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**THE DYNAMICS OF RESISTANCE**  
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**LESSONS FROM THE SCI ARS PROJECT**

Mikael Scherdin and Ivo Zander

Department of Business Studies

Uppsala University

## **INTRODUCTION**

While when asked most people would endorse creativity, novelty, and intellectual and economic progress, in reality novel ideas and projects are typically met with resistance. Yet, and perhaps because it is much more socially acceptable to acknowledge progress rather than inertia, the concept of resistance and how it plays itself out has received only marginal scholarly attention.

In this chapter, we seek to develop a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of resistance, drawing upon our personal experience from attempting to introduce and implement a novel cultural and art project in the city of Uppsala – the SCI ARS project. Outlining a number of elements in what may be seen as the dynamics of resistance, we place particular emphasis on how novel ideas and projects set in motion processes that would otherwise have remained dormant, and which do not necessarily involve any disagreement with the ideas as such. Nevertheless, these often unanticipated processes may prove fatal obstacles to project implementation and ultimate survival.

In the concluding parts of the chapter we draw out some tentative conclusions about the pre-conditions for successful introduction of novel ideas on the cultural and art arena and beyond. We highlight how change agents may pay attention to the framing of novel ideas and projects in ways that do not open up for alternative interpretations, how timing of the launch of a project or control over critical resources may avoid triggering otherwise dormant competition, and how evaluators of novel ideas and projects should seek to balance own opinions and input into any project against project members' motivation to sustain their implementation efforts.

## **RESISTANCE**

Most if not all who have been involved in the launching of novel ideas would ascribe to how they are met with resistance. Such resistance may express itself in several contexts, including society, organizations, and the implementation of new business ventures (cf. Berglund and Gaddefors, 2010), and it is beyond the scope of the present study to explore the concept throughout all its forms and appearances. To that end, we will over-simplify and consider

resistance towards a novel idea and its practical implications, acknowledging but not further exploring that it in most cases it is intertwined with issues that concern power and authority relationships.

Within this comparatively narrow context, resistance may be defined both as an impassive stance towards a novel idea, expressed in the withholding of critical resources that could potentially have been allocated to support its implementation, and/or actions explicitly aimed at discrediting the idea and preventing its realization. Its effects are delayed implementation or ultimate failure and termination of further attempts to promote and realize the idea. The degree of resistance is in part determined by subjective expectations about the future, as it relates to baseline assumptions about what would be a “normal” pace of implementation and change among the individuals promoting the novel idea. This complicates the establishment of any objectively “true” level of resistance, especially as individuals who launch and pursue novel ideas are known to be susceptible to cognitive biases such as over-confidence and planning fallacies (Kahneman and Lovallo, 1993; Baron, 1998).

While resistance is largely subjectively perceived, to some extent it could be said to represent an objective reality. The more objective element would include more or less overt attempts to prevent the implementation of the novel idea (for example, staging legally sanctioned appeals or raising public opinion against certain actions or developments) or to discredit it among people who could offer potential support. Notably, objectively perceivable resistance may not be known to or experienced by everyone. For example, while individuals involved in or affected by attempts to discredit a novel idea may be aware this fact, such attempts may remain unknown to the group in charge of and promoting idea implementation.

The sources of resistance to novel ideas may be manifold. At a fundamental level, resistance finds its roots in general cautiousness against the unfamiliar and traits that have proven beneficial from an evolutionary and survival point of view, but these are aspects that will not be contemplated further in the present study. Especially in the context of novel ideas that deviate significantly from the existing and accustomed, resistance may instead be determined by the extent to which involved individuals agree with or understand the new venture.

In many cases, and especially when the main issue is the viability of the novel idea (however defined), people may simply have different opinions about the ultimate chances of success. These different opinions are in large part based on subjective understandings of the likelihood of future events and the ability of individuals to influence the final outcome (cf. Zander, 2007). This is the classical situation of the funding of new business ventures, as displayed in various forms of Dragons' Dens popularized in television, where potential financiers will either support or (more commonly) reject new business proposals.

The misunderstanding of novel ideas is of a different nature, because in this case individuals may actually agree about the ultimate chances of success, but implicitly have misperceived the best or appropriate ways to proceed. The result may be official support for the novel idea and the associated allocation of critical resources and efforts, but as a result of a mismatch of perceived and required efforts there will nevertheless be significant delays, imperfect execution, or ultimate failure of idea implementation. Put somewhat differently, there may be perfectly good intentions but misdirected efforts to help out in the implementation process.

The sources of resistance may also be traced to the consequences of the novel idea. In this case, different individuals may be in perfect agreement as to the viability of a novel idea and undertaking, but for some its implementation may be associated with irreversible loss or unpleasant consequences. Although in most (if not all) cases the evaluation of success rates and developments processes of novel ideas are associated with emotions (Churchland, 2002; Dolan, 2002), the consequences of novel ideas, particularly if they imply a break with prior experiences, may elicit strong personal reactions, which in turn can translate into supportive or obstructive action (Huy, 2002).

A main point we will elaborate upon in the remainder of this chapter is that such common sources of resistance may be accompanied by partly or largely unrelated dynamics and processes. These dynamics and processes may emerge at any time during the pursuit of a novel idea, and may have significantly negative effects on the initiators' chances of rounding up sufficient support for sustained and successful implementation. Notably, in many cases they might come as an unpleasant surprise for the unsuspecting and unprepared, and the following sections aspire to detail their nature and finally offer some thoughts on how they can be avoided or nullified.

## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The empirical material on the SCI ARS project was collected through direct observation and participation in the project itself, as the first author was lead coordinator of the project and the second a member of the advisory board. Data collection would thus be seen as participant observation, and the empirical account be characterized as an autoethnography (including the first-person presentation of data which is commonly found in autoethnographical studies; cf. Scherdin, 2007). At the time when the SCI ARS project unfolded, there were no ambitions to use it for any specific research purposes, and in this respect it is “clean” from any attempts to strategically intervene in ongoing process or events or to pay particular attention to specific conceptual or theoretical aspects of the unfolding story. That latter aspect has instead been the purpose of the current chapter.

The applied method comes with several caveats and weaknesses, including the subjective element in the collection and interpretation of data. As the story is told and analyzed in the following sections it is, if you so wish, a one-sided account of processes and events that have many other and unobserved aspect and potential interpretations. It has not (yet) been possible to triangulate and verify the observations, although in light of the contents of the account and ultimate results it is doubtful whether a set of interviews with other central actors involved in the process would be free from biases. While the subjective element of the present study may be perceived as troublesome by some, it could be emphasized that such subjective elements would be part also of any traditional, case-based study.

This leads on to one of the strengths of the applied methodology, which is that from the authors’ perspective it can be ascertained that the account of processes and events that were part of the SCI ARS project is rendered as honestly and correctly as possible. There has been nothing to gain from telling a story that would only be partially true, or, put somewhat differently, from presenting a biased story to be able to make any particular or selling points in the conclusions. The main ambition has indeed been to tell the “true” story, albeit from a subjective viewpoint and still affected by the general problems of accurate recall and selection of memories and data to go into the final account (Golden, 1992).

There is also a second and from our perspective important advantage associated with the applied method – the fact that all the emotions that were involved in the process can be

retold. Again, a number of issues such as selective and incorrect recall come into the picture also with respect to emotions, but arguably those emotions that were strongly perceived and hence remembered are also those that have warranted particular and closer scrutiny.

In the account that follows, it has not been possible to include full details about the processes and events that were part of the SCI ARS project. Instead, we have attempted to provide a general understanding of the unfolding of the process, and focused in on a small number of events we believe were of significant consequences and conceptual interest. These events became immediately obvious when trying to recollect what happened during project launch and development, and reflecting upon what they meant ultimately proved highly enlightening in terms of understanding resistance to the project. In other words, as the project like many others of similar kind involved arduous efforts to initiate change, that part of the story will be taken for granted and not commented upon further. Our main interest will be one or two conceptual points that gave us a deeper understanding of what happened, and hopefully the same applies to the reader as well.

## **THE SCI ARS PROJECT**

As it was ultimately described, about one year after the idea was originally conceived, SCI ARS was to become a center for contemporary art, with specific focus on cross-disciplinary research centered on artistic processes. The results would be published in traditional research outlets and also in the form of art exhibitions. Although research about artistic processes was still in its infancy, it was envisioned SCI ARS would offer an arena for the fusion of research in fields such as creativity, cognition, medicine, computer sciences, and entrepreneurship. To date, it was argued, there existed no dedicated space to produce and display the scientific findings, partially in the form of art exhibitions. SCI ARS was to become that dedicated space.

The conditions looked promising. The city of Uppsala, located some 70 kilometers north of Stockholm, in many respects was dominated by the university's presence, stretching back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. It nevertheless, or perhaps because of this fact, lacked any significant institutions for contemporary art. Talks aimed at the creation of new cultural institutions had been going on for decades, but by and large had remained unfruitful. The city comprised a set of well-established and internationally reputed research institutions,

including the faculties of medicine, natural sciences, and humanities. The project itself had received some early seed funding from the Foundation of the Culture of the Future, and financing issues could be addressed through support from Anders Wall, a well-known Swedish entrepreneur, philanthropist, and art collector and patron. It was also his network of contacts that had revealed that the owners of a now empty warehouse facility - Senapsfabriken ("The Mustard Factory") - were looking for new tenants. Members of the project group had extensive knowledge about the workings of the art and cultural arena, maintained local and international networks of contacts in contemporary art circles, and one of the members was involved in original academic research in the intersection of art and entrepreneurship.

The project developed over a period of eighteen months. During that period, it saw the formulation of an overarching vision as well as a detailed program for planned activities (contained in what essentially translates into a full-blown business plan), developed through contacts with artists, curators, architects, local art museums, potential financiers, and representatives of Uppsala University. For the first years of operation, financing was to be sought from private individuals and corporations, with Uppsala University as an important supporting partner from the scientific community. All detail about the unfolding of the project cannot be accounted for in this chapter, but two specific events or chains of events stand out in its development. Both of these events – what turned out to be critical meeting at Uppsala University and the resigning of a member of the project's advisory board - will be described in more details in the following.

### **The Meeting at Uppsala University**

The meeting at Uppsala University had been preceded by extensive preparations, including a range of meetings with potential financiers, architects, and potential providers of exhibition premises. At a pre-meeting, the business plan had been discussed with the central financier, and these discussions had uncovered international contacts on the contemporary art scene that could be of further help in venture financing. In all probability, contacts between the critical financier and the university Vice-Chancellor had created a pre-understanding of the venture and thus prepared the ground for the upcoming meeting. As the project would be

asking for formal rather than financial support from the university, it is believed that the issues under consideration were comparatively non-contentious.

Let one of the project members retell the events that took place during the meeting itself:

“The imposing main building of the university, located next to the cathedral, the second center of power in Uppsala, displays a number of magnificent meeting rooms. Double doors much taller than the normal person, a number of drawing rooms with century-old oil paintings, paneled and painted walls and ceilings, stucco work, statues and figurines, and impressive marble floors all breathe but one thing – power. The power of the university, the power of science and its ultimate custodian, the Vice-Chancellor.

An assistant shows us the way to one of the drawing rooms, where a short wait permits a conversation about the art displayed on the walls. We are then shown to a meeting room of more ceremonial character. It is perhaps a bit misleading to call it a meeting room, as it is far removed from projector screens, projectors or whiteboards. It is about 4 meters to the ceiling, there are books and paintings, and a set of chairs that matches the number of attending people. One chair is more like a throne and some 30-40 centimeters taller than the others, placed at the short end of an incredibly heavy black mahogany table.

A short wait is followed by the entry of an entourage of people, the Vice-Chancellor being the last one to arrive. The Vice-Chancellor takes a seat on the “throne” and the rest of us – members of the project group and university administrators – are rather pressed together at the other end of the table. It’s about a decimeter between us, about a meter to the Vice-Chancellor. The atmosphere turns very formal, perhaps even ceremonial. When the Vice-Chancellor speaks everybody sits quietly, eyes turned towards the floor. I wonder how this will end. I notice that everyone in the project group turns very nervous and suddenly it feels impossible to present any thoughts of more considerable ethereal level.

One at a time, we present our case and ambitions, and to my surprise the Vice-Chancellor is very positive. He starts talking about some university premises that may be used for the project and which are fairly central and close to where students move about. Spirits are lifted and we start feeling more confident. The meeting is attended by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the head of administration, and a representative from the faculty of arts, a sort of advisor in matters that concern art at the university. The advisor asks a few



penetrating questions, presumably to test our credibility, but nothing that significantly disturbs the flow of the meeting. It's going our way.

The Vice-Chancellor hands over the word to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who apparently is responsible for art-related issues at the university. Now the atmosphere turns scrutinizing and probing. One of the opening questions is: "What are others doing in this field?", specifically then other Swedish universities. It is unclear if there is fear of sticking out too much from the rest, or if it is about identifying the uniqueness of the project. We interpret it as a question whether anything similar has been done in connection to other universities, and truthfully answer there is no project of this type to be found anywhere. No one else at the meeting really knows what is going on in other places, but there is an emerging notion that several of the leading universities are engaged in this type of activity already.

Having now created a mental picture of the project, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor continues to account for existing cultural activities and events that have taken place at the university, and wonders if we couldn't do exhibitions that would "illustrate scientific projects". Well, we respond, the main objective perhaps isn't to hire artists to illustrate scientists' projects, but collaboration around ongoing research projects could well be a possibility. But wouldn't it be possible to, in light of the upcoming jubilee celebrations, hire a set of artists to illustrate scientific projects that are exhibited in the century-old premises of Gustavianum (a venue that is used for the exhibition of the university's various collections, including historical artifacts and oil paintings, and also housing a unique anatomical theatre from the 17<sup>th</sup> century)?

The discussion gets stuck around the university's collection of oil paintings, its art collection in general, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's ambition to get these collections out more into the public. The meeting completely loses its 'esprit' and the Vice-Chancellor delegates the project to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The meeting is over. The question has been removed from the Vice-Chancellor's desk to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's. A follow-up meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reveals that the ambition is now to redesign the project so that it fits with the university's existing art collections and the illustration of science."

## **Dynamics of the Advisory Board**

The second salient observation from the SCI ARS project is of a different nature, as it is really consists of a series of events, the drivers of which remain only partially known.

The observation concerns the resigning of a member of the advisory board, and its effects on further project developments. The advisory board member originally became associated with the project on recommendation by the critical financier. The to-be member's extensive contacts within the university made this an appealing proposition. An early meeting at the financier's rural residence confirmed ambitions to jointly explore the emerging SCI ARS project, and recommendations were made that the project group establishes contact with an internationally renowned art collector and patron. The meeting ended on an upbeat note, and the set of people in charge of implementing the project had crystallized; an advisory board that throughout the project's implementation would range between three and four people and a project group consisting of two core members with select periods of significant involvement of professional architects and web designers.

The first indication of emerging complications occurred a few months later, as a contact with the advisory board member unexpectedly revealed concerns about further personal involvement, especially on account of the fact that the member's name allegedly had been surfacing and used in a number of unsuitable circles. The event left the project group perplexed, as project development and implementation had been of traditional nature and to the group's knowledge so far had not involved any controversial moves or discussions.

Some months after the contact, the board member over the telephone announced a wish to resign as an official representative of the project. The reasons remained unexplained, but it was assured that the decision had nothing to do with the SCI ARS project itself, which remained as interesting and important as before. The question of motives was not pushed further, but there was a strong sense of an unspoken conflict of interests underlying the decision. Internal discussions among project members contemplated the implications for the further development of the project, and also the underlying drivers or motives. Discussion at previous meetings had revealed that the board member maintained separate contacts with the international art patron, and it was speculated that other processes had now been set in motion that directly or indirectly affected the development of the SCI ARS project. At the same time, contacts with the critical financier were becoming less

committing than before. Project members speculated there may be another and unknown game going on in parallel to the SCI ARS project. Were plans being drawn for the establishment of a museum for the display of the university's art collections? Whether this was indeed true remained an unanswered question.

Ultimately, the official reasons for resignation were the board member's uneasiness with remaining on the advisory board, adding the notion there was too limited personal understanding of projects of this nature and too little time to be devoted to its further development. The member's resignation occurred some eighteen months after the project's initiation, and with the resignation the project lost important internal legitimacy at the university. It also made it more or less impossible to secure formal support for the intended and to the project critical collaboration across arts and scientific research.

## **DISCUSSION**

As a backdrop and overall frame for the discussion, it may be useful to contemplate the basic nature of the SCI ARS project.

### **Project Origin and Type of Innovation**

While the origin or source of the project was associated with a distinct event – the realization of the empty warehouse premises of Senapsfabriken and emerging discussions about what activities they may incorporate – it was not the type of event that could be characterized as a crisis. As in many entrepreneurial undertakings, the project was largely opportunity driven, and in organizational contexts these types of projects are known to generate less attention and longer decision times than those that in some way reflect or counteract an apparent crisis (Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Jackson and Dutton, 1988; Nutt, 1998).

If compared to the existing art and research institutions in Uppsala, and also seen against the often referred to traditionalism of the city of Uppsala, the SCI ARS project would probably represent a mix of traditional and well-known concepts and comparatively radical elements that differed from current trajectories. In terms of addressing and attracting new visitors or customer groups, the SCI ARS project in part involved traditional activities such as

exhibitions and a café section. Similarly, the 'artist in residence' concept that was part of the project proposal is established and well-known, especially among individuals active on the art arena. Yet, the project also involved more significant innovation, particularly the ambition to create a new type of forum for interaction across artists and scientists. The exact nature of these activities and effects on creativity and thought processes would have been much more difficult to recognize and evaluate.

In terms of modularity, the SCI ARS project did not require significant new developments or alterations in linkages to other and existing activities (cf. Tushman and Anderson, 1986; Henderson and Clark, 1990). It is also notable that it in most part represented change "into" a new state, rather than change "from" a previous state. This would have attenuated resistance caused by feelings of irreversible loss among individuals or groups affected by the new venture. All in all, the project came without a distinct sense of urgency, moderate levels of novelty and conceptual complexity, and a generally non-threatening stance with regard to already ongoing activities and institutions.

### **Dynamics of Resistance**

The meeting at Uppsala University is interesting as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's probing approach to the original idea set off dynamics with important consequences for the project and its members. In all probability, the probing approach included a mixture of benevolent attempts to help out in the process of identifying a suitable format of the idea, and a perceived notion that as a potential official representative of the university the new concept had to be assessed with existing resources and operations in mind. The latter assessment also involved comparisons with other and partially competing universities. The critical stance in the examination may have been re-enforced by the composition of the attending group of university officials, including the Vice-Chancellor and a representative from the faculty of arts. From a process perspective, it would appear highly likely that at least some of the members of the assembled group would take on the official role as critical reviewers with the university's best in mind.

Whatever the pre-conditions for the discussion, the attempt to re-frame the project into something that deviated significantly from the original idea had two important consequences. In the first place, it created ambiguity among other listeners as to what this

new project would really look like, creating associated uncertainty as to which idea and project was evaluated and whether or not it was a good idea. The suddenly enhanced levels of complexity in the decision-making process probably resulted in the feeling that “this project I still in the early phases and requires some further contemplation before anything official can be done about it.” As a second result, the tables were completely turned and the purpose of the meeting changed into one where the original and prospective supporters were selling a project on the project initiators (and others), the effects of which could only be growing frustration and the adoption of a defensive stance towards further negotiations. The general and growing feeling among the project members could be described as: “We’re wasting time here, this was not what the meeting was about”.

This second and arguably more significant implication of these dynamics was their strong negative impact on the motivation of the project group members. However benevolent the intentions, attempts at re-formulating the project into something it was not intended to be was extremely discouraging, a fact that was probably exacerbated by the ‘avant garde’ nature of the project idea. This was not intended to become a project that would resonate with the century-long traditions of a respectable academic institution; on the contrary, the ambition was to create something that could breathe life and excitement into an otherwise stale and conservative city. And how the project related to “what others do” was perceived as completely irrelevant. The more this ‘avant garde’ project would come to resemble what someone else did the more it would lose its freshness, attractiveness and ‘raison d’être’. After the meeting, there was no mistaking in the reactions among the project members - “this has been a complete waste of time and is never going to work, we can forget about the university.”

As the aftermath of the university meeting documents, the SCI ARS idea may be described as an idea that was indeed “hi-jacked” (cf. Scherdin and Zander, 2010), as the presentation at the university gave rise to the idea that the project should focus on various forms of exhibitions to illustrate science. That idea would probably never have emerged without the SCI ARS meeting as an igniting event, and while its ultimate crystallization prevented further progress on the original idea it came without any real intentions which could support actual launch and sustained implementation. However benevolent in its origins, the activation of what would otherwise have remained a dormant idea became an effective blocking element to the entire SCI ARS project.

With regard to the ultimate resigning of one key member of the advisory board, it should be re-emphasized that we can only speculate about the underlying drivers or motives. It nevertheless remains a fact that the developments were unexpected and to the project group remained puzzling and largely unexplained, and in that capacity they offer ground for some extrapolation and hypothesizing.

One possibility that may find traction in some cases is that the mere introduction of a novel idea and project sets off thought processes and activities that may otherwise have remained dormant. Notably, these would be thought processes and activities unconnected to the ability to understand, buy into, or even offer support for the initiating idea and project. They are, if you so wish, thought processes and activities that in the absence of a precipitating event would have remained unrealized Aristotelean possibilities.

The emergence and attempted implementation of novel ideas may thus indicate the existence of resources or emerging resource activation, and also that someone has seen potential value in these resources. There is, in other words, a signal of the emergence of opportunities that could potentially be grasped. The effect may be combined with the realization and actualization of projects that may otherwise have remained dormant, but which are now perceived as more promising opportunities. Information gleaned through contacts with members of any currently pursued project could act as a gateway to individuals and organizations in potential possession of valuable resources. In this way, and similar to the dynamics set in motion by the meeting at the university, the original project ignites ideas that would otherwise have remained untried, and it may indeed serve as a shortcut to identifying important resources to be rounded up in the development process.

Ultimately, but not necessarily, it may come to a situation where support for the original idea and project gets into conflict with attempts to develop own intentions and engagements, and such cases may witness the unexpected and unexplained withdrawal of prior support and resources. In some instances, events could also turn into direct and active resistance, for example in the form of overt or covert discrediting of the original idea and project. In this way, and in a situation which resembles that of corporate managers who get stuck in attempts of “crossing the chasm” (Moore, 1999), project members who believe things are progressing nicely may stand puzzled as they witness the sudden disappearance of support and success that was thought to be within reach.

## Implications and Lessons Learned

An overarching impression from what happened during the unfolding of the SCI ARS project is that the strength of resistance is not simply a matter of how well a specific idea or new project is understood and received by others. The main point seems to be that the mere launching of the project sets off dynamics that would otherwise have remained dormant, and which may not necessarily have anything to do with the perceived attractiveness or feasibility of the project itself. These processes may be particularly accentuated and harmful in the context of more radical new ideas, which are ambiguous and therefore open to many alternative interpretations and specifications, and also span time periods which allow competition for potentially available resources to emerge.

A first practically relevant insight concerns how novel ideas and projects could and perhaps should be framed. At the fundamental level, framing is about how individuals attempt to construct meaning and convey a picture of “reality” to other people (Benford and Snow, 2000). The objective is to generate attention to certain issues, problems, or projects and to construct mental models that help others make sense of and evaluate new information. It also comes with the notion that individuals strategically try to communicate pictures of reality that do not necessarily correspond to all “objective” or known facts, i.e. they attempt to convey an appealing picture of novel ideas without resorting to outright misrepresentations of the objective and true facts (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Howells and Higgins, 1990).

As the framing literature has focused on how to make a novel idea attractive to others and make them “buy into” it, the SCI ARS experience adds the notion that framing may be just as much about preventing them from developing own and deviating thoughts about what the idea could be instead. While the two aspects are perhaps intertwined, it is not improbable that there are techniques that prevent listeners from going astray and retain them within the frames of a particular train of thought. In other words, successful framing is a matter of balancing the fact that novel ideas must be able to generate interest and find acceptance among others, while at the same time they should not trigger processes that lead to the contemplation of alternative formulations and functions of the original idea. This point is perhaps well-known to many experienced change agents, but to all with lesser skills

and intuitive framing reflexes it could offer a source of further contemplation and adaptation in the selling process.

If there are lessons to be learned in terms of the timing of “going public” with a new idea and project, the (perhaps not entirely helpful) conclusion would be that careful consideration of when to publicly launch a novel idea and project can be of significant importance. In light of the SCI ARS experience, it may have proven more effective to as much as possible delay external visibility of the project and to design a plan that included explicit consideration of how to compress the time for meetings and negotiations with the external parties. This would have reduced the window of opportunity for potentially competing projects to emerge and materialize, partly because the notion of a project that is already well under way and is close to its finalization comes with the perception that “this train has already been missed”. This would reduce the inclination to actively follow through on other ideas and projects that may have been pulled out of dormancy.

An alternative to delayed launch and concerted efforts to compress implementation times would be to secure control over one or several critical resources. While it may not be the case that such control is always achievable, and apart from the level of confidence in the project it may generate among other parties contemplating project support, it would prove a definite advantage in making at least one central resource unavailable to competing initiatives (hence limiting the level of perceived feasibility of such competing initiatives; Krueger, 2000). The SCI ARS experience indeed invokes the question about probabilities of success in radical new ventures that cannot draw on firm commitment from or control over a minimum set of critical resources. Our tentative conclusion would be that such ventures may ultimately work, but that in many cases that involve multiple stakeholders they would border the “mission impossible”.

Arguably, the findings also come with some potential insights for evaluators of novel ideas and projects, especially if there is a basic willingness and ambition to promote change and progress. For those evaluators, understanding and contemplating how efforts to refine and alter proposed ideas and projects influence the emotions and motivation among project representatives seems particularly important. The core of the issue is awareness of the need for balancing natural and legitimate attempts at probing new ideas and assisting in their development against the motivational effect this may have on the founding project members. Especially the latter point is probably too often forgotten when the consequences



of change are contemplated (Huy, 2002), and it may be particularly important in the context of radical and ‘avant garde’ projects which by nature are expected to deviate from the existing and accustomed (Chin, 1985).

## **CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

As we draw our conclusions from the SCI ARS project, we want to re-emphasize that the proposed insights and lessons remain preliminary. They are in part based on extrapolation and speculation and the extent to which the project can tell us about general occurrences must be verified by future experiences. We would also like to underscore that the presentation has not been intended to blame any specific person or set of events for the demise of the project, as the set of explanatory factors is potentially very large and in large parts remains unknown (including the possibility that SCI ARS was fundamentally a “bad” idea). Our ambition has been to highlight the nature and implications of one or two conspicuous events and processes which have continued to puzzle our minds when revisiting and contemplating the ultimate fate of the SCI ARS project.

Also, many of the aspects we have touched upon are likely to have been identified in the prior literature, most likely under different names and across a broad range of fields of research. At the point of writing, we are unaware of the full range of conceptual and theoretical perspectives that may have been brought into the picture and which could better describe, explain, and correct our proposed insights. If there is nevertheless some novelty in the findings and conclusions, they may offer a starting point for some further conceptual elaborations and more focused empirical investigations.

In any event, we would expect that some of the experiences that have been accounted for are recognized by practitioners across a range of professional fields. To the extent practitioners would recognize and verify some of our observations and perhaps also find the preliminary conclusions enlightening, we hope to think that the chapter has contributed one piece to our understanding of resistance and how it is played out in the context of more radical new ideas and projects.

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