experts, concerned and good communicators.



The 10 success factors of the SIM model can be summarised as follows:

- A systemic approach
- Vision-building
- Open processes
- The integration of strategy, structure, actors and communication, and culture, which affects all aspects of the system
- Intelligent process architectures
- Reflection as an instrument of self-reflection
- Analogous interventions
- Contradiction management
- Cooperation of the leaders/decision-makers and advisors in the ongoing design of the change process
- Professional project management



3. Use of the tool

The SIM model was developed from the practice of enterprise development processes by managers and advisors. It was first conceived especially for enterprises. The model can be adapted to correspond to any system.

The 10 most common interventions are these:

- qualified diagnoses
- evaluation as intervention
- development work with decision-makers and key persons
- generating positive future pictures
- innovative communication platforms (group of controls, dialogue platforms)
- purposeful communication with the environment surrounding the system
- consequences (positive or negative) of unwanted behaviour
- management of the project portfolio
- large group meetings with analogous elements
- reviews, learning from errors

4. Sources

Uwe Cichy, Roswitha Königswieser
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