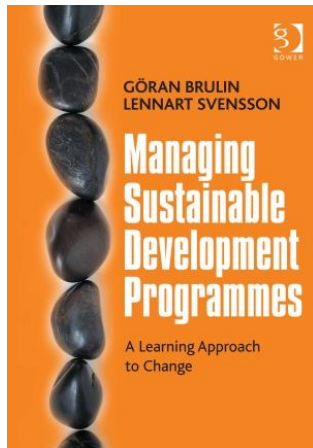


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Managing Sustainable Development Programmes***

Author: **Goran Brulin and Lennart Svensson**

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Reviewer: ***Michael DeTuncq***

Introduction to the Book

As the name implies, this book looks at the issues involved with obtaining sustainable development from the programs and projects sponsored and funded by the EU Structural Fund in Sweden and the role of project management in the successful attainment of this goal. These programs and projects are primarily aimed at changing, improving, and strengthening regional growth and employments policies. A program is loosely considered sustainable if the long term objectives and effects continue after the programs have been implemented and the implementation funding ends. This book is a critique of the tradition way these programs and projects are managed. It examines the impact traditional program and project management have on achieving sustainable development and offers alternatives that Brulin and Svensson contend will produce superior results.

Overview of Book's Structure

Managing Sustainable Development Projects consists of eight chapters. The chapters can be grouped in to three sections. The first section (chapters 1 & 2) explains the high level methods of program and project management and evaluation. This section supplies the context for how things are generally done currently as well as presenting some alternative methods that are also being evaluated. The second section (chapters 3 – 7) presents the key research findings and the case studies. This is where the authors make their case that current methods of program and project governance are

not generally producing the intended long-term results. The third section (chapter 8) is where the authors offer their alternatives to the traditional methods.

Highlights: What's New in this Book

What's new in this book is the empirical data that was collected and analyzed. Brulin and Svensson looked at various implementation strategies, the impact of learning and where learning happens, the effect of project management practices, and the role that gender plays in creating sustained change beyond the project implementation efforts.

What's also new is the recommendation that policy makers and project managers of large government programs should consider backing away from the traditional methods of governance and their definition of what success is. Brulin and Svensson contend that traditional project management techniques are short sighted in that they focus primarily on the measurement of immediate activities rather than longer term results and the focus on maintaining the original scope makes it more difficult for unintended benefits to emerge.

Highlights: What I liked!

What I liked most about this book is that they did not call for an abandonment of traditional methods, but a move away from the "Planning-Steered Development Model" and a "Development-Supportive Evaluation Model". They also emphasized the importance of active engagement from the program/project ownership as one of the key success factors.

Another success factor noted was the importance of innovation in sustainable development, particularly in terms of economic development. While most programs were not successful in the terms of the original scope, they did recognize that there were aspects outside the original scope that were successful and that innovation was one of the key factors in these successes. This is one of the reasons they encourage a move towards the Development-Supportive Evaluation Model. And while innovation is one of the stated goals of the current EU Structural Program for 2007-2013, Brulin and Svensson find that innovation tends to come from less structured environments. They basically contend that planned innovation isn't very innovative.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

As an American IT professional and entrepreneur, I was at a disadvantage because the book assumes the reader is familiar with the EU Structural Fund and the subsidiary Region and Social Funds, but in fairness, the authors were clearly writing for a European audience. It is not a "how to" book on managing large government projects, nor was it intended to be.

Who might benefit from the Book

This book is beneficial to anyone who is interested or involved in large government programs and projects that are seeking to obtain long-term socio-economic change.

Conclusion

Without trying to rock the political boat, Brulin and Svensson make an effective argument that master planned societies and economies are not as open to change as they need to be in order to allow the innovation to occur that is one of the key success factors to achieving sustainable development. In order to achieve the type of innovation that is found in Israel and the United States that some structural changes need to be made in the way research and development is done in coordination with universities and a move towards a venture capital model for new business financing and away from debt based financing.

From a project management standpoint, they argue that Planning-Steered Development, in terms of sustained development, measures the wrong things and discourages the deviation from scope and adaptation to changing conditions that encourage innovation. As I read this I kept thinking that what they were suggesting was a move towards Agile methods of managing these large socio-economic programs. On the last page of the book they make the direct tie to Agile Project Management methods as the model managing these large projects.

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Michael DeTuncq is an IT professional, project manager, and entrepreneur. He is the founder and former owner of Hit! Run! Score!, Inc., an eCommerce team sporting goods business. He has managed projects ranging from business startup and development to Internet marketing to software and web development and implementation, to IT infrastructure and networking.