

## **Some potential current and future-related topics for project management to consider addressing in more detail <sup>1</sup>**

By Alan Stretton

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article discusses some current and future-related topics in project management (PM) which I believe are fundamentally important to its future, and which therefore appear to me to merit further attention by those who are best placed to further develop them. The latter could include very many in the PM professional and academic research communities around the world, who are the intended audience for this article.

However, in putting this article together, I have used some recent Thought Leadership and Content Creation initiatives by the Project Management Institute (PMI) as background for developing certain of the following potential topics. This was mainly because the materials from one of their reports in particular provided an excellent launching pad for the some of the following discussions.

So, whilst references to these PMI reports may appear to dominate, particularly initially, I want to emphasise that the intent in developing these potential topics is to address the project management world at large, as well as those involved with the PMI reports. Indeed, it is quite likely that some of the following “potential topics” may already be “in the works” of some PM representative or academic/research bodies. (In my late 90s, I am somewhat constrained in trying to keep up to date with all that is going on in project management – at least, that’s my excuse).

As indicated, my starting point for these discussions is PMI’s Thought Leadership and Content Creation initiative, and one of its key reports to date – to which we now turn.

### **PMI’s THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND CONTENT CREATION INITIATIVE**

The Project Management Institute (PMI) has published a series of reports as part of its new strategy on Thought Leadership and Content Creation. Eleven of these reports, from June 2022 to July 2023, are listed as *Featured Insights from PMI’s Thought Leadership* (PMI 2023A) in the References in this article. One of the more recent reports is entitled “Building Resilience through Strategic Risk Management”, which is referenced separately as PMI 2023B. This latter report will be my starting point for developing the following thoughts, which include tentative suggestions about topics which PMI and/or others may wish to consider in preparing PM for an uncertain future.

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## **PMI's STRATEGIC RISK MGT. REPORT, & SOME CONTEXTUAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **The primary focus of this report is on organisational strategic risk management**

The primary focus of this report is on organisational strategy, and its risk management component. Essentially, it emphasises that the organisation first needs to get its overall organisational strategic risk management “right”, in order to “strengthen organisational resilience and ensure long-term growth”.

This report includes many guidelines to help achieve these objectives, most notably under the following headings.

- Mitigating risk in 2023: Trends to watch
- The opportunity side of strategic risk management
- Case study: The ROI of mitigating risk
- How AI tools can sharpen risk management
- Risk reboot: Mitigating risk with technology
- It's time to forge a strong risk culture

### **Project risk management must then align with the organisation's risk strategies**

It follows that the organisation's project risk management activities must then align with the organisational risk management strategy, to facilitate the achievement of its longer-term organisational objectives. As the Strategic Risk Management report puts it:

Armed with a clear understanding of how the company's risk appetite aligns with its strategic vision, project managers can weave the right risk mindset into the fabric of their team's way of working. Rather than looking at risks within the narrow view of the project alone, they can bring a broader view by looking at the project within the context of the entire organisation's needs and objectives.

This can be seen as a prime example of the influence, and importance, of the project's organisational context for the effective management of its projects.

### **This report highlights the importance of the project's organisational context**

At a more generalised level, it may seem all too obvious that the management of various components of an organisation's projects should align with the broader strategic intent of the organisation. The logic of doing so in the context of the risk management component is clearly spelt out in the above quotation. Yet, the importance of broader project alignments with corresponding elements in the organisational context receives all too little attention in the project management literature, which remains predominately inwards-looking in its approach. Consequently, the Strategic Risk Management report's more outwards-looking approach is particularly welcome.

Many of us have been arguing for some time that project management (PM) is best discussed in the context of the organisation within which, and/or for which, it is being undertaken. For example, Morris 2013:281 argued for the project's organisation to be the unit of analysis, as follows.

Meanwhile, a review of the data on project overruns in the late 1980s suggested a broader paradigm for the discipline: 'the management of projects', one where the project organisation is the unit of analysis, where context, the front end, technology, people and the commercial basis of the project's development and delivery are included, as well as the traditional control topics.

I have used a linear form of a basic organisational strategic management framework as a context for discussing project management in this journal for nearly six years, and a recursive version for nearly three years – the latest versions of which are shown as Figures 1 and 2 in Stretton 2023d.

I do not know what it might take for the project management literature, and project managers at large, to really shift their perspective to that of putting the organisation at centre stage, rather than the project itself. Whilst there have been frequent exhortations to align the project with the organisation's strategies, these do not appear to have contributed to any substantial shift.

However, the Strategic Risk Management report also discusses the organisation's own external operational contexts, which appears to add further substance to the materials discussed above – as now further discussed.

### **The report also discusses the organisation's own external operational contexts**

One of the relevant issues discussed in the Strategic Risk Management report is the need to maintain a close watch on trends in the global environment in which the organisation operates, to facilitate decisions to help mitigate perceived emergent risks. The following "issues generating the most concerns for CEOs – now and in the future" were cited:

Inflation (40%-28%); Macroeconomic volatility (31%-29%); Geopolitical conflict (25%-25%);  
Cyber risks (20%-25%); Health risks (14%-13%); Climate change (14%-22%);  
Social inequity (6%-9%)

Other reports in the Thought Leadership series have also directly addressed such trends, including

- Global project management top trends – February 2023
- Global megatrends 2022 – February 2022

The Strategic Risk Management report goes on to observe that, "As organizations prioritize environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives, these issues are raising the most concerns:"

Cybersecurity resilience (48%), Company working conditions (40%); Increasing regulatory and disclosure requirements (37%); Lack of ESG expertise and resources (28%)

Organisations' ESG strategies have also been discussed in more detail in the following earlier Thought Leadership reports.

- Measuring the impact of ESG initiatives – June 2023
- The ESG imperative: Turning words into action – June 2022

Overall, these extended holistic contextual perspectives of the organisation suggests to me that the above could be generalised beyond the risk aspects, and ESG considerations, to include other external stakeholders in the organisation's activities – most particularly customers and other users. All such external influences impact on the organisation's strategic management activities, which, in turn, influence (or should influence) the way relevant project management activities are undertaken.

Some of us have long argued that the contexts within which projects are undertaken are largely neglected in the project management literature, to the detriment of overall project effectiveness. I have tried to tackle this subject several times in this journal, including a series of seven articles beginning with Stretton 2019e, and more recently in Stretton 2022i. However, I found it difficult to compress such a broad subject into a compact and useful format. Undoubtedly there are others in the project management community who are much better qualified to tackle this topic, and hopefully might do so. This potential topic (PT) might be summarised as follows.

**PT1** Expositions of the key relevance of an organisation's strategic position and external contexts as active guidelines for effective project management plans and activities

## **DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PRODUCTION-BASED OWNER ORGANISATIONS (OOs) AND PROJECT-BASED SUPPLIER ORGANISATIONS (SOs)**

Another relevant consideration is that the type of organisation will obviously influence the projects it undertakes. We can identify two broad and distinctively different types of organisations that undertake projects, in which many aspects of project management practice can vary a great deal. These two different types of organisation, and implications for the management of their projects, are now discussed in more detail.

Various writers have distinguished between the following two types of organisations that undertake projects, These have been given a variety of titles. In this article I have combined those used by Cooke-Davies 2002 – *Production-based* and *Project-based organisations*, with those used by Taggart 2015 – *Owner Organisations (OOs)* and *Supplier Organisations (SOs)*. These combined titles, and descriptions of their nature, are shown below. The detailed descriptions are borrowed from Archibald et al 2012 (who used yet different titles)

- **Production-based owner organisations (OOs)** derive most (if not all) of their revenue and/or benefits from producing and selling products and services. They utilize

projects to create new, or improve existing, products and services; enter new markets; or otherwise improve or change their organisations

- **Project-based supplier organisations (SOs)** derive most (if not all) of their revenue and/or other benefits from creating and delivering projects/programs to external customers.

Distinguishing between these two broad types of organisations that undertake projects is a preamble to the recognition that most of the project management literature, and many of the PMI Thought Leadership reports, tend to focus on project management in production-based owner organisations (OOs) – as now discussed.

## **THE PM LITERATURE IS MAINLY CONCERNED WITH PM IN PRODUCTION-BASED OOs, AT THE EXPENSE OF PM IN PROJECT-BASED SOs**

### **The project management literature is primarily concerned with PM in OOs**

It is first noted that, historically, the project management literature has been primarily concerned with PM in production-based owner organisations. For example, this was the case with Cleland & King's pioneering book on *Systems Analysis and Project Management* (Cleland & King 1968), and also with Kerzner's classic book *Project Management: A systems approach to planning, scheduling and controlling* (Kerzner 1979). (I also note here that, from the point of view of an SO project manager, as I was at the time, I found a good deal of the contents of these books irrelevant to my work.)

This primary concern with OOs in the PM literature still appears to be the case in more recent times. For example, as Taggart 2015 observed,

Conventionally, either directly or by implication, the project management bodies of knowledge focus on the role of the Owner Organization (OO).....

With regard to PMI's Thought Leadership initiatives, its Strategic Risk Management report also appears to be primarily concerned with its relevance in OO contexts – as is illustrated by its sub-heading "*Strategic risk management is a way to strengthen organisational resilience and ensure long-term growth*", for example.

Indeed, many of the other recent PMI Thought Leadership reports also appear to be concerned primarily with production-based owner organisations. For example, four of these reports have been concerned with Project (or Program) Management Offices (PMOs), which are normally confined to OOs – as listed in reports dated March 2023, and October, May and February 2022, in PMI 2023A.

### **However, SOs appear to employ at least as many project managers as do OOs**

Taggart 2015 made the following observation.

So, for each significant project there may be many PMs employed by SO, but there may be only one PM employed by an OO. It is my contention that this ratio is repeated across most projects and so most of the individuals engaged in the management of projects do so for Supplier Organizations (SO) rather than Owner Organizations (OO).

A reviewer has expanded on Taggart's contention by pointing out that, as you look down a supply chain, you will often find contractors, subcontractors, service providers, and system and equipment suppliers, each of which has component and subcomponent suppliers. For most of these contractors and suppliers, their delivery of produce or service will be as a project with project management required. The larger the project, the more of these supplier projects there will be.

Taggart's contention is also supported by Lehmann 2016, who surveyed some 246 project managers, and found that some 51% of respondents worked on what he called 'customer projects' – i.e. with SOs – whilst 44% were on 'internal projects' – i.e. with OOs – whilst the remaining 5% said that the setups of their projects didn't fit either.

If this situation is, as it appears to be, broadly representative of the project management domain at large, project managers in SOs do not get the coverage in the literature that their numerical importance appears to warrant. I attempted to make a start on this in Stretton 2019g, 2017e. Lehmann has contributed many relevant articles in this journal, and undoubtedly there will be other contributors I have missed.

### **Also, most environmental/social change responses/initiatives are done via SOs**

There are, however, other reasons to suggest why an increased focus on project-based supplier organisations (SOs) could be appropriate topics for further development, including perhaps in Thought Leadership reports. One of these is that it is SOs, and not usually OOs, which deliver most of the outputs from which environmental and societal benefits are derived – either in response to changes, or to initiate change.

### **Therefore, PM in SOs seems a worthy potential topic for further development**

In light of both the large numbers of project managers working in SOs, and the primary roles of SOs in environment and social change responses and initiatives, it appears more than reasonable to suggest that project management bodies that can readily access an appropriate range of resources could undertake the task of putting together more specific guidelines for project managers who work in project-based supplier organisations. This second potential topic might be summarised as follows.

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| <b>PT2</b> | Recommendations for practical guidelines for project management in project-based Supplier Organisations (SOs) |
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I now propose to extend the discussions on project-based supplier organisations a little further. In the following, I will distinguish between

- SOs that provide an extended range of services beyond projects, such as FEL (Front End Loading) services, and beyond; and
- SOs that provide what I will call conventional SO services, which are essentially confined to projects.

## **POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPANDING ON EXISTING EXTENDED SO SERVICES?**

### **PMI's strategy to move from project managers to "changemakers"**

At this stage I want to turn to a recent interview with PMI's President and CEO, Pierre Le Manh, published in this journal (Khelifi 2023), entitled "From project managers to changemakers!" The latter descriptor has prompted the following discussions on possibilities for further extending the range of SO services in the context of this strategy.

In the Khelifi interview, Le Manh expanded on PMI's current strategy to move from project management to "changemakers", partly as follows.

More broadly....the move in our current strategy, from project managers to changemakers, is a reflection of the evolution of the profession, which is becoming more fluid and less strictly defined, especially in some industries. .... I believe that in 10 years we will have defined the profession we represent in a way that is broader than the definition of Project Management as it is today, but also in a way that is more specific than "changemakers".

I do not know to what extent other PM representative bodies have similar aspirations, but surely they will be thinking of the future of project management in ways that may not be dissimilar to the above.

As I noted in Stretton 2023h, my understanding of "changemakers" is that it implies direct project management involvement in initiating broad societal changes. Whilst there may be some opportunities for production-based owner organisations, and thence their project managers, to make such direct contributions, these would appear to be rather limited. Much the same applies to what I described above as conventional SOs, which I will be discussing in more detail shortly.

However, there appear to be substantial opportunities for SOs which already provide extended services to further extend the range of such services. I discussed one type of possible further extension in Stretton 2023h, as now briefly summarised.

### **Possibilities for extending SO integration/coordination services into new areas**

Stretton 2023h discussed possibilities for extending project management into new domains via broader integration management services. The main points of that article are summarised as follows.

- Project managers necessarily develop substantial integration skills in managing a multitude of different resources contributing to their projects. They are therefore well placed to offer integration management services in other domains as well – more so than general managers, because they do so in more dynamic and unique environments.
- Increasing specialisation in vocations and disciplines in broader domains has brought ever-increasing demands for appropriately skilled people who can integrate the outputs from a variety of specialists to help achieve broader overall goals. The need for such people has been acknowledged in several non-project sources, as has a recognition of their relative scarcity.
- This situation therefore appears to represent an opportunity for project management to add a broader integration management service role to its more traditional roles of dealing directly with projects.

It has since occurred to me that the descriptor *coordination manager* would better describe the essence of this role to the public at large, and to potential external partners or collaborators. Although it may appear to be a relatively trivial matter, I believe it is important that the chosen descriptor accurately reflects the nature of the particular type of contribution which a coordination management resource is organised to deliver.

Proposals for specialised coordination management entities, or their equivalent, have been made for some time, but I am not now close enough to the action to assess the current extent of need for them. But, the grossly inadequate response to the northern NSW floods here in early 2022 was a prime case where a specialised coordination management entity could most certainly have helped improve the response.

Moreover, as far as the future is concerned, it appears inevitable that “unprecedented” environmental and social disruptions-cum-emergencies will become more common, with a correspondingly increased need for specialist coordinating entities to help optimise the contributions of all parties involved in responding to these.

This is only one of what may prove to be many types of extended project-based supplier organisation services that may be developed to contribute in an increasingly VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) future, as part of “the evolution of the profession”, as Le Manh has expressed it.

Although it may seem a little premature to speculate on possibilities for such extensions to SO services in moving towards something like “changemakers”, I am inclined to think that the more attention we direct now towards such possibilities, the more likely we are to identify opportunities earlier than we otherwise would.

Consequently, I tentatively offer the following as a further potential topic for future longer-term development of SOs, particularly those that already provide extended



services. This would appear to be a very appropriate subject for researchers, both in academe, and in representative PM bodies.

**PT3** Explorations of possibilities for further expanding extended project-based organisation services to increase project-related contributions in increasingly VUCA contexts

### **Extended SO services appear to work best with partnering-type arrangements**

We have several recorded examples of existing types of extended project-based supplier organisation services being handled in partnership or partnering modes.

For example, Stretton 2022k described processes we developed in Civil & Civic for helping customers/users clarify and confirm their basic business or equivalent needs, before specifying the project/ product requirements to best help satisfy these needs – which we described as Client Needs Determination (CND). I noted there that Civil & Civic certainly saw the needs identification process as a kind of partnership, which was facilitated by the institution of joint governance arrangements for each project with what we called a Project Control Group (PCG), dating from the early 1960s.

Another example comes from extended services provided by many EPC (Engineering, Procurement, Construction) organisations in helping customers' senior leadership re-establish and develop their organisational strategic objectives, particular in the context of FEL (Front End Loading) on major and mega projects. Prieto 2009 describes the involvement of an EPC organisation in helping the owner organisation as follows.

Most importantly, the owner requires a partner that can help it translate its programmatic vision and broad objectives into a well defined set of specific business objectives that underpin an actionable and implementable strategic plan for the “giga” program [super-large mega-programs/project].

Looking more to the future, and possibilities for extended SO services to contribute to broader environmental and societal issues, I recently discussed partnering possibilities in some detail in Stretton 2022f in this journal. The main reason for recommending partnering-type arrangements for such extended SO services is that other entities are generally responsible for initiating such broader changes, so that a partnership with the initiators appears to make sense. As I noted in Stretton 2023h, I had the impression that Le Manh may also have had this in mind in relation to his “changemakers”, judging by his mention of existing PMI “partnerships with specialized organizations like The Green Project Management or with the United Nations”. Indeed, partnering and collaboration is needed on most projects in the social sector. For example, projects dealing with the U.N.'s development goals (hunger, education, housing, migration, etc.) require partnering between the PM world and subject matter experts and organisations.

Whilst there are already many situations where project management has partnering arrangements with appropriate specialist organisations and groups, there appear to be many other opportunities for PM to contribute a good deal more by pro-actively

pursuing appropriate partnering arrangements. Consequently, I suggest the following as another potential topic to be further developed by those who seek to further such arrangements.

**PT4** Explorations of further possible synergistic partnering arrangements with specialist initiating organisations for extended project-based service organisations (SOs)

Another type of potential partnering-type arrangement is with those people most affected by environmental and societal changes (or their representatives when large numbers of people are involved) – i.e. a partnership between the providers and users of the relevant extended SO services.

In the context of projects at large, in recent times I have written a good deal about the neglect of the role of users of project management outputs in the project management literature – most recently in Stretton 2023k, in relation to PMI's 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of the PM Standards and PMBOK Guide (PMI 2021), and in which I put the case for greater focus on user roles. Perhaps the role of users in this more general context might be more conveniently expressed in the context of partnering arrangements.

This might suggest the following as another potential topic to be further developed – either in its own right, or as an appropriate addition to PT4.

**PT5** Explorations of further possible synergistic partnering arrangements with users or their representatives for extended project-based service organisations (SOs)

## **SOME UNRESOLVED ISSUES RE LARGE PROJECTS BY CONVENTIONAL SOs**

### **Organisations at large, and environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues**

In describing ESG, I quote from PMI's ESG Resource Hub.

ESG is an abbreviation for environmental, social and governance. These three non-financial factors represent the extent to which an organization governs itself responsibly and acts in ways that positively impact people and the planet. ...

As global challenges arise, so does the pressure for organizations to ensure their initiatives create a better world for all. ...

In PMI's Strategic Risk Management report, the following trends to watch were listed under the heading *Mitigating risk in 2023: Trends to watch* (in descending order of importance)

Inflation; Macroeconomic volatility; Geopolitical conflict; Cyber risks; Health risks;  
Climate change; Social inequity

As also noted earlier, various aspects of organisational ESG strategies have been discussed in two earlier PMI Thought Leadership reports. In the report entitled *The ESG imperative: Turning words into action – June 2022*, its first heading summarises the importance of ESG for organizations as follows.

The pressure is on for organizations to get serious about sustainability and social impact strategies.

So, at least three of PMI's Thought Leadership reports have a wealth of information and guidelines to help organisations at large identify potential negative impacts they may have in ESG contexts, and to take action not only to mitigate these, but also to try and convert them into positive impacts.

As noted earlier, these PMI reports appear to be concerned mainly with production-based owner organisations (OOs). Whilst the general thrust of the above arguments apply also to project-based supplier organisations (SOs), there are some important issues that apply only to the latter, as now discussed.

### **Major change initiatives that affect the environment and society are made via SOs**

There does not appear to be any substantive reason why conventional project-based supplier organisations would not continue to be the primary vehicles for delivering major change initiatives that affect the environment and society. These types of organisations are therefore likely to remain key contributors to initiating, and/or responding to, broad environmental and societal (ES) changes.

As already indicated, conventional project-based supplier organisations do not receive the level of attention in the project management literature that their sheer magnitude would appear to warrant.

### **These are typically large and often complex projects, or megaprojects**

Significant environmental and social projects are typically large, often complex, and many, if not most, would be described as major projects, major programs, or megaprojects. The latter are described in Wikipedia as follows: "Megaprojects are large-scale complex ventures that typically cost more than 1 billion US Dollars,"

### **Differences between managing megaprojects and smaller "classical" projects?**

In Stretton 2019i I discussed some comparisons made by Prieto 2015 between what he described as "large complex" projects on the one hand, and "classical" projects on the other. I began with the following quotation from Prieto 2015, in which he very specifically says (his emphasis):

Large complex projects differ from those that comprise the traditional domain of projects as defined and served by the Project Management Institute and its Project Management

Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). Remember its admonishment that PMBOK provides a management framework for **most projects, most of the time**. Large complex project appear to live outside these boundary conditions.

I then drew on three of Prieto's tables which outlined certain distinctive aspects related to the management of large complex projects, and which were included in some comparisons he made between the latter and "traditional" or "classical" projects. These tables comprised:

- Some precepts/ assumptions re large complex project mgt. vs. traditional
- Types/extent of management focus on large complex projects vs. traditional
- Managerial leadership behaviours for large complex projects vs. traditional

It occurred to me at the time (2019) that some of the then current "traditional" project management practices Prieto discussed in 2015 had already moved significantly towards his descriptors of their counterparts in the large complex project context. I haven't been in a position to follow this up in any detail, but the little evidence available to me suggests that this trend may well have continued. However, I am too far away from the action these days to be able to confirm that this is so, and, if so, to what extent, and in which areas.

Now, someone may already have studied this issue. If not, I suggest that it could be another potential topic to be further developed by interested PM bodies – perhaps along the following lines.

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| <b>PT6</b> | Enquiries about differences and commonalities between managing megaprojects and managing "classical" projects |
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### **Project management typically has little, if any, say in decisions on the nature of ES change initiatives, nor associated risk and/or ESG impact assessments**

Whilst it is not practical to generalise about the huge variety of current and potential types of environmental and societal (ES) changes, we can point to at least one very common and important type in which project management rarely has any say in relevant ESG issues.

These are the very large number of major infrastructure projects which are initiated at the political level of government, and which do not appear to be supported by adequate mechanisms to undertake the ESG work in a professional manner – at least in Australia. Consequently, we have had more than our fair share of white elephant infrastructure initiatives/projects, and a seemingly never-ending stream of major projects with massive cost and time over-runs. But there is some evidence that these types of problems are not confined to Australia, particularly in the context of megaprojects, as now discussed.

Some twenty years ago, Flyvbjerg et al (2003) published a very important book entitled *Megaprojects and Risk*. The undisciplined nature of the initiation of so many megaprojects is well described in the following quotation from the front of the book.

*Management and Risk* .... is a fascinating account of how the promoters of multibillion-dollar megaprojects systematically and self-servingly misinform parliaments, the public and the media in order to get projects approved and built. It shows, in unusual depth, how the formula for approval is an unhealthy cocktail of underestimated costs, overestimated revenues, undervalued environmental impacts and overvalued economic development effects. This results in projects that are extremely risky, but where the risk is concealed from MPs [Members of Parliament], taxpayers and investors.

I have not followed Flyvbjerg's many subsequent publications in any detail, but evidently this aspect of megaprojects has not changed a great deal. This is certainly the case in Australia, where we continue to have far too many examples of major cost overruns on such projects, and/or of underperformance in terms of promised benefits.

To my mind, the prevalence of this type of what I might call "rogue" projects is the biggest elephant in the project management room. However, it is one thing to recognise the problem so well outlined by Flyvbjerg et al, but it is obviously quite another to work out how to avoid it – or at least mitigate it.

It would certainly appear to be a mammoth task to set up ways and means of overcoming at least the worst of these types of problems – but surely the effort should be made. The question then is, "by whom?" This prompts another question, "if PMI or other representative bodies do not attempt to initiate remedial action, who will?" This, in turn, then prompts the following rather tentative suggestion for another potential topic to be further developed by someone in the project management field.

**PT7** Explorations of possibilities for creating mandatory project management check-points to cater particularly for "rogue" environmental and/or social initiatives

### **Lack of effective governance could be seen both as a cause and/or consequence, of sub-standard initiation of, or response to, major ES changes**

A closely associated issue with PT7 is that of governance of ESG projects, particularly in the initiation stage of major projects. Some Australian colleagues have attributed many of the problems we have here with major infrastructure projects to problems with their governance. We certainly appear to have more than our share of no-one-in-charge infrastructure initiatives here, particularly at initiation stages. However, all too often, this is also an ongoing problem, with participating project managers not able to influence the originating parties to exercise effective governance of the entire initiative.

So, we have a kind of chicken-and-egg problem with governance in these contexts, which might suggest yet another potential major long-term topic to be developed.

**PT8** Explorations of possibilities for creating mandatory governance arrangements for all major environmental and/or social initiatives

PT8 is very closely aligned with PT7, so that these topics could be combined. However, more detailed investigations of either, or both, would quite likely unearth some other important associated topics – so I suspect that both the above would turn out to be interim topics as a broader picture unfolds, and other considerations come to light.

To repeat the obvious, getting some form of real control on “rogue” major environmental and social initiatives would appear to be a mammoth task. But, as I see it, the position at present is that we have this mammoth elephant in the project management room. So, if we, as project managers, do not move to rectify this situation – or at least shrink our elephant down to a reasonably manageable size – who will?

## SUMMARY

This article has suggested – albeit somewhat tentatively – the following eight potential topics that some appropriate bodies in the project management community could (or should?) consider developing further, to help build up an overall coverage of important current and future possibilities for project management.

**PT1** Expositions of the key relevance of an organisation’s strategic position and external contexts as active guidelines for effective project management plans and activities

**PT2** Recommendations for practical guidelines for project management in project-based Supplier Organisations (SOs)

**PT3** Explorations of possibilities for further expanding extended project-based organisation services to increase project-related contributions in increasingly VUCA contexts

**PT4** Explorations of further possible synergistic partnering arrangements with specialist initiating organisations for extended project-based service organisations (SOs)

**PT5** Explorations of further possible synergistic partnering arrangements with users or their representatives for extended project-based service organisations (SOs)

**PT6** Enquiries about differences and commonalities between managing megaprojects and managing “classical” projects

**PT7** Explorations of possibilities for creating mandatory project management check-points to cater particularly for “rogue” environmental and/or social initiatives

**PT8** Explorations of possibilities for creating mandatory governance arrangements for all major environmental and/or social initiatives

These topics also represent some broad issues which have concerned me for some time, most of which I have previously discussed, or have at least mentioned, in previous articles in this journal. There are some other substantial issues in project management which have also concerned me – and I hope to discuss at least some of these in future articles in this journal.

I can only hope that this modest offering might prompt further development of the latter by those bodies in the project management community, including PMI's Thought Leadership people, who are best able to contribute to one or more of these potential topics.

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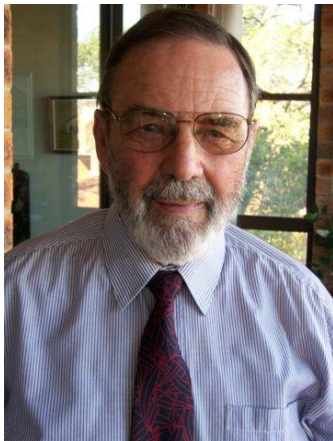
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## About the Author



### **Alan Stretton, PhD**

Faculty Corps, University of Management  
and Technology, Arlington, VA (USA)

Life Fellow, AIPM (Australia)



**Alan Stretton** is one of the pioneers of modern project management. He is currently a member of the Faculty Corps for the University of Management & Technology (UMT), USA. In 2006 he retired from a position as Adjunct Professor of Project Management in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Australia, which he joined in 1988 to develop and deliver a Master of Project Management program. Prior to joining UTS, Mr. Stretton worked in the building and construction industries in Australia, New Zealand and the USA for some 38 years, which included the project management of construction, R&D, introduction of information and control systems, internal management education programs and organizational change projects. He has degrees in Civil Engineering (BE, Tasmania) and Mathematics (MA, Oxford), and an honorary PhD in strategy, programme and project management (ESC, Lille, France). Alan was Chairman of the Standards (PMBOK) Committee of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) from late 1989 to early 1992. He held a similar position with the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), and was elected a Life Fellow of AIPM in 1996. He was a member of the Core Working Group in the development of the Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management. He has published 250+ professional articles and papers. Alan can be contacted at [alanailene@bigpond.com.au](mailto:alanailene@bigpond.com.au).

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