Chapter 4
Sustainability in Project Management Processes

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ABSTRACT
Sustainability is one of the most important challenges of our time. How can we develop prosperity, without compromising the life of future generations? Companies are integrating sustainability in their marketing, corporate communication, annual reports, and in their actions. The concept of sustainability has more recently also been linked to project management. This chapter explores the concept of sustainability and its application to project management processes. It aims to provide guidance on how the standards of project management should integrate the concepts and principles of sustainability. After a review of the relevant literature on sustainability, its leading principles are identified and applied to the standards for project management processes.

INTRODUCTION
Sustainability is recognized by the United Nations as one of the most important challenges of our time (Glenn and Gordon, 1998). The pressure on companies to broaden reporting and accountability from economic performance for shareholders, to sustainability performance for all stakeholders has increased substantially (Visser, 2002). Some authors even imply that a strategy focused solely on shareholder value is not longer viable (Kennedy, 2000). Following the success of Al Gore’s ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, awareness seems to be growing that a change of mindset is needed, both in consumer behavior as in corporate policies. How can we develop prosperity without compromising
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the life of future generations? Proactively or reactively, companies are looking for ways to integrate ideas of sustainability in their marketing, corporate communications, annual reports and in their actions (Hedstrom et al., 1998; Holliday, 2001).

Sustainability, in this organizational context, can be defined as “Adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stake-holders today while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future” (International Institute for Sustainable Development and Deloitte & Touche 1992). The concerns about sustainability indicate that the current way of producing, organizing, consuming, living, etc. may have negative effects on the future. In short, the current business processes of organizations are not sustainable. Therefore, these processes need to change. And they need to change in a sustainable way.

A frequently used practice of realizing change in organizations is by creating temporary, task oriented organizations called projects (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995; Turner and Muller, 2003). Therefore it makes sense to link the concept of sustainability to project management (Association for Project Management, 2006; Maltzman and Shirley, 2010; Gareis et al., 2011; Silvius et al., 2012). In one of the first publications that discusses the relationship of sustainability and project management, the British Association for Project Management recognizes that “the planet earth is in a perilous position with a range of fundamental sustainability threats” and “Project and Programme Managers are significantly placed to make contributions to Sustainable Management practices” (Association for Project Management, 2006). However, Eid concludes in his study on sustainable development and project management that the standards for project management “fail to seriously address the sustainability agenda” (Eid, 2009).

This chapter explores the integration of the concepts of sustainability in project management processes as identified by the most-prominent standards for project management. It aims to identify the relationship between sustainability and project management and to provide guidance on how the processes and standards of project management should integrate the concepts and principles of sustainability.

THE CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The balance between economic growth and social wellbeing has been around as a political and managerial challenge for over 150 years (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). Also the concern for the wise use of natural resources and our planet emerged already many decades ago, with Carson’s book “Silent Spring” (Carson, 1962) as a launching hallmark. In 1972, the ‘Club of Rome’, an independent think tank, published its book “The Limits to Growth” (Meadows et al., 1972). In the book, the authors concluded that if the world’s population and economy would continue to grow at their current speeds, our planet’s natural resources would approach depletion. The Limits to Growth fuelled a public debate, leading to installation of the UN ‘World Commission on Development and Environment’, named the Brundtland Commission after its chair. In their report, the Brundtland commission defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). By stating that “In its broadest sense, sustainable development strategy aims at promoting harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature”, the report implies that sustainability requires also a social and an environmental perspective, next to the economical perspective, on development and performance.

The visions that none of the development goals of economic growth, social wellbeing and a wise use of natural resources, can be reached without considering and effecting the other two,
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