



Practical concern:

The many ways we use the future in practice

My concern:

The **unfortunate** ways we use the future in practice

The Future is Now!

Planning in a World of Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Kristian Kreiner

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How the Future becomes Past by Being Promised

Past ----- Present ----- Future

time₁

Planned
future

Past ----- Present ----- Future

time₂



The False Promise of an Attractive Future

Only an arrogant man would believe he could plan a city, only an unimaginative man would want to.

John Kay (2010). *Obliquity. Why Our Goals Are Best Achieved Indirectly*. P.178.

The future of cities, projects, organizations is an effect of *macro-behavior*

Thomas C. Schelling (1978). *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*



The False Promise of Attractive Futures

To think that you know the solution when you don't even understand the problem

Only an arrogant man would believe he could plan a city, only an unimaginative man would want to.

John Kay (2010). *Obliquity: How Achieved Indirectly*. P.178

Neglecting the resourcefulness of others and the potential for learning from experience

The future of cities and organizations is a *macro-behavior*

Thomas C. Schelling (1978). *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*



The Conditions for Planning

- Aspects of reality:
 - Complexity
 - Uncertainty
 - Ambiguity
- Alternative interpretations
 - Managerial inadequacy
 - Managerial conditions
- Alternative implications
 - Replace managers
 - New management strategies



Projects as Complex Supra-Policies

- Courses of action / high order purpose / Projected future
(Gilbert Ryle, Alfred Schütz)
- Inspiring, informing, governing the infra-action of thousands of variegated actors.
 - Flexibility
 - Opportunity-driven action
 - Non-exclusiveness



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Projects as
organizational form or
mental framework



Case: Building the World's Most Accessible Office Building

- Making room for experimentation
- Motivating risk taking
- Making Stakeholders feel Safe
- Learning relevant lessons from experiential feedback



Case: Building the World's Most Accessible Office Building

- Making room for innovation
- Motivating employees
- Making the future clear
- Learning relevant lessons from experiential feedback

The future is clear
The implications are unclear
The success criteria ambiguous



Conclusions: Plans as Myths and Tools

- Plans are mistakenly used as predictions/promises of the future
 - Accountability is problematic under real-world conditions
 - Our imaginations are real constraints
- Plans are an institutional necessity
 - We can treat them as myths
 - Or we treat them as inspiration: exploring potential implications