Preface

“The most important leadership challenge facing business today is the integration of sustainability into core business functions” (BSR/GlobeScan State of Sustainable Business Poll, 2012). This conclusion, from the 2012 BSR/GlobeScan State of Sustainable Business Poll, outlines the importance of sustainability on global business, and the progress it has made over the past 20 years. Sustainable development emerged from an idealistic concern of pressure groups, and grew into a critical business concern of executives.

An important challenge for these executives is to put sustainability to practice in their core business. Contributing to sustainable development is not the “greenwashing” of current business practices. It is the re-thinking, re-designing, and re-developing of business practices in a more sustainable way. Sustainability therefore means change. Change of business models, products, services, resources, processes, reporting, and behavior. Change that is most often implemented via projects. Relating sustainability to projects and project management therefore makes a lot of sense. It is this relationship that is addressed in this book.

The relationship between sustainability and project management is an emerging field of study that is picking up momentum. Figure 1 provides an overview of publications (books, book chapters, articles in academic journals, and conference papers) on the topic1. It shows that the majority of serious publications were published in the last four years, so the insights and knowledge on what the integration of a sustainability orientation on project management are developing.

With insights and knowledge developing, it is useful to create an overview. This book aims to provide this overview. In 24 chapters, the findings and views of over 30 authors are presented. Their contributions cover studies in North America, South America, Australia, West and Central Europe, Asia, and Africa. Some authors have a very practical perspective, whereas others approach the topic more academically.

Figure 1. Overview of publications on the topic of sustainability in projects and project management
demically. They may have different ideas, consider different aspects, or reach different conclusions. The overview provided in this book is not about providing a single theory, storyline, or “truth.” It is about showing relevant insights that provide a foundation for discussion and development. Development of knowledge on the topic of implementing sustainability in, and by, projects and project management. This book is therefore designed to enlighten and inspire project sponsors, project managers, and project teams to understand how sustainability applies to projects and how sustainability practices can be incorporated into project management.

READERSHIP

The first group of professionals that this book addresses is project management professionals. It is this group that will be faced with an increasing demand for demonstrating sustainability in their work. The responsibility for sustainability in projects, however, also rests with project sponsors, PMO leaders, and other stakeholders in the context of projects. The book therefore also aims to address (senior) management, executives, and sustainability professionals. It is this group that is faced with the implementation of sustainability in the core business practices of their organizations.

The third and final group of professionals this book targets are educators and students in the field of business and project management. They represent the future of their professions and will need to respond with the sustainability challenges that we are faced with. Today and in the future.

ORGANIZATION

This book is structured in four sections, with the following themes:

1. Considering Project Management through a Sustainability Lens
2. Integrating Sustainability into Project Management
3. Sustainability and the Project Manager
4. Case Studies and Best Practices

The next paragraphs provide a short introduction to each chapter.

OVERVIEW

As the book is devoted to a very diverse range of topics contributed by a large number of professionals and academics, it is felt necessary to provide a bird’s eye view of the contents of the chapters.

Section 1: “Considering Project Management through a Sustainability Lens.” The seven chapters in this section introduce the concepts of sustainability, which have a long-term focus, to project management, with a short-term focus, and finds areas of alignment.
Chapter 1: “How Business Excellence Models Contribute to Project Sustainability and Project Success,” establishes links between project sustainability, Business Excellence Models, and project success. The chapter reviews the Baldridge Performance Excellence Program and the European Foundation for Quality Management, for alignment with sustainability considerations. The author finds that establishing the integrative project mindset is critical to ensuring sustainability is a full participant at the table of project success criteria.

Chapter 2: “Integrating Project Strategy for Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Framework,” presents a framework for integrating project strategy for sustainable development within the context of corporate sustainability strategy. This framework starts with corporate sustainability strategy and stakeholder relationships, and moves throughout project structures, processes, and activities.

Chapter 3: “GreenPM®: The Basic Principles for Applying an Environmental Dimension to Project Management,” describes different concepts for integrating environmental considerations throughout the project lifecycle. Examination is made of the process groups, as well as portfolio management and metrics. Applying principles of environmental sustainability need not be an onerous endeavor, and can ultimately be good for the business as a whole.

Chapter 4: “Sustainability in Project Management Processes,” evaluates ways to integrate sustainability principles within project management standards, moving beyond the merely implicit references to sustainability practices within PRINCE2®, the PMBOK® Guide and the ISO 21500 Guidance on project management.

Chapter 5: “How can Sustainable Development Redefine Project Management Processes?” The research described in this chapter proposes a tri-dimensional integration between construction, project management, and sustainable development when approached from a systems thinking point of view.

Chapter 6: “Social Sustainability to Social Benefit: Creating Positive Outcomes through a Social Risk-Based Approach,” shows how the incorporation of social risk monitoring can significantly improve the likelihood of a project’s success. This chapter argues that sustainability risk should be identified and managed in the same manner as all other project risks.

Chapter 7: “Project Success by Integrating Sustainability in Project Management,” concludes the section with a description of the behavioural aspects of integrating sustainability with project management. Published integrated annual reports from 35 organizations are investigated for the level of sustainability disclosure, the degree of success of projects involving sustainability, and the impact of integrating sustainability into project management practices.

Section 2: Titled “Integrating Sustainability into Project Management,” consists of six chapters that begin the work of determining how project management processes are changing, and will continue to change, to support sustainability concerns.

Chapter 8: “Re-Thinking Project Initiation and Project Management by Considering Principles of Sustainable Development,” it is argued that considering sustainable development principles results in an improved quality of project initiation processes, to determine whether an investment should be made.

Chapter 9: “Project Initiation: Investment Analysis for Sustainable Development,” examines responsible and ethical investment, and its possible role in providing the basis for an investment decision within project initiation. The chapter presents holistic approach, which considers the investment life cycle, the interests of different stakeholders and diverse investment methods to integrate sustainability principles in project initiation.
**Chapter 10:** “Integrating Sustainability into Technology-Oriented Project Management: Cases from South Africa,” investigates how sustainability may be addressed in the management of projects, based on the analysis of four cases. The investigation uncovers that sustainability issues cannot be treated as separate from core enterprise activities and practices, as social-ecological systems are the base of all economic activity.

**Chapter 11:** “Sustainability in Project Management: Practical Applications,” describes aspects of sustainability and pragmatically applies them to deliverables and processes throughout the project management lifecycle.

**Chapter 12:** “Evaluating Sustainability on Projects Using Indicators,” examines a proposed methodology for integrating sustainability into project baselines in two industries. Existing indicator sets are analyzed via analytic hierarchy, and a procedure is defined for applying the most appropriate set to a given project.

**Chapter 13:** “Consideration of Sustainability in Projects and Project Management: An Empirical Study,” analyzes 56 case studies, to ask to what extent organizations currently consider the concepts of sustainability in the initiation, development, and management of projects. The study concludes that sustainability is most often considered in terms of business resources, but there are many more opportunities, and desire for realizing them in the future.

**Section 3:** “Sustainability and the Project Manager,” is comprised of five chapters that focus on the project manager as driver for these changes. The drive towards sustainable project management depends on his leadership, attitude, and focus towards integration.

**Chapter 14:** “Leading Sustainability through Projects,” offers practical guidance on what project leaders must do in order to incorporate sustainable development not just in products, but in activities as well. A particular focus is brought to bear on the variance between the temporary nature of projects and the long-term perspective of sustainability.

**Chapter 15:** “How Positive Psychology can Support Sustainable Project Management,” studies project management from a psychological perspective. The chapter posits that positive emotions such as hope and optimism are particularly important for the development of sustainable project management.

**Chapter 16:** “Project Manager as a Pivot Point for Implementing Sustainability in an Enterprise,” focuses on the criticality of the role of the project manager in achieving organizational sustainability, and the importance of developing a new mindset, a new frame of reference, in order to achieve long-term objectives through short-term initiatives. Connections between sustainability thinking and lean methods are used to illustrate this paradigm shift.

**Chapter 17:** “Sustainability in Project Management: Perceptions of Responsibility,” wrestles with the question of who is actually responsible for incorporating sustainability in project management processes, the project manager or the sponsor. Through literature review and case examination, it is determined that intrinsic motivation of the project manager to incorporate sustainability into his work is the decisive factor for effective integration.

**Chapter 18:** “Sustainability Assessment for Project Managers,” a sustainability toolset is revealed, along with guiding principles for assessing sustainability, to encourage positive project impacts. These tools help the project manager better determine how to handle sustainability impacts.
Section 4: “Case Studies and Best Practices,” concludes with six chapters that demonstrate work that has already been done on integrating sustainability with project management.

Chapter 19: “Changes of Projects by Considering the Principles of Sustainable Development Case Study: Transforming the Project Hospital North,” uses a case to explore how sustainability can be taken into account while managing the transformation of a project. Principles of sustainable development can be considered in changes in projects, and also sustainable development might cause major changes of projects, and may in and of itself be a reason for change.

Chapter 20: “Stakeholders’ Perspectives on Sustainability in Project Management,” looks at four different projects, with goals related to sustainability, in The Netherlands. The study demonstrates that even projects aligned with sustainability objectives are rarely executed in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Awareness alone is not enough to develop sustainable project management practices, and the stakeholder’s own perspective is key.

Chapter 21: “Application of Sustainability Considerations into Practice: The Open Remote Case,” examines how a project can be analyzed for sustainability, and how adequate actions can be selected. Conclusions from the case include the fact that applying sustainability in project management gives a broader scope, that lifecycle evaluation is critical, and that sustainability requires leadership and taking action.

Chapter 22: “Drivers for Sustainable Project Management Behaviours in Facilities Management: Fluorescent Tube Business Case Example,” moves beyond traditional project management methodology to examine the broader environment around sustainability. What influence do legal and regulatory factors have on sustainability? How about business and governmental factors? This case examines these interdependencies through the initiation and planning phases of a project as it works towards those outcomes.

Chapter 23: “Experimenting with Project Stakeholder Analysis: A Case Study,” examines the impacts and complexity of integrating sustainability practices in project stakeholder analysis, using a wind farm project conducted for Siemens.

Chapter 24: “Instruments and Methods for Integrating Sustainability in Project Management: Case Study from Slovenia,” the use of a Balanced Score Card (BSC) as an instrument for sustainability integration is examined in a case study. The BSC is a strategic tool for achieving sustainable development and an excellent approach for harmonizing and coordinating projects in order to fulfill the implementation of strategic direction.

CONCLUSION

This book aimed to provide an overview of relevant perspectives, views, and findings on the relationship between sustainability and project management. In that aim, the book succeeds. It brings together the most influential authors on the topic, from different backgrounds and regions, and they provide a variety of approaches and opinions. Therefore, what can we conclude from this overview? Is there a common message? On what do the authors agree? And on what do they disagree?

A first obvious conclusion is that the authors agree it makes sense to connect sustainability to projects and project management. This conclusion may logically be biased, because of the focus of the book, but the fact that so many authors from such different backgrounds share this opinion is meaningful. Also
regarding the role of the project manager, the authors seem to agree that this role is pivotal in the consideration of sustainability in projects, despite the fact that the formal responsibility for many aspects of the project may be with the project sponsor.

The authors probably also agree that the widely used standards for project management address the consideration of sustainability aspect only partially and/or implicitly. In fact, one of the critiques on the recently released Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®) 5th edition, is that, despite calls and a petition from practitioners and academics, it does not address the relationship between sustainable development and project management properly. One of the logical reasons for this is that the understanding of impact of sustainability on project management principles, concepts, and processes is not developed enough yet. On this aspect, the book makes a good contribution, by providing frameworks, criteria, and consideration, as well as practical instruments, tools, and formats. However, a next step should be to integrate the tools and instruments provided here, in order to provide a foundation for the development of standards.

The tools and instruments provided in, or perhaps derived from, the content of this book will need to be tested and developed further in real life projects. The cases reported in section 4 provide first applications, but it should be concluded that empirical studies on the integration of sustainability in projects and project management is still limited. Studies are mainly interpretive and/or qualitative. In an emerging field of study, this is a logical phase; however, a next step in research on the topic would preferably need to lead to more universal results.

A point of discussion amongst the authors may be the definition of the scope of considering sustainability aspects in projects and project management. Some authors suggest that the concepts of sustainability inevitably imply that the sustainability aspects of the project’s deliverables and their effects should be included in the scope of considering sustainability in projects. However, other authors consider the sustainability of the “permanent” organization out-of-scope of the sustainability of the “temporary” organization, the project. Although a point can be made for both views, the editors believe that the two organizations, the permanent one and the project, cannot be isolated from each other. In practice, projects often share resources with the permanent organization, or fall under the same governance regime, making it impossible to have conflicting values. As some authors demonstrate, considering sustainability is most of all a value-based concept.

This observation brings us to our final conclusion: considering sustainability is about values. The question is, what are the values of the project management profession? PMI’s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct paves the way for the further professionalization of project management and formulates clearly and specifically the values that should lead us in our work: responsibility, respect, fairness, and honesty. If we work according to these values, considering sustainability aspects in projects and project management is a logical consequence of our profession. As IPMA Vice-President Mary McKinlay stated at the opening of the 22nd World Congress of the International Project Management Association in 2008: “the further development of the project management profession requires project managers to take responsibility for sustainability”. Therefore, it is up to us. All of us!

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REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1 The overview of publications is included in the final sections of this book.