THE POWER OF AGENDA – PROJECT MANAGER´ PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY AND PROJECT SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are increasingly aware that the choices they make about products and processes can have profound environmental and social implications. Projects play today a pivotal role in the realization of more sustainable business practices. This leads to the role of the project manager and how it is evolving in the context of traditional project management and sustainable business practices. With project management as a profession, and with increasing projectification in the business environment, there is a need to address these current challenges. The research question asked was: “Does sustainable project management influence project success?” Six project managers within organizations that have an active policy on sustainability or social responsibility were interviewed for this research. The main findings are that there is a positive relationship between applying sustainable project management in projects and having a project that could be defined as a successful one.

Key words: Project Management, Sustainability, Project Success, Sustainable Project Management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and social responsibility are some of the most critical challenges of our time. These topics are now addressed in mainstream headlines by today’s media - according to which dramatic changes draw closer every day. Sustainability is also in the minds of project management researchers, as the subject was at the center at the 4th IPMA Research Conference 2016. There, academics discussed how sustainability must be a part of the mindset of the professional project manager (Ingason & Schoper, 2017).

Climate change and the increasing amount of plastics in the seas are, to mention a few examples, some of the challenge's societies find themselves facing. There is a growing public outcry for action. Fundamental changes are needed in the modern lifestyle, and in how we conduct our businesses and use resources. United Nations Global Compact Principles and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals heighten the importance of not only governments and individuals but also organizations to take responsibility for the impact they have. Organizations are encouraged to change their business practices for future generations (“SDG Compass,” n.d.)

Projects, by definition, are seen as temporary organizations that realize change. The change is within the organization but also reaches across organizational boundaries. Applying sustainability to the project management discipline will, therefore, increase sustainable business practices and move society towards a more sustainable way of life (Silvius, 2017).

Integrating sustainability stretches the system boundaries of project management (Silvius, 2017). This leads to the role of the project manager and how the role is evolving in the context of traditional project management and sustainable business practices. Silvius and de Graaf (2019) stress that how the project manager fulfills his management duty in the project has to be most efficiently and effectively with respect to sustainability.

Carvalho & Rabechini (2017) say that although the importance of sustainability is recognized, little guidance exists on including the subject of sustainability in the project management literature. Marcelino-Sádaba et al. (2015) emphasize the lack of empirical evaluation, particularly when looking at the relationship between project sustainability management and success. This reflects in Icelandic literature where research on sustainability and project management is scarce.

This research is aimed at casting a light on the relationship between sustainable project management and project success through the lenses of Icelandic project managers in the field. The research question that this paper will address is:

**Does sustainable project management influence project success?**

Following this introduction, this article is structured in five sections. The first section is a review of the literature on sustainability, project success, and sustainable project management. The second and third sections go into details of the research method and results. A discussion on the research findings follows this, and the last section brings the conclusion of the study together.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainability and the organization

Sustainability was defined in the Brundtland report as meeting current generations needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainability is a broad definition that Elkington (1999) recognizes with his triple bottom line: People, Planet, and Profit. There the importance of balance between economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability is fundamental for the equilibrium of the organization and society as a whole. If one of the pillars dominates over the other two, then the system will be imbalanced (Silvius, Schipper, & Snezana, 2012).

According to the ISO 26000:2010 standard on social responsibility the fundamental principles are accountability, transparency, ethical behavior, respect for stakeholders’ interests, respect for the rule of law, respect for international norms of behavior, and, respect for human rights (International Standard, 2010).

An organization that incorporates sustainability in its strategy and company policy shows commitment and acknowledges its responsibility for the impact the organization has on stakeholders and the environment (Tharp, 2012). Human rights, labor practices, environmental issues, fair operating practices, consumer issues, and community engagement are all factors that the organization has to acknowledge that it has an impact on. According to Martens and Carvalho (2017), more organizations are becoming aware that the choices they make can have a significant impact on the environment and society. Silvius, Schipper & Nedeski (2012) found in their research that considering sustainability was considered as more of a way to reduce harm rather than as a modern social responsibility approach on their behalf.

The financial benefits of having a sustainability policy are clear, with less waste and reduction in costs as some of the benefits that companies can expect (Silvius & Schipper, 2014b). Value creation is the primary objective for many organizations, for the project organization generating value is through the success of its projects (Silvius, 2017).

The core of sustainability indicates a motion of economic prosperity, protecting the environment and its equity. Sustainability should not be looked on only as a requirement but also a source of competitive advantage and as contributing to project success (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017).

2.2 Project Success

The criteria of what project success means are one that has evolved along with research and technological advances in project management. The earliest definition included within budget, within time, and within specification (Silvius & Schipper, 2015). Traditional project success relates to the triple constraint and how projects that were within budget, time, and quality were considered successful (A. Shenhar & Dvir, 2007).
Pinto and Slevin (1988) and Shenhar et al. (2001) emphasized the importance of considering project success over time. Project success is measured by its efficiency in the short term and its effectiveness in achieving the desired results in the medium and the long term (Müller & Jugdev, 2012).

In order to develop a more comprehensive set of criteria of project success, Silvius and Schipper (2015) grouped what they considered related measures and concluded six condensed criteria of project success as can be seen in table 1. Their analysis of studies on project success unveiled 27 different measures of project success. Project success is a multidimensional concept. Many factors are identified that go beyond the traditional known triple constraint criteria. The table also demonstrates that there is no consensus about a universal set of measures for project success. (Silvius & Schipper, 2015).

Table 1 Criteria of project success (Silvius & Schipper, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Measures included in this criterion</th>
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| The project is executed in a controlled manner | The project management process is adequate  
Project risks are managed adequately  
The project is performed with a high standard of work quality |
| The agreed project deliverable is completed on schedule and within budget | The project is completed within schedule  
The project is completed within budget  
The deliverable is meeting technical specifications |
| The project’s deliverable is ‘fit for purpose’ | The deliverable is meeting functional performance requirements  
The customer of the project is using the deliverable (after completion)  
The deliverable is fulfilling the customer’s needs  
The deliverable is solving a customer’s problem |
| The business objectives or goals of the project are realized | The business objectives of the project are met  
The business objectives of the suppliers/contractors are met  
The deliverable creates a larger market share of the customer organization |
| The stakeholders of the project are satisfied | The project sponsor is satisfied with the project  
The (other) stakeholders are satisfied with the project  
The end-user is satisfied with the project  
The cooperation of parties and individuals in the project is good  
The project team is satisfied with the project  
The supplier is satisfied with the project |
| The project prepares the organization for the future | The project prepares the organization for its future  
The project contributes to the development of the participating organizations  
The project contributes to the personal/professional development of the participating individuals  
The project creates a positive environmental impact on society  
The project creates a positive social impact on society  
The project creates a positive economic impact on society  
The project earns public recognition |

For project management, the key performance indicators and success criteria are directly linked with the organization`s strategy, technology, and the organizational environment. Return on investment is the most common measure for evaluating project management investment (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017). From the business perspective, the ability of the project`s deliverables to deliver expected return on investment is critical for the success of the project (Fernando, Walters, Ismail, Seo, & Kaimasu, 2018).
The relationship and the effect between considering environmental, social, and economic aspects in projects on the classical iron triangle, within time, budget and quality, is not so clear. Increased focus on environmental and social aspects could result in higher project costs or longer timelines. However, this could prevent or reduce risk and uncertainty in the project and therefore compensate for the added expense (Silvius & Schipper, 2015).

2.3 Sustainable Project Management

Carvalho and Rabechini (2017) talk about two perspectives in sustainable project management. An internal perspective that relates to the project management processes during the project life cycle and an external one that is related to sustainable development and environmental and social impact. Lack of addressing the importance of sustainability in standards and best practices for project management, PMbok, Prince2 and ISO 21500, has had it critique while the new IPMA ICB4 indeed acknowledges the relationship between projects and sustainability (Silvius, 2016a).

Sustainability in project management can be exploited in several ways. Examples include sustainable purchases, using life cycle analysis, performing enterprise risk assessments and considering sustainability elements for the project deliverables (Martens & Carvalho, 2017). Implementing sustainability right at the beginning of design processes is considered a crucial way to efficiently integrate sustainability in project management. The product development needs to take into account the complete life cycle of the project and product and include all environmental considerations of the process (Brones, de Carvalho, & de Senzi Zancul, 2014). An important stakeholder group that Peenstra & Sylvius (2017) reflect on is the supplier and his role in considering sustainability in projects. Their finding shows that for suppliers to integrate sustainability in projects is highly connected to the willingness of the customer to pay for it.

Silvius and Schipper (2014b) suggest that the competence of the project managers is crucial when implementing sustainability into project management. They highlight five key competencies: system thinking competencies, anticipatory competences, normative competences, strategic, and interpersonal competencies. The project manager has a central position in this context. The power of the agenda is one that the project manager can enforce to address sustainability matters with the governing body of the project, the project sponsor, the project team, or other stakeholder groups.

Silvius & de Graaf (2019) explored what factors influence the project manager intention to address the sustainability of the project with the project board. Their findings concluded four factors that influence the intention. First is a moral compass, that it is the right thing to do and that ethical considerations influence the project manager. The second factor is the potential benefits. The project manager feels that the outcome of the project will be better if sustainability is considered in the project. This correlates with the discussion of how the definition of project success has evolved from only the project life cycle to shifting the focus to the product life cycle. The third factor is the potential risk that the project manager faces if he addresses sustainability matters to the project board. This relates to how the project manager is regarded by the board and can be detrimental to their relationship if the board is
not sustainability inclined. The fourth and last factor is the organizational fit and how managers and employees within the organization, in general, think of sustainability. If the organization has a strategy for sustainability or company policy, the attitudes and opinions of this group are influenced by that and lay a more fertile ground for discussing the subject of sustainability.

Sustainable project management, as defined by Silvius and Schipper (2014a) is:

- Sustainability is about balancing or harmonizing social, environmental and economic interests
- Sustainability is about both short-term and long-term orientation
- Sustainability is about local and global orientation
- Sustainability is about values and ethics
- Sustainability is about transparency and accountability
- Sustainability is about stakeholder participation
- Sustainability is about risk reduction
- Sustainability is about eliminating waste
- Sustainability is about consuming income, not capital

This reflection is based on the observation that to encompass sustainability fully; one needs to address it with a holistic approach where nothing in the project environment is left untouched. To incorporate sustainability, the project manager needs to take charge of the agenda and start building the bridge between sustainability and project management (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this research is to explore to what extent Icelandic project managers are using sustainable project management in their professional lives, how they define project success and if they note a correlation between the two subjects.

3.1 Research approach

To gain insights into the minds and experiences of the project managers, a qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews was used. This methodology allows the interviewer to ask an open-ended question that draws out more specific data from the participants. Another option to collect data would have been to use a quantitative method such as a questionnaire. Though a questionnaire offers some advantages such as more convenient access to a larger sample of participants, it falls short when the goal of the research is to get the reflection on personal experiences of the participants (Sigríður Halldórsdóttir, 2013).

3.2 Participants

The first condition for selecting the participants was that they needed to work as project-, program- or portfolio managers, within organizations that have in their company policy some sustainability or social responsibility policy. The second condition is due to correlations with organizational policy and the project brief. The third condition was that the sample would be representing different sectors within project management, such as technology, finance, infrastructure, engineering,
research & development, and product design. Other than that, no other conditions were applied.

The author reached out to eight individuals for their support. All of them agreed to participate, but unfortunately, it was not possible to accommodate one participant within the available timeframe. Out of the seven, five participated themselves, while two from the finance sector forwarded the meeting to persons, they felt could better help the author. When presented in a meeting with participant number seven, the author realized that the participant did not meet the criteria of being a project manager. On the other hand, the person had a vast experience of the sustainability implementation process within the organization as a team member in the project. The researcher decided to continue the interview and with that gained the perspective of the team member, not the project manager. This perspective will not be echoed in this report, but the author feels that this broader perspective he got, will give him a more holistic understanding of the subject of sustainable project management.

3.3 Interview structure

The interviews were conducted in April 2019. The researcher met with all participants at their company offices where the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Each interview duration was between 25 to 45 minutes. Interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. The recorded data generated for this report will be terminated after the researcher graduates in June 2019.

A list of questions was prepared beforehand after a careful research process. The questions asked are based on two international surveys on sustainability in projects and project success (Silvius, 2016b) and the other a European Union funded survey on triggers and barriers that influence the adaptation of sustainable practices in the process of projects (Sabini, 2017). The questions were classified in these four frames:

1. Profile of the participant – both professional and personal
2. Level of sustainable project management applied within projects
3. Definition of project success – both company perspective and private one
4. Thoughts on the relationship between sustainable project management and project success

For the common understanding between the researcher and interviewees on the definition of sustainable project management, the following definition was introduced:

Sustainable Project Management is the planning and controlling of project delivery and support processes, with consideration of the environment, economic and social aspects of the life-cycle of the project’s resources, processes, deliverables and effects, aimed at realising benefits for stakeholders and performed in a transparent, fair and ethical way that includes proactive stakeholder participation (Silvius & Schipper, 2014a)
4. RESEARCH RESULTS

This section will present the data and the analysis of the most critical findings from the interviews.

4.1. Profile of the participants

Project manager A: Has a background in Applied Engineering and holds an MPM degree. With experience as a project manager, first in IT projects but for the last two years in product development for an international manufacturing company.

Project manager B: Has a background in Engineering. With over ten years’ experience as a project manager, in Iceland and internationally, in infrastructure and capital projects. Currently, as a project leader for a public utility company.

Project manager C: Has a background in Information technology and an MPM degree. With extensive experience as a project manager in finance and information technology. Currently a project management facilitator for a public infrastructure company.

Project manager D: Has a background in Science and holds an MBA degree. With extensive experience as an analyst and project manager. Currently, a team leader within a portfolio of a financial institution.

Project manager E: Has a background in Environmental Science and holds an MPM degree. With over fifteen years’ experience as a project manager for an engineering and consulting company, both in Iceland and internationally.

Project manager F: Has a background in Electrical Engineering and an MBA degree. With vast experience both as a project and portfolio manager. Currently a project manager for an international technology company.

4.2. To what extent do you apply sustainable project management?

All interviewees felt they applied some or all of the aspects of sustainable project management (SPM) in their projects. Often due to the nature of their projects. A heavy regulated framework that binds the projects or alternatively, the projects follow strict company policy. Some mentioned that sustainability was relatively new to them but was getting more attention within every stakeholder group. There was also a sense that this was being applied in projects due to market demand. For larger projects, there was more relevance than in smaller projects to apply SPM. Some mentioned that the definition of SPM was extensive and universal and not that easy to grasp the core of it and what it meant for project management while others found this to be the next step in the definition of project management.

Project manager A: “We try to design the product as sustainable as we can, but of course there are aspects we can do better. Our industry is very much focused on sustainability, so this makes it easier for us. First, we look at is the product financially beneficial, but sustainability comes shortly after in our selection process of what projects to start. The company has a strong vision of social responsibility, and for me, as an employee, I try to follow that to the best of my knowledge. The downside to this is that costs can be higher during the development phase when
applying SPM, but then again it is easier to sell the product if it is sustainable since the market is for it.”

Project manager B: “I have to say that this definition is quite big to grasp – but I am quite sure we do a lot of what would fall under this definition though we do not use these terms. Our projects are public infrastructure projects, and there are many stakeholders that we need to be in good dialogue. We are funded with taxpayer’s money, so we have to be very responsible in all we do. The company is quite regulated, as well as having numerous policies and standards that are part of our quality system. For me, I would say we apply sustainable project management in all our projects. Everything is documented and transparent. Environmental issues are taken very seriously here, and we work closely with our stakeholders, educating our customers and contractors on how they can be more sustainable.”

Project manager C: “In all our big infrastructure projects this is very much practiced. Sustainability and the balance between economic, environmental, and social is something that is taken quite seriously when decisions are taken. In these big projects, there is a clear process of how to evaluate these things in the context of the whole project. Usually, there is a business case that considers this. Regarding other projects, often internal improvement projects, and then this probably is not as direct as with the others.”

Project manager D: “Four years ago the company introduced a new strategy and with that a policy in social responsibility. When we select projects, we always look at our vision and company policy. Some projects are directly related to supporting our policy, while others indirectly support it. Social responsibility is a journey for the company, and I feel that this is somewhat in our DNA now, though of course, it is always a continuous improvement for a company. I am not sure if we specifically address sustainable project management in our projects, but due to the fact we follow our policies rigorously I feel we are doing this in many ways, e.g., we always work quite closely with our customers, and other stakeholders in everything we do and their input is important for us.”

Project manager E: “It is company policy to always suggest to the customer the more sustainable way in all our consulting and engineering projects. We look very much at the environmental impact our projects have. Some of the first things I do in projects is mapping the impact and the stakeholder analysis. I find this stakeholder engagement a crucial part to have early on and through all the projects. The scope of the project, of course, has a lot to say. With larger projects then we have laws and regulations like the environmental impact assessments, a process that enables all stakeholders to voice their concerns on the project and where the effect on the environment is highlighted, to name a few things it involves. So, for larger projects, I would say we are there. It is with the smaller projects that applying SPM can be more challenging, and I do blame that just more on the old mentality, but fortunately, I feel that changing in my work.”

Project manager F: “I would say we are somewhat there but maybe just in the last two years or so. Our company policy is quite clear now, and we want to do better. Environmental aspects of our projects are at the forefront. Now we are very much looking into all the sourcing of materials for our product and sustainability is a part of our requirements. Our product design process is quite firm and structured. How the product life-cycle is, from the early stages from design and production, when it enters the market and until it exits the market is something that is echoed
through all our work. We are working on how to use the leftover materials, and since all production lines are lean focused, we try to minimize all waist in our projects.”

4.3. Success in projects is?

When asked how they defined success in projects, classical definitions were used, within time, within the cost, with the qualities asked. Some mentioned that the product needed to be used by the consumer and that the product fulfilled his needs. Others talked about how success is measured both for the project and over the lifetime of the product. Faults and returns of the product after it enters the market would make the project not successful since they did not prevent this fault in the project phase. Success was also mentioned if the project reached its purpose and business goals. If a project did go over time or budget, then it could get redemption if it gave a return on the investment when it entered the market. Success for others was also if the project teamwork had been good, and everybody that participated in the project felt good about it. In general, all the answers touched base with some of the definitions of project success, although time, cost, and quality come first.

Project manager A: “In the beginning there always some requirements and they need to be met. Of course, the requirements can change over the project life-cycle, especially in product development projects. In the beginning, the cost estimates, the technology development cost is sometimes not so clear. However, what is normally the most important factor is there an acceptable profit from the project. If the project costs too much and goes over on a budget, but has an acceptable profit margin afterward, then the over cost is not that big of a problem.”

Project manager B: “Normally it is within time, within budget and that the product is functional and operationally ready. Let us say if someone is not so happy with the project and complains then we do not rank the project a failure if it meets these standard requirements. Our goals are always to ensure that all utility systems are up and running 24/7. It is imperative to plan and execute projects well. If something brakes, then it always a major effort to fix it. Our systems are underground, and normally no one sees it until something brakes, so to prevent that we have to do our job good.”

Project manager C: “I feel that the perspective of classical constraints and the iron triangle is too narrow to define success. I fell that this is part of something old, a view of the contractor or something. The next step in the definition of project success is the value generated for the user, the dividends for us, and how risk is handled in the project. I feel that that is more the way you should look at success. So then, of course, is sustainability and that is even wider perspective and encompasses these other two triangles within. For me, this is a logical step in the definition of project success. The only thing is that to get to this perspective is difficult in my experience; it is even just difficult to get people to look beyond the classic constraint. If you are in program management or even portfolio management, then you need to be able to rise above and see this value and gain in the wider context. Unfortunately, I find that classical project managers often have difficulty looking beyond the deliverables of each project.”

Project manager D: “The Company works a lot with measures and KPI’s. All project follows a process where there are two decisions gates. Before entering gate two before formal execution starts, there we always set measurements for success. We have different criteria for success, sometimes it is within time or budget, but it
can also be how beneficial is the solution for the company, sometimes it linked with law and regulations or just a specific date.”

Project manager E: "We are quite classical here, within time, on budget, deliverables as promised. To ensure that; we have cost estimates and checks, schedule checks, even stakeholder check during the project process. It is interesting to look at this from the perspective of SPM. Then the deliverables need to be as promised to the buyer but also fulfill the expectations of all other stakeholder groups. In this is the skeweness of point of view, the view of the buyer and then the view of let us say the general public. To tackle this, I would say it is essential to map and enforce some counter actions during the project planning and execution. Then you minimize this gap between expectations.”

Project manager F: "Here project managers are measured how they perform with projects within time and budget. I would say that is number one, two, and three. For the product, then it is the quality and how well the market reacts to the product. I would say the market is a good measure of success. If there are high returns of the product, then it is not such a successful project. I look at it also from the perspective is the team happy – though the company is not maybe looking at that. For me, that is a measure of success if everybody that came along is satisfied with the result.”

4.4. Relationship between Sustainable Project Management and project success

All participants felt there was a positive connection between SPM and project success for most parts. The importance of incorporating sustainability into the design process was considered a critical step to achieving better sustainability and social responsibility results – it must start with the design. The active stakeholder dialogue is also a key enabler for success. Too much focus on cost can decrease the chances of a successful project was mentioned. For the companies where the policy on sustainability or social responsibility is fully aligned with the company actions, there did the participants mentioned how projects had delivered more value to all stakeholders.

Project manager A: "If a company cannot include sustainability in projects, then they are just focusing on one thing, and that is shareholder dividends. Business goals are probably the most important – but then other economic factors weigh also. However, as it is today, everything costs, that why it is so important for us to design better products that can help our customers have better yields from their products. The environmental benefits are a minimum waste, and the economic benefits are a better usage of materials. In our business, each percent gained is very beneficial for our customers. That is why we strive the make our products the best possible.”

Project manager B: "There is a clear connection, and I would say that the social factor is also essential. For us in general, time is probably the single most important factor in all we do. This is because, during some periods of the year, it is impossible for us to work on the grid. In January we are not shutting out the hot water. If we must work on the hot water, then that takes time during the spring or summer. We are always weighing how we interact with our customers and how we can serve them better. We are also trying to educate them being more responsible consumers of the services we sell provide them. As for within projects then we are working a lot to minimize waste – with special focus on waste of time. We are focusing on better communication, both internally and externally for this, to have transparency and
clarity in our work. However, in general, I would say that if you take economic, environmental, and social factors in your perspective, then you are on a good track.”

Project manager C: “For me, SPM is just the next step in how we measure project success. For the future I think this is very relevant, this is the direction we need to set course. We work extensively with communication and stakeholder plans through our projects. We aim to be in as open and good dialogue with our stakeholders, and as for environmental issues, I have the feeling the company does more than laws and regulations require of them. The environment is important for the company, and it wants to minimize its impact as it can. There is one aspect I especially take from this SPM, and that is this ethical view. I think that is an important view as well that the project manager should ask himself. Does the project align with my ethical stand? But what this comes down to is that to practice SPM then the project manager needs to take the role of a project leader and get all of the stakeholders on board, the project owner, the project board and team members, for to get to this stage of SPM – the future will be more complex and challenging for us.”

Project manager D: “I would say success is connected to all these things. For us a big change has been the shift in focus, now we are in much more contact with our customers and strive to meet their needs. They even have input during the design process. Our KPI and other project measurements we set are our best indicators to determine if the project is successful. We are also working in a regulated environment were a risk, and uncertainty in the market sphere is something we try to foresee and be prepared. I know the company human resource policy is quite good, and the staff has some good benefits. We have reached excellent results in our journey to become more sustainable with the company vision and policy. Maybe some are not so clear, but my feeling is that with integrating sustainability into the operations of the company, the results have become better. I feel that there is a strong ethical stand, and more improvement is coming, we are doing a good job through the portfolio, but of course, we are just doing one step at a time, this is a never-ending journey.”

Project manager E: "What I would say about this that here you are view things with a much broader perspective, not the typical narrow one you are accustomed to doing. Not sure if many are viewing their projects with what the next generation would think. You are just in the now I would say. It is interesting to add this ethical perspective when assessing the project. However, maybe this is all a bit out of the park for what the project manager can do. Not sure if his powers go this far. However, I would say that companies should apply this as guidance into their projects as a part of their quality and environmental goals. Adding SPM would be just another layer that would make the projects better.

Project manager F: "I would say that this goes well together. This balance is very important. For us, we are very much focused on the life-cycle of the product. Not just only the product but also the packaging and everything that is part of the process of declaring the product to the market. We work extensively with stakeholder analyses and risk analysis for each part of the process. We are certified with some standards and follow industry benchmarking practices as well as operating in a quite regulated environment. All of these talks with SPM so I would say yes, there is a positive relationship. If there is a downturn, I would say that we, like everywhere else, are running many projects and there is a lot of possibilities out there. Unfortunately, there is not enough workforce so often the same people get
used again and again without getting a break. However, that is just the reality with many teams.”

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was in three sections. First, there was to gain the perspective and insight of project managers on the subject of sustainable project management and how much they apply SPM in their projects.

If we look at the results in comparison with Silvius and Schipper (2014) definitions of sustainable project management we see that all the interviews agreed to the importance of the balance of economic, environmental and social factors within the project. Active stakeholder engagement was also a factor that all the interviewees mentioned as being one of the most important factors in every project. The notion of the impact the project and the product will have in its lifetime was not so clear with all the interviews, except those interviewees that work either in product design, planning or in larger capital projects. Project is, by definition with a clear start and end, and the challenge is to get project managers to look further than just their project. Benefits and value were something few mentioned and if so, typically being in the context of creating value for the company and customers. It was clear that all interviewees worked for companies that have clear strategic goals and strive to operate in a transparent and ethical way.

All interviewees felt they applied some or all the aspects of SPM in their projects. Project managers A & F were focused on the design aspect, how important that was to get the sustainability aspect built-in. This is in line with what Brones, de Carvalho & de Senzi Zancul (Brones et al., 2014) found out that implementing sustainability right at the beginning of design processes is considered a crucial way to integrate sustainability efficiently in project management. The product development needs to consider the complete life cycle of the project and product and include all environmental considerations in the process.

Project managers B, C, D & F, all talked about how company policy enforced them to put sustainability at the core of their projects. This relates to what Tharp (2012) said about when an organization that incorporates sustainability in its strategy and company policy shows commitment and acknowledges the responsibility for the impact the organization has on stakeholders and the environment. In their study on sustainability in project management, Silvius, Schipper & Nedeski (2012) found that the desired ambitions for considering sustainability in projects were growing from what was at that time, the actual situation. Another finding was that if sustainability is incorporated in company strategy, it led to a higher actual level of sustainability consideration in projects.

Next, the research was to get the project managers’ definition of project success. In general, all the answers touched base with some of the definitions of project success, although time, cost, and quality came first. If we compare the answer with the group of definitions Silvius and Schipper (2015) present, then we see that all the interviewees use a criterion for success that concurs with this definition for the most of it. The only criteria, "prepares the organization for the future," was maybe the one that was not that clear to all, expect the project managers that often referred to company policy and goals as their guiding light, when asked about their definitions of project success. When the organization is
preparing for the future, it is when its projects create a positive impact on economic, environmental, and social in society.

Project managers A, B, E & F, were all quite classical in their definition of project success. With some of the elements of the triple constraint being even more important than others. This is much like traditional project success of the triple constraint and how projects that were within budget, time, and quality are considered successful (A. Shenhar & Dvir, 2007).

Project manager C felt that the classical explanation was too limited and saw sustainable project management as part of the new definition of project success, something Silvius and Schipper (2015) highlight with their summary of success definitions.

Project manager D felt did not commit to any definition as the ultimate one. They use a variety of definitions of success which is determent for each project during the project process

The third section this research amid to realize was to investigate the relationship between SPM and Project Success. All participants felt there was a definite connection between SPM and project success for most parts. For the companies where the policy on sustainability or social responsibility is fully aligned with the company actions, there did the participants mentioned how projects had delivered more value to all stakeholders.

Another loud voice from the project managers is the importance of active stakeholder dialogue before, during, and even after the project is done. This in line with (Marcelino-Sádaba et al., 2015) that say that the stakeholders´ management can be the connection between traditional project management and the social and ethical aspects, improving their participation and coordination. The more experienced project managers are more interested in developing teamwork and more oriented to investment success (Müller & Turner, 2007). Stakeholder management is a critical factor for project success.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable project management is being practiced in many ways within the organizations the interviewees represent, though the definitions stated here are not necessarily used. This is correlated in the literature were integrating sustainability is said to stretch the boundaries of project management. The research question asked was: "Does sustainable project management influence project success?" The answer that all the participants gave was a positive one.

This leads to the role of the project manager and how the role is evolving in the context of traditional project management and sustainable business practices. It is essential that the project manager fulfills his management duty in the project most efficiently and effectively with respect to sustainability. Projects play a pivotal role in the realization of more sustainable business practices, and with the power of agenda, project managers should take the initiative to address the sustainability within each project.
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7. REFERENCES


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