Augmented project management? Why ‘less is more’ when facing complexity in projects

Stefano Setti, CEO, BLUPEAK Consulting
Start with WHY

Why are we here today?

• To reflect upon the **VUCA world** through the lens of complexity
• To better understand what **challenges** this implies for a PM
• To ask ourselves why do we feel so “**augmented**”
• To comprehend how **agility** has become **multiple**
• To discover how to find our own “**less is more**” way
Stefano, nice to meet you …
Welcome

Pieter Bruegel
Exploring *complex-land*

A long personal *knowledge journey*:

- PMI-NIC research **2008** “Emerging PM”
- EMEA **2011**: “constraints”
- EMEA **2012**: “com-prehension” *(with Michela Ruffa)*
- EMEA **2016**: “PM & VUCA”
- PMI-NIC **2016**:
  - “leadership on thin air”
  - “extreme PM”
- EMEA **2017**: Adaptive Leadership
  *(Lessons from the Antarctic, with Chiara Montanari)*
- … and it’s still a long way!
PM Re-volution

- A comprehensive, philosophical, humanistic approach,
- [organizationally] agile,
- respectful of complexity,
- “emerging”

- Team building,
- Conflict resolution,
- Communication,
- Soft Skills
- Risks

- Engineering approach,
- Resource allocation,
- Scheduling,
- Optimization & control

WE ARE HERE

Team building,
Conflict resolution,
Communication,
Soft Skills
Risks

60s
80s
00s
10s
This journey

**Part I**
Understanding the Context

**Part II**
Augmented PM

**Part III**
Multiple Agility

**Part IV**
Tips to Run
Part I

Understanding the Context
VUCA World?

“The greatest danger in turbulent times is not the turbulence, it is to act with yesterday’s logic”    Peter Drucker
Volatile ahead

“The nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts” (1)

- How volatility impacts Leadership in Projects?

  - Stakeholders line-up fluidity
  - Continuous requirements re-negotiation
  - Facing Inactivity, Passiveness
  - Difficult to define rules, procedures
  - Dealing with emotionality, boiling point

Volatility ahead

M. C. Escher
Volatility

“Volatility” – Videoclip (The Simpsons)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkJehlr1tEw
Uncertainty ahead

“The lack of predictability, the prospects for surprise and the sense of awareness and understanding of issues and events” (1)

• How uncertainty impacts Leadership in Projects?

Uncertainty

“Uncertainty” – Videoclip (Risk & Crystal Ball)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrCOIRGpeeM
Complexity ahead

“The multiplex of forces, the confounding of issues and the chaos and confusion that surround an organization”

- How **complexity** impacts Leadership in Projects?
  - Relationships over components
  - Go Beyond the WBS
  - Leverage emerging behaviours
  - Collective leadership
  - Robustness through Ologrammatic dissemination

De Toni, Comello, Prede o Ragni? Uomini e organizzazioni nella ragnatela della complessità, 2005

Complexity

“Complexity” – Videoclip (The Monarchs Migration)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LawHWslqa5s
Ambiguity ahead

“The haziness of reality, the potential for mis-reads, and the mixed meanings of conditions; cause-and-effect confusion”

• How ambiguity impacts Leadership in Projects?
  • the challenge of stakeholders languages (Babel’s effect)
  • Continuous semantic tuning required
  • The PM as the guardian of words and sense
  • Help collective interpretation
  • Glossary becomes a Manifesto through the project
  • The importance to read weak signals

Ambiguity ahead

*Pieter Bruegel – Babel’s tower (1563)*
Ambiguity

“Ambiguity” – Videoclip (The Naked Gun)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTh9qpzhunE&feature=youtu.be
Looking beyond the shape of things

Cassandra

Laocoonte
The end of predictability

\[(\Delta p)(\Delta x) \geq \frac{\hbar}{4\pi}\]

- N. Bohr
- E. Fermi
- A. Einstein
- E. Schroedinger
- M. Planck
- J. Rydberg
- De Broglie
- P. A. M. Dirac
- J. Von Neumann
- A. Sommerfeld
- P. Debye
- H. Weyl
- E. Rutherford
- W. Pauli
- ...

"YOU ARE PROBABLY HERE?"
Edgar Morin

His work has refined the idea of comprehension, from the ethics & complexity perspective

He wrote more than 50 books, among them:
✓ 1982, Science avec conscience
✓ 1994, La Complexité humaine
✓ 1999, Relier les connaissances

French philosopher (1921, -), considered as one of the fathers of the science of complexity

In his long and wide career he struggled for a new universal humanism for the next millennium

Edgar Morin, one of the greatest contemporary thinkers
Cloud of complexity


#PMIEMEA18
“Connaître, c’est être capable de **distinguer**, puis de **relier** ce qui a été distingué.

“Le vrai problème (de réforme de pensée) c’est que nous avons trop bien appris à **séparer**. Il vaut mieux apprendre à **relier**” (1)

“La stratégie de **reliance** pour l’**intelligence** de la **complexité**” (2)

(1) https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pensée_complexe

(2) Revue Internationale de Systémique, vol.9 n°2, PP 105-122, auteur : **Edgar Morin**
The limit of planning

W. Blake – Sir Newton (1795)
Just follow the plan?

“Just follow the plan” – Videoclip (Bank Robbery)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNlj6IlyvvM
Part II

Part I
Understanding the Context

Part II
Augmented PM
What about our body of knowledge?
PMBOK evolution
the Talent Triangle
The …”Agile effect”
“The Complete PM” paradigm

From “The Complete Project Manager” – Alfonso Bucero, Randall Englund
Howard Gardner’s “Five Minds for the Future”

Disciplined
mastery of key subjects

Synthesizing
arraying information to make sense to self and others

Respectful
seeking to understand differences

Creating
beyond existing knowledge and syntheses to pose new questions

Ethical
striving toward good work and good citizenship

2008
Mutiple Agility

Today we witness a wide use of the words *agile /agility*, with a lot of different meanings.
Sometimes producing confusion.

According to **Multiple Intelligence Theory** of Howard Gardner we should accept that there are different types of agilities.

The 4 dimension of agility
Multiple Agility – Step 1
The “over” attitude

**AGILE Manifesto for Agile Software Dev.**

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan
Agile PM ...

... today is quite understood and mostly well applied.
The “retrospective” attitude
Multiple Agility – Step 2
Organizational agility: why?

“Most companies die not because they do the wrong things, but because they keep doing what used to be the right things … for too long”.

(anonymous)
Organizational Agility: definition

The **capability** of a company to **rapidly change** or **adapt** in response to **changes** in the market.

A **high degree of organizational agility** can help a company to **react successfully** to the **emergence of new competitors**, the development of new **industry-changing technologies**, or **sudden shifts in overall market conditions**.

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/organizational-agility.html
Organizational Agility: the drivers

**Emotional Drivers:**
- Sources of energy and empathy
- Pride of building a good brand
- Leading by example
- Affiliation and belonging

**Cognitive Drivers:**
- Developing a new, open and honest dialogue
- Promoting broader perspectives
- Engaging in higher quality confrontation

**Organizational Drivers:**
- Re-integrating the organization,
- Creating interdependent processes,
- Providing Common rewards
- Develop Value Creating Capabilities

**Relational Drivers:**
- Re-uniting the top team
- Fostering an open and honest dialogue around
- Key collective decisions

Elaboration from Arafa, Doz and Kosonen
Organizational agility

From: Christopher G. Worley
The Agility Factor: Routines of Sustainable Performance
15 September 2015
Organizational agility
Multiple Agility – Step 3
Personal agility - definition

Demonstrates **positive attitude, resilience and openness** to **changes** in scientific, technological, commercial or business environment, processes, structures, relationships.

*It implies adapting one’s approach as the requirements of a situation change, being comfortable in ambiguous situations and working effectively within a variety of situations and with various individuals or groups of diverse backgrounds and experiences.*
## Personal agility – Scaling up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes when required</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is nimble; shift gears comfortably and quickly</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thrives on constant change; adapts well to multiple changes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Models effective change behaviours</strong></td>
<td><strong>Enables an environment that fosters personal agility</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapts to new approaches when explained why and how.</td>
<td>• Alters normal procedures to fit a specific situation to get the work done and/or to meet organizational goals.</td>
<td>• Enjoys ambiguity; comfortably handles risk and uncertainty; is responsive in ambiguous situations.</td>
<td>• Is a role model for being flexible; models and helps others adapt to changes to procedures, processes, etc.</td>
<td>• Encourages agility on the part of others by highlighting the benefits of innovation and change for the overall success of the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapts to changes in priorities, assigned responsibilities and projects.</td>
<td>• Responds quickly to new opportunities and learns new behaviours.</td>
<td>• Works with a diversity of situations, people and groups and adapts to a change in direction, objectives and strategy.</td>
<td>• Coaches others and provides feedback on their change journey.</td>
<td>• Makes organizational changes to meet the evolving needs of NRC’s stakeholders and the shifts in external markets, financial industry, government policies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates a willingness to change ideas or perceptions based on new information or contrary evidence.</td>
<td>• Willingly considers new ideas, procedures or processes to address a situation.</td>
<td>• Maintains positive demeanour under trying conditions.</td>
<td>• Depicts strong resilience and a mindset of continuous improvement.</td>
<td>• Provides an environment that encourages experimentation and that rewards and recognizes effort; accepts failure with an understanding that it often precedes success.</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Maintains a positive outlook as pressure increases.</td>
<td>• Works well with different people; adapts to other’s styles and/or work habits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Stimulates idea flow from all staff with the aim of developing new, commercially viable products and services.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Depicts a positive outlook towards doing things differently.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Helps others generate and identify breakthrough ideas, fresh perspectives and new opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal agility … level 5

"Strong people don't put others down. They lift them up"

Darth Vader, Philanthropist
Multiple Agility – Step 4

- Personal Agility
- Organizational Agility
- Agile PM
- Learning Agility

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"Once you stop learning, you start dying"

~ Albert Einstein ~
Learning Agility

Learning agility is defined as the ability and willingness to learn from all kinds of experience and use those lessons effectively in new and different situations.

Do not confuse with intelligence: acquiring technical skills or knowledge is the domain of intelligence and this is not the same as facing and mastering real-world issues and challenges.
PM skill for life
Part IV

**Part I**
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Tips to Run
In practice?
“Less is more” practice

“Before going out, look at yourself in the mirror and remove something.”

Coco Chanel
How do we feel?

How to run?
Before starting ...
... what is not admitted:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSPCtfiKVqs&feature=youtu.be
start min 7:32
Tip#1
Stop being a hero

- Start true delegation
- Engage stakeholders
- Engage SMEs
- You were not appointed to save the world
- No project is for a one-man-band
- Don’t think to be able to work it out alone
“Stop being a hero” – Videoclip (*one man grass band*)
Tip#2

Be adaptive

- Be ready to change the plan
- Embrace change culture
- Minimize documentation
- Minimize contracting
- [Ethically!] re-adapt the rules
- Continuously re-norm the team
- “Wear” the situation
Tip#2

“Be Adaptive” – Videoclip (The ridiculous 6 & Baseball)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whVYz1Z3n6Y
Tip#3
Avoid stereotypes

- Remove stereotype (or be aware of them)
- Avoid suspect, build trust
- Don’t be susceptible, reduce competition at the minimum
- Don’t think to be better than the others
- Don’t overestimate the power of rationality
- Don’t leverage too much on experience, this will reduce your ability to be surprised and learn
Tip#3

“wear the situation” – Videoclip (Dart Vader)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYOi8SPneS8&list=RDfYOi8SPneS8&t=2
Tip #4
Accept suboptimal

- Clarify the expectations
- Investigate stakeholder tolerance
- Identify and share thresholds
- Don’t give what it is not demanded
- Combine the right amount of definition and improvisation
- Avoid gold plating
Tip#4

“Be Adaptive” – Videoclip (Pink Panther - Hamburger )

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6oeAdemFZw
Tip#5
Let them go

• Trust your team
• Trust emergent skills
• Practice colective leadership
• Apply the right amount of redundancy (*Ologrammatic Principle*)
• Develop a team manifesto to establish a strong identity
  “we the people …”
• Encourage self learning
Tip#5

“Let them ” – Videoclip (Bobby McFerrin & Pentatonics)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ne6tB2KiZuk
Notes & Neurons: In Search of the Common Chorus
Acknowledgements

- Dalia Vodice
- Michela Ruffa
- Giusi Meloni
- Donatella Calderini
- Tiziano Villa
- Michele Maritato
- Dario Morandotti
- Walter Ginevri
- Paola Mosca
- Alfonso Bucero
- Thiago Regal
- Mike Frenette
- Serena Borghi
- Maria Cristina Barbero
- Saverio Losito
- Cinzia Pellegrini
- Armando Beffani
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Questions?

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