



Book Project on the 60th Anniversary of IPMA: “We need people – now more than ever”

Berlin, Germany – September 19, 2025 – A philosopher invites readers to view projects as “pataphysical” questions, encouraging us to think beyond mere functionality. A contribution from Ukraine reflects on managing projects amid uncertainty and upheaval. And one author weaves together cultural influences and emotions that shape project success in a personal essay.

These and many other perspectives open the anniversary volume published for the 60th anniversary of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). Edited by Prof. Dr. Reinhard Wagner, Honorary Chair of GPM and former IPMA President, the book offers not only a retrospective of six decades of project management but, more importantly, a forward-looking exploration. “For the IPMA’s 50th anniversary, we had a book that primarily captured the status quo,” Wagner explains. “This time I wanted something different: a volume that puts the future of project management front and center.” That ambition runs through contributions from authors across the globe.

The thematic scope ranges from artificial intelligence and agile approaches to sustainability and communication. In roughly ten interviews and numerous essays, experts from academia and practice share widely different perspectives. Central to all of them is a look ahead: How will projects evolve by 2050 or even 2085? What role will humans play once routine tasks are increasingly handled by AI? Many contributions deliberately focus on personal perspectives, emotions, and societal dimensions rather than traditional management frameworks.

The anniversary volume was launched at the IPMA World Congress in Berlin and will also be made available online. “It was important to us to present this collection on the occasion of IPMA’s 60th anniversary,” says Wagner. “Because the future of project management will largely depend on how we define the role of people within it.”

Interview with Prof. Dr. Reinhard Wagner on the anniversary volume 60 Years of IPMA

Dr. Wagner, the anniversary book 60 Years of IPMA is very different from the publication marking the 50th anniversary. What’s the biggest difference?

Wagner: “The future-oriented perspective runs like a thread through all the contributions. Again and again, the question is how project management will evolve in the decades ahead.”

When you talk about the future, uncertainty seems to be part of it. Will people still be needed in project management at all?

Wagner: “Uncertainty often comes up, especially about whether humans will still be necessary in projects. For me the clear answer is: yes, we need people – now more than ever. The key question is simply: for what purpose?”

What does that mean specifically for IPMA’s work?

Wagner: “A central concern for IPMA is to deliberately keep the focus on people. Even in articles that deal with artificial intelligence, this theme surfaces repeatedly. The question is: what role should humans play in directing and guiding AI?”



The book includes many diverse contributions. Is there one that particularly impressed you?

Wagner: “I find John Naughton’s essay especially intriguing. He uses a surprising reference to musicians like Avicii and brings in a very personal perspective. Texts like this show that almost all contributions highlight emotional and individual viewpoints – classic management frameworks are hardly present.”

You describe a trend ‘away from management, toward people in projects.’ Can you explain that?

Wagner: “We’re seeing a clear trend: away from ‘management’ as an abstract form of control, toward the actual project and the people within it. Management often distances people from the real work, whereas the future lies in involving people more directly. They won’t just be the executing force anymore; they’ll become the central shaping power.”

What role does artificial intelligence play in this?

Wagner: “At the same time, we must engage intensively with AI and its limitations. Routine tasks will increasingly be handled by machines. But that’s precisely why project management will remain essential in execution and design. The co-creative act of *shaping* a project – especially in its preparatory phase – will remain a deeply human responsibility. While machines can generate the project plan, it’s up to humans to orchestrate collaboration: between people themselves, and between people and machines.”

What broader consequences will this have for society?

Wagner: “In the future, people will have fewer operational tasks but more time to dedicate to collective work and social engagement. Projects will increasingly be thought of in pre- and post-phases, and their collaborative character will become stronger.”

You also stress the importance of psychology. Why is that?

Wagner: “Psychology will become ever more critical. It’s about how we can tap into people’s energy more effectively. Self-Determination Theory provides crucial insights. It shows that people are motivated in projects through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Especially the aspect of ‘relatedness’ – the feeling of belonging – will play a major role.”

What lesson do you draw from this for the future of project management?

Wagner: “Project management must allow more freedom and let people simply do. Only then can their full potential unfold, enabling projects to be not only successful but also meaningful.”

About GPM and IPMA

GPM ([Deutsche Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement e. V.](https://www.gpm.de)) is the leading competence network for project management in Germany and the GPM is the National Member Association of IPMA in Germany, with over 6,500 members. The [International Project Management Association \(IPMA\)](https://www.ipma-worldcongress.com) is a global umbrella organization for project management, with member associations in over 70 countries.