

# Human Resource Challenges of Leading Sustainable Projects With Diversity and Inclusion During Turbulent Times

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## The Aim and Scope of This Special Issue

Project management is a critical field in driving sustainable development (Müller & Locatelli, 2023; Sabini & Alderman, 2021). With the current global challenges, project managers must prioritize diversity and inclusion in managing their projects. This special issue aims to explore the unique challenges faced by project managers in leading sustainable projects that must consider organizational diversity and inclusion policies and practices, especially in times of uncertainty and skill shortages. The world is currently facing unprecedented challenges, including climate change and social and political upheavals (Ika et al., 2020). As a result, project managers are tasked with leading sustainable projects that address these complex issues while ensuring the success of managing diverse and inclusive members in their teams (Winch et al., 2021).

The success of managing sustainable projects depends on the effective management of human resources at the unit, team, and organizational levels (Hurt & Thomas, 2009; Locatelli et al., 2023; Sabini & Alderman, 2021). Meeting the demands of various stakeholders external to projects at the societal level is also critical (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Guerci et al., 2019). Culturally, diverse project teams need to be managed effectively to contribute to the successful

implementation of projects and maintenance of project team members' work-life balance and psychological well-being (Le et al., 2016; Nauman et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2023). However, the field of project management has traditionally focused on the technical skills and competencies of project teams (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Nauman et al., 2022; Nauman et al., 2022; Nauman et al., 2021; Sundqvist, 2019). Recent research has highlighted the critical importance of soft skills, such as leadership, cross-cultural communication, interpersonal skills, and stakeholder engagement, in ensuring project management success. Therefore, human resource (HR) managers must navigate a diverse workforce while ensuring that all team members are engaged and committed to achieving the project's sustainable goals (Aust et al., 2020). Moreover, the current business environment is characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, posing further challenges to project managers (Huemann, 2022; Hurt & Thomas, 2009). Thus, leading sustainable projects with a focus on diversity and inclusion can be challenging, particularly in the face of external disruptions such as climate change, economic downturns, political instability, and social unrest (Locatelli et al., 2023). This special issue seeks to explore these challenges and identify strategies for overcoming them.

## Potential Topics of Interest

The submissions for this special issue may focus on any concepts that contribute to our understanding of the HR challenges of leading sustainable projects with diversity and inclusion during turbulent times. We welcome submissions with a broad range of research methodologies and encourage interdisciplinary contributions with new theories, models, and empirical analyses of project management. Submissions can be qualitative case-based research, conceptual papers, quantitative studies, and papers using multimethod or mixed-methods approaches. Potential topics for this special issue include, but are not limited to:

- Human resource management (HRM) issues relevant to managing and leading projects;
- Leadership strategies for managing diverse and inclusive teams for sustainable projects;

- People management challenges for small and large projects in different industries;
- Diversity and inclusion strategies in enabling projects to be sustainable;
- Leading large and sustainable projects in turbulent times;
- Sustaining global projects and HR challenges;
- Green or sustainable HRM and diverse project teams;
- Leading sustainable projects with green HRM and corporate social responsibility;
- Managing sustainable projects with low-skilled or migrant workers;
- The impact of organizational culture on managing sustainable projects;
- The roles of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in managing sustainable projects;
- Managing conflict, resolving disputes, and promoting teamwork and collaboration in diverse project teams;
- The impact of national cultural differences on managing global project team dynamics;
- Leadership issues for promoting diversity and inclusion in sustainable projects;
- Communication and stakeholder engagement for building culturally diverse and inclusive project teams;
- The meaning of diversity and inclusion for managing projects under crisis; and
- Best practices for recruiting, hiring, and managing culturally diverse project teams.

## The Submission Process and Time Line for the Special Issue

This call for papers offers authors the opportunity to attend the paper development workshop (PDW) during the European Academy of Management (EURAM) 2024 Conference at the University of Bath, School of Management, United Kingdom (24–28 June 2024). Authors wishing to take this PDW opportunity should submit their manuscript to the Project track (part of the Special Interest Group, Project Organizing) with the theme “Human Resource Challenges of Leading Sustainable Projects with Diversity and Inclusion During Turbulent Times” by 11 January 2024 directly through the EURAM submission system. The guest editors of this special issue are either leading this track and/or will be present during the conference to provide initial feedback on the papers. A submission to EURAM is not a prerequisite for submission to this special issue but is highly encouraged. All submissions should be uploaded to the *Project Management Journal*<sup>®</sup> website (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pmj>) by 1 August 2024, following the same author guidelines as those for regular issues.

The manuscript should cover these four research components to be considered:

1. **Relevance of the problem** (description of the real-world phenomena and need for research);
2. **Theoretical underpinning of the research;**
3. **Methodology** (clear steps of the research design and descriptions of the data); and
4. **Contributions to the discipline** of project management studies and temporary organizing or to the broader field of business and management research. Additionally, authors must highlight the interdisciplinary links and contributions from other fields to the scholarly field of project management studies.

Authors should carefully review and follow the *PMJ* author guidelines (<https://journals.sagepub.com/authorinstructions/PMX>) and indicate the publication category Special Issue: “Human Resource Challenges of Leading Sustainable Projects with Diversity and Inclusion During Turbulent Times.” Submitted papers will be subject to the routine *PMJ* anonymized review process with multiple reviewers. We expect authors and reviewers to work in a timely manner to comply with the anticipated time lines of submission and publication outlined as follows. If you have any additional questions, please consult any of the guest editors.

The anticipated time lines for this special issue are:

- EURAM 2023 conference deadline—(near finished manuscript): 11 January 2024
- First round of feedback from EURAM 2024 conference: March 2024 (if you plan to attend the PDW scheduled on 24–28 June 2024; and you will be receiving more feedback during the PDW)
- Submission of full paper: 1 August 2024
- Formal review and revision cycle: September 2024 to March 2025
- Approximate online acceptance: April 2025
- Approximate publication in print: 2025

We invite scholars, practitioners, and researchers to submit their original research, case studies, and conceptual papers to this special issue. We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary approaches that bring together perspectives from project management, HR management, organizational behavior, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability. For further information or questions, please contact one of the guest editors of this special issue.

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