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A Guide to Responsible Project Management

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Nigel L Williams

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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
Lancaster University

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 well-established undertaking to uphold ethical standards. The oath is reckoned to be the earliest expression of medical ethics, inaugurating 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, responsibilities 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 the first draft for a detailed guide to Responsible Project Management, thereby creating a far more solid basis for progressing the discussion. The next version of their work is now accompanied by a Manifesto for responsible Project Management.

This guide is an important next step on the long road to improving our professionalism. It offers a set of ten driving 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, share it with others and actively join in the conversation.

Prof Darren Dalcher
October 2019

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
October 2018

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
October 2018

Foreword from Gwyn Jones

Gwyn Jones
Director
Association of Sustainability Practitioners

It's time to wake up. We've been blaming others, framing the challenge around future generations, criticising others for doing "too little too late" and hoping it won't happen before we move on... for too long.

We now know that we live in the Anthropocene Age. Which means that we are shaping the World and the conditions for all life upon it. Some have been aware of this for almost half a century, but our narratives have alienated the very people who need to act for over 30 years and it's time to change all that.

There aren't simple answers to the big complex questions we crave. It's becoming apparent that the economic, social and business models we created and persist with are not conducive to life on earth. So we need to change first how we think, what frameworks we use to gain deeper understanding of situations and to begin the journey of discovery that will, very quickly, not just reverse the damage but also regenerate and stimulate the replenishment of environmental capital (clean air, clean water, bio-diversity, benign climate) and social capital (health, wellbeing, equality) while still creating the financial capital to fuel the continuation of our communities. This is sustainability. And, in other words: Sustainability is the outcome of conscious thinking.

The first step is to become more conscious of the outcomes of our actions: both positive and negative. It's largely the impacts we are NOT aware of that are represent the biggest threats.

We need to make wiser choices as these determine our actions. To be wiser these choices need to be shaped by different sets of values and principles that are more attuned to the challenges we now face. This will allow us to choose the actions that have the fewest and least damaging negative impacts and favour those that have the most positive impacts.

Every enterprise can be considered a 'project'. Everyone engaged in projects need to be more aware of the consequences of their actions. Every decision, every choice, every action needs to be taken with more understanding of the consequences for ourselves, for others across the globe and for the natural resources upon which we all depend.

The Manifesto for Responsible Project Management and this Guide are important contributions to this shift. This document provides a set of frameworks to guide us at every stage of a project: its conception, execution, maintenance and full life-cycle all the way to its 'death' and liberation of resources ready for the next enterprise. We offer models that allow deeper understanding of the benefits and the harm a project can do to all its major stakeholders.

The ideas and frameworks in this document help to move the conversation on to the practical real world of Project Management. It enables everyone of us involved in projects to take full responsibility for our choices and actions, that our children are now clearly demanding and expecting, and that future generations will thanks us for.

Gwyn Jones
October 2019

Preface and introduction

Karen Thompson
Senior Academic
Bournemouth University

I am amazed and delighted by how far the campaign for Responsible Project Management has come in the year since we published the first edition of this Guide. We invited you to connect, engage and participate in this work, and you have. The response to our call for action has been overwhelming so I must begin with a huge THANK YOU to everyone – project professionals, academics and students from a wide range of disciplines and industries – who have contributed their ideas and support to this initiative. A full list of contributors is included.

A year ago, we were concerned with highlighting the damage projects often do to the environment and/or society and that, even when the objectives are defined by others, project professionals have a responsibility to act. The initiative was a call to action for project professionals everywhere to begin advocating for beneficial project outcomes rather than abrogate responsibility to society and the environment for the often damaging impacts of project activities and outcomes.

Over the past year, a range of environmental concerns such as global warming, pollution, the destruction of rain forests and other natural habitats have received unprecedented media attention due to the efforts of Sir David Attenborough, Greta Thunburg, Simon Reeve and others. The point has been made, but I will re-state it here: the protection and regeneration of natural resources and finding way of enabling everyone to prosper are not issues for future generations, nor just for left-wing activists.

The future of 30 years ago is now. The effects of climate change and human conflict are clearly visible, and we have only a short window to wean ourselves off our carbon-fuelled, consumption-driven lifestyles. It is time to stop blaming others, to stop alienating those whose support is needed and to start working together for change.

RPM was initially inspired by the collaboration between Arup, UCL and APM on FoPM[1], and by Peter Morris' call[2] for action on climate change. At its heart, RPM is a call to action that aims to change the narrative of project management.

RPM complements other work on sustainability in project management by focussing on the competencies and understandings that project professionals will need to develop to act responsibly.

RPM is an on-going collaboration between professional project practitioners and academics. A social learning workshop on RPM was held at Bournemouth University in July 2018 and the first edition of this Guide was published in November 2018 with 8 principles. A research team in Spain undertook research on RPM. Their findings confirmed the 8 principles and added two more – engagement and transparency – that we welcomed.

At the start of 2019 we drafted a Manifesto for Responsible Project Management with 10 driving principles. In July, a second workshop took place where we refined and signed the Manifesto. The Manifesto already has over 30 signatories from across the UK and Europe, and has been translated into many other languages (these can be found on our website www.ResponsiblePM.com). Now we are beginning to focus on uncovering, collecting and sharing case studies of RPM in practice.

Over the past yesr we have learnt so much. Our journey continues and we are pleased that so many have joined us.

This Guide aims to share some of our learning. There are three sections that revise the context for RPM, present the Manifesto with ten principles, and then offer practical guidance on how projects can be managed more responsibly. There are new models and an eco-cycle for RPM that positions projects within a continuous cycle of life, death and regeneration.

Please accept our invitation to connect, engage and participate in this work.

Dr Karen Thompson
October 2019

Context

Why does Project Management need to be responsible?

The Project Management profession faces a paradox of influence on visible, high impact projects and invisible project managers. Projects can influence communities before, during delivery and after delivery. Before delivery, the announcement of a planned project can change perceptions of a location, attract protests and encourage economic activity by entrepreneurs. During delivery, projects can have significant environmental impacts and can displace communities. After delivery, project outputs may positively or negatively impact economies, the environment and society.

Project managers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that communities, the natural environment and wider social ecology are not harmed or even further, are restored by the activities under their purview. The scale of this challenge is even more urgent given the recent warnings of disruptions to economic systems likely to occur from a changing climate and the related human impacts such as forced migration and resource conflict.

Inspired by the PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) initiative along with related work by Effective Altruism that seeks to maximize the beneficial impact of management activities, the notion of responsibility within project management was conceptualised. Without responsible management, projects can contribute to degradation of the natural environment and serve to increase conflict within and between communities. Responsible Project Management is therefore a journey to encourage Project Managers to enact responsibilities to society that extends beyond the immediate confines of narrowly defined project objectives.

Project Managers will require new competencies in areas that may not be considered part of traditional project management, such as advocacy and balancing diverse requirements of a wide range of stakeholders and that span the short, medium and long term.

RPM aims to identify and support the development of Project Managers in rising to this challenge. The transition is not easy, but we are confident that 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[3])

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[4])

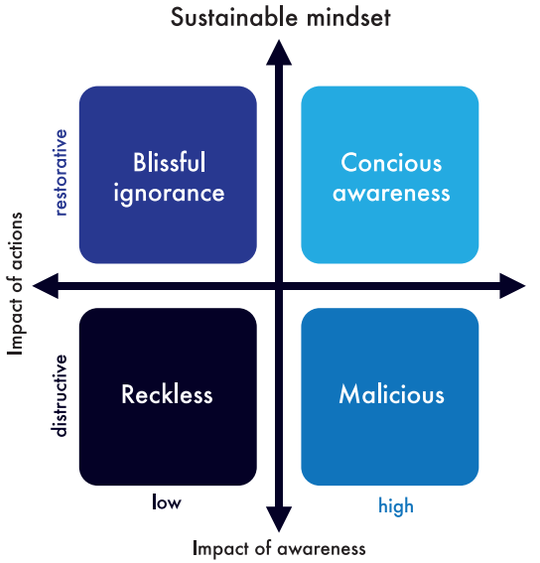
Part of the largest refugee site, Kutupalang Camp in Bangladesh, showing density of housing and absence of trees.
(Photo courtesy of Mehdi Chowdhury 2018 no re-use without permission)

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 the short, medium and long term. 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 responsibly will develop awareness among stakeholders of the consequences of the project activities and outcomes on the environment and people, as well as the financial impacts. 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, medium and 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.

RPM is based on understanding sustainability as an outcome of conscious thinking. Being, rather than doing. Four sustainability mindsets have been identified using the impact of actions vs the level of awareness of the impacts, as illustrated below. RPM aims to move project management into the 'conscious awareness' quadrant.



On a project, sustainable outcomes can result from project activities. Project activities are determined by the choices made, and the choice made before and during a project are based on information and the underlying values of decision-makers, as illustrated below.

Managing a project responsibly changes the project management narrative. Emphasis on achieving short-term goals shifts towards balancing the needs of people, planet and prosperity, over the short, medium and long-term. 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.

The Manifesto for Responsible Project Management crystalises the call to action to all project professionals – project managers, project leaders, team members and stakeholders – to begin advocating for better project outcomes and incorporates ten principles to help guide practice.

The Manifesto

The Manifesto signed on 3rd July 2019 is as follows.

"This is a call for project professionals to expand their roles by advocating for beneficial change. This Manifesto aims to help facilitate conversations that value:

- **Conscious** awareness over ignorance of project impacts
- **Regenerative** and circular approaches over consumption, damage and waste
- **Collaboration** and engagement over competition and control

While we recognise that projects programs and portfolios need to deliver outputs, outcomes and benefits, unless we all look after the natural world and human communities, projects will contribute to the destruction of humanity. The signatories to this Manifesto are developing and applying ways of managing projects that deliver social, environmental and economic value without preference."

If you would like to become a signatory to the Manifesto, please visit our web site and add your name at www.ResponsiblePM.com

> *"Both in my work on sustainability initiatives with Bloomfield Groups and Climate Club and in my teaching, I am always focused on helping people to turn research and planning into demonstrably effective action. Too often in the past, we have seen the pure and principled intentions of the preparatory stages recede when it comes to project management. True joined-up thinking and action, however, require that the noble and the pragmatic are woven together from the beginning to the end of a project. Furthermore, in these times of rapid social and ecological disruption, the noble is increasingly also the pragmatic: building the ten principles of Responsible Project Management into all that we do can produce outcomes that are socially, environmentally and economically much more successful."*
>
> (Robert Barnard-Weston)

Principles

10 Driving Principles for Responsible Project Management

1.Purpose. Identify and understand the purposes underpinning projects from different perspectives.

2.Awareness. Raise awareness of possible impacts and consequences of projects.

3.Engagement. Engage with a wide range of stakeholders and promote common interests.

4.Curiosity. Be curious, uncover and address ethical complexity, conflict, and unintended outcomes.

5.Uncertainty. Recognise uncertainties and encourage clarity and sharing of new knowledge.

6.Anticipation. Anticipate changes, evaluate options and promote informed decision making.

7.Creativity. Understand needs for creativity and innovations: make space for imagination.

8.Transparency. Foster transparency and sharing of visions, thoughts, and feelings among stakeholders.

9.Stewardship. Encourage stewardship of human and environmental resources and ethical considerations.

10.Balance. Seek balance between the needs of people, planet and profit; short, medium and long term.

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. To aid analysis and mapping of projects against the SDGs, we have grouped the 17 into three categories – people, planet and prosperity, as illustrated.

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[5]) and the stakeholders feel ownership of the project which can protect its lifespan.

(Gutteridge, 2018[6])

Principle 2: Awareness

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

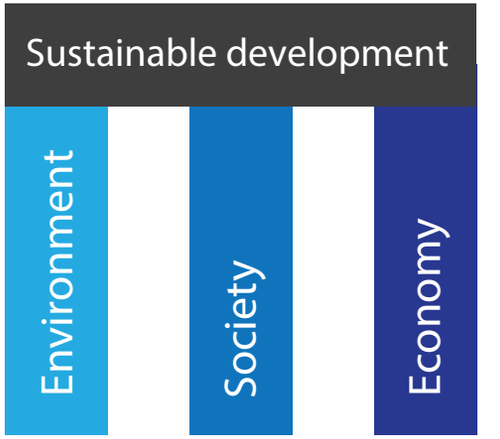
Every project has an impact on people and the environment. The impact may be perceived as beneficial for some but detrimental for others.

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.

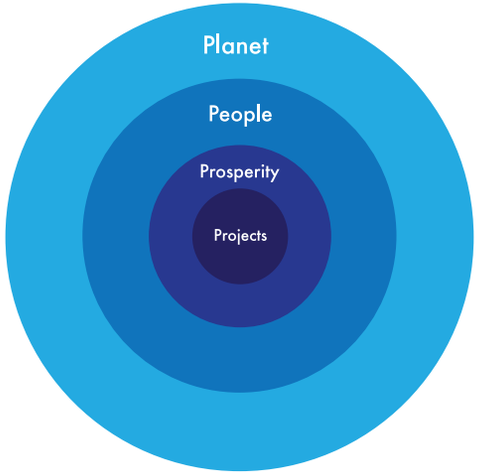
Natural resources are used by all projects during delivery and may continue to be depleted as the outcomes are realised. Typically, a project requires energy, transportation, components, and raw materials. During a project there will be waste products that need to be disposed of, such as packaging. Once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



A traditional view of sustainable development suggests that trade-offs can be made between the three domains



Re-conceptualisation to illustrate the nested dependencies between domains

Principle 3: Engagement

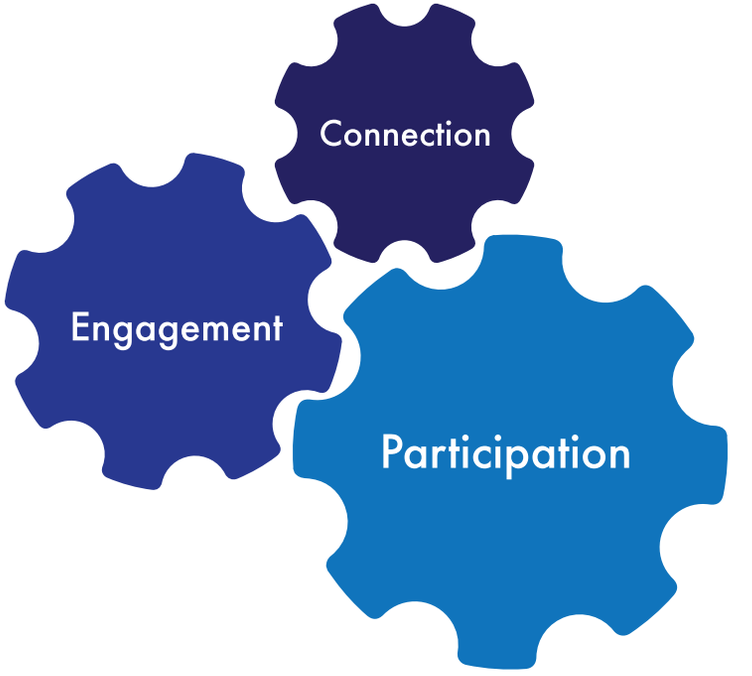
Responsible Project Management brings human interaction to the fore and this, in turn, emphasises communication. Projects create new knowledge and therefore opportunities for learning and sharing are required as a project unfolds. Three types of communication are required for learning to occur.

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, build support and influence external decision-makers.

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

Participation. Communication among connected and engaged stakeholders is needed to coordinate their activities and project outputs.

Communication around participation is often the focus of project management communication. The third principle of RPM is engagement because this is a new focus for Project Managers. Communication that engages with the external environment and stakeholders is required to elicit feedback, validate assumptions and develop understandings. At the level of participation, a Responsible Project Manager will convene and coordinate people, rather than seek to control.



Types of project comunication needed for project learning.
(Adapted from Thompson 2017[8])

Principle 4: 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

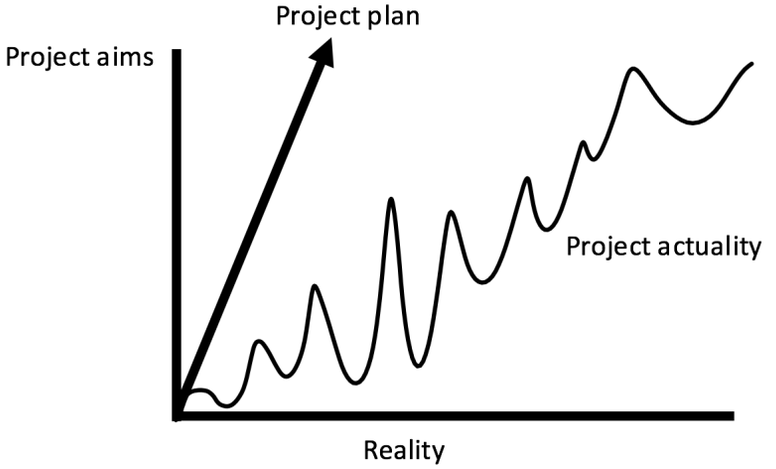
The amazing colourful rocks were uncovered as the local glaciers melted only a few years ago. Opened up to tourists by several local companies, the local community is paid to support visitors and protect the landscape. Without this support the area would be vulnerable to mining by large global companies.

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 5: 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 the 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 6: 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 9: 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 7: 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 8: Transparency

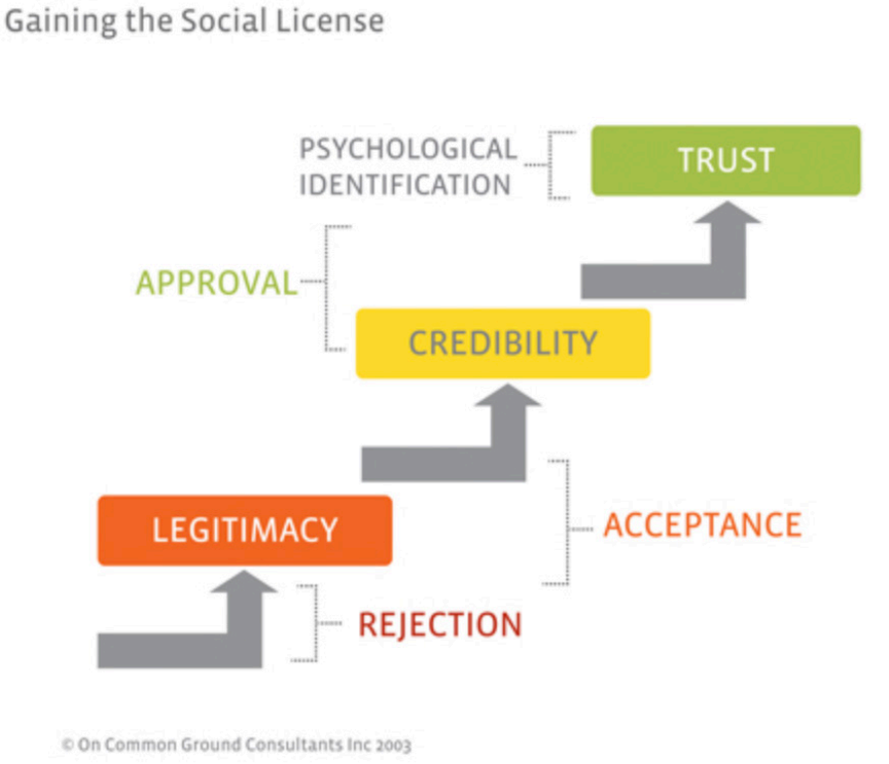
Managing responsibly involves recognising that project impacts may extend beyond the organisational boundaries of project decision-makers, and will include the environment and wider society. This requires providing information about activities and decision-making in the format and context that is appropriate to the wider range of stakeholders that RPM recognises.

Increasingly, projects require a 'social licence'[9] to operate. A social licence can be considered as ongoing approval, and depends on decision-makers' perceptions of legitimacy, credibility and trust. Gaining and maintaining these perceptions will depend largely on the degree of transparency around sharing project information.

Conventional forms of project governance may typically recognize the Project Board, Steering Group and/or the Senior Executive Team. Governance of the project resources, activities and impacts is constrained by the boundaries of the organisations directly represented and the sharing of project information may be similarly constrained.

For RPM, representatives of the environment and communities need to be incorporated into formal governance processes. They need to be given a seat at the decision-making table thereby providing opportunities for information to be shared from environmental and social perspectives. In this way it seems reasonable to suggest that decision-making will be better informed.

Responsible project managers can foster transparency and sharing of visions, thoughts and feeling among all stakeholders by incorporating different perspectives into formal decision-making processes.



(Thomson and Joyce, 2008[9] re-produced with permssion)

Things I never heard in the meeting

[Transparency wall inspired by a poem by Big Issue seller Richard Brian Lewis]

Appear as you are,
be as you appear!
'Rumi'

When we were designing the festival,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
the enthusiasm outside the project team
(that might have provided vital resources at
a fraction of the cost).

When we were planning to roll out the system in other countries,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that the UK team didn't really have any control over decision-making.

When we were recruiting for a networking seminar,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that there was a cap on the number of guests I could invite.

When we were estimating the budget for the project,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that decisions about suppliers had already been made.

When we were designing a new
budgeting system for our department,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that if the system was successful it would
be used by the whole company.

When we were running the workshop, I realised that what I never heard in the meeting was your real requirement for the specific feedback you needed from participants.

When we organised the holiday, what I hadn't aired in the meeting was my real feelings.

When we went into the meeting, I realised that what I never heard was any internal concerns about the agenda.
(S. Thompson)

When we were starting the project,
What I never heard in the meeting was
... why others missed the messages
... how much time I have for my activities
... Who will be there with me.
(Class of 2019
MSc Organisational Project
Management)

When cheerfully planning to build the tunnel under the water,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
the dubious minds' prophecies of reverberations!
(R. Vahidi)

When we were building the largest ocean
racing yacht ever,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that the bearings supporting the massive 130-
foot-tall (40 m) mast had not been used before.

When we were negotiating the new contract,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that the financial sponsor's job was on the line
if certain contractual terms weren't accepted.

When we were designing the cladding system,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
who was going to build the new design.

When we were organising the event,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
the voice in my head expressing my fear that we
were missing some requirements from a particular
group [that with hindsight I could have shared].

Before we started building the church,
what I never heard in the meeting was ...
that all the building materials had been
mysteriously transported to another site
during the night. (11th Century legend)

Principle 9: 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.

Principle 10: 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.

Guidance

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 environment

- Willingness to understand other cultures & beliefs

Development of soft skills

Research on soft skills development suggests that using coaching techniques can improve Project Managers' understanding, capability and confidence in building good relationships and having effective communications with colleagues. Project Managers who stepped into a coaching role as part of my research became more able and willing to empower others - and this will be essential to manage projects responsibly.

Project Managers changed their behaviour after stepping into coaching over just six practice sessions. They 'stepped back' and gave colleagues more focused attention when listening, which encouraged colleagues to contribute their ideas and perspectives. In other words, they changed their intentions for work relationships to become more collaborative.

Collaboration involves negotiating relationships and this will be novel for many. Building trust, respect and rapport are required and having an interest in others and their ideas is different from assuming a role from one side only. A coaching perspective was chosen for the research because the discipline of coaching is considered to have has a better understanding of soft skills than other disciplines. The shift in behaviour of the participants is attributed to coaching principles learned during coaching practice, particularly the philosophy that an adult-to-adult relationship is agreed where the person receiving coaching takes responsibility. Coaching understands that effective communication requires the intentions for the relationship to be specified and agreed. For example, once good rapport has been built, open and honest communications is easier both ways.

Shirley Thompson (2018)[10]

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

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.

An Eco-cycle for Responsible Project Management

LEMON has been mapped to create an eco-cycle for RPM.

Conventional ways of viewing the life of a project are challenged by calls for sustainable development: a project is not, by definition, meant to be ongoing and sustainable, although the outcomes are usually intended to be. For example, an event may be thought of as one-off but we can think of the memory of the experience to be a lasting outcome that may encourage attendance or not at future similar events.

Systems thinking suggests that the fixed dichotomy of success vs failure is unhelpful when thinking about sustainability. In complex environments, the ability to deliver direct project impacts may not in itself be effective to achieve lasting change. As well as delivering direct impacts, effectiveness in achieving sustainable change depends upon:

- Ability to affect key dynamics
- Learning and adapting
- Integrity of approach[12].

Conceptualising LEMON using systems thinking enables a project to be considered within an eco-cycle. Iterations and recursions of the stages are recognised and will often be required to achieve sustainable objectives.

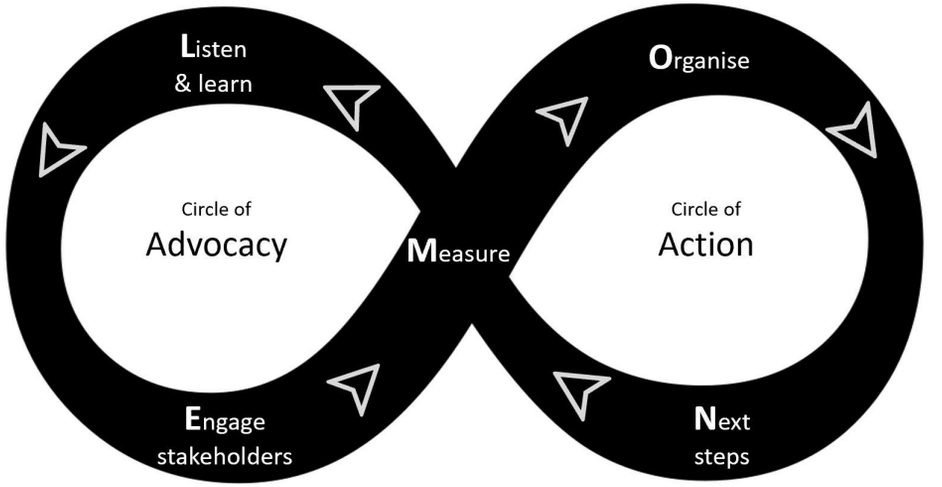
An eco-cycle perspective suggests two types of activity, Advocacy and Action, as respresented by two 'circles'.

Advocacy is central to RPM as Project Managers become advocates for better project outcomes. In order to advocate, a Project Manager needs to Listen, learn and engage with stakeholders. The transition from advocacy to action turns on the notion of measuring the baseline for change. Once action has been taken and change implemented, the effectivenenss of the action can be assessed by further measurement and comparison with the baseline.

Action begins with measurement of baseline and this is an important addition to a tradition project life cycle. Measuring the baseline for change provides clarity for action to be taken.

The next step is to organise people (i.e. roles and responsibilities) and the work to be done. Next steps incorporates the traditional execution of a project including implementation of change. Post-implementation, it is important that the impact is assessed – hence a return to the measure activity. The twin circles mean that from Measure, two paths are possible – either to Organise again for further intervention/s or begin listening and learning to understand new challenges and opportunities that may have emerged.

ECO-cycle for Responsible Project Management



(Thompson 2019)[13]

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