A guide to
Responsible Project Management

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2018 Edition

Further information can be found on our website:
www.responsiblepm.com

Responsible
Project Management

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Foreword from Darren Dalcher

Darren Dalcher
Professor in Strategic Project Management
Founder and Director of the National Centre for Project Management
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Now is the time for responsible project management.

Project management remains essential to the delivery of much-needed assets, capability and infrastructure required to underpin the increasingly insatiable ambitions of society. Yet, given current economic and political pressures, the profession is persistently being challenged to deliver ever more with far less.

This is not an easy challenge. Such pressure can translate into difficult decisions and tricky trade-offs even for the most accomplished and experienced managers. Trading-off safety, sustainability and prosperity, whilst balancing outputs, outcomes, impacts, benefits, risks, issues, and costs is a complex undertaking. Moreover, as we begin to grapple with the longer-term implications and repercussions of our actions, it is incumbent upon us to consider the ramifications for tomorrow, for the future and for our great-grandchildren.

Medical practitioners are traditionally bound by the Hippocratic oath, a traditional undertaking to uphold ethical standards. The oath is reckoned to be the earliest expression of medical ethics, establishing a set of key principles, which have maintained their significance and relevance to the present day. The oath is often equated to the phrase 'first do no harm'.

So what is the project manager's equivalent of an oath to do no harm? And thinking about harm, we can also begin to ponder, harm to whom, or to what? Project managers can no longer proclaim the end of their responsibility at a presumed handover point. Responsibility and obligations now seem to extend into a far less certain and less forgiving future. With the statute of limitations extending into the future, we now need a new way of making sense of our long-term obligations, responsibility and actions.

The time has come for discussing and employing a new type of responsible project management. There is a serious obligation on any one working in the project space to question and consider the long-term impacts of our actions and undertakings. As professionals and educators, we are indebted to Karen Thompson and Nigel Williams for initiating this critical conversation on our behalf.

Yet, not satisfied with simply asking the questions or initiating the conversation, Karen and Nigel took the next step of developing a first draft for a detailed Guide to Responsible Project Management, thereby creating a far more solid basis for progressing the discussion.

The Guide is a first step on the long road to improving professionalism. It offers a set of eight principles that could form the basis of taking responsibility for our decisions and actions. I would urge professionals, students and academics to read the guide and engage in the conversation. Ultimately, it is only through a joint effort that we can develop a deeper and more meaningful approach to contending with the enormity of the grand challenge of creating a better future through informed and engaged projects and craft a discipline of responsible project management. To play a part in this new development, read the guide and actively join in the conversation.

Prof Darren Dalcher

Foreword from Rob Leslie-Carter

Rob Leslie-Carter
Director, Arup

Over the past 12 months, we've presented Future of Project Management - research into forward thinking and emerging trends in the way we lead and manage projects - to more than 5000 students and practitioners. Without exception, the trend that dominates audience questions is 'changing corporate culture', and by extension the evolving professional expectations on the role Project Managers play in shaping that culture.

Whether triggered by more millennials and Gen Zs entering the workplace, the growth of freelance or 'gig' workers in teams and organisations, more flexible working arrangements, or a more inclusive and diverse set of backgrounds and ideas, traditional relationships and corporate cultures are changing.

Beyond flexibility, reputation in terms of culture is becoming increasingly important for companies and project teams, especially when it comes to employee retention. Employees are looking more and more into corporate statements about values, culture and social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly becoming a differentiator – be it choosing an employer, corporate reputation, or employee engagement. Employers with strong CSR principles have been shown to achieve a better working atmosphere, a more efficient workflow and better employee loyalty.

All of this dovetails well into the recent Royal Charter for the Association for Project Management, and their supporting white papers exploring professional responsibilities, codes and conduct, ethical considerations, and areas of potential political, intellectual and moral irresponsibility in the delivery of our project work.

Part of Arup's response is a commitment to align all our work and our business with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and explore how to align our business behind all new global agendas for such as COP21 and the Paris Pledge. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

On an individual Project Management level, this is about a professional conduct that is as much about doing the right things as doing things right. Your personal legacy will become an increasingly important part of your professional success in the future, and a question I always pose to audiences is, 'Why would anyone want to be Project Managed by you?'

I'm really excited to see this publication on Responsible Project Management taking this thinking to the next level of detail and am looking forward to being part of the ongoing conversation.

Rob Leslie-Carter

Foreword from Andrew Edkins

Andrew Edkins
Director
The Bartlett Real Estate Institute
UCL

Projects are the vehicles that introduce change. Whether this change is tangible and enduring – as is the case with buildings and similar structures, or more nuanced and ethereal – as in cases of a pop-up performance art event, projects cause disruption to the steady-state. It is this disruption that can be seen as being at the heart of responsible project management.

To be responsible means to understand the impacts and consequences of actions and deeds. Professionals have to think carefully about this term as if one couples the obligation to be responsible with the requirement to be accountable, and then there are the conditions for identification of the parties that caused things to happen, This causation is both positive and negative. Those who solve major problems and generate new breakthroughs are lauded – think Nobel Laureates down the ages, but professional in our modern age will also consider the negative connotations, with the concern about being blamed when things go wrong. This challenge, of being required to see beyond the direct and immediate is one that is growing as our understanding of how our lives and our worlds are interconnected and entwined.

For the project manager, this world of consequence and impact is one that is growing in significance and focus. Ethics and morals are topics that professions such as law, medicine and accounting have grappled with in order that they can serve both their clients/patients as well as their professional ideals.

For project management the focus has been on delivering the project. To consider the consequences of the project has been something that is out of scope for the project manager, but this is changing. It is changing as projects themselves are under increased and wider scrutiny from many outside the project. The world of digital technology and social media means that anyone can be informed anywhere of what is going on and this real-time connectivity provides one set of pressures. There are, however, more pressures as through our science and technology we understand the longer-term impacts and consequences of our actions. Climate change and global warming are the most obvious of these, but we are also starting to appreciate the longer-term impacts of other global phenomena and trends – a generally ageing population, an urbanising population, and a natural environment that is suffering from resource depletion as well as plastic pollution and more. This makes the task of the project manager more testing as there are so many more factors to manage and parameters to consider than simply be concerned with the management of project time, cost, specification and scope.

It is therefore both timely and significant that this guide has been produced. It asks us, those who manage projects, to look at the situation, circumstance and context that we find ourselves and the project we are to manage in. It inevitably makes the role of the project manager more significant and this, if it embraced, should elevate further the profession of project management as it seeks to deliver projects, but does so cognisant of the wider world in which any project will sit and with better understanding of the impacts and consequences of the project both now and directly as well as further into the future and indirectly.

Prof Andrew Edkins

Foreword from Gwyn Jones

Gwyn Jones
Director
Association of Sustainability Practitioners

I want to give you a brief flight through time, from the 1950s when I was born, to the current day and consider the challenges and opportunities we face. There have been massive changes and disruptions in this period.

By the 1950s, tremendous advances had been made in fields such as plastics, antibiotics, nuclear and telecommunications. The economic model around the world assumed that resources were infinite and growth in GDP was the primary measure of success. Continued, never ending growth. And the dominating manufacturing model was "take, make, throw away" (both the "waste" and eventually the actual products). There was little if any concern for the negative impacts of this model, both environmental and social.

In the 1960s concerns were raised about the impact of the disposable model, and finite resources to support a rapidly increasing global population (7.6 billion in 2018). Many scientists were beginning to understand the potential threat to our climate of our actions, but they were perceived as a threat to the benefits of progress.

By the new millennium, we started to accept that climate change and resource depletion are very real global threats. We learned there is no "away", because planet Earth is home to us all. We have started to discuss new concepts, such as Social Capital, Human Capital and Environmental Capital, adding to the well understood Financial Capital and Manufactured Capital.

Today, people are more openly discussing how we can create sustainable societies, businesses, economies and ways of living. The new global challenge is "Sustainability". Or, "How do we create a future in which the population of 10 billion people predicted for 2050 can live in peace, equitably and sustainably?" Put simply "Enough for everyone, forever".

The sustainability discourse is difficult, and many companies push the responsibility on to an environmental or sustainability team that have little impact on how a company functions, but could demonstrate that it was being responsible. We see corporate statements professing their commitment to "reducing their environmental impact" or "doing no harm". But

these are commitments to being "less unsustainable" as they implicitly see the only impacts as being negative. They do not embrace the idea of deliberately creating positive impacts. Being less unsustainable is fundamentally different from being more sustainable.

The Circular Economy is the manufacturing/design principle that embraces the fact that resources are finite, and production should mimic nature in creating no waste. In parallel new ways of defining how a company's success is measured are being created and built into the legal form and structures to allow directors to create value for more than just the shareholders. Purpose led organisations that combine doing good with making money are emerging. Examples include "Benefit Corps" (B Corps), for-profit Social enterprises, not-for profit NGOs and charities. These are organisations committed to creating social and environmental capital, as well as financial capital. Failing systems are being replaced with ones designed to be sustainable from the outset. To be sustainable, systems must be financially sustainable AND create benefits and value for ALL their stakeholders.

Our awareness of the impacts of our choices is rising. We are more conscious of how the world actually works and how we can work with it, rather than against it. No one has ever had to design a sustainable society, so please don't expect this to be easy. Although the challenges are HUGE we are making great progress[1].

So what's this got to do with Projects and Project Manager? Everything. All our developments and advances are delivered through projects. When I worked in IT, projects were judged mostly by how good they were at creating the intended deliverables, within the budgetary and resources. Efficiency was key. However, many projects passed this test but were considered failures. The deliverables were not fit for purpose. Often this was because the world and the users' needs had changed through the lifetime of the project. The management process was not flexible or reactive enough. A report from the US military in the 70's claimed that 80% of all IT projects failed. The profession has learned but failures still inevitably occur.

There is new thinking now that invites us to redefine what success means. The awareness that allows us to create ever more sustainable products, businesses and societies, when applied to projects, means we can now define a project's success not just by its output (deliverables) but by its outcomes - the value and benefit it creates for all its stakeholders (investors, staff, users/clients, suppliers/partners, community, the environment). Defining the purpose of a project in these terms gives the project manager a completely different mandate: the opportunity to create valuable and valued outcomes and in turn to have a more valued and valuable career.

Creating sustainable projects is not easy. We don't know yet how to do that. We need to develop the techniques, tools and models that will deliver this. Hence this collaboration between ASP, BU and APM. I invite you to join in and contribute to addressing the biggest challenge of the 21st century: sustainability.

Gwyn Jones

Preface and introduction

Karen Thompson
Head of Education and Professional Practice
Department of Leadership, Strategy and Organisations
Bournemouth University

Responsible Project Management is a concept that is overdue. Projects are the engines of change across the globe and project management has been at their heart for decades. Against the backdrop of a growing world population competing for increasingly scarce resources, projects consume, and frequently waste, environmental reserves and destroy social infrastructure on a vast scale. When projects fail, resources are wasted.

Sustainable development is a global priority, recognised by organisations such as the United Nations. Although a rising tide of nationalism around the world threatens international accords, perhaps the latest forecasts for a 1.5 degree rise in temperatures within 12 years[2] will provide impetus for action.

Project strategy, objectives and success criteria may be defined by others but Project Managers must accept some responsibility for the impacts of a project. Project Managers already work across functions and have many of the skills needed to facilitate a dialogue about how a project might nurture communities and restore the natural environment. Yet, sustainable development and project management do not sit comfortably together.

Early this century there was a re-thinking exercise in both project management and sustainable development. The exercises seem to have been entirely separately from one another, and since then progress has been slow in both fields.

This work is an attempt to connect project management with the notion of sustainable development in a meaningful way using the concept of responsible management. Inspiration for our work includes Future of Project Management[3] and calls for action on climate change, most notably the work of Peter Morris[4]. RPM contemplates the future and aims to change the narrative of project management.

In July 2018 a workshop hosted by Bournemouth University brought together sustainability practitioners, professional project managers, researchers and students in different disciplines and from several universities here in the UK and the Netherlands to begin discussing what being responsible in project management might mean.

The first output is this Guide and I would like to acknowledge the contributions from all the participants. A full list of contributors is included.

This Guide is presented in three sections that set out the context for RPM, suggest eight principles and then offers practical guidance for managing projects more responsibly. One focus of the workshop was the competencies that Responsible Project Managers will need and how these might be nurtured. Further research is planned we invite your engagement and participation.

Dr Karen Thompson

Context

Why does Project Management need to be responsible?

Project management contributes trillions to the global economy annually, driving business innovation and converting politicians' promises into new systems and infrastructure that aim to improve everyday life. Even projects that are considered successful in terms of cost, time and quality, consume natural resources, damage the natural environment and can divide communities. Projects that fail or are challenged waste financial, human and environmental resources that are also measured in trillions each year across the globe.

Sustainable development is a global priority and yet sustainability and project management do not sit comfortably together. There is inherent tension between the long-term focus of sustainable development and pressures on projects to deliver against short-term measures of success.

Projects are located within local communities, the natural environment and wider social ecology. Every project has a context that has human and natural dimensions, as well as financial. Around the world, as growing populations compete for increasingly scarce resources, human conflict is likely to increase. Without responsible management, projects contribute to degradation of the natural environment and serve to increase conflict within and between communities across the planet.

The professionalisation of project management confers upon Project Managers a responsibility to society that extends beyond the immediate confines of narrowly defined project objectives. Balancing diverse requirements of a wide range of stakeholders and that span the short and long term is novel, challenging and requires confidence, new knowledge, and new competencies. This is not easy, but Project Managers are at the forefront of change and are well placed to make a difference.

"Spoon of sand can tip the balance,
Drops of water turn the mill,
Way out here over the rainbow,
Someone standing, singing still"

(Bailey and King 2018[5])

Illustration:
Project Management as a response to the Rohingya Crisis

The contextual issues that reveal themselves when Project Management engages with grand societal challenges are illustrated in the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Waves of Rohingya people have taken refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh and by 2018 the total number of Rohingya in Bangladesh is estimated to be 918,000, with around 700,000 new arrivals since August 2017. The Rohingya refugees are confined within several camps in the Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. The camps are managed jointly by the government and a coordinating body of international organisations and are vulnerable to rain, floods, cyclones, fire and landslides.

The largest refugee site is Kutupalang Camp in the Cox's Bazar district. Here the environmental impact of the crisis and the decline of vegetation between 2017 and 2018 are significant. This site was formerly a protected forest and a habitat for many forest animals. The camps also have significant economic impact. For example, approx. 15.24 million USD annually in salary costs for two thousand government officials required to manage Kutupalang camp. Services for refugees and infrastructure in all camps are delivered through projects. Presently [October 2018] there are 84 projects that are formally recognised, with 206 organisations formally involved as stakeholders. Coordination and integration of these project activities is a complex process and these organisations are required to negotiate a number of tensions and paradoxes. For example, stakeholders seek to provide relief while minimising negative environmental, economic and social impacts. Further, inclusive governance structures may need to be created that recognize the status of these displaced people and allow them to participate in project activities.

(Adapted by Williams from Chowdhury 2018[6])

Part of the largest refugee site, Kutupalang Camp in Bangladesh, showing density of housing and absence of trees.
(Photo courtesy of Mehdi Chowdhury 2018 no re-use without permission)

What is Responsible Project Management?

Responsible Project Management (RPM) is the concept of managing projects with conscious attention to the intended and unintended impacts of the project and its outcomes, in both the short term and long term. Impacts on the environment, people, as well as the financial costs. The aim of RPM is to nurture and enhance natural, human and economic resources, and to deliver value without preference to stakeholders representing environmental, social and financial interests.

A Project Manager acting professionally will take responsibility for developing awareness among stakeholders of the consequences of the project activities and outcomes. Diverse perspectives will be uncovered and respected by the Project Manager. Uncertainty will be recognised and used to inform decision-making by balancing the known and the unknown, the short term and the long term. RPM requires a Project Manager to act with an awareness of the limits of knowledge, ethical complexity, and that understandings change over time.

Managing a project responsibly changes the project management narrative. Emphasis on short-term goals of meeting cost, time and quality requirements shifts towards balancing the short and long-term project impacts on people, planet and profit. RPM is a call for Project Managers to take responsibility for facilitating project decision making in ways that deliver value to a wide range of stakeholders, including the environment and society. Eight principles have been identified to help guide RPM practice.

Principles

8 Principles for Responsible Project Management

1. **Purpose.** Understanding the intentions underpinning a project from different perspectives.

2. **Awareness.** Exploring possible impacts and implications that may otherwise remain uncovered and little discussed.

3. **Curiosity.** Uncovering ethical complexity, surfacing conflict and unintended consequences.

4. **Uncertainty.** Recognising unknowns, inviting new understandings and being receptive to change. Planning to the next point of uncertainty.

5. **Anticipation**. Facilitating the evaluation of options and informed decision-making that anticipate different future scenarios.

6. **Creativity.** Recognising the need for new ideas and innovation. Providing space and opportunities for imagination.

7. **Stewardship**. Curating the experiences of all stakeholders. Protecting, nurturing and replenishing natural resources.

8. **Balance.** Striving to combine short-term and long-term goals, and triple win for people, planet and profit.

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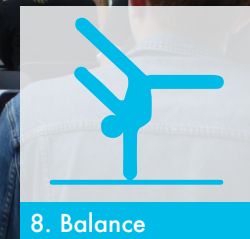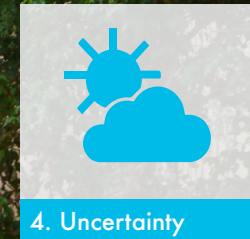
Principle 1: Purpose

Projects are conducted by people for people, and yet project management is often seen as a largely technical function.

Specifically, people use projects to deliver change and the changes delivered by projects are for people. Changes might include new physical infrastructure, such as roads, drainage systems and new buildings; implementing a new information system, such as a welfare or payroll system; or developing new knowledge, such as training, education, research or exploration.

Individual projects depend upon a wide range of people and systems, and on perspectives from the past, present and of the future. The actions of people on projects are shaped, consciously and unconsciously, by their sense of the project's purpose and the impact they anticipate the project will have upon them. Perceptions of the value delivered by a project will also vary. Value will be assessed differently depending on the perspective, and the net impact may be considered beneficial or detrimental.

Acting responsibly requires a Project Manager to develop an awareness of the wide range of perspectives that different groups and different people may have about the purpose of a project. Different perceptions of purpose may not be reconcilable, but the role of the Responsible Project Manager is to develop understanding and draw out common interests.

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a starting point for considering projects in a global context and understanding the breadth of accountability required to manage a project responsibly.

Illustration:
Community Participation

Water Aid is a United Kingdom charity that advocates community participation in all its projects. Rather than imposing a project on a community and then leaving them to deal with the consequences, the community is involved in every aspect of the project and its construction including digging trenches and boreholes.

Each community member is required to make a small financial donation. In return, the community is taught the skills and are provided with the resources that are required to maintain a healthy water supply to its community that can be maintained long-term (Water Aid 2018[9]) and the stakeholders feel ownership of the project which can protect its lifespan.

(Gutteridge, 2018[10])

Principle 2: Awareness

"Nobody lives on a different planet,
No project thrives without a community."
(Jones 2018[7])

Every project has an impact on people and the environment. The impact may be perceived as beneficial for some but detrimental for others.

People are involved in delivering a project and will use the outputs of the project. Beyond those people directly involved, there will be people and communities supplying materials and other resources needed to achieve the project. Then there will be people and communities who are affected by the project outputs and outcomes. A new road, for example, may reduce journey times for those travelling from further afield while increasing noise levels for local households or dividing a community. Similarly, a new computer system may speed up payments for customers but there may be staff redundancies.

Natural resources are used by all projects during delivery and may continue to be depleted as the outcomes are realised. Typically, a project requires energy, transportation, components, and raw materials. During a project there will be waste products

that need to be disposed of, such as packaging. Once a project is complete, the outcomes will continue to either replenish, damage or deplete resources from the natural environment, such as air pollution from an increase in vehicles using a new road. As engines of change, projects have impacts on communities and the environment, whether these are recognised or not.

Sustainable development has been conceptualised as supported by three pillars: economy, society and environment. Unfortunately, this construct suggests that trade-offs are possible between the three domains. The notion that environmental concern can be sacrificed for economic gain fails to recognise the dependencies that exist. Similarly, putting the benefits to society or the environment above economic consideration has been unpalatable for many businesses.

Projects and people depend on cohesive communities and a healthy environment. The role of a Responsible Project Manager is to raise awareness among those making project decisions of the impact of a project and its outcomes, in both the short and long term.

Traditional view of sustainable development suggests that trade-offs can be made between the three domains
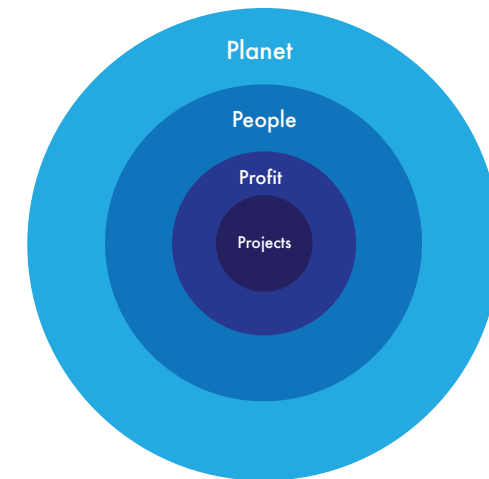
Dependencies between domains are nested

Principle 3: Curiosity

Projects are often shaped by a specific type of solution and rely on expert knowledge. Two problems can arise from a solutions-orientated approach to project management.

One problem is over-reliance on knowledge from one particular type of expert. Relying on experts from one discipline, say engineering for building or environmentalists for conservation work, can limit the scope and opportunities considered. Every project has dimensions that are physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural. Therefore, the outcomes of a project are likely to be improved where a wide range of types of knowledge are deployed. Project Managers need to be curious about a wide range of possibilities.

A second problem for solution-driven projects is that relying on experts to define the answer to a problem risks marginalising or even dis-empowering the community whose support is required for the project to succeed. Local knowledge may be valuable in providing insights about possible solutions, barriers to change and opportunities for implementation.

Managing a project responsibly requires a Project Manager to be curious about the understandings and information that may be locked within local ecosystems and communities.

Rainbow Mountain, Peru

The amazing colourful rocks were uncovered as the local glaciers melted only a few years ago. Opened up to tourists by several local companies, the local community is paid to support visitors and protect the landscape. Without this support the area would be vulnerable to mining by large global companies.

We were standing on a path used by the farmer and had to step out of the way to let the llamas through. The animals were as curious about the visitors to their mountain as we were about them.

Principle 4: Uncertainty

Uncertainty challenges projects. Traditional approaches to project management focus on what is known and tend to resist change or scope creep.

Plans are created, and work scheduled, based on information available at the outset. Plans are rarely able to take full account of the external context for a

project and may compromise the aim in favour of delivering the solution. As work starts, plans can rapidly lose their usefulness when the project encounters reality. A Project Manager may limit change in the interests of meeting time or budget constraints.
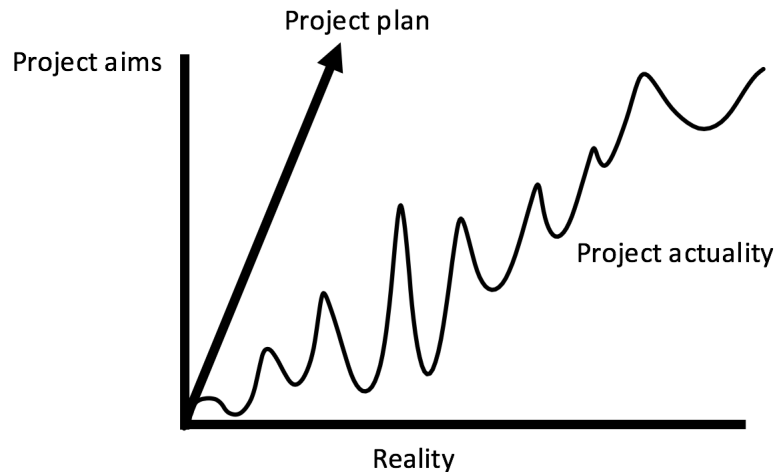
Representation of the actuality of a project

Managing projects responsibly involves recognising that projects emerge as new knowledge and understandings are developed. Projects can only be planned in detail up to next point of uncertainty. Therefore, project plans need to provide explicit opportunities for uncovering new understandings and informed decision-making at key points as new information becomes available.

The way a project responds to uncertainty can also be constrained by the project organisation, such as the project steering group and the project team. If knowledge needed to respond to a change is not readily available, time and budget pressures may mean the options available to the Project Manager are limited.

Managing uncertainty necessitates engaging a wide range of stakeholders, encouraging dialogue, valuing different perspectives, identifying shared interests and curating outcomes. Stakeholder analysis may identify key people and organisations to be involved but as new ideas emerge or there are changes in context, those with important understandings to contribute may be overlooked. Therefore, identifying stakeholders and governance arrangements at the start of a project tends to inhibit the flexibility needed to cope with uncertainty.

RPM suggests that different forms of organisation may be needed to achieve different aspects of a project and at different stages of development. Projects from the field of sustainable development suggest that flexible forms of project organisation are desirable. The LEMON approach (see the practical guidance section) suggests different project organisation should be considered for different aspects and stages of a project to increase flexibility.

Principle 5: Anticipation

RPM calls for a Project Manager to anticipate opportunities, as well as risks to the project. Diversity of outcomes and consideration of a range of options are required if the outcomes are to be optimal

Risk management receives much attention in project management. It could be said that if plans ran smoothly there would be little need for a Project Manager. A more anticipatory approach to uncertainty might be helpful for improving outcomes for everyone. Attention can be given to seeking out opportunities that would have a beneficial effect on a project, as well as identifying risks and barriers to project success. Developing an early understanding of what is critical for different stakeholder groups can surface both barriers and opportunities. For example, consider asking all stakeholders the questions:

If this project is a disaster, what would that look like?'

'If this project is a huge success, what would that look like for you?'

Anticipation is likely to be improved by engaging a wide range of stakeholders. Project governance is usually organised around the interests of three types of stakeholders: suppliers, users and investors. For RPM, three new types of stakeholders are identified: community, environment and, if applicable, commercial partners. The six types of stakeholders are discussed further under principle 7: Stewardship.

In a relay race, the baton maintains momentum as it is transferred from one runner to the next. Each runner anticipates the arrival of the baton into their hand and starts moving as the previous runner approaches but not so fast as to miss a smooth handover.

Principle 6: Creativity

"Problems cannot be solved with the same mindset that created them."
                                    (Einstein)

Projects today need to tackle issues and solve problems that humans have never faced before.

Projects are usually organised as a series of activities, scheduled either in series, parallel, or a mix of both. A traditional approach to organising project work is a linear 'Waterfall' approach. However, research on problem solving reveals that the cognitive activity involved is anything but linear[8].

Criticisms of a Waterfall approach include difficulties with communication between suppliers and users and the length of time required to deliver results.

Agile approaches to managing projects are popular and go some way towards addressing concerns about a Waterfall approach. Suppliers and users often work closely together to improve understandings and ensure requirements are met. Results are usually delivered at frequent intervals using an Agile approach.

Never-the-less, like Waterfall, Agile approaches are solutions-driven and pressure to meet short-term deadlines tends to drive outcomes.

The role of creativity and innovation must be recognised for RPM. Creating an environment for creativity and innovation in a project involves creating the time and space for imagination.

Reflexivity is to be valued if new understandings are to be nurtured and captured. All participants in a project will be learning as the project unfolds and providing opportunities to share new understandings is a crucial part of the role of a Responsible Project Manager.

Making space for imagination

Artwork by Gus Meads

Principle 7: Stewardship

RPM requires the interests of a wide range of stakeholders to be recognised and these interests must be represented in project decision-making.

Stakeholders are the people and entities that provide the resources for the project and upon which the project has, or will have, an impact.

Project governance is usually concerned primarily with the economic dimensions of a project RPM highlights a wider range of stakeholders. Investors, suppliers and users are typically represented in project decision-making. For RPM, there are three additional groups of stakeholders to be involved in decision-making: the environment, local community or communities, and commercial partners. Hence, six categories of stakeholders are recognised for RPM.

RPM seeks to engage all stakeholders in ways that are nurturing, rather than destructive or exploitative. For the environment, sustainable means increasing rather than depleting natural resources. For people, sustainable means supporting and nurturing well-being, rather than exploiting people or damaging community cohesion. A guiding principle for managing a project responsibly is 'do no harm'.

All projects use natural, human and financial resources, and have impacts that are natural, human and financial. All the resources come with a set of dependencies even though these may not be widely recognised. For example, some resources depend on a financial transaction while others depend on good will or are provided by the natural environment.
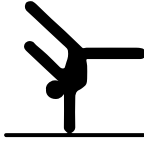
Project responsibilities and accountabilities need to be defined in a way that reflects the need for stewardship of all resources and impacts in each of the six categories.

There will be tensions between individual stakeholders and between different categories. The obligations of different stakeholder groups need to be formally recognised in the project organisation. New roles and responsibilities need to be defined as a way of managing tensions.

The six stakeholder categories provide a framework for organising project responsibilities and accountabilities for sustainability. Responsible project organisation needs to ensure that all six categories of stakeholders are represented in the governance arrangements.

The concept of stewardship provides a useful way of framing responsibilities in RPM. Stewardship of resources, as distinct from simply consuming or destroying resources, is required. Stakeholders from all categories need to fully engage with the project to ensure the net impact across each environment - natural, social and financial - is restorative.

Commercial partners

Community

Staff

Environment

Users

Stewardship of project interests and resources

Investors

Principle 8: Balance

Project managers are well-placed to balance the short-term local requirements for change, with the need to nurture communities and the environment upon which we all depend.

Managing responsibly involves taking on responsibility for facilitating sustainable change, rather than simply delivering outcomes prescribed by a project sponsor or artefacts defined by a client.

Professionalisation of project management implies that Project Managers have a responsibility to society that goes beyond a purely technical function. Managing responsibly involves a Project Manager extending their attention beyond the project work and immediate outputs to consider the project outcomes - in both the short and long term. A new focus on people, their well-being and the cohesion of communities is also suggested.

Projects tend to emerge through human interactions and are prey to the unknown, yet the narrative of traditional project management can be characterised as techno-rational. Conventional approaches emphasise planning and control with a focus on what is known about a project.

RPM does not advocate replacing traditional tools and techniques for managing activities and risks. RPM seeks to extend understanding, add new dimensions and change the narrative of Project Management.

The aim of this work is to help modern Project Managers find balance in their lives and in the projects they manage. The path will not be easy, and we hope you will engage with us and others to develop ideas and support one another.

Good luck and enjoy.

Guidance

Communication in and about projects

RPM brings human interaction to the forefront of a project and central to interaction is communication. Projects create new knowledge and therefore opportunities for learning and sharing are required as a project unfolds. Three types of communication are required for learning to occur.

Connection. Communication is required that connects a project to its environment. Information needs to flow in both directions: from the external environment into the project and vice versa. Horizon scanning activities are required to continually revise project knowledge with external updates. And communication needs to flow outwards to raise awareness of the project and influence external decision-makers.

Engagement. Once stakeholders are connected with a project, then communication is required to win hearts and minds thereby encouraging engagement with the project. To maintain engagement, information about how people feel about a project needs to be communicated within the project and with the external world.

Participation. Communication among connected and engaged stakeholders is needed to coordinate their activities and project outputs. A Responsible Project Manager will convene and coordinate people, rather than seek to control. Communication is required with the external environment to elicit feedback, validate assumptions and develop understandings about change.
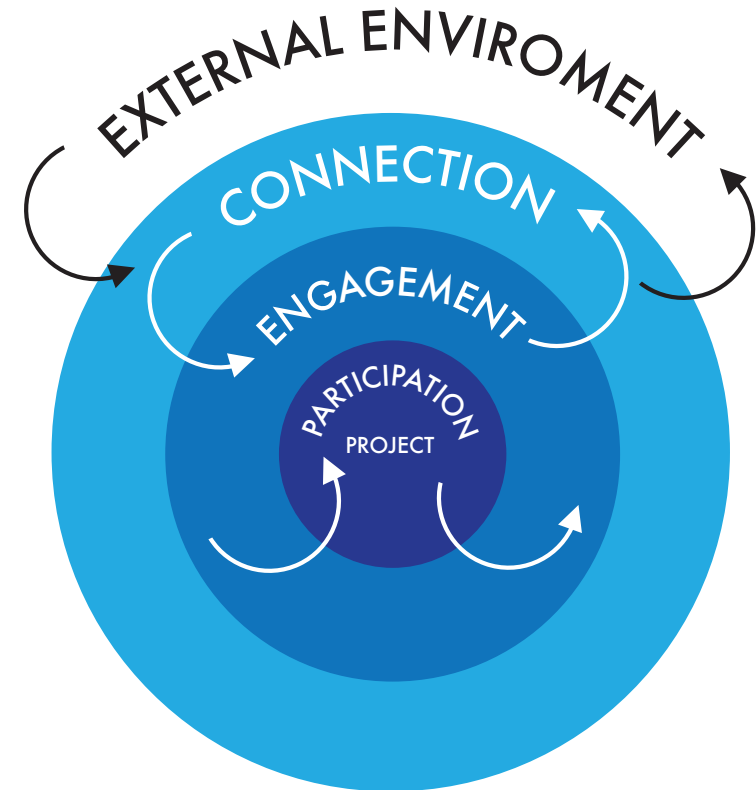
Types of project communication needed for project learning[11]

Roles and responsibilities

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a starting point for understanding the breadth of accountability required to manage a project responsibly. The six roles identified for responsible project governance have been mapped against the UN's 17 SDGs in Table 1.

Table 1. SDGs mapped against stakeholder types	
Stakeholder category	**Responsibilities for action in relation to SDGs**
Users	Good health & well-being (3) Quality education (4) Gender equality (5) Reduced inequalities (race, religion etc.) (10) Decent work & economic growth (8)
Staff	Good health & well-being (3) Quality education (4) Gender equality (5) Clean water & sanitation (6) Reduced inequalities (race, religion etc.) (10) Decent work & economic growth (8)
Commercial Partners	Decent work & economic growth (8) Industry, innovation & infrastructure (9) Sustainable cities (11) Responsible consumption & production (12) Peace, justice & strong institutions (16) Partnerships for the goals (17)

Table 1. Contd.	
Stakeholder category	**Responsibilities for action in relation to SDGs**
Community	No poverty (1) Zero hunger (2) Good health & well-being (3) Quality education (4) Gender equality (5) Clean water & sanitation (6) Affordable & clean energy (7) Decent work & economic growth (8) Industry, innovation & infrastructure (9) Reduced inequalities (race, religion etc.) (10) Sustainable cities (11) Responsible consumption & production (12) Peace, justice & strong institutions (16) Partnerships for the goals (17)
Environment	Responsible consumption & production (12) Climate action (13) Life below water (14) Life on land (15)
Investors	Decent work & economic growth (8) Industry, innovation & infrastructure (9) Responsible consumption & production (12) Peace, justice & strong institutions (16) Partnerships for the goals (17)

New competencies and knowledge for Responsible Project Managers

New competencies and activities are required for RPM to complement functional tasks such as planning and monitoring. Emphasis of the human dimension brings to the fore activities that encourage individuals to share diverse perspectives; develop and exchange knowledge and understandings; prioritise uncertainty; uncover complexity; identify and raise awareness of unintended consequences; respect and cherish diversity; nurture and value well-being; surface conflict and resistance in order to improve understanding and outcomes; curate experiences to provide a context for creating artefacts; balance short and long-term outcomes.

Recognising the diversity of stakeholders' perspectives, dispositions and values involves a Project Manager extending their activities throughout the life of a project. A range of new activities to extend the role of a Project Manager throughout a project are suggested in Table 2.

Table 2. New Activities for a Responsible Project Manager	
Typical functional tasks of a project manager	**New activities that extend the role of a project manager acting responsibly**
Planning	Convening stakeholders and encouraging sharing of perspectives
Monitoring progress again plans	Facilitating decisions that seek to implement win-win-win solutions for people, planet and profit
Stakeholder management	Stakeholder engagement and communication to uncover interests, resources and dependencies. Encourage and support stewardship of resources
Reporting progress, managing scope and managing (limiting) change	Coordinating activities, revealing uncertainties and enabling change
Focus on cost, time & quality	Curating artefacts and experiences for all involved and affected by the project

Responsible Project Managers will need :

- Knowledge of sustainability

- Ability to embrace and lead change

- Awareness of values & beliefs

- Facilitators

- Reflectiveness

- Recognising uncertainty

- Assess project against the 17 SDGs

- Map decisions against the 17 SDGs

- Ability to work in an ambiguous envi   ronment

- Willingness to understand other cultures & beliefs

Development of soft skills

My research on developing project managers' 'soft skills' suggests that using coaching techniques can improve their understanding of effective communications, including effective relationships. e.g. they 'took a step back' and gave colleagues more attention which encouraged colleagues to contribute more information, and that led on to PMs encouraging colleagues to see and take on their responsibilities, to empower colleagues. i.e. they changed their intentions for work relationships with colleagues.

However, getting people to be mindful to negotiate relationships is novel for many.....it needs trust, respect, rapport, interest in the other person etc. (which coaches are used to, but this is not generally the case).

Shirley Thompson (2018)[12]

A new 5 stage project life cycle

RPM challenges traditional approaches to project management, such as Agile and Waterfall. Projects need to tackle increasingly complex problems. A linear process, where developing a solution is seen as a series of steps followed in an orderly manner, is typically considered the best way to solve a problem. Waterfall is just such a linear process. Agile is based on the premise that a problem can be broken down into a series of smaller problems and each is tackled in a largely linear manner. However, studies of the cognitive processes involved in solving complex problems is far from linear.

Reviews of projects that can be considered sustainable suggests that five distinct types of activity are involved in managing a project responsibly. The five types of activity are arranged is a 5 stage model (see LEMON diag.). Iterations and recursions will often be required to achieve sustainable objectives.

The LEMON model has been validated with project practitioners who have confirmed that these are indeed the stages they use to manage projects responsibly. For example, feedback from a project practitioner was: "isn't this what we do already?" However, project management literature does not yet reflect such an approach.

5 Stage model for managing projects responsibly

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M
O
N

Listening and learning

Engaging stakeholders

Measure & review

Organise for intervention

Next steps

The 5 stages

1. Listening and learning. In conventional approaches to project management, lessons learnt are sometimes identified and captured towards the end of a project. Project Managers sometimes recognise the importance of learning as the project progresses, but reflexivity is given little attention in formal methods. A responsibly managed project begins by harvesting existing knowledge about the project context, including uncovering attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and understandings about resources, dependencies and constraints. The focus is on developing an emerging vision of change and identifying the key dimensions (physical, behavioural, environmental etc.). Outputs from these activities will include understandings about the current situation, constraints, stakeholders and resources.

2. Engaging stakeholders. Developing and sharing a vision of beneficial change; developing and deepening understanding of the characteristics of the desired changes. The focus is on uncovering knowledge and refining the vision. Outputs from these activities will include an initial framework for managing relationships among stakeholders.

3. Measure and review. An audit of the key dimensions of desired change is required. Key data about artefacts, behaviours, attitudes, environmental impact etc. are required to understand and prioritise interventions, and to provide baselines for monitoring progress. Options for change can be developed based on objective measurements of key dimensions. The focus is on gathering data and information to assess scale, feasibility, and priorities. Outputs will include baseline measures of key dimensions, costs and expected benefits.

4. Organise for intervention. Based on a sound understanding of the dimensions of the desired change, of the priorities, and the dynamics of established arrangements, individual interventions are designed appropriately. Specific responsibilities are allocated to individuals and organisations with the most relevant resources and influence. New organisational forms may be created to achieve change that spans existing organisational boundaries. The focus is on organising and convening people, to connect them to each other and to the natural environment. Outputs will include specific artefacts

leading to changes to attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and measures of impact that demonstrates progress against baselines.

5. Next steps. The effectiveness of interventions and the sustainability of changes made are reviewed and assessed. Assessments of the social impact, the impact on the environment and the economic viability of the changes made are required. The focus is on the impact of change and is forward-looking. Outputs will include new understandings, new questions and new projects.

Acknowledgements

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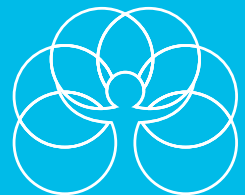Rob Bowra
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