*PM World **Journal*** *(ISSN: 2330-4480)*
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

Let's talk about public projects [1]

Public Project Governance – what the public administration needs projects for[2]

Stanisław Gasik

Introduction

Each country must have an idea of how projects and their aggregates will serve the goals set for the government and the public administration it controls. It would also be useful for them to establish general rules for implementing project management in their jurisdictions. The way to achieve these goals is through **Public Project Governance** (PPG). And the introduction to this topic is the subject of today's article.

First, we will define the concept of governance, then the concepts of public governance and project governance. By combining these two areas, we get the concept of Public Project Governance. The last section is devoted to the first issue of PPG: the role of projects in public administration.

What is governance?

The term "governance" has many definitions. It can be understood as a high-level order or a way of directing an organization. The area of operation and the organization's goal are elements of governance. A school operates in the field of education and its main goal is to provide knowledge to its pupils. Usually, an element of governance is the definition of the principal roles and structures that make up the organization. The organization is led by a Board headed by the CEO. The Board makes major decisions by majority vote and the CEO directs the work of the Board. Or the CEO makes major decisions using the knowledge and experience of the other Board members. The company consists of a production division, a finance division, a sales division, and a human resources and payroll unit, all of which cooperate in a specific way. Decision-making processes and controlling the functioning of an

---

[1] Editor's note: This article is the sixth in a series related to the management of public programs and projects, those organized, financed and managed by governments and public officials. The author, Dr. Stanisław Gasik, is the author of the book "*Projects, Government, and Public Policy*", recently published by CRC Press / Taylor and Francis Group. That book and these articles are based on Dr. Gasik's research into governmental project management around the world over the last decade. Stanisław is well-known and respected by PMWJ editors; we welcome and support his efforts to share knowledge that can help governments worldwide achieve their most important initiatives.

[2] How to cite this paper: Gasik, S. (2023). Public Project Governance – what the public administration needs projects for. Let's talk about public projects, series article, *PM World Journal*, Volume XII, Issue VI, June.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

organization are also an element of governance. An organization's governance is usually described in organizational regulations.

What is public governance?

A state is an organization, so it also has its governance rules which are called **state governance** or **public governance**. Its most important elements are usually documented in the constitution, although some countries, such as the UK and Israel, do not have a single document containing the most important regulations. Public governance defines the main levels of governance, such as the central level, state level, and local level, and the authority assigned to each of these levels. For example, foreign policy is created and implemented at the central level, communications policy at the state level, and rules for conducting trade at the local level. The division of public institutions into legislative, executive, and judiciary branches is an element of public governance. Another essential element of public governance is how power is elected (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2010). Governments operate through the implementation of public policies, so the rules for defining and implementing them are also an element of public governance. An important element of public governance is the institutions that control how governments operate, generally referred to as audit chambers. They usually control the correctness of spending public money; they can also control the efficiency of management processes. In an expanded sense, public governance defines the ways in which the three sectors of the state interact: government, the market, and organizations of the civil society (e.g., Löffler, 2009; Ramesh and Howlett, 2017).

What is project governance?

Every organization must also have defined project implementation rules or **project governance**, which includes the main principles, structures, and decision-making processes for projects. According to Müller (2009), the most important element of project governance is defining the role of projects in the organization. In project-based organizations, projects are the main means of achieving business goals, while in project-dependent organizations they are a tool for organizational development.

Müller (2009) distinguishes four main components of project governance:

- Governance of project management
- Governance of projects
- Governance of (project) programs
- Governance of project portfolios.

Governance of project management is some general rules for project management that apply throughout the organization. For example, the number of project managers needed or the establishment of an organization-wide PMO.

Governance of projects is the main rules for the implementation of individual projects. For example, defining the roles (a project must have a manager and a sponsor), the main phases (initiating, planning, etc.), and how to supervise their implementation (e.g., project assurance).

*PM World **Journal*** *(ISSN: 2330-4480)*
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

Governance of project programs refers to how project programs are implemented. In addition to the governance structures, phases, and methods of supervision, the project program must have rules for the governance and supervision of its components. In particular, rules for initiating projects (or subprograms) and closing them.

Governance of project portfolios is the main rules for the creation of project portfolios: criteria for their components inclusion (e.g., compliance with the organization's strategy, possibility of financing, level of risk) and closing components (planned or killing them).

Public Project Governance and its levels

Projects implemented by the public administration must also be subject to governance. Their rules must comply with the rules of state functioning, i.e. public governance, and – by definition – are the rules of project governance. Together they form a system of **Public Project Governance** (e.g., Klakegg et al., 2008, Williams et al., 2010, Gasik, 2023). As in other organizations, the PPG defines the role of projects in the state and the main rules for their implementation (Figure 1).
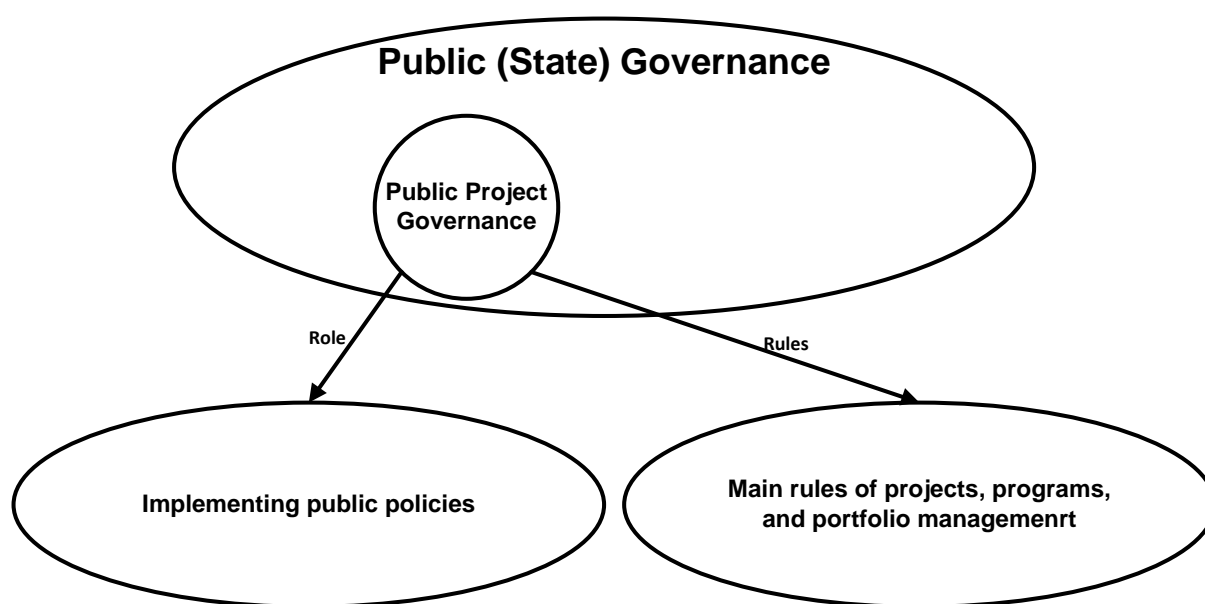

Figure 1. Public project governance components

The implementation of public projects can be of interest to many organizational levels: the government (legislature and cabinet), government institutions (e.g., ministries or departments), project programs, and, finally, the projects themselves. In addition, government institutions and project programs may also have their own hierarchies. For example, a ministry may have subordinate agencies performing specialized tasks, while programs may consist of subprograms. Each of these levels can set and apply governance rules within the limits granted to it explicitly or implicitly (when a higher level is not interested in project governance) and is obliged to apply the rules, set by the superior institutions. Public project governance is an example of multi-level governance (Marks et al., 1996).

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

For the sake of simplicity, I will deal with two levels of hierarchy here: governmental (this is what I will call the legislative and cabinet levels) and subordinate institutions, as these are the most common and important hierarchical levels of public project governance. Public sector project-level governance rules are similar to those of other sectors – so there are no major problems in applying Prince2® or PMBOK® Guide in any sector. Public program governance rules tend to be much more complex than those of other sectors primarily due to the greater number of stakeholders involved, but I will leave that for discussion in another article in this series.

The role of projects in public administration

The most important issue is to determine the place – or role – of public projects in the functioning of the state. What are public projects implemented for? Can there be a general answer to this question? "No project is an island" (Engwall, 2003). Public projects are not lonely islands either. Projects are implemented so that governments can achieve their goals. The goals of government action in particular areas are defined in **public policies**. Public policies are implemented through the implementation of **policy instruments**. In turn, the sets of instruments that implement a particular policy are called **policy programs**. In many texts, the term "policy" is omitted. In the public administration environment, it is simply understood that the term "program" refers to the implementation of a certain policy[3].

So projects are implemented as elements of policy programs and indirectly of public policies (Figure 2.)

---

[3] I use the term "policy program" to distinguish it from the term "project program," appropriate for jointly managed collections of projects, which are dealt with by the Project Management Institute, for example (PMI, 2017). Nb. PMI omits the word "project" as for them the meaning of the word "program" is also obvious – but different from that in the public administration area.

PM World _Journal_ _(ISSN: 2330-4480)_
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
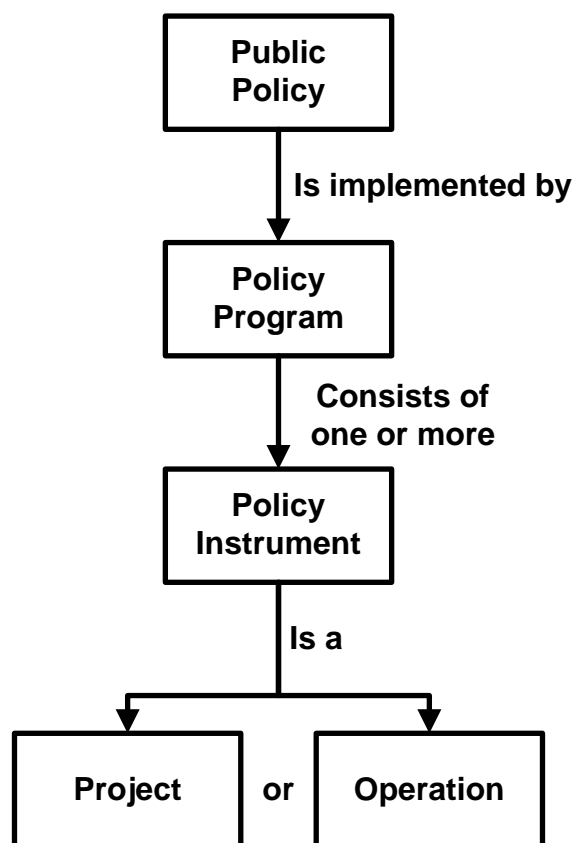by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

Figure 2. Structure of public policies

The main types of policy programs are project-based, operation-based, and mixed (Gasik, 2023). This classification also applies to public policies. It is based on the types of instruments used (other classifications of policy instruments you may find in Van Nispen (2011) or Gasik (2023)). In project-based policies, projects directly serve to achieve the policy goal. For example, the goals of transportation policies are achieved mainly through the construction of roads, bridges, railroads, etc. Operation-based public policies are those in which goals are achieved through the usually long-term implementation of certain processes. For example, the goal of fiscal policy may be to increase (or decrease) the amount of taxes collected. The effect of the policy can be observed after a certain period of implementation of appropriately modified tax collection processes. The goal of health policy may be to reduce or completely eliminate the incidence of a certain disease. Here, too, the effects can be observed after a certain period of vaccination or new treatments. Mixed public policies are those in which effects are achieved through the implementation of both projects and processes – such as defense policy, consisting of the deployment of new weapons and the continuous training of more and more soldiers.

The role of projects in project-based policies was described above. On the other hand, in policies where continuous processes are their elements, projects are used to introduce changes to ongoing processes or to implement new processes. Making changes to the tax collection process requires some changes to these processes and the implementation of an information campaign – both of these activities are of the

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

nature of a project. In mixed policies, projects serve partly to directly achieve goals and partly to modify ongoing operations.

There is one type of public policy that does not require projects: it is the continuation of public policies implemented in the previous period (for example, in the previous term of government). NB. this is the most common type of public policy: no administration could withstand the simultaneous modification of most of the policies implemented. A true project-free continuation is only possible for operation-based public policies. The continuation of project-based policies by definition requires the implementation of projects. The classification of public policies and their programs is shown in Figure 3.
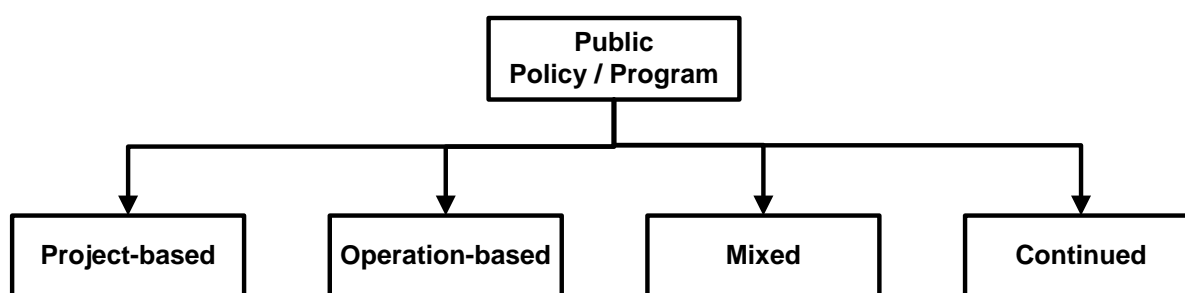

Figure 3. Types of public policies

Summary

The role of projects in the public sector is the implementation of public policies. It is determined by the type of public policy: project-based, operation-based, mixed, or continuation. This way I tried to answer the first question related to public project governance: what is the role of projects in public administration?

High-level issues regarding the manner of implementing public projects in public administration, i.e. other areas of Public Project Governance, will be the subject of my next articles in the *Let's talk about public projects* series in PM World Journal.

References

Engwall, M. (2003). No project is an island: linking projects to history and context. Research Policy, 32(5), 789-808.

Gasik, S. (2023). Projects, Government, and Public Policy. Boca Raton, Florida: Taylor and Francis.

Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2010). The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues. Draft Policy Research Working Paper, Washington DC: World Bank.

Klakegg, O. J., Williams, T., Magnussen, O. M., & Glasspool, H. (2008). Governance Framework for Public Project Development, Project Management Journal. 39 (S1) 27-42.

Löffler, E. (2009). Public governance in a network society. In Bovaird, T., Löffler, E. (2009). Public Management and Governance. Second Edition, pp. 215 – 232. New York, USA: Routledge.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

Marks, G., Hooghe, L., & Blank, K. (1996). European integration from the 1980s: State-centric v. multi-level governance. Journal of Common Market Studies, 34(3): 341-378.

Müller, R. (2009). Project Governance. Fundamentals of Project Management. Gover Publishing, Farnham, Surrey, UK. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315245928.

PMI (2017) The Standard for Program Management. 4th Edition, Newtown Square, USA: Project Management Institute.

Ramesh, M., & Howlett, M. (2017). The Role of Policy Capacity in Policy Success and Failure. In Klassen, T. R., Cepiku, D., Lah, T. J. (eds) The Routledge Handbook of Global Public Policy and Administration, pp. 319 – 334. New York, NY: Routledge.

Van Nispen, F. K. M. (2011). The Study of Police Instruments. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute: Fiesole, Italy.

Williams, T. Klakegg, O. J. Magnussen, O. M., & Glasspool, H. (2010). An investigation of governance frameworks for public projects in Norway and the UK. International Journal of Project Management 28, 40–50.

About the Author

Stanisław Gasik, PhD, PMP

Warsaw, Poland

Dr. Stanisław Gasik, PMP is a project management expert. He graduated from the University of Warsaw, Poland, with M. Sc. in mathematics and Ph. D. in organization sciences (with a specialty in project management). Stanisław has over 30 years of experience in project management, consulting, teaching, and implementing PM organizational solutions. His professional and research interests include project knowledge management, portfolio management, and project management maturity. He is the author of the only holistic model of project knowledge management spanning from the individual to the global level.

Since 2013, his main professional focus has been on public projects. He was an expert in project management at the Governmental Accountability Office, an institution of the US Congress. He is the author of "Projects, Government, and Public Policy," a book that systematizes knowledge about government activities in the area of project management.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. XII, Issue VI – June 2023
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Public Project Governance
Let's talk about public projects
by Stanisław Gasik, PhD

He was a significant contributor to PMI's PMBOK® Guide and PMI Standard for Program Management and contributed to other PMI standards. He has lectured at global PMI and IPMA congresses and other international conferences.

His web page is www.gpm3.eu.