



Project Management Basics



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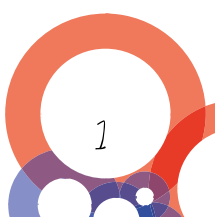
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1. Introduction into project management

This paper gives a general introduction into basics related to project management. The paper does not follow a specific project management concept or direction. It is more or less a general and short overview over different factors like

- framework conditions
- hard skills
- soft skills
- roles and commitment

we identified as a useful theoretical entry to manage multilateral projects as good as possible. These can be useful if you plan a project or want to reflect your own knowledge towards project management.

First of all, what is a project? - A project is a temporary interaction with a specific scope and specific resources as well as a defined beginning and ending. In general projects are unique (new and risky) as well as no routine interactions. Projects deal with context related complexities which always differ and usually require a separate project management approach.

What is the task of project management? - The general task or goal of project management is to prepare, conduct and implement successful projects which help to solve challenges - no matter to what kind of project. Projects become more and more important in a more and more complex world. In the case of rural development this complexity leads to many new topics and projects that should be fostered by public organisations. So projects will be an inherent part of development processes in the future.

This is nothing new! - That's right, but...

Why do so many projects not succeed? - On one hand, there is no clear answer to that question because projects are always different. On the other hand, successful projects obviously find better ways to adapt their project management to new or different circumstances, different stakeholders and at least different cultures to avoid too many mistakes. Finally, classical linear (e.g. waterfall) project management can not be the future solution to succeed.

*That means, there is no general cookbook for successful projects?!
But useful basics as an orientation!*

Let us start with project planning as a flexible cycle for project management!

Project planning is more or less a project cycle which helps to plan (f.e. goals/targets timeline, resources,), structure (f.e. milestones, task management) and monitor/evaluate projects from a general point of view. The figure on the next page is one of many good conceptual samples which is developed in the context of projects from the framework of environmental management (housing, industrial installations, nature reserves etc.)



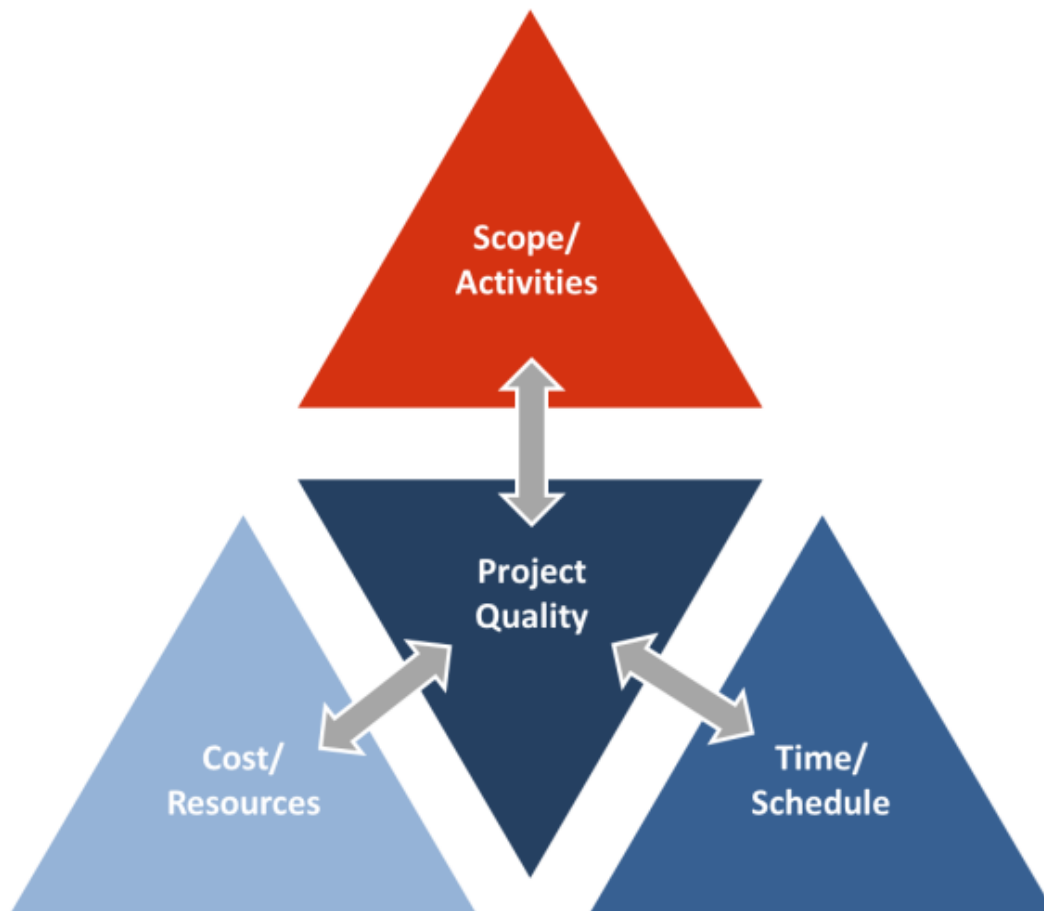
Rammert, U (2012) *Sample project planning and realization cycle*

It starts with the analysis of information by identifying project goals and doing an inventory of natural resources, the recent situation, options of activities, and maybe even the skills and abilities of the team members (see chapter 2). The next step is participation of collaborators (if necessary) which is important to create a goal concept, an action plan and make it transparent. Afterwards these central aspects of a plan need to be adapted to the planning level and transferred into a more concrete implementation structure of the plan. Finally the monitoring/evaluation of success during or after the implementation of a project is elementary to proof or adapt the goal concept of a project. The steps of the process can also be found in some more detail in the organisation of the “Case Study Method Tool” which has been used as a basis of analysis during the Benefit4Regions project. This procedure/these steps on the one hand will lead towards a structured and understandable project management plan which fits for all stakeholders and can be change in the specific context of a project. On the other hand the plan as well as the scope of the project needs to be adapted to different circumstances and stakeholders. Especially in more complex projects different types of competence should be regarded:

- Analysis of information related to context/situation
- Adaptability of social circumstances
- Personal-specific skills
- Method-specific skills

The degree of complexity of those project management plans are related to those types of competences and need to be adapted for each project to design an efficient and lean process.

2. Framework conditions of project management



Klüber, H. (2018): Framework conditions for project management

We understand “*the magic triangle of project management*” as the classical and timeless framework conditions of project management. It covers the three dimensions of “*cost/resources – time/schedule – scope/activity*” as well as the “*project quality/stakeholder satisfaction*” as a fourth and parent dimension.

Project management is always and in general a challenging task where these three dimensions of *cost/resources*, *time/schedule* and *scope/activities* need to be balanced to achieve a good project quality related to the project goals. No matter if you realize an infrastructure like a house, work on development strategies/concepts or implement a new product.

Those project managers who keep these three dimensions in mind are one step closer to take good and target-orientated decisions in a project. Nearly every decision has an impact on the dimensions:

Cost/Resources

How much budget do we have in relation to implementation cost?
How many collaborators do we need related to the targets?

Time/Schedule

How much time do we have to conduct the project?
What do we do when we are out of the schedule?

Scope/Activities

How many project goals should we define?
Which activities or steps fit to the project goals?

Finally let us have a short look on the dependency of those three dimensions by an easy example of “building a house”:



Cost/Resources vs. Time/Schedule

There is a deadline to complete a house but it can not be implemented in time. The solution could be to let more handworker work on that house. This all works but has an impact on the budget. This is the classical conflict between cost and time.

Cost/Resources vs. Scope/Activities

Similar challenge: Budget is nearly exhausted but the roof needs to be finished. So the quality of the material needs to be reduced to fit into the budget which does not satisfy the customer.

Time/Schedule vs. Scope/Activities

The customer planned to have eye catching elements on the frontage of the house. But the handwork need more time as planned. So if they should finish the work in time, they need to reduce the quality.

How is this related to stakeholder satisfaction? In general it is all about the satisfaction of stakeholders who always have different demands and points of view related to these dimensions. As a project manager it is not enough to manage those dimensions a good way. It is of importance to fulfill the expectations und requirements of all stakeholders. Therefor the main task for a project leader is success by fulfilling these dimensions as well as getting acceptance of all stakeholders.

3. Hard skills for project management

The hard facts of project management deal with the question of *“How do we structure and successfully implement a project management plan?”* related to the defined framework conditions. That is important to have a commitment with collaborators and get into interaction. It also means to divide the process of a project into different general phases and describe the purpose and the tasks like the project planning example in the introduction visualized as an example.

There are many phase models that can be used to divide a project into different parts. According to the variety of projects from simple to very complex projects four phases and one additional phase could be regarded as a basics approach/inspiration. The table on the next page gives a general theoretical overview about the phases as well as the tasks which should be modified and adapted for each project.

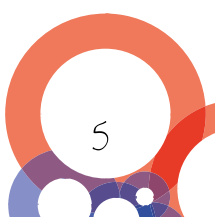
In addition to the table, two different types of competences are import to make sure that a structure of a project management plan is valid and transparent as well as accepted by all collaborators:

- **Analysis of context/situation** (f.e. strategies/concepts of collaborators, activities of collaborators, political system, administration system, Economic system, Tax system, social system)
- **Method-specific skills** (f.e. formats for user participation, working structure/design, definition of target, task management, strategy building)

Different types of tools can be used to support project management in these processes like

- Project development tools (e.g. Business model Canvas, ...)
- Project structure tools (e.g. Gant Chart, Mind Map, asana, agantty ...)
- Schedule tools (e.g. MS Project, OpenWorkBench, groupware tools etc.)
- Information tools (e.g. project homepage, moodle, ...)
- Communication tools (e.g.. telefon, e-mail, skype, slack,...)
- Collaboration tools (e.g. realtimeboard, groupware tools, ...)

Finally the different type of tools and the examples show the variety and the amount of options. This leads to the declaration that everything in project management is related to the project itself and needs to be adapted.



Initiation// Development



Tasks

- Situation analysis
- Identification of stakeholder
- Identification of collaborators
- Definition of a common vision
- Identification of requirements
- Identification of risks
- Definition of SMART goals
- 1st draft of the project

Planning// Requirements



Tasks

- Final definition of stakeholder
- Definition of common and partial goals
- Definition of a project plan with working packages
- Definition of cost/resources, schedule and scope
- Definition of a project organisation/communication
- Finalization of requirements/ proof of concept
- *additionally funding application*

Conduction// Control



Tasks

- Team building
- Final adaption of requirements with stakeholder
- Project and process steering & controlling
- Communication management
- Conflict management
- Production of outputs

Closing// Documentation



Tasks

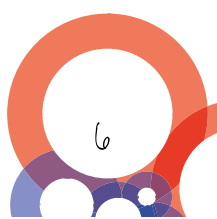
- Matching of conduction & requirements
- Formal proof of outputs
- Final reporting of all outputs
- Final processing
- Closure of the project

Monitoring// Evaluation



Tasks

- *Additionaly utilization of the outputs in other projects and processes*
- *Additionaly monitoring & evaluation of the utilization*
- *Additionaly adaption of projects outputs*



4. Soft skills for project management

The soft skills for project management deal with the question: *“How do we guide the project management process and its scope/activities with success?”* related to the defined framework conditions and the different phases of a project and its complexity. That is important related to the fact that every project is different and always a learning process of avoiding pitfalls and mistakes. Guiding these learning processes by soft skills means to create an efficient and lean process. This depends more or less on different types of competences which include:

- **Personal-specific/social skills** (f.e. communication, moderation/mediation, empathy)
- **Method-specific skills** (f.e. formats for user participation, working structure/design, definition of target, task management, strategy building)
- **Adaptability of social circumstances** (f.e. values & norms of societies, mentalities, behaviours)

Moreover in the case of learning to succeed the connection of **Mindset – Skillset – Toolset** is getting more and more important to achieve valuable and successful projects. This has something to do with the way project manager guide a structured process and different tasks as well as activities that are arranged with all collaborators.

The table shows an overview of this connection:



Mindset

Mindset is the most critical part of projects because it influences the way of collaboration. Therefore the mindsets of project leader as well as collaborators need a common base/commitment in the way of thinking and acting. Otherwise there will be a lack of achieving common targets.

Diversity management is an important approach to deal with different mindsets. A project leader needs to be a mindful communicator/facilitator who cares about the differences, gets access to everyone to manage a common understanding and stays a neutral person.

Skillset

Skillset is the most obvious part of projects because competences and skills are needed to ensure a good quality of outputs. It is a learning process which is up to the personal-specific skills of each



collaborator. “Learning from each other” means to exchange knowledge which should be regarded as a central part in each project.

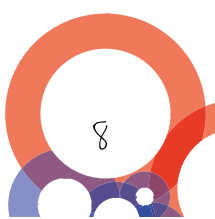
Important skills are moderation/mediation, presentation, documentation and communication as well as being a good bridge builder and facilitator.

Toolset

Toolset is also a critical part of projects because the usage of methods and tools e.g. in the case of participation is getting more and more important to facilitate knowledge as well as to co-design and implement new ways of development. The more transparent methods are, the more easier it is to collect new knowledge and to co-create value in multilateral projects and to enhance development.

The toolset depends on the concrete project and should fit to the skills as well as to target groups and project goals.

Finally, all of this also depends on the adaptability of social circumstances. The more local as well as international a project is, the more differing those circumstances are and needs to be regarded as an orientation point for the level of outputs and solutions.



5. Roles and commitment in projects

Successful projects find better ways to adapt their project management to new or different circumstances, different stakeholders and at least different cultures to avoid too many pitfalls and mistakes. This includes the mentioned hard and soft skills but with less importance the definition of roles and the commitment of stakeholders. This is something which can partly be influenced by project manager to succeed. But it is a mutual relationship which is more or less up to every stakeholder.

“What do we need for a good commitment of all stakeholders?”

The willing and openness of all stakeholders as well as their organizations is needed. Otherwise there is always a lack which leads to more misunderstandings and conflicts. In the initiation phase of a project the clarification of roles and the need for commitment must be coordinated and ensured by all collaborators. The table on the next page gives some kind of “golden advices” related to the roles of project leader and stakeholder and their commitment in a project:

Project leader	Commitment	Stakeholder
Diversity management and predictive facilitation of tasks in the project initiation phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situation analysis by each partner with a common template Definition of a common vision which will be accepted by everyone Common identification and definition of requirements, risks and SMART goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willing and open mindset for collaboration Active working on given tasks Responsibility for the defined project scope
Precisely fitting communication of defined the defined framework and requirements in the planning phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition and acceptance of the framework conditions , project plan and final requirements by each partner Division of tasks related to framework conditions of each partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Evaluation of project conditions Decision to be part of the project Commitment to the division of tasks
Prudent organization of the development process in conduction phase by controlling of the process. communication management, conflict management and deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team building & active participation Adaption of requirements in working groups Fulfilling the responsibilities in the collaborating process Production of goal orientated outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility for acting & learning (mindset, skillset & mindset) Responsibility for own tasks as well as collaborative tasks Responsibility for goal orientated outputs
Contemporary collection of outputs and documents in the closing phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of final documents/ reportings Support of the project team/group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility for own and collaborative documents



6. Conclusion for multilateral projects

The project management basics pointed out the most relevant conditions and facts for project management in short cuts. These should be seen as adaptable orientation points because every project is an individual challenge and no universal cook book of project management can be used.

According to this international as well as multilateral projects have the highest requirements on project management related to the project management plan as well as mindset, skillset and toolset. That means to make sure that the project management has the relevant abilities to master the own role as well as building bridges to stakeholder needs, facilitate roles of stakeholders as well as the needed commitments to conduct and communicate a successful project. Therefore different types of management are important like:

- Project planning management
- Knowledge management
- Diversity management
- Participation management
- Communication management
- Conflict management

Related to public organizations and the growing complexity in the world, international and multilateral projects are needed. Finding easy answer for all those complex challenges “next door” is more or less impossible. Thus public organizations will be forced in the future to identify new collaboration partners with similar challenges.

Finally this framework document as well as the others will give a theoretical access for target groups to those challenging international and multilateral projects. This will be completed by the application-orientated “B4R-CODE – A SMARTER way for Comprehensive Development” with its general strategy and specific partial strategies. This approach builds up a cross section through all activities of the Interreg 5A project Benefit4Regions.