

Hanne N. H. Briedis  
Anna Solberg

## A Call for Change

Aiming towards more relevant and sustainable  
impact from aid projects

Master's thesis in Industrial Economics and Technology Management  
with specialization in Project Management

Supervisor: Ola Edvin Vie

July 2020



Hanne N. H. Briedis  
Anna Solberg

## **A Call for Change**

Aiming towards more relevant and sustainable  
impact from aid projects

Master's thesis in Industrial Economics and Technology Management  
with specialization in Project Management  
Supervisor: Ola Edvin Vie  
July 2020

Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Economics and Management  
Dept. of Industrial Economics and Technology Management



---

# Preface

This thesis concludes our Master of Science in Industrial Economics and Technology Management, with specialization in project management, at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The bulk of the work was conducted during the spring semester of 2020.

The topic of this study stems from our shared passion and interest in using projects as a means to make positive and lasting impacts in the society. We are grateful that we, at our request, were given approval to define our own scope for our final year projects. Some of the preliminary work conducted during the fall semester of 2019, which was already presented in the specialization project thesis, is also included in this master's thesis.

This master's thesis is dedicated to raising awareness on what is effective and what is obstructive towards the goal of aid projects having a positive, long-term impact on the country and society receiving the help.

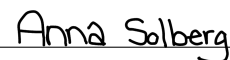
Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Trondheim, July 2020



---

Hanne Nicole Haukland Briedis



---

Anna Solberg

---

# Acknowledgements

We would first and foremost like to thank our supervisor, associate professor Ola Edvin Vie, for his help in steering this thesis in the right direction. He challenged us when we needed to be challenged and encouraged us when things looked less bright. We appreciate him for always taking time to meet with us, and for being patient when we have been confused.

Our thanks also extends, of course, to the ten informants who set aside their valuable time to participate in our private, personal interviews. Their insights and thoughts were essential as the empirical data for our thesis, and all our analysis and conclusions could not have been made without their input. We are very grateful.

We are also extremely grateful to Nowell A. Briedis for dedicating his time to proofread and help turn our, at some points, terrible wording into something more understandable. Additionally, we thank Håkon Andreas Hyttedalen, and some of our other closest friends and family for being extraordinarily supportive and always curious to converse about the topic and provide valuable input.

Last but not least, we thank each other. As project partners we have supported and inspired one another. This process has consisted of excellent brainstorming sessions, creative thinking, and most importantly many great laughs. Writing, reflecting, and conducting this work together has, without doubt, lead to a far better final result than either of us could have achieved alone.

It has been a challenging but thoroughly delightful process.

H.N.H.B & A.S.

---

# Abstract

Working on "projects" is an increasing trend in modern times, and has become an integral part of society. Concurrently, task-specific, temporary endeavors have, to a large extent, become the conventional way of delivering development aid. On the other hand, successful development aid requires long-term thinking. Recognizing this contradiction, how can sustainability be ensured in aid projects?

The problem statement addressed in this thesis is worded as follows:

*How can development aid projects help people in a relevant and sustainable way?*

The study is based on a collection of semi-structured interviews and adopts a qualitative inductive approach. The findings reveal important observations related to the "projectification" of the aid sector. We question if this projectification has led to a misplaced focus, with a tendency to put too much emphasis on planning, reporting and evaluating, instead of simply generating the most relevant and lasting positive impact. People need to focus more on achieving results that are vital to the target group, rather than on churning out large quantities of standardized, overly planned and inflexible, "by the book", projects.

We suggest that sustainability should be understood as consisting of two complementary components; the Triple Bottom Line and Lasting Impact. Moreover, more flexibility is needed in aid projects, which could be obtained through implementing Flexibility With a Direction or Planned Flexibility. Additionally, we introduce a model, which we call the Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model), as a tool to help alter the focus of aid projects towards the purpose of obtaining a positive lasting impact. The APIM-model emphasizes end-user considerations, and suggests that a long-lasting impact is most likely to be achieved by finding a relevant solution to the end-user's existing problem, and a solution that can and will be used and maintained.

**Keywords** – Aid, APIM-model, Flexibility, Lasting Impact, Master's Thesis, NTNU, Ownership, Planning, Projectification, Project Management, Relevant Solution, Reporting, Sustainability, Triple Bottom Line

---

# Sammendrag

Å gjennomføre oppgaver som prosjekter er en økende trend og har blitt en integrert del av samfunnet. Målrettede og midlertidige tiltak, som opphører når den planlagte oppgaven er utført, har i stor grad blitt standarden innen bistandssektoren. Samfunnsendring og utvikling krever derimot langsiktig tenkning. Hvordan kan bærekraft sikres i bistandsprosjekter, til tross for denne motsetningen?

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker følgende problemstilling:

*Hvordan kan bistandsprosjekter hjelpe mennesker på en relevant og bærekraftig måte?*

Studien baserer seg på en rekke semistrukturerte intervjuer og en kvalitativ, induktiv metode. Funnene avdekker viktige observasjoner relatert til "prosjektifiseringen" av bistandssektoren. Vi stiller spørsmålsteget ved om denne prosjektifiseringen har ført til et villedende fokus, med en tendens til å legge for stor vekt på planlegging, rapportering og evaluering, istedenfor å skape mest mulig relevant og varig påvirkning. Det må fokuseres mer på å oppnå resultater som er essensielle for målgruppa, og ikke på å gjennomføre store mengder standardiserte, detaljplanlagte, og lite fleksible prosjekter "etter boka".

Vi foreslår at bærekraft bør forstås som et begrep bestående av to komplementære komponenter: Trippel bunnlinje og varig påvirkning. Videre er det behov for mer fleksibilitet i bistandsprosjekter, som kan oppnås ved å implementere "fleksibilitet med retning" eller "planlagt fleksibilitet". I tillegg introduserer vi en model (APIM-modellen), som er ment å være et verktøy som kan bidra til å justere fokuset for bistandsprosjekter mot varig påvirkning. APIM-modellen legger vekt på involvering av sluttbrukerne og foreslår at det er mer sannsynlig å oppnå langvarig positiv effekt og påvirkning på samfunnet dersom løsningen er relevant, samt både kan og vil brukes og vedlikeholdes.

**Nøkkelord** – APIM-modell, Bistand, Bærekraftig, Eierskap, Fleksibilitet, Masteroppgave, NTNU, Planlegging, Prosjektifisering, Prosjektledelse, Rapportering, Relevant løsning, Trippel bunnlinje, Varig påvirkning



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Problem Statement . . . . .	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Theoretical Background</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Projectification . . . . .	5
2.1.1	What <i>is</i> a "Project"?. . . . .	5
2.1.2	A Trend Towards Projectification . . . . .	6
2.2	Sustainable Projects . . . . .	7
2.2.1	Definition of Sustainability Within Project Management . . . . .	8
2.2.2	Sustainable Results in Projects . . . . .	9
2.2.3	Output vs Outcome . . . . .	10
2.3	A Project's Time Frame and Phases . . . . .	10
2.3.1	Planning Projects . . . . .	11
2.3.2	Needs Assessment . . . . .	13
2.3.3	Interventions . . . . .	14
2.4	Reports and Evaluations . . . . .	15
2.4.1	Evaluating the Effect of Aid . . . . .	15
2.4.2	Learning From Success and Failure in Projects . . . . .	18
2.5	The Recipient as a Stakeholder . . . . .	20
2.5.1	Importance of the Recipient . . . . .	21
2.5.2	Prioritizing Recipient Ownership . . . . .	21
2.6	The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model) . . . . .	23
2.6.1	Four Categories of Projects . . . . .	24
2.6.2	A Practical Example Placing a Project in the APIM-model . . . . .	25
2.7	Theoretical Framework . . . . .	26
2.7.1	Propositions to Sub-Question 1 . . . . .	27
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1	Finding a Project . . . . .	29
3.1.1	Choosing an Inductive Approach . . . . .	31
3.1.2	The Reappearance of the APIM-model . . . . .	32
3.2	The Choice of One Type of Research Over Another . . . . .	33
3.2.1	Research Strategy . . . . .	34
3.2.2	Research Design . . . . .	35
3.2.3	Research Method . . . . .	36
3.3	Collecting Research Data Through Interviews . . . . .	38
3.3.1	Sampling Strategy . . . . .	38
3.3.2	Sample of Informants . . . . .	38
3.3.3	Preparing for the Interviews: Interview Guide and Piloting . . . . .	39
3.3.4	Conducting the Interviews . . . . .	41
3.3.5	Transcriptions . . . . .	42
3.3.6	Coding . . . . .	42
3.4	Analyzing the Research Data . . . . .	44
3.5	Quality of the Research . . . . .	46
3.6	Limitations of the Study . . . . .	47
3.7	Ethical Considerations; Preserving Privacy and Securing Anonymity . . . . .	49

---

3.8	Personal Reflections . . . . .	50
3.8.1	Change the Approach, or Change the Scope? . . . . .	50
3.8.2	Two Optimistic Students and a Master's Thesis . . . . .	52
3.8.3	The COVID-19 crisis . . . . .	52
<b>4</b>	<b>Empirical Data</b>	<b>54</b>
4.1	Importance of Local Ownership and Involvement . . . . .	54
4.1.1	Local Ownership of the Project . . . . .	54
4.1.2	Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community . . . . .	56
4.1.3	Aid Projects as "Business Development" . . . . .	59
4.1.4	The Informants' Definition of Sustainability . . . . .	60
4.2	Aid Projects as "Standard" Projects . . . . .	61
4.2.1	Need for Planned Flexibility . . . . .	61
4.2.2	Standard Project Management in a Different Context . . . . .	63
4.2.3	A General Aid Project Structure . . . . .	64
4.2.4	Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation . . . . .	66
4.3	Aid Projects in a Broader Context . . . . .	67
4.3.1	The Diminishing Importance of Aid . . . . .	68
4.3.2	Framework Conditions . . . . .	69
4.3.3	Aid as a Political Instrument . . . . .	70
4.3.4	Higher Level System Change Versus Small-Scale Initiatives . . . . .	71
4.3.5	The Forgotten Purpose of Aid . . . . .	72
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>74</b>
5.1	Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset . . . . .	74
5.1.1	A "Sustainable" Definition of Sustainability . . . . .	74
5.1.2	Compulsory Planning - One Size Does Not Fit All . . . . .	76
5.1.3	A Reporting Nightmare . . . . .	81
5.1.4	Questioning the Use of Projects in the Aid Sector . . . . .	85
5.2	Focusing on the Locals . . . . .	87
5.2.1	This is the End-User's Project, Not Yours . . . . .	88
5.2.2	Benevolent Ideas With the Wrong Solution . . . . .	91
5.2.3	An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model . . . . .	93
5.2.4	Explaining the APIM-model With Three Examples . . . . .	96
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>100</b>
6.1	Answering the Problem Statement . . . . .	100
6.2	Practical Implications: Considering the Broader Context . . . . .	102
6.2.1	Is it time to phase out certain types of projects? . . . . .	103
6.2.2	Positive Impact - For Whom? . . . . .	104
6.3	Further Research . . . . .	105
6.4	Concluding Remarks . . . . .	107
	<b>References</b>	<b>108</b>
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>115</b>
A1	Interview guide [English] . . . . .	116
A2	Interview guide [Norwegian] . . . . .	119
A3	Study information sheet and informed consent form . . . . .	122

## List of Figures

2.1	A project is divided into several phases. Based on Andersen (2018), Samset (2003) and Ika et al. (2010). . . . .	11
2.2	The amount of achievable information increases with time, while the ability to change (flexibility) decreases. Based on Samset & Volden (2016) and Samset (2003). . . . .	12
2.3	Interim evaluations and final evaluations are commonly used, whereas ex ante evaluations and ex post evaluations are less practiced. Based on Samset & Christensen (2017). . . . .	19
2.4	The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model). Developed by the authors of this thesis. . . . .	24
3.1	An outline of our research process . . . . .	32
3.2	The rejected model reappeared in the empirical data . . . . .	33
3.3	Approaches, strategies, designs and methods for a research project. Our chosen path is highlighted. Illustration inspired by Ringdal (2007). . . . .	33
3.4	The data structure of this thesis. This structure is based on Gioia et al. (2012). . . . .	45
4.1	A general outline of an aid project, as explained by the informants of this research project. . . . .	65
5.1	True sustainability is obtained by ensuring both the TBL and a lasting impact. . . . .	76
5.2	The Aid Project Impact Mapping model with examples . . . . .	96

## List of Tables

2.1	The six evaluation criteria for development evaluation. The explanations are based on descriptions given by OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2019). . . . .	17
3.1	Sketch of the matrix created to get an overview of the literature . . . . .	30
3.2	The sample of informants . . . . .	40
3.3	A code passes the test if the answer to both question 1 and question 2 is alternative b). The code test is based on (Tjora, 2017). . . . .	43
5.1	Different approaches to making aid project plans and having flexibility. The alternate approaches to the current practice are based on the empirical findings and are given names based on the informants' wording. . . . .	79

# 1 Introduction

Every year, a large amount of money is put into foreign aid projects. Statistics from Norad's database reveal that Norway, in 2018, granted a total of NOK 34,6 billion in aid through Norad and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, divided between 4695 projects (Norad, 2019a). In addition to these, came projects funded through other channels or outside of the National Budget. With these large amounts of money being put into aid projects every year, it is vital that they are invested wisely.

The term "foreign aid", in its broadest sense, refers to help or support given to a country or group in need. Over the last few decades, man-made or natural disasters have increasingly impacted communities (Leiras et al., 2014). The need for aid has, in other words, not diminished. Aid is often classified as either humanitarian or development aid (Riddell, 2014). Humanitarian aid deals with urgent crises, such as famine, war and nature disasters (Riddell, 2014; Zürcher, 2017), whereas development aid is focused around ongoing structural issues that might be hindering development of a country or society (Riddell, 2014). In many cases, these two are related, but there are also fundamental differences. Humanitarian aid is a short-term, emergency response, while development aid usually takes place in longer term situations (Paweska, 2018; Riddell, 2014). In the context of this thesis we will consider development aid. While foreign aid could be classified into a vast number of categories, we have applied a broad definition of the term, excluding only humanitarian aid. This allowed us to investigate the general trends within the aid sector. Humanitarian aid is excluded mainly due to its short-term goals, but also because humanitarian aid historically only accounts for 5-10 % of the total share of aid (Riddell, 2014) and there is little renunciation of humanitarian aid (Riddell, 2014). Whether aid works or not is a prominent debate, but the majority on both sides appear to support humanitarian aid (Riddell, 2014).

Project management has had remarkable success in conventional contexts and settings (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012) and there are endless publications concerning project management in sectors such as engineering, IT, construction, logistics, and healthcare (Khang & Moe, 2008; Thermistocleous & Wearne, 2000). Yet, despite the aid and international development sector undoubtedly also being project-oriented (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003;

Ika et al., 2010), there is limited research on aid from a project management perspective (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003).

In parallel with a trend towards "projectification" of the society, the concept of "sustainability" has gained increased attention (Sabini et al., 2019). But while projects per se are a temporary endeavor (Project Management Institute, 2000), sustainability is concerned about the future and longer term conditions and results (Elkington, 2018; OECD, 2002). This seeming contradiction forms the base of the study presented in this thesis, as we consider aid projects where the main goal of the project is to have a lasting positive impact for somebody outside of the project team.

Due to our specialization being project management, we have adopted a project management perspective on aid projects. In our literature search we have noticed that, despite aid being conducted as projects, publications dealing with the combination of these two disciplines seem to be limited (Ika et al., 2010; Steinfort & Walker, 2007). This study is therefore based on an inductive approach. Our goal is to investigate how the quality of aid projects can be improved, by aiming towards more relevant and sustainable project results within project management.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Studies of the immediate impact of aid projects have shown that most aid projects "work" (Riddell, 2014). However, these studies do not answer the more substantial and crucial question - does aid make a positive difference to people's lives in the long term? Instead of asking whether the inputs result in the expected *outputs*, we are concerned about the project *outcomes*. According to Riddell (2014), both aid detractors and donors seem to agree that aid does not work as well as it could. Between the years 1990-2014, a study on poverty alleviation was done by Azam et al. (2016), based on data from 39 developing countries. One of the conclusions was that aid alone did not contribute to poverty reduction in these countries during that time period. Trying to improve the impact of aid is thus an issue of great concern.

With regard to this, we would like to base our master's thesis on the following problem statement:

Problem Statement:

*How can development aid projects help people in a relevant and sustainable way?*

Aid projects form a special type of project (Khang & Moe, 2008) and pose several characteristics that differentiate them within the project management environment (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003). According to Khang & Moe (2008), the objective of aid development projects, per definition, is concerned about humanitarian and social objectives such as living standard improvements, poverty alleviation, capacity building and basic human rights protection. The projects are complex, subject to poor market power and often affected by cultural differences and lacking resources (Dufková & Sejkora, 2020; Kwak, 2002). Like other projects, aid projects deliver services or goods (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). But in contrast to many other project management domains, the "hard element" in aid is most commonly only regarded as a means to obtain the final goal - the "soft element" (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003). Even when aid projects seem to be concerned about physical outputs, the ultimate "soft" goals have priority (Khang & Moe, 2008). Aid projects are often primarily concerned with social transformation and human development (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003) and the objectives are thus, in general, considerably less tangible, with less visible and measurable deliverables than those normally found in conventional projects (Khang & Moe, 2008).

According to Ika et al. (2010), there is a dispute over whether universal project management theory can be applied to all types of projects or not. The Project Management Institute tend to imply that their procedures and standards can be universally applied (Steinfort & Walker, 2007), while Khang & Moe (2008), among others, argue that aid projects require new tools and concepts. However, a generally accepted methodology for aid development projects does not exist (Dufková & Sejkora, 2020).

This study aims to contribute to the general body of project management knowledge, by focusing on aid projects that take place in developing countries. Despite aid being a

project-oriented sector (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003; Dufková & Sejkora, 2020; Ika et al., 2010), little of the project management literature pays adequate attention to aid projects (Khang & Moe, 2008; Pinto & Slevin, 1987). Considering that there is a dispute over whether universal project management theory can be applied to all types of projects or not (Ika et al., 2010) and aid projects being noteworthy different from other projects (Khang & Moe, 2008), we find it imperative to consider aid projects with a broad, overarching project management perspective. Instead of focusing on narrow methods or issues, we will in this study investigate aid projects from an all-encompassing project management perspective and look into what is the correct mindset to begin with.

By conferring with a cross-section of people who are experienced with aid projects we aim to get a thorough overview of the situation within the aid sector and identify some of the areas in need for more attention. We wish to both highlight some of the pitfalls of the current practice and present important focus areas to achieve projects that are more likely to help people in a relevant and sustainable way.

Consequently, we will look closer into the two following sub-questions:

SQ1: *What possible mistakes can prevent the attainment of relevant and sustainable aid project results?*

SQ2: *What should be done to increase the chances of an aid project having a lasting positive impact?*

If not explicitly stated, "aid projects" and "development aid projects" will be used interchangeably. We will, on some occasions, distinguish between aid projects as "business development" from more traditional development aid. Thus, the term "traditional aid" is applied to describe aid not being conducted as business development.

This thesis is organized in six chapters, the remaining being as follows: Chapter 2 **Theoretical Background** gives an overview of relevant theory and Chapter 3 **Methodology** presents the methodology applied. The empirical findings are provided in Chapter 4 **Empirical Data** and are discussed in light of the theory in Chapter 5 **Discussion**. Finally, our conclusions, practical implications, and suggestions for further research are presented in Chapter 6 **Conclusion**.

## 2 Theoretical Background

Before beginning our investigation of the [Problem Statement](#), as defined in [Chapter 1 Introduction](#), we will first review the theoretical background of the relevant topics. We start off by investigating what a "standard" project is, and what is distinguishable about a "sustainable project". After this, typical setups and methods used in project management to ensure optimal results are presented. The recipient is then discussed as an important stakeholder, before presenting our suggested model (The Aid Project Impact Mapping model) to guide the selection and implementation of aid projects. The theoretical chapter concludes with a presentation of the theoretical framework and three propositions related to [Sub-Question 1](#).

### 2.1 Projectification

Numerous authors have, according to [Maylor et al. \(2006\)](#) and [Schooper et al. \(2018\)](#), commented on the increased interest in projects outside of the traditional sectors of construction and engineering. [Maylor et al. \(2006\)](#) argue that this interest in projects also extends beyond the boundaries of work-life, and is now becoming an integral part of society. This growing emphasis on projects has been termed "projectification" ([Midler, 1995](#)) and constitutes one of the most important organizational developments in recent years ([Winter et al., 2006](#)). The aid and development sector is, as noted in [Chapter 1 Introduction](#), undoubtedly a project-oriented industry.

#### 2.1.1 What *is* a "Project"?

There are many guidelines on how to manage projects, including within the aid and development sector ([Steinfort & Walker, 2008](#)). Yet, many authors lack a clear definition of the term ([Munk-Madsen, 2005](#)). We therefore need to start off by defining a project.

Authors and practitioners have applied various definitions of the word "project" (e.g. see: [Pinto & Slevin, 1988](#); [Project Management Institute, 2000](#); [Soohong, 2016](#); [Turner, 2006](#)), and, according to [Andersen \(2018\)](#), a generally accepted definition of the term does not exist. A widely quoted interpretation of a project is, however, given by the [Project Management Institute \(2000\)](#):



*"[A project is a] temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result."*

(Project Management Institute, 2000, p.204)

Although the literature also employs many other definitions of a project, and the term seems to be debatable, the same general notions appear in most conceptualizations: Projects are a non-routine, time-limited and task-specific way of working (Andersen, 2018; Maylor et al., 2006). Projects are positioned as transient and irregular work, clearly distinguished from continuous and repeatable operations.

While analyzing different cases in the context of the literature, Maylor et al. (2006) concluded that the existing definitions of a project are not consistent with how the term is used by practitioners. There are especially three project characteristics that do not match how projects are conducted in practice (Maylor et al., 2006):

1. Uniqueness
2. Temporality
3. Level of pre-determinism

While uniqueness is central in the definition of a project, there has been a focus on establishing processes for projects, whereby projects are conducted as executions of well-established routines. Furthermore, the routines tend to stretch over longer periods of time, resulting in situations where projects are not distinguished from ongoing operations. Lastly, while all the definitions of a project indicate that it has clear goals for what it has to achieve, in what time frame, and with what resources, the cases revealed that this was seldom the reality (Maylor et al., 2006).

It is thus relevant to question whether the term "project" is used according to its definition by practitioners within aid projects, and if it is even appropriate to use this term in the context of aid.

### 2.1.2 A Trend Towards Projectification

Schoper et al. (2018) defines "projectification" as *"the share of project work in an organization"* (Schoper et al., 2018, p.71). While this definition allows for a quantitative measure of the degree of projectification, several authors, including Fred (2015) and Maylor

et al. (2006), comment that projectification contains more than an increased number of projects. The phenomenon of projectification extends to organizational changes (Fred, 2015; Maylor et al., 2006), something that was pointed out by Midler already in his initial research on projectification (Aubry & Sylvain, 2012; Midler, 1995).

The rationale for implementing projects are many. Projects are intended to deliver controllability and flexibility while making organizations more innovative and fostering flat organizational structures (Fred, 2015; Maylor et al., 2006; Schoper et al., 2018). However, projects, that were initially expected to reduce bureaucracy, are becoming more and more formalized and controlled, resulting in a new type of bureaucracy (Maylor et al., 2006).

With the increased interest in projects and project management, Pollack & Crawford (2007) note that there seems to be *"surprisingly little critical review of the concept and application of standards in project management"* (Pollack & Crawford, 2007, p. 87). A number of the central concepts of project management have a significant scope for interpretation, making it challenging to set standards. Pollack & Crawford (2007) note the tension between uniqueness and similarity and ask how one thing can be both fundamentally unique and standardized, at the same time.

The distinct competence of a project lies in its claimed ability to deliver ‘one-off’ assignments to specification, on time and within budget, through detailed planning and control (Hodgson, 2004). Hodgson & Cicmil (2006) adhere to a critical school of project management and question the pragmatic approach of focusing on improving projects rather than asking more fundamental questions regarding the intellectual foundations of project management. The discipline of project management was initially developed in the construction and engineering industry (Hodgson, 2004), but has spread as projectification has developed into a widespread phenomenon (Jensen et al., 2016; Schoper et al., 2018). Maylor (2001) argues that the academic subject and many practices have lagged behind the change. However, the tendency is still to treat the basic framework of project management as compelling (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2006).

## 2.2 Sustainable Projects

Sustainability has, over the last decades, become a concept of increasing attention. Countless studies have, according to Martens & Carvalho (2016b), Silvius et al. (2013),

and Sabini et al. (2019), addressed the two topics of sustainability and project management, separately. Less focus has, on the other hand, been directed to the intersection of these topics (Martens & Carvalho, 2016b). A large amount of studies have marked the need for including sustainability as an integrated part of project management (Chofreh et al., 2019). Yet, the concept of sustainability seems to have multiple interpretations within the field of project management, which therefore makes this a challenge (Sabini et al., 2019; Samset, 2010).

### 2.2.1 Definition of Sustainability Within Project Management

The Brundtland Commission was among the first to provide a definition of sustainability (WCED, 1987). Their description was made in the context of sustainable development and reads as follows:

*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

(WCED, 1987)

This definition implies that awareness about the future is a central part of sustainability. The Brundtland Commission's definition later evolved to what we today call the "triple bottom line" (TBL). The concept of the triple bottom line was first introduced by Elkington in the mid-1990s (Elkington, 2018). Since then, it has become a well-known sustainability framework, composed of three pillars (Martens & Carvalho, 2016b): the *economical* (cost of manufacturing or producing (Martens & Carvalho, 2016b)), the *environmental* (optimal use of resources and minimal waste (Toledo et al., 2019)), and the *social* (having respect for, i.e., human rights and international norms, and being transparent, accountable, etc. (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017)) factors. Being sustainable in this sense, entails finding the best way to preserve and optimize all three of these pillars simultaneously.

A second definition of sustainability focuses more on the benefits a project can have, even after its termination (Martens & Carvalho, 2016a; OECD, 2002; Samset, 2010). In the context of evaluation and results based management, the following explanation has been given:

*"Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn."*

(OECD, 2002)

Here, the longer time frame is considered. Sustainability in this sense evaluates whether the effects of a project will continue beyond its official termination, when the project organization has pulled out. This focuses on the impact into the future, seen from a broader perspective considering all the changes in a society generated by a project (Samset, 2003)

This thesis, being focused on achieving lasting impact, will concentrate on, and apply, the term sustainability (OECD, 2002) using the latter definition.

### 2.2.2 Sustainable Results in Projects

Albert & Mickel (2019) conclude, through a qualitative content analysis, that an agreed definition of sustainability stems from the Brundtland report and the TBL framework by Elkington (2018). The triple bottom line has become a well-known sustainability framework, and every year thousands of publications and reports are made based on the model (Elkington, 2018; Silvius et al., 2013).

Additionally, several studies (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017; Chofreh et al., 2019; Martens & Carvalho, 2016a) indicate that there is a positive correlation between project success and conducting a project sustainably (WCED, 1987). Despite this, a fully integrated perspective of the concept of TBL is still rare among practitioners. Several sources (Carvalho & Rabechini, 2017; Martens & Carvalho, 2016b; Singh et al., 2012, among others) state that project management practitioners put an unequal amount of focus on the three parts of the TBL. Sabini et al. (2019) also comment that project management literature on sustainability, with a definition based on the Brundtland Commission's, has grown in numbers, but simultaneously become more fragmented. Adding to this is the realization that a focus on sustainable project management in terms of the TBL on its own might be insufficient if it results in doing the wrong thing, albeit doing it the right way (Sabini et al., 2019). Sabini et al. (2019) makes a clear distinction between sustainability in project management practices (doing things right) and sustainable project outputs (doing the right things).

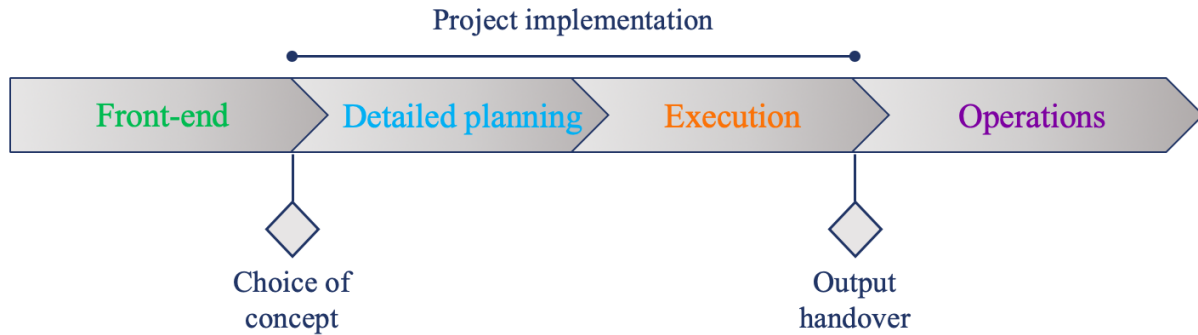
### 2.2.3 Output vs Outcome

The two definitions of sustainability can be linked to the terms "output" and "outcome". Within project management terminology, there is a clear distinction between these two terms. [Hussein \(2018\)](#) describes outputs as the activities or products produced by a project. These outputs can thereby be associated to the TBL aspect of sustainability, ensuring that a project produces activities and products in a manner that does not deteriorate the economic, environmental, or social conditions. The outcome, on the other hand, is related to overall beneficial gains and long-term impact.

The lack of a consistent interpretation of the term "project success" was, according to [Baccarini \(1999\)](#), pointed out by McCoy already in the mid-1980s. In an attempt at clarifying the term, [Baccarini \(1999\)](#) defined two distinct components of project success: project success and project management success. The former is related to the project deliverables, while the latter is concerned with the overall outcome of a project. Correspondingly, [Samset \(2003\)](#) argues that projects must not only perform well operationally, but also be strategic and tactical. [Volden \(2018\)](#) builds on this and links operational, tactical and strategical goals to output, outcome and societal objectives, respectively. In a handbook published on behalf of The World Bank, [Watkins et al. \(2012\)](#) elaborate that achieving successive results, both now and in the longer term, requires a holistic approach to the operational, tactical and strategical perspectives.

## 2.3 A Project's Time Frame and Phases

As explained in Subsection [2.1.1 What is a "Project"?](#), many definitions of the term "project" exist. Similarly, [Bruke \(2013\)](#), [Andersen \(2018\)](#) and [Samset \(2010\)](#) all observe that there are several ways of dividing a project into separate stages. Due to the many existing domain-specific phase models, [Andersen \(2018\)](#) considers that a generalized model is not desired. However, both he and [Bruke \(2013\)](#) conclude that all projects do undergo somewhat equivalent stages. The distinguishing setups and definitions are, therefore, possible to illustrate in a simplified, generalized overview. The same does, according to [Khang & Moe \(2008\)](#), hold for international development projects. A general model aligned with the conventional PMI project lifecycle ([Ika et al., 2010](#)) is shown in [Figure 2.1](#). This model suggests four distinct stages, yet it must be emphasized that this is a



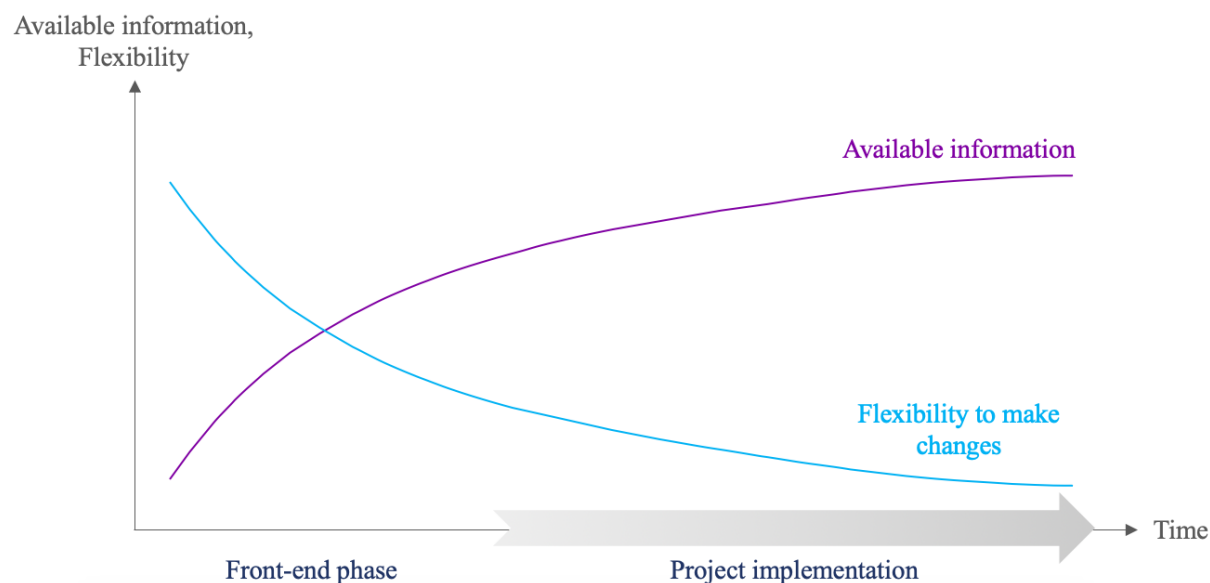
**Figure 2.1:** A project is divided into several phases. Based on Andersen (2018), Samset (2003) and Ika et al. (2010).

normative and theoretical illustration.

The initiating project phase is called the front-end phase. At this stage, a project is simply a concept or a construct of thought (Samset, 2010). Samset (2010) argues the quality of the initiating phase strongly impacts the entire project, and the findings of Khang & Moe (2008) confirm that the need to "start right" also holds within development aid projects. When the final concept has been chosen, the detailed planning can start. This phase, together with the following phase - the execution - are often regarded as the most dominant in projects (Hussein, 2018; Samset, 2010). Samset (2010) merges these two into a single phase, including all the actions happening between the final decision of funding, and the handing over of the deliverables. He calls it the implementation phase. When this phase is completed, the project organization pulls out and the outputs are entrusted to the recipients (Samset, 2010). This is then the beginning of the operations phase, and the official project is over.

### 2.3.1 Planning Projects

As projects progress with time, it is recognized that making changes becomes more difficult (e.g. Samset, 2003). Both Hussein (2018) and Samset (2003, 2010) note that this results in a diminishing possibility to influence the project with time. Simultaneously, Samset & Volden (2016) addresses the fact that the amount of available and achieved information will increase over the length of a project. This situation is illustrated in Figure 2.2. According to Samset (2003), research indicates that if project managers focused more on the choice of concept in the early stages of a project, many problems could be prevented.



**Figure 2.2:** The amount of achievable information increases with time, while the ability to change (flexibility) decreases. Based on Samset & Volden (2016) and Samset (2003).

When aid projects apply for funding from Norad, a detailed application form must be filled out. The process and requirements are thoroughly explained in a call for proposals on Norad's official website (Norad, 2019b), and the portal is open for applications annually. Projects are permitted to apply for one to five years funding, the longer duration being the norm. Regardless of the duration, a thorough application is required, specifying details such as an overarching plan, a total budget and financial plan, and specific measures to achieve the results (Norad, 2019b).

A popular saying is that "failing to plan is to plan to fail" (Ika et al., 2010). This phrase declares that although planning does not guarantee project success, lack of planning will probably guarantee failure. Ever since the discipline of Project Management emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, the quality and importance of project planning have been considered cornerstones for project success (Dvir & Lechler, 2004). This view has been strengthened by numerous empirical studies (e.g. Pinto & Slevin (1987) and Khan et al. (2003)) and is strongly advocated by the Project Management Institutes guidebook (Project Management Institute, 2000). One of the main assumptions behind this position is that planning reduces uncertainty and by that increases the likelihood for success (Dvir et al., 2003).

In the orthodoxy of conventional project management, the planning phase is where project management tools are used at most (Ika et al., 2010). A widely used planning tool within

the aid sector is the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), also known as The Logframe. The LFA was originally developed for the US Agency of International Development (USAID) in 1969 but spread rapidly to the UN and other international aid organizations (Volden, 2018). The framework has, since then, evolved and been adjusted at several occasions, but there have been no changes to its fundamental purpose and structure (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003). The LFA is now a pre-requisite for getting funds from many major donor agencies (P. Crawford & Bryce, 2003). The LFA is an analytical process resulting in the logical framework matrix. In short, it intends to separate the "means" from the "ends" and represents a logical flow from the activities to the goals, given that the assumptions hold. Despite being subject to criticism, the position of the LFA has not been essentially weakened (Hummelbrunner, 2010).

Rigorous planning and control has more or less become synonymous with good project management, and is exerted in all major project management domains (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012). It is generally held that standard project management is to "plan your work" and "work your plan" (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012). Yet, some scholars challenge this thinking (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012) and rise doubts about the importance of formal project planning (Andersen, 1996; Dvir & Lechler, 2004). Dvir & Lechler (2004) argue, in contrast to the general understanding, that since projects are a temporary, unique and ongoing tasks, it is unimaginable that they can be performed without any changes. The historical dictum, "plans are nothing, planning is everything", pointing to the importance of the planning process, could thus be rephrased to "plans are nothing, changing plans is everything" (Dvir & Lechler, 2004; Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012). The findings of Dvir & Lechler (2004) emphasize the process of constantly reorienting the project based on evaluations, rather than following a rigid plan.

### 2.3.2 Needs Assessment

Minasyan & Nunnenkamp (2016) conclude that aid will more likely have a positive growth impact if its priority is to satisfy the recipients' *actual needs*. Picciotto (2013) also makes it clear that there is no such thing as one-size-fits-all within development. He is sure, and The World Bank's "Guide to Assessing Needs" states the same (Watkins et al., 2012), that the context matters and the needs differ. Needs assessments are therefore an important part of every aid project's front-end phase. Watkins et al. (2012) explain



that needs assessments are steps, tools, techniques, and guides a project should use to collect important information, make correct decisions, to achieve relevant and sustainable results. [Watkins et al. \(2012\)](#) emphasize that needs assessments do not necessarily have to happen exclusively in the front-end phase, but that they should be done as a continuous monitoring process.

Studies have, according to [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#), shown that even when there *is* enough information and a good decision base is available, decision makers tend to let their intuition, personal preferences, or political views have a larger influence on the decision than the facts and analysis. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it is assumed that this leaves a great dependency on the experience and capabilities of the decision maker. Although front-end evaluations cannot guarantee that the best alternative is chosen, they are suggested in order to actually use the justified facts and analysis, and link them to the decision making process ([Samset & Christensen, 2017](#)).

### 2.3.3 Interventions

There is a difference between finding out *what* might solve a problem, and knowing *how* to implement that "what". When a solution to a problem and a planned change is identified, a plan for how to realize that change has to be designed. "Interventions" are described by [T. Cummings & Worley \(2015\)](#) as "*a set of sequenced planned actions or events intended to help an organization increase its effectiveness*". They list three major criteria that define an effective intervention within the field of "organizational development":

- It is relevant to the needs of the organization where the change is implemented
- The actions are based on causal knowledge of intended outcomes
- The organization is better able to implement future changes on their own

We perceive the first two criteria as relevant and adequate for the field of aid as well, and therefore briefly explain these more in the following two paragraphs.

The first criterion calls for the intervention to be relevant. This includes that it is based on valid information, that the recipients are involved in making decisions, and that there is internal commitment, ownership and responsibility for the intervention among the beneficiaries ([T. Cummings & Worley, 2015](#)).

The second criterion expects the intervention to be based on causal knowledge about the intended outcome and how it could be achieved. This is a rudimentary stage, as it is often challenging to make strong causal inferences between actions and outcomes (T. Cummings & Worley, 2015).

Related to the idea of interventions is the concept of "theory of change". A theory of change is a blueprint of the needed building blocks to obtain the long-term goal (Vogel, 2012). It represents both how and why the series of actions under given assumptions will succeed. A theory of change is, in other words, the thoughts behind how a particular intervention will bring about the desired change and achieve its goal. There are no set methodologies or a single definition for a theory of change. Instead, the approach allows the implementer flexibility while linking inputs, outputs, outcomes and assumptions. Thus, it can provide a means to make explicit the often implicit hypotheses that bridge input, output, use and outcome (Thornton et al., 2017).

## 2.4 Reports and Evaluations

Aid effectiveness has been a debated topic since the early days of development research (Metzger & Gunther, 2015). Questions, such as whether aid works or not and if the funds are spent as intended, have been asked repeatedly since the 1970s (Reinertsen, 2015). This is often where reports and evaluation come into the picture.

Project evaluation can be defined as *"the systematic investigation of the effectiveness of a project or other intervention"* (Volden, 2018, p.110). Volden (2018) suggests that since a project is initiated to fulfill a certain purpose, one should always ask whether the intended result has been realized or not. The aim is to learn from both the successes and failures, and improve future planning and implementations.

### 2.4.1 Evaluating the Effect of Aid

Evaluations became particularly relevant in the U.S.A. during the implementation of social programs in the 1960s (Volden, 2018). Thereafter it spread to other countries and sectors, in particular to international development aid (Volden, 2018). Since aid involves public money being spent in other parts of the world, Cracknell (1996) sees it as no coincidence that evaluation was established as its own discipline earlier within the development aid

sector than for other sectors.

In an increasingly interconnected world, people's problems have also become intertwined (Picciotto, 2013). No individual or country exists in isolation, and people who normally have nothing to do with each other can all be influenced by the same incidents and challenges. The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, titled it "problems without a passport" (Annan, 2009). Taxpayers in developed countries have concurrently become skeptical about the effectiveness and rationale of public-sector programs (Picciotto, 2013). This especially concerns programs that do not directly benefit the taxpayers themselves, and in particular international aid programs. As a result, Picciotto (2013) explains that there is a demand for assurance that aid does indeed have a positive effect and delivers results. The UNDP (2011) corroborates that evaluation is a method of holding them responsible for the resources they use in their work.

Aid projects are often socially oriented, making a cost-benefit analysis challenging (Cracknell, 1996). Typical dimensions used to measure the success of a project are cost, time and quality. Samset (2003), among others, suggests that these three measurements are insufficient. A more appropriate approach has been made by the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2019), and is acknowledged by several large institutions such as Norad, the UN, and the EC. This approach consists of an objectives-oriented evaluation model. It was revisited in 2019, and now comprises six separate evaluation criteria in a broad time frame and context. These six are summarized in Table 2.1. In their publication, the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2019) more closely explain each category and the model's principles for use. Each point is addressed with the importance of evaluating them in both the present context and with respect to their likely and expected results in the future.

Picciotto (2013) recognizes the OECD DAC evaluation criteria as possibly one of the most viable for evaluating projects. Moreover, Samset & Christensen (2017) suggest that the same evaluation criteria can be applied upfront of a project to assess and increase its likelihood of a successful outcome. However, both sources advise that more emphasis should be laid on the relevance and sustainability aspects, as those are the two most crucial criteria to whether a project will succeed or not.

As noted in the previous paragraphs, evaluations can be done upfront, during, and upon

**Table 2.1:** The six evaluation criteria for development evaluation. The explanations are based on descriptions given by [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation \(2019\)](#).

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Short description *</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Relevance</b>	<i>"Is the intervention doing the right things?"</i>	The extent to which the objectives and form of the intervention respond correctly to the needs, policies, and priorities of the target group and their society.
<b>Coherence</b>	<i>"How well does the intervention fit?"</i>	The degree to which the intervention can add value, avoid duplication of efforts in the same context, and exist and work successfully with the current system.
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<i>"Is the intervention achieving its objectives?"</i>	The degree of a causal pathway between the intervention and its objectives and results.
<b>Efficiency</b>	<i>"How well are resources being used"</i>	The intervention's utilization of resources to deliver results within the set time frame, compared to other feasible alternatives.
<b>Impact</b>	<i>"What difference does the intervention make?"</i>	The ultimate positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects of the intervention.
<b>Sustainability</b>	<i>"Will the benefits last?"</i>	The possibility for the net benefits of the intervention to last over time, in light of its resilience, risks and potential trade-offs.

\* Short descriptions cited from [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation \(2019\)](#)

completion of a project. [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) further state that an evaluation upfront of a project has an especially high benefit relative to the resources allocated in order to make the evaluation.

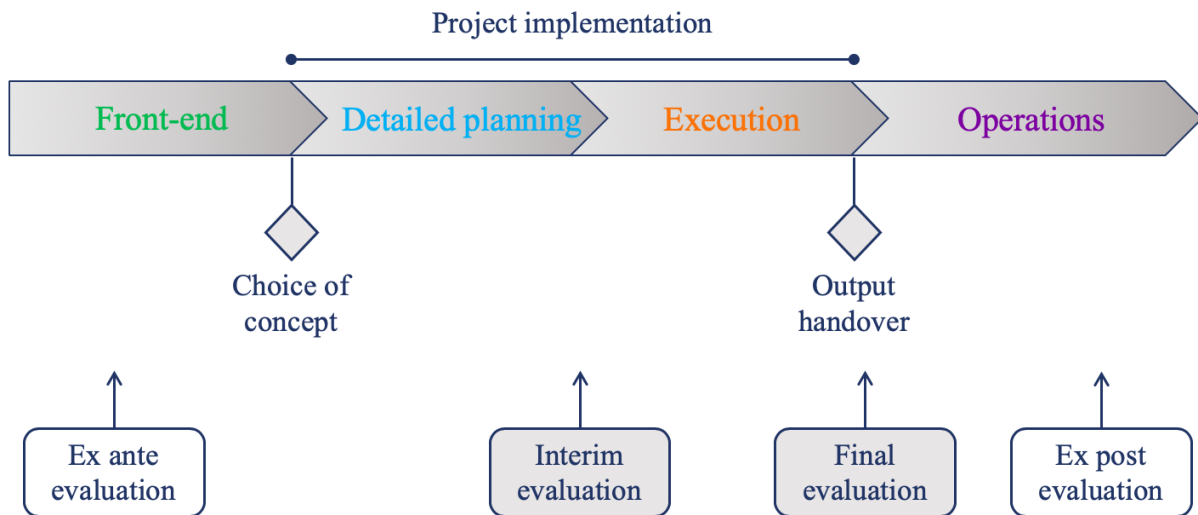
### 2.4.2 Learning From Success and Failure in Projects

Today, many see reporting as a vital part of aid projects. Partners receiving Norwegian aid are subject to strict requirements for reporting with the intention of securing traceability and transparency, and fostering learning ([Balogun et al., 2018](#)).

An evaluation of the Norwegian aid administration's practice of Results-Based Management (management strategy and planning approach) from 2018 ([Balogun et al., 2018](#)) criticized the current practice. Result-Based Management implies a focus on continuously measuring and reporting results, and research show that it might lead to a temptation to engage in actions that easily can be quantified ([Sjøsted, 2013](#)). The evaluation claimed that meeting the reporting requirements is a tedious task, demanding resources from both the beneficiaries and the aid administration ([Balogun et al., 2018](#)). [Balogun et al. \(2018\)](#) also pointed out that, despite a strong focus on reporting, the reported results were not properly used to improve the field and increase the efficiency.

[Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) divide evaluations into four different types at separate stages of a project, as show in [Figure 2.3](#). Based on experience, they claim that most project evaluations occur during the project implementation or right after the output is handed over. They name these two types of evaluation "interim evaluation" and "final evaluation" respectively. On the other hand, evaluations during the front-end phase ("ex ante evaluations") or during operations ("ex post evaluations") are also of great importance. The rationale for ex ante evaluations, before the project implementation, is to find the best approach or conceptual solution, and adjust the project at a stage where the flexibility is the highest. A challenge, however, of upfront evaluations is the fact that nearly all assessments must be done based on assumptions ([Samset & Christensen, 2017](#)). [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) explain that ex post evaluations, in the operational phase, on the other hand, can provide valuable learning to improve future projects. Especially together with the ex post evaluations, these two can create a valuable "learning loop". The UNDP back this up in their guide, "Outcome-Level Evaluation" ([UNDP, 2011](#)).

They advise that through ex ante evaluations, ex post evaluations, and also mid-term evaluations during project implementation, indications can be found whether a project will have successful outcomes or not. These "outcome-level" evaluations will then say something about what approaches and processes have helped make a difference. Thereby, one can use them to learn from previous experiences and improve new initiatives.



**Figure 2.3:** Interim evaluations and final evaluations are commonly used, whereas ex ante evaluations and ex post evaluations are less practiced. Based on [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#).

In contrast to reporting and evaluating having become institutionalized learning tools in aid projects, [Schaumburg-Müller \(2005\)](#) claims that evaluations do not actually foster learning as much one had thought. His research, based on four different organizational perspectives and various case studies, identifies that aid agencies do not learn from findings, or follow recommendations from evaluations. A study performed by [Clements et al. \(2008\)](#), has a similar verdict. They found evidence of evaluations having a positive bias (motivated by a wish to get more resources and to defend reputation) and being weak (focusing more on inputs and outputs, than outcome and impact).

[Picciotto \(2013\)](#) underscores the need for a coherent and responsive evaluation program. It cannot be ignored that regardless of the quality of the evaluation tools developed, they will only contribute to learning and accountability if they are well implemented. [Picciotto \(2013\)](#) points to the major improvement in social indicators, heightened productivity and reduced poverty, summing up that there is no doubt that the global development enterprise has obtained grand achievements. However, he also emphasizes that there are no two countries that will experience the same effectiveness of the same development strategy,

due to the contextual differences.

## 2.5 The Recipient as a Stakeholder

Research has been done that makes it evident that stakeholders are an essential part of projects (Laplume & Sonpar, 2008; Miles, 2012; Uribe et al., 2018). Today, numerous definitions and explanations are available (McGrath & Whitty, 2017; Miles, 2012) but Freeman (1984) was one of the first to give a definition of stakeholders. He worded it as following:

*"Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives."*

(Freeman, 1984, p. 46)

A longer definition is suggested by the Project Management Institute (2013), including elements such as the stakeholders' possible relation to the outputs and outcome of a project. This definition also reflects whether or not a stakeholder is involved in a project:

*"A stakeholder is an individual, group, or organization who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project. Stakeholders may be actively involved in the project or have interests that may be positively or negatively affected by the performance or completion of the project."*

(Project Management Institute, 2013, p. 30)

A conclusion from the numerous existing definitions, is that they indicate that stakeholders, some more significantly than others, play an important role and are essential to keep in mind in every project.

The recipient of a project output, also often called the end-user, target group, or beneficiary, is an obvious stakeholder in aid projects. Hussein (2018) characterizes the end-user as the stakeholder who will live with the outcome of a project after official project termination. He explains that this group covers the people who, in some way, will interact with the product as soon as it is ready for use. This could for instance be the people who will utilize the outputs, or who will deal with its operations, support and maintenance.

### 2.5.1 Importance of the Recipient

Hussein (2018) describes the beneficiary as an important stakeholder to ensure that the correct outputs and outcome are delivered. He explains that the correct outcome can only be achieved if a project is able to deliver the right product. The recipients can therefore, to a large degree, influence the outcome of a project by their expectations, requirements and acceptance of the output.

Hussein (2018) states that the end-users often have the highest interest during the phase where the outputs are put into use. Despite this, he sees it as highly important that the recipients are always kept in mind, from the outset of a project. Hussein (2018) concludes that the fundamental strategy for dealing with these stakeholders builds on close cooperation and involvement. Interestingly enough, the UNDP (2009), in their "Handbook on Planning Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Result", inform that end-users in developing areas are often not included in the planning process for aid projects. The reason is that people from marginalized groups, minorities, or poor rural communities, are considered likely to be without adequate education or knowledge to suitably understand and contribute in the planning phase. The UNDP (2009) stress that this exclusion often ends up being a costly mistake. Their handbook specifies numerous times that the beneficiary must be included during the whole process of a project to ensure ownership, learning and sustainability (OECD, 2002). Similarly, Khang & Moe (2008) explains that the common developmental, cultural and knowledge gap between the recipients and donors are likely to result in a mismatch between the capacity of the target groups, the real needs and the implemented project.

### 2.5.2 Prioritizing Recipient Ownership

The UNDP (2009) underline the beneficiaries' ownership as fundamental for achieving development results. They state two major questions that must be considered regarding the breadth of ownership in a project:

*"Who does the development programme or project benefit or impact, and do a sufficient number of these agencies and persons feel ownership of the programme or project?"*



(UNDP, 2009, p. 12)

The UNDP (2009) further state that a national or community ownership must exist in order to attain satisfaction in the recipients, and their willingness to maintain the assets. If the locals take pride in a project, they will involve themselves more and aspire to preserve the outputs (UNDP, 2009).

A complex web of stakeholders is, according to Youker (1999), a characteristic of aid projects. While most commercial projects have two key stakeholders (the client and the implementing unit), aid projects involve three key stakeholders; the funding agency, the implementing unit and the target beneficiaries (Khang & Moe, 2008). This latter group, the recipient or beneficiaries, are those that the outcome of the project is intended to benefit (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). A study conducted by Diallo & Thuillier (2004) affirmed that each of the the stakeholders asses the projects success based on their own agenda or within the interests of the group they represent. Consequently, we find it natural to assume that the beneficiaries evaluates the projects on a different basis then the other stakeholders. The target beneficiaries do, however, hold a weak position (Golini & Landoni, 2014) and have a limited influence on the projects (Dufková & Sejkora, 2020), as they generally do not finance the project (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010). It is further often assumed that they lack the technical competence and ability to self-determine the project goals (Golini & Landoni, 2014). Golini & Landoni (2014) therefore find it more suitable to consider the beneficiaries as playing the role of "influencers" rather than "customers".

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness from 2005 (and reaffirmed in Busan in 2011 (Booth, 2012)) was signed by ministers from both developed and developing countries, with an aim to improve the effectiveness of aid and reform how it is delivered (OECD, 2008). The OECD (2008) explain that it was motivated by the acknowledgment that countries' and governments' actions are, over time, far more important and relevant for sustainability (OECD, 2002) than the actions of the donors. One of the principles from the declaration is "ownership", which solicits that the recipient countries must develop and incorporate their own development strategies to the project (Booth, 2012; OECD, 2008). Meanwhile, in 2016, a progress report was published on development cooperation that reveals that, although there has been an advancement in country ownership, the increase has leveled off in recent years (OECD/UNDP, 2016). On the other hand, it insists

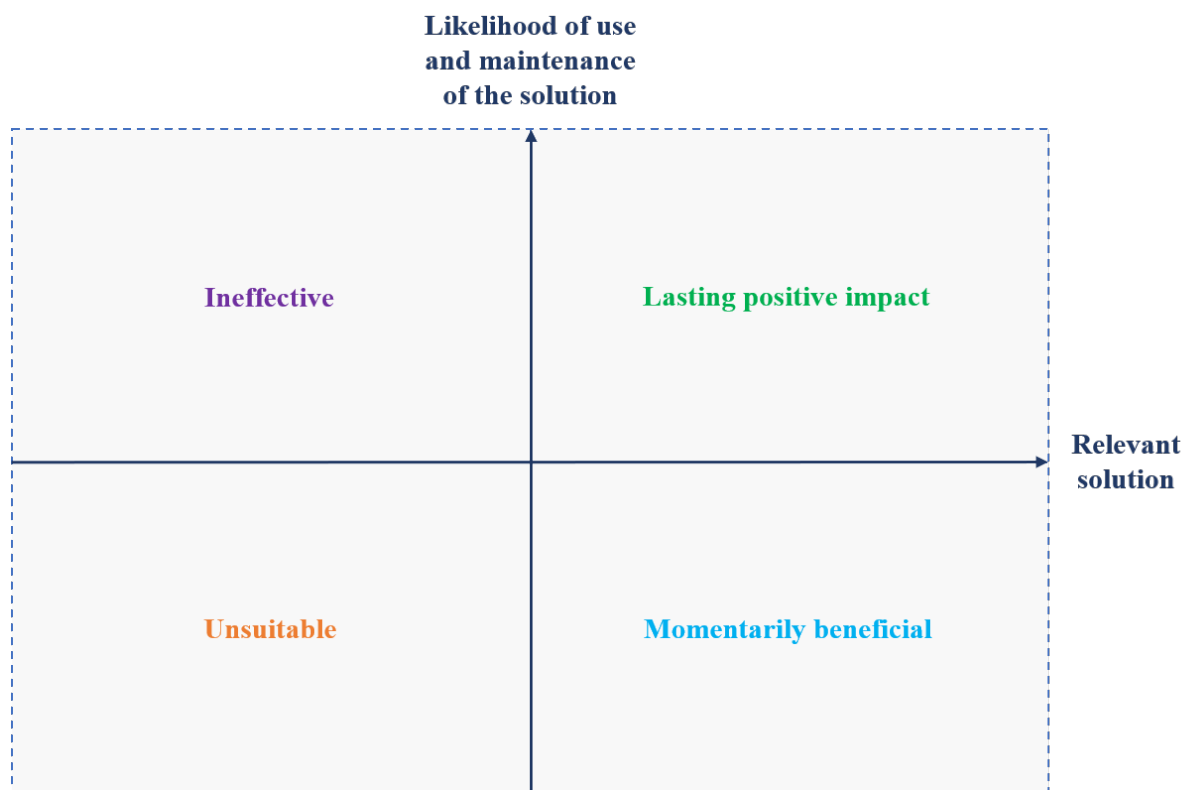
that ownership in the country and community of the development beneficiaries is still fundamental. The [OECD/UNDP \(2016\)](#) thereby confirm that this must be prioritized in order to achieve an effective implementation, sustainable ([OECD, 2002](#)) results, and relevant support to the target group's actual needs.

The principle "alignment" from The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness ([OECD, 2008](#)) addresses the development and growth of local markets. The content of this principle indicates that the donor must utilize the recipients' already existing institutions and systems, and adjust goals to match national priorities. Additionally, the declaration goes deeper into the focus of developing the local partners' capacities, such as planning, implementation, and financial management, to reach their ambitions and be responsible for the results.

## 2.6 The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model)

Based on the theory on how to obtain lasting impact, we developed The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model) presented in [Figure 2.4](#). The model consist of a two by two matrix and its purpose is to guide selection and implementation of aid projects in order to more likely achieve lasting positive impact. The APIM-model will be explained in the subsequent paragraph, [Subsection 2.6.1 Four Categories of Projects](#) and [Subsection 2.6.2 A Practical Example Placing a Project in the APIM-model](#). We will return to the APIM-model in [Subsection 5.2.3 An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model](#) in [Chapter 5 Discussion](#), as it to our surprise reappeared in the empirical findings (see [Subsection 3.1.2 The Reappearance of the APIM-model](#)).

Theory ([OECD, 2002](#); [Samset, 2010](#)) implies that in order to achieve a lasting positive impact, the project must be both sustainable and relevant (see [2.4.1 Evaluating the Effect of Aid](#)). These two factors are explained as how long the envisioned effect will last upon completed implementation and whether the goal is in accordance with the need in the society. Thus, the argumentation leads to two dimensions indicating the likelihood of lasting positive impact: The likelihood of use and maintenance of the provided solution and the degree of relevance the solution has to the end-users' original problem.



**Figure 2.4:** The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model). Developed by the authors of this thesis.

### 2.6.1 Four Categories of Projects

The two dimensions explained, naturally compose the two-by-two matrix, shown in Figure 2.4. The APIM-model divides projects into four separate categories:

The quadrant to the top right represents projects that have a relevant solution (OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019) to the original problem aimed to be solved. Furthermore, the conditions allow for the output to be used and maintained upon termination. All together, this implies a high chance of the project resulting in lasting positive impact.

In contrast, the top left quadrant shows that some projects might have a high likelihood of being used and maintained but the solution is irrelevant to the actual problem. Despite delivering lasting impact, the project is ineffective.

If the project neither fulfills the objective, nor will be maintained or used, the outcome is unsuitable under the project circumstances. These cases are placed in the bottom left quadrant.

The last quadrant, to the bottom right, contains projects having a relevant solution but with a low likelihood of being used and maintained. The output might be momentarily beneficial but is less likely to be sustained.

By definition, a project cannot last forever (Project Management Institute, 2000). The ultimate goal of most projects is therefore to produce significant, positive changes that will sustain after project termination (Khang & Moe, 2008). With reference to the APIM-model in Figure 2.4, most projects therefore aim for the upper right quadrant (*Lasting positive impact*). The bottom right (*Momentarily beneficial*) and upper left (*Ineffective*) quadrants are often, yet not consistently, unfortunate (there are cases where a short-term solution is needed, or where irrelevant solutions can solve other issues), while the bottom left quadrant (*Unsuitable*) is, in general, undesirable.

### 2.6.2 A Practical Example Placing a Project in the APIM-model

To better illustrate the four quadrants, a fictional, yet realistic, example will be given through a project with the goal to achieve education for girls in rural communities in the developing world. The project aims to build new schools in these areas, as the lack of capacity is perceived to be a reason for girls being out of school. The following four descriptions could be possible outcomes of the project:

1. In the case where resources are available and the only hinder for girls getting education is that there is no facility, a new school building in the village can be the correct project. The circumstances allow for the school to be maintained, and it can be used by all children in the area. A placement in the top right quadrant is reasonable and the project can likely have a lasting positive impact on the society.
2. There are enough resources (teachers/books/money/etc.) to run and maintain the facilities. The amount of kids in need of education is also high enough so that there is a need of an extra school in the community. However, the route to arrive to the building is unsafe, especially for girls, and it is unlikely that girls will attend school. The solution is ineffective and is placed in the top left quadrant.
3. There are already several schools in the village and the need for an extra one is non-existent. The actual problem is that the culture in the society does not accept girls in education. The outcome would be that the school would not be used and

girls would still not be allowed professional studies. The example is placed in the bottom left quadrant, as unsuitable. A more suitable project would focus on other factors hindering girls from getting education, and finding solutions to those.

4. This time, the school is built in the correct place and girls are allowed education. In contrast, in this case there are not enough resources to keep running the school in the longer run. This places the project in the last quadrant to the bottom right, with a non-maintainable relevant solution. The solution is truly enough momentarily beneficial but only until the provided funds and resources run out.

The contemplation on whether or not to build a school is the correct idea to solve education for girls is a part of the front-end phase of a project (see Subsection 2.3 A Project's Time Frame and Phases). End-user consideration (see Section 2.5 The Recipient as a Stakeholder) and needs assessments (see Subsection 2.3.2 Needs Assessment) should be done at this stage to find out what their actual situation and need is, to avoid ending in the wrong quadrant and going for a project that is not suitable to the case.

## 2.7 Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1 Introduction introduced two sub-questions. While the first sub-question asks about the possible mistakes of current practice, the second sub-question aims to propose the focus or actions needed to improve projects. The sub-questions read as follows:

**SQ1:** *What possible mistakes can prevent the attainment of relevant and sustainable aid project results?*

**SQ2:** *What should be done to increase the chances of an aid project having a lasting positive impact?*

This chapter has provided several definitions and explanations related to the traditional mindset of "standard" (Subsection 2.1.1 What is a "Project"?) projects. To guide the discussion related to the first sub-question, we developed three propositions. The propositions were developed based on the data structure presented in Section 3.4 Analyzing the Research Data in Chapter 3 Methodology (see Figure 3.4). This section relates the presented theory and introduces the three propositions.

As we will explain in Subsection 3.1.2 The Reappearance of the APIM-model in Chapter

3 Methodology, our APIM-model (presented in Section 2.6 The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model)), to our surprise, reappeared in the empirical findings. The APIM-model underscores the need to have an overarching perspective on aid projects. We therefore regard it as counterproductive to break down the sub-question further and have thus not developed any propositions for the second sub-question.

### 2.7.1 Propositions to Sub-Question 1

SQ1, questions what aid projects might be doing wrongly, preventing them from obtaining ideal results. Questioning whether the typical way of thinking and operating in projects is appropriate for aid development projects as well, proposes, among others, three specific propositions.

The first proposition is based on Section 2.2 Sustainable Projects and the classic view on sustainability. It is found in project management literature that sustainability is commonly sought through a triple bottom line. Based on the fact that aid often is referred to and organized as a project, the following is claimed:

SQ1-P1: *"Sustainability" defined as the "triple bottom line" is appropriate for aid projects.*

The second proposition stems from Section 2.3 A Project's Time Frame and Phases with its description of the general project phases and the rooted routine of planning in all projects. A well known phrase in project management literature is that failing to plan is to plan to fail (Ika et al., 2010), and will be utilized as the basis for the discussion of planning in aid projects.

SQ1-P2: *Failing to plan is planning to fail.*

In Section 2.4 Reports and Evaluations an explanation of the requirements for reporting and evaluating aid is given, together with the reasoning behind it. The extensive demand of these formalities leads to the last proposition we will form our discussions around.

SQ1-P3: *Reports and evaluation can verify the impact of aid projects, and are essential to improve and optimize future aid projects.*

Summarized, the three following propositions are given with respect to [Sub-Question 1](#):

<b>SQ1-P1:</b>	(Sustainability)	<i>"Sustainability" defined as the "triple bottom line" is appropriate for aid projects.</i>
<b>SQ1-P2:</b>	(Planning)	<i>Failing to plan is planning to fail.</i>
<b>SQ1-P3:</b>	(Reports and evaluation)	<i>Reports and evaluation can verify the impact of aid projects, and are essential to improve and optimize future aid projects.</i>

## 3 Methodology

The process of carrying out this research project was not as straight forward as originally envisioned and expected. This chapter is, therefore, laid out to explain the steps and procedures taken through the five months of its execution. The applied methodology is to a large extent based on the advice given by [Bryman \(2016\)](#), [Tjora \(2017\)](#) and [Larsen \(2017\)](#), while the data analysis follows [Gioia et al. \(2012\)](#). We first elaborate on the difficulties in defining the project, before explaining the applied research strategy, -design and -method. After this, the data collection strategy and the process of analyzing the data is explained, together with an evaluation of the quality of the research and its limitations. We also present the ethical considerations we have taken, before presenting some personal reflections.

### 3.1 Finding a Project

Our initial aspiration with regard to both our specialization project thesis and our master's thesis was to carry out two studies that could make a difference for people in developing countries. We both have a passion for the topic of helping people in a sustainable way. As we, through our studies, have gained knowledge within the field of project management, we started to recognize signs of projectification ([Fred, 2015](#); [Maylor et al., 2006](#); [Midler, 1995](#)) in the aid sector. This realization gave us the idea to consider development aid from a project management perspective, and look into what can increase the likelihood of obtaining relevant and sustainable results.

We soon realized through our literature study that the topic of sustainable aid projects, in terms of lasting impact, not is widely considered in the project management literature. However, the importance of obtaining lasting impact is not limited to the aid sector ([Samset, 2010](#)). Building on this, we dedicated our specialization project thesis, written during the fall of 2019, to a literature study on sustainable project management and lasting project results.

By conducting a narrative literature review ([Bryman, 2016](#)), we aimed to arrive at an overview of the existing literature within the field of study. We first conducted a rough search in electronic bibliographical databases applying searching terms such as



Name of article	Topic				
	A	B	C	D	...
Article 1	X	X	X		
Article 2		X		X	
Article 3	X		X		
...					

**Table 3.1:** Sketch of the matrix created to get an overview of the literature

"sustainability", "project management", "project phases", "success", "help projects" and "developing countries". Thereafter we applied different combinations, synonyms and alternative terms based on the initial findings, as suggested by [Bryman \(2016\)](#). A total of 97 articles, book chapters and reports were long-listed and later narrowed down to a short list where 44 written pieces of work were assigned to read, 30 were marked as possible candidates, and 23 publications were filtered out as unnecessary based on their abstracts. The literature review was, as suggested by [Bryman \(2016\)](#), an ongoing component of the work, and literature of interest was added from the reference lists of the already identified articles throughout the process. To map out the fields covered by existing theory and get an overview of the found literature, we created a matrix as a part of the reading process. Each article was assigned a new row, and columns were created for the topics identified. A sketch is shown in [Table 3.1](#).

Based on the literature, we developed a two-by-two matrix (the APIM-model) to be used as a tool to ensure the consideration of a long-term impact of a project. Our original plan was to base our master's thesis on this model, however, the feedback we received from the examiners was not encouraging. Consequently, we found ourselves rejecting our own model, discarding our specialization project thesis, and concluding that we needed to find a different lead for our master's thesis. However, we wanted to keep the original **Problem Statement** for this research: *How can development aid projects help people in a relevant and sustainable way?*

We had been advised by several professors that a deductive study ([Pearse, 2019](#)), with theoretical propositions as a starting point, would be the best approach to our master's thesis. Taking this advice seriously, we strove towards finding the relevant theory and appropriate, good research questions to go with it. Frustratingly enough, this attempt was without success. We ended up spending most of January and February in a continuous

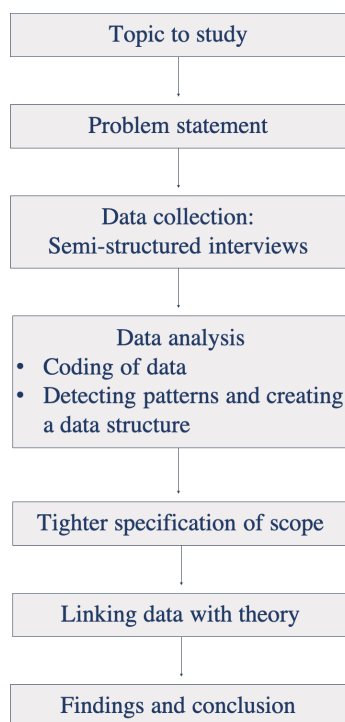
loop, starting over with new theory and research questions every week. What we realized when writing our specialization project thesis (that it is challenging to find large amounts of appropriate, academically recognized literature on "sustainable aid projects") ended up being a challenge again now.

### 3.1.1 Choosing an Inductive Approach

There was no doubt that we would not give up on our passion about sustainable aid, just to follow a deductive approach. Simply choosing another project management field in order to more easily find theory and make feasible research questions was not an option. We rather ended up going our own way, choosing a mainly inductive approach (Bryman, 2016).

With only a general topic and scope for our research, we started conducting semi-structured interviews. With the empirical data in hand, we could start processing the data and finding patterns and topics that conflicted with existing theory. Thereby, we could identify aggregate focus areas from which it was alluring and feasible to make our research questions. From there, we started to study the empirical data in context of existing theory on the prevailing topics. This explained final, inductive research process is outlined in Figure 3.1.

Conducting interviews early in the process, without having clear theoretical propositions to answer or a set agenda for our thesis, allowed us to be less swayed and biased by theoretical inclinations (Tjora, 2017). Through hearing what the informants had to say, a candid insight in the real situation could be obtained. This evaded us trying to haul out information which indeed is related to theory but in reality is of trifle importance.

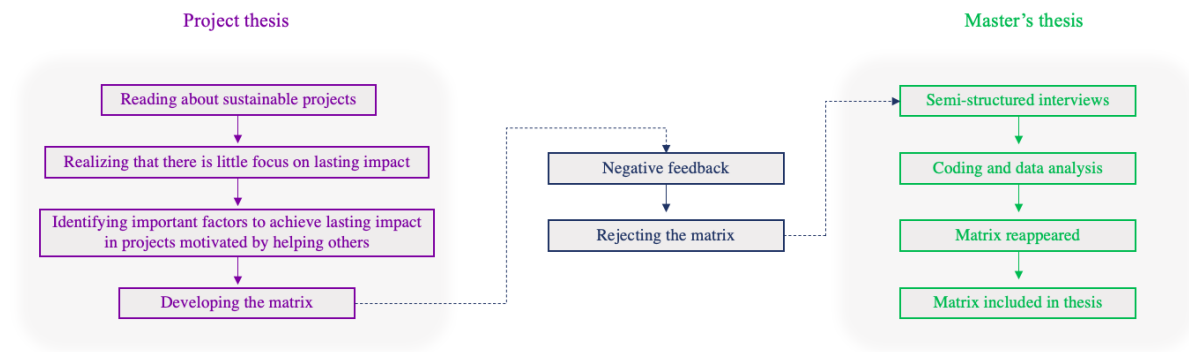


**Figure 3.1:** An outline of our research process

### 3.1.2 The Reappearance of the APIM-model

Having completely rejected our model from our specialization project thesis, we were astounded when it unintentionally reappeared in the empirical data material. As we will explain more thoroughly in Subsection 3.3.6 [Coding](#) and Section 3.4 [Analyzing the Research Data](#), the coding and analysis of our empirical data adhered faithfully to the informants response and terms. Yet, despite no questions related to the APIM-model being asked, the coding clearly revealed that the answers given were closely related to the two axes of the model. Thus, we chose to reintroduce the model and consider its reappearance as a sign of quality.

An explanation of the APIM-model is given in Section 2.6 [The Aid Project Impact Mapping model \(APIM-model\)](#) in Chapter 2 [Theoretical Background](#), while we will comment on its relation to the empirical findings in Subsection 5.2.3 [An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model](#) in Chapter 5 [Discussion](#). The chain of actions is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

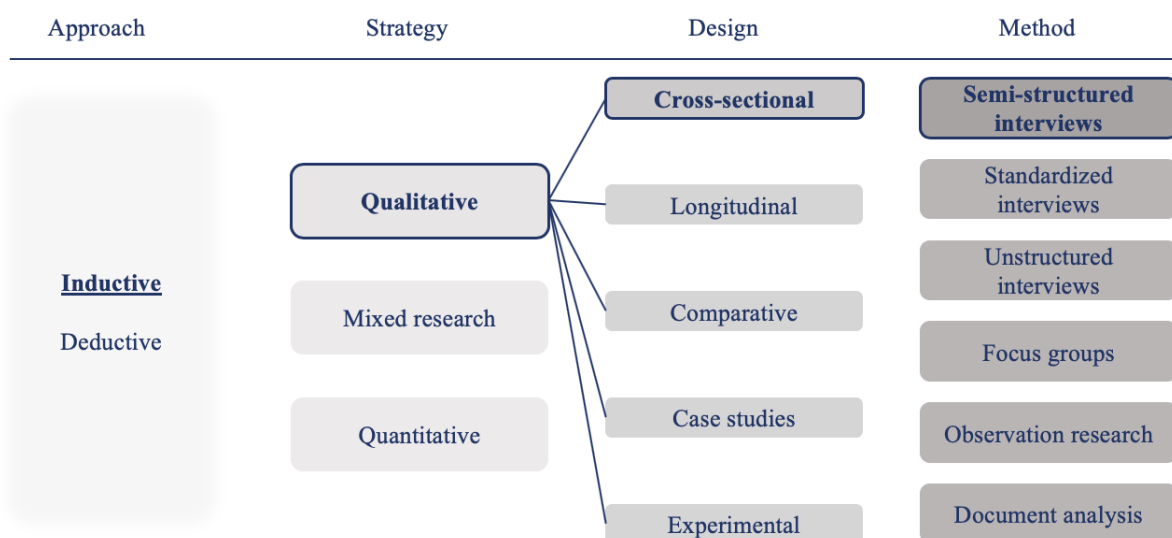


**Figure 3.2:** The rejected model reappeared in the empirical data

### 3.2 The Choice of One Type of Research Over Another

After deciding on a mainly inductive approach with the ambition of generating theory within a currently underexposed theme in project management literature, we found it most suitable to choose a qualitative cross-sectional study. The data collection was conducted by carrying out semi-structured interviews with a broad sample of informants.

This section aims to outline our choices regarding the research strategy, design and methods. We will present the most considered options and explain why we favored the chosen approach. A summary of the applied methodology is illustrated in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3:** Approaches, strategies, designs and methods for a research project. Our chosen path is highlighted. Illustration inspired by Ringdal (2007).

### 3.2.1 Research Strategy

According to [Bryman \(2016\)](#), the term research strategy means "a general orientation to the conduct of social science" ([Bryman, 2016](#), p.32). A common distinction of research strategies within social science is drawn between quantitative and qualitative research ([Bryman, 2016](#)). The main difference between the two strategies is the fact that quantitative research employs measurement while qualitative research does not ([Bryman, 2016](#)). However, the differences are deeper and also include different orientations to the relation between theory and research, ontological position and epistemological consideration. "Ontological position" refers to whether or not social reality exists independent of its actors, while "epistemological consideration" is related to the question of what is being regarded as knowledge.

Quantitative research entails collecting numerical data or quantifying data ([Bryman, 2016](#)). Objectivism, implying that social phenomena has an existence separate or independent from actors, and a natural science model of conducting research are typically adopted. Its aim is to test theory rather than generate it ([Bryman, 2016](#)). Quantitative research is therefore suitable when one has a clear problem statement, one wants to describe the frequency of a phenomena, or one knows a lot about the topic of research.

Qualitative research, in contrast, emphasizes words and entails an approach focusing on generation of theories ([Bryman, 2016](#)). Qualitative research is, on one hand, more flexible and open than quantitative research, but on the other hand more subject to screening bias and harder to generalize ([Bryman, 2016](#)). Social entities are considered as social constructions built by social actors ("constructionism") and instead of thinking that societies shape individuals, individuals shape the social reality ([Bryman, 2016](#)). The latter calls for an epistemology strongly differing from quantitative research. Instead of seeking an objective truth following models for natural science, the meaning in subjective matters are interpreted into an understanding. The consequence is that qualitative research more often implies assumed, rather than demonstrated, views.

While the conventional way is to either choose a quantitative or qualitative approach, a third option is to mix the two strategies. Approaching the study with mixed strategies provides the opportunity to offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative

research and capture the complementary nature of both strategies (Bryman, 2016). Even though mixed research has its advantages, it does not outperform mono-strategy research on a general level. The mixed research risks resulting in unnecessarily complex evaluations that become challenging to maintain short, yet understandable and informative enough (Bryman, 2016). For the purpose of this study, we disregarded a mixed strategy due to time limitations and the already unclear and complex scope.

A quantitative research strategy did not seem appropriate for our study. We started our inductive approach with a broad problem statement, and little or no emphasize could be placed on numerical data, as there was no other quantitative data to analyze than the recognition of how often the same factors were brought up by the informants. Moreover, the topic of this study is, as commented in Section 3.1 *Finding a Project*, underexposed in the existing literature. As aid projects also are complex, and there exists limited knowledge of the impact of the contextual factors, we saw it as unsuitable to focus our study on testing theory. Based on this we dismissed the quantitative research strategy.

In this study, we took the challenge of entering a field that is underexposed in the project management literature. The best practice in aid projects has not yet been found and established. With this limited existing theoretical background, a qualitative strategy was appropriate. The flexibility in this strategy would allow us to experiment more and find out what the situation of aid projects *actually* is, something the theory could not properly tell us. Our ambition was to contribute with a piece of this lacking theory, on how to obtain a lasting positive impact through aid projects.

### 3.2.2 Research Design

A research design is a plan for how and in what time frame the empirical data in a research program will be collected and analyzed (Bryman, 2016; Ringdal, 2007). Both Ringdal (2007) and Bryman (2016) distinguish between five different designs: cross-sectional, longitudinal, case studies, comparative and experimental. In our case, a longitudinal design was not applicable, due to the time constraints of our study (Bryman, 2016). Longitudinal studies require multiple data registrations for the same unit of analysis over a period of time (Ringdal, 2007). Neither was an experimental design doable, as this design would have required us performing real time experiments and observing the effect

(Ringdal, 2007), which would be difficult in our research on aid projects in developing countries. This left us with the option to choose a cross-sectional study, a case study or a comparative study.

A comparative design entails using the same methods to study two contrasting cases with the aim of understanding social phenomena through comparison (Bryman, 2016). When a comparative study is applied in relation to qualitative research, it takes the form of a multiple case-study (Bryman, 2016). Hence, the principal difference between a case study and comparative study is the number of studied cases.

To be able to explore aid projects in a way that would enable generalization, we found it necessary look at a more diverse perspective than a case study would allow. While individual cases could point to important aspects about specific focus areas, challenges and indicators (Bryman, 2016), we wanted to detect patterns that are likely to apply to a larger population of aid projects. Aid projects are highly context dependent and it would not be feasible for us to tell apart general considerations from context dependent factors. Thus, we opted for a design that would allow us to collect data from multiple cases and draw conclusions across a sample of research subjects.

C. Cummings (2018) describes cross-sectional studies as appropriate for qualitative studies when the aim is to describe the population of interest. Information is recorded and variables are not manipulated. In terms of focus, a cross-sectional design differs from a multiple case study by looking at a sample of cases rather than emphasizing the individual cases (Bryman, 2016). This was exactly what we intended to do. Cross-sectional designs are unable to establish a clear view of the timing between cause and effect (Ringdal, 2007), but are rather suitable to identify patterns within the population (C. Cummings, 2018). There is seemingly little literature on the cause and effect relation between projectification and sustainable aid, but through our research we aim to put forth some indications on possible interconnections.

### 3.2.3 Research Method

The choice of research method refers to the technique applied to collect the empirical data (Bryman, 2016). We decided to employ semi-structured in-depth interviews (Bryman, 2016; Larsen, 2017), as we wished to get a genuine insight in the situation of the field of

aid, and thereafter suggest appropriate research questions. The semi-structured interviews allowed us to respond spontaneously to the informants elaborations, and go deeper into certain topics. At the same time, our interview guide made sure that we covered mainly the same areas in all interviews, and did not go in complete divergent directions each time.

Based on the answers of our informants, we were able to narrow down the scope of the thesis. At this point, we also studied the theoretical background of our problem statement through academic literature.

Several research methods were up for discussion, before we settled with semi-structured interviews. A document analysis (Bryman, 2016) was considered infelicitous as we aimed to explore a field. Observation research (Ringdal, 2007), on the other hand, was considered highly interesting, but such methods would be unreasonably complicated. It would not be feasible for us to travel around and observe different aid projects in developing countries due to cost and time limitations as well as accessibility. Consequently, we had to find a research method that would allow us to explore a field without having to observe it, and interviews with experienced informants appeared as most suitable. Focus groups (Tjora, 2017) are characterized by being efficient and cost effective, as well as fostering interactions among the informants. For our research it would be, due to the limited population of possible informants, challenging to find time for the informants to participate if they all had to be present at the same time. We considered it to be more beneficial if we as researchers could adapt to the informants' schedule, leaving time a less likely reason for them to have to reject the invitation. Yet, more important was the fact that we wanted to collect independent data and hence, did not want the informants to stimulate each other. Short and strictly focused interviews are, according to Tjora (2017), often suitable when the scope is narrow and holds a low degree of sensibility. Our scope was by no means narrow. We therefore considered it to be important that the informants were given enough time and allowed to speak freely. We were afraid that too standardized interviews (Ringdal, 2007) would be overly restricting, while pure unstructured interviews (Bryman, 2016) bear the risk of resulting in a vast number of distinct topics.



## 3.3 Collecting Research Data Through Interviews

With research strategy, design and method chosen, it was time to get started with the interview process. This section will explain the sampling strategy, present the sample and describe the interview process of our research, as well as the coding applied after the interviews.

### 3.3.1 Sampling Strategy

As described in Subsection [3.2.2 Research Design](#), we chose a cross-sectional design for our study with the aim of describing the population of interest. Thus, we found it essential to collect data from informants with a broad experience within the field of aid projects. There were two main reasons for this, both being related to the fact that we chose to investigate an area underexposed in current literature. First of all, we wanted to decrease the chances of our results being dependent on the context of a single project. Secondly, our problem statement was, at this point of time, still widely defined, and we thought a broader perspective would help us identify the important areas to dig deeper into within the practice of today's aid projects.

The choice of design influences the sample and the sampling strategy ([Ringdal, 2007](#)). Limited amount of time and accessibility lead the selection of informants being based on a mix of purposive and convenience sampling ([Bryman, 2016](#)). We had already initiated contact with a few of the informants in relation to our specialization project thesis. Moreover, we contacted people within our network and were referred to potential informants. The last initial initiative was to contact people that recently had commented on issues related to our problem statement in media. As the interviews progressed, we also applied "snowball sampling", where some of our informants put us in contact with other people with knowledge and experience within aid projects ([Bryman, 2016](#)).

### 3.3.2 Sample of Informants

Table [3.2](#) consolidates information about the informants. Aliases have been used instead of names, and broad categories are used to describe their current and former professional roles. This is done in order to preserve the anonymity of the informants, which we will also

get back to later in Section [3.7 Ethical Considerations; Preserving Privacy and Securing Anonymity](#).

Table [3.2](#) clearly demonstrates the broad sample of informants applied for this study. Among the informants are consultants and researchers implementing, assessing and evaluating aid and development projects for the United Nations, the World Bank and several governmental ministries and directorates. We saw value in gaining insight in both this broader system view, but also on the concrete level. Several of the informants are, therefore, practitioners of aid, either working for a company where development aid is part of their business, or engaged in this topic outside of their professional career. While all of the informants had experience within the field of aid projects, years of experience varied from less than five to more than twenty. We also planned to interview representatives from the Norwegian directorate of aid and people influencing policy and practice in the Norwegian aid system to establish an even broader perspective. However, due to the situation emerging from the COVID-19 crisis, these interviews were canceled (see Subsection [3.8.3 The COVID-19 crisis](#)).

### 3.3.3 Preparing for the Interviews: Interview Guide and Piloting

There are various ways to approach qualitative interviewing, depending on the need for structure, depth, details, flexibility, etc. ([Bryman, 2016](#); [Kvale, 1996, 2012](#)). As explained earlier, we applied semi-structured interviews as the method for our research. An interview guide ([Kvale, 2012](#)) consisting of a list of questions formed the basis for the interviews, but quite a bit of leeway was given to both us as interviewers and the informants. This was done because we wished to use their answers to further narrow down our [Problem Statement](#), instead of the opposite. Adhering to the belief that there must be total consistency in the questions is, according to [Gioia et al. \(2012\)](#), hampering more traditional research from uncovering new concepts to develop. When asking questions we, therefore, did not rigidly follow the interview guide, but allowed for deviations and follow-up questions in response to the informants' replies, and to encourage further reflection ([Kvale, 2012](#); [Tjora, 2017](#)). Despite the flexibility of the semi-structured interview, we made sure to provide all the informants with the same information about the research and the chosen topic. This is advised by [Larsen \(2017\)](#), in order to maximize the validity and reliability of research.

**Table 3.2:** The sample of informants

<b>Alias</b>	<b>Current and former roles</b>	<b>Years of exp.</b>	<b>Interview length</b>
<b>Microeconomist</b>	Founder of microeconomics aid company, Board member in aid organization	10 - 19	39 min <sup>1</sup>
<b>Business Promoter</b>	Practitioner of aid through business and investments	10 - 19	1 h 9 min
<b>CSR Consultant</b>	Economics educator in developing areas, CSR consultant, Aid practitioner	< 5	46 min
<b>Scholarship Patron</b>	Founder of organization providing school scholarships for girls, CSR consultant	5 - 9	52 min
<b>Aid Investor</b>	Founder of company practicing aid as business, Board member in aid organization, Practitioner of non-profit aid	5 - 9	45 min
<b>Philanthropist</b>	Philanthropist, Expert on effective donations, Ambassador for a global NGO	5 - 9	1 h 5 min
<b>Evaluations Expert</b>	Researcher and expert on aid evaluation, Aid implementation developer	> 20	54 min
<b>Development Economist</b>	Development economist, Practitioner of non-profit aid and aid as business development, Expert on aid development reporting	5 - 9	1 h
<b>Researcher</b>	Researcher within sustainability, Project coordinator for a project in developing countries	< 5	54 min
<b>International Expert</b>	International development consultant, Practitioner in various NGOs	> 20	1 h 13 min

<sup>1</sup> Pilot interview. Interrupted by a fire alarm.

Bryman (2016) emphasizes the importance of "piloting" questions (i.e. trying them out to see if they are clear, unambiguous, and address the issues at hand) before carrying out the interviews. Our first interview was, therefore, conducted as a pilot interview. Surely enough, the interview guide was modified slightly afterwards (the final interview guide is enclosed in Appendix [A1 Interview guide \[English\]](#) and [A2 Interview guide \[Norwegian\]](#)). It turned out that, despite our inductive approach and still undecided exact topic for our thesis, it was clear that a disproportionate amount of time was dedicated to information that would not be relevant to our scope. Some questions were perceived as repetitive, while others made our informant briefly list projects he had been involved in without providing the depth needed to apply this information in our research. In spite of this and the fact that the pilot interview was not ideal, many of the points and answers were relevant to the research. Thus, this informant's views ended up being included in the empirical findings.

### 3.3.4 Conducting the Interviews

All the interviews lasted approximately one hour, the shortest being 39 minutes and the longest 1 h 13 minutes (see Table [3.2](#)). Only one of the interviews was held in person. The remaining nine were phone calls, due to the participants' changing whereabouts and busy schedules, and later also the "COVID-19" situation explained in Subsection [3.8.3 The COVID-19 crisis](#) at the end of this chapter. The larger half of the remote interviews included video, and the other included only audio. This depended on the quality of the Internet and the available options for the participants. Most interviews were conducted in Norwegian, but some were also held in English as not all of our informants are Norwegian speakers. All interviews consisted of three people: two interviewers (with the designated lead interviewer more or less following the interview guide, and the other adding follow-up questions where more in-depth information or clarity was desired), and one informant. Kvale (1996) underscores that the interviewer is his or her own research instrument. Being two interviewers allowed the designated lead to devote her focus to the interview subject and the conversation, while the other one took the role of an active listener and also made sure that all the important questions were asked. Thus, we were able to balance the dimension of the human, social interaction and the theme of study (defined by the [Problem Statement](#)), as accentuated by Kvale (1996). Both us being present in all of the

interviews also allowed us to avoid one-sidedness [Bryman \(2016\)](#).

### 3.3.5 Transcriptions

[Bryman \(2016\)](#) warns that the process of transcribing interviews can be extremely time-consuming. This was something we experienced, and our transcriptions also resulted in an immense number of pages to be analyzed. However, the benefits of audio-recording and transcribing the interviews afterwards relieved us of having to strenuously take notes during the conversations. Recording the interviews allowed us to focus on the conversation, explore statements and follow up on interesting points. Notes were only used as support to remember elements to get back to, if possible, later in the interview. The transcriptions were written according to advice given by [Tjora \(2017\)](#): As we were not yet sure about what information would turn out to be important for our research, all transcriptions were done in detail to preserve all material. In places where it turned out difficult to hear the exact words used by the informant, blanks were inserted into the transcriptions, instead of filling them in with assumed statements and words.

### 3.3.6 Coding

Coding is an essential part of qualitative research, and is the process of "labeling" the data ([Tjora, 2017](#)) in order to break it down into approachable and manageable components ([Bryman, 2016](#)). There are several approaches to coding within the field of qualitative research. We followed the guidelines given by [Tjora \(2017\)](#), applying codes that are closely related to the empirical data. This will, according to [Tjora \(2017\)](#), reduce the bias.

[Tjora \(2017\)](#) lists three main purposes of coding:

1. *"Extract the essence of the empirical material,*
2. *Reduce the volume of the data material,*
3. *Facilitate for generation of ideas based on the details of the empirical data"*

([Tjora, 2017](#), p. 197)

By following an inductive empirical approach we aimed to reduce the bias. The codes applied were in most cases direct quotes and terms used by the informants. This ensured that the coding was closely related to the empirical data and retained the specific parts of

**Table 3.3:** A code passes the test if the answer to both question 1 and question 2 is alternative b). The code test is based on (Tjora, 2017).

The Code Test		
	a)	b)
1	Would it be possible to make this code upfront of the coding? If yes: A priori code. -> Try another code.	If no: Potentially a good code, close to, and stemming from, the empirical data.
2	What does the code in itself say? Thematises the data segment and only generally related to what the informant talked about. -> Unnecessary sorting code - make another code.	Reflects concrete content. Directly related to what the informant said.

the material. Starting with the first transcription, codes were made consecutively. When suitable, the now already existing codes were used for the following transcriptions, and new codes were added when needed. As suggested by Tjora (2017), the codes were closely related to the empirical data and there was made no attempt to limit the number of codes. The aim was to decrease the probability of premature conclusions. This implies an approach where the applied codes describe what the interviewee says rather than the topic he or she talks about (Tjora, 2017). In addition, we did not limit the length and amount of detail, to avoid misunderstandings of the context in which things were said.

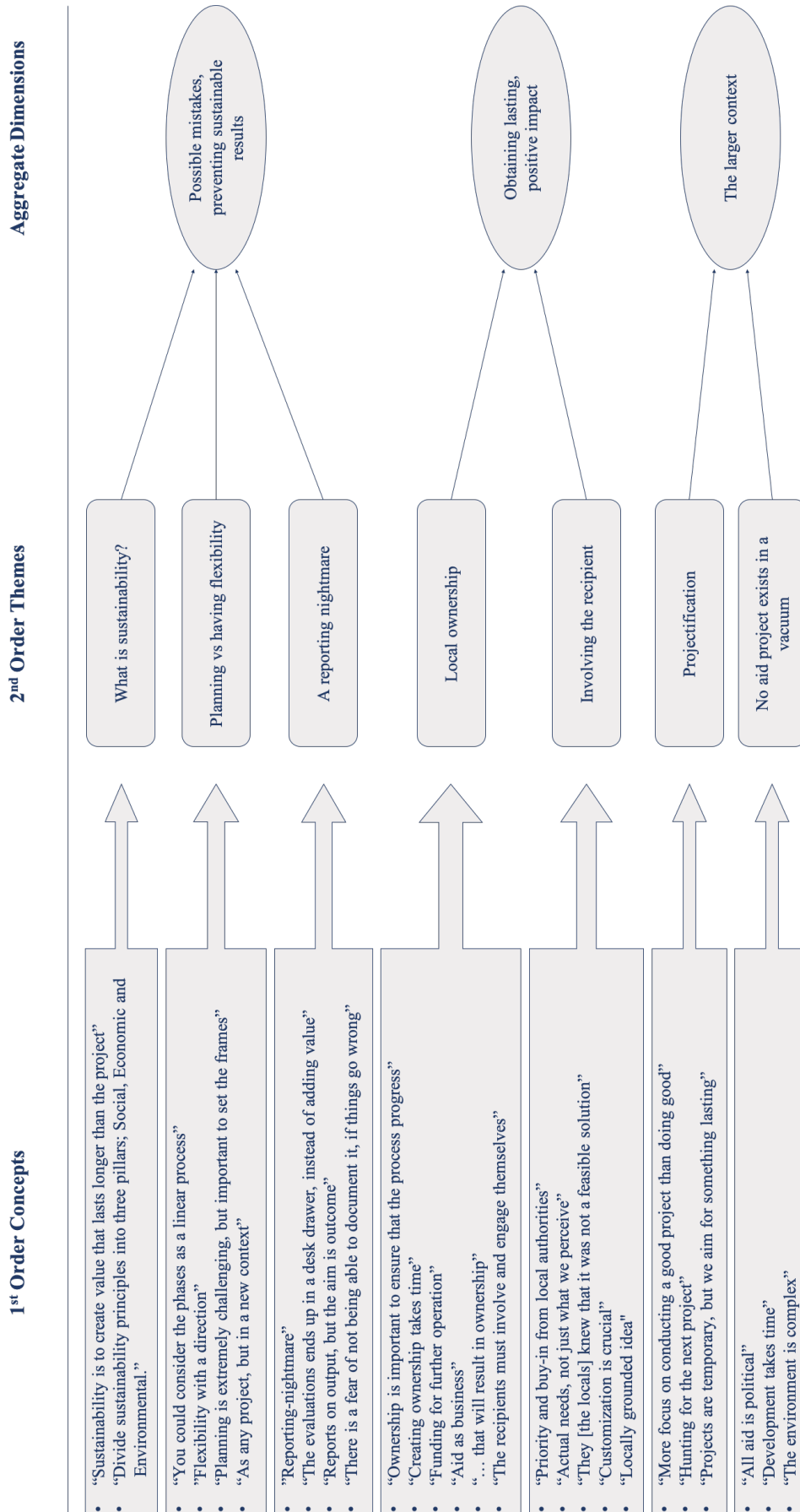
We further applied the code test recommended by Tjora (2017). Two simple questions were asked for each code, and a code would pass the test and be applied if the answers were both 1b and 2b, as illustrated in Table 3.3.

A total of 487 codes were generated from the ten transcriptions. Due to this large quantity, the qualitative data analysis software NVivo was applied, as suggested by Bryman (2016) and Tjora (2017). The software made it easy to go back and forth between the applied codes and their respective excerpts in the data material. This was convenient in the analysis, when looking for patterns and overlapping focal points and assertions among the informants.

## 3.4 Analyzing the Research Data

To ensure qualitative rigor of our inductive approach, we followed the approach to analysis proposed by Gioia et al. (2012). This included organizing the data into 1st- and 2nd-order categories before assembling them into a more structured form. The structure is illustrated in Figure 3.4. The 1st order categories are supposed to correspond with the informants terms (Gioia et al., 2012), and in our case ended up being a selection of our 487 codes (see Subsection 3.3.6 Coding). Based on these 1st order categories, we started to look for differences and similarities, creating 2nd order themes. Gioia et al. (2012) explain that the researcher's task, in this step of the analysis, is to reduce the number of germane categories. This is done by simultaneously considering the more abstract level of the codes, the theoretical level of themes, and the larger question of, "What is going on here?". The emerging 2nd order themes were then clustered further into aggregate dimensions, and all this together formed the data structure which was employed as the basis for the structure of this thesis. While performing the data analysis, we made sure to always have our guiding Problem Statement in mind.

As we employed an inductive study, and hence did not have theories to test, we did not have theoretical propositions. However, during the data analysis we realized that a large proportion of the empirical findings conflicted with what we already knew about project management. Thus, based on the data structure, we developed propositions to guide the further investigation of the data material and the discussion related to the first Sub-Question. These propositions are presented in Section 2.7 Theoretical Framework in Chapter 2 Theoretical Background and discussed in Section 5.1 Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset in Chapter 5 Discussion.



**Figure 3.4:** The data structure of this thesis. This structure is based on Gioia et al. (2012).



## 3.5 Quality of the Research

In this section, the applied research methodology will be discussed in terms of scientific quality. It is recommended by many authors that research employing a qualitative strategy should be evaluated through different criteria than quantitative studies (Bryman, 2016). For the purpose of this discussion, we apply the measures of credibility, confirmability and transferability as suggested by Tjora (2017). This set of criteria is almost identical to what Bryman (2016) terms "trustworthiness", however, enlarging the list is according to Tjora (2017) inexpedient.

Credibility is about the internal logic of the research project (Tjora, 2017). There can be several possible accounts of an aspect in social reality (Bryman, 2016), and the criterion of credibility refers to whether the research arrives at an account that can be acceptable to others (Bryman, 2016). To increase the credibility of our study, we have endeavored to follow the principles of good practice (Bryman, 2016) by, for instance, not disregarding conflicting statements. The limited amount of time for this research project did not allow us to apply true respondent validation or data triangulation (Bryman, 2016). Instead, we made sure to communicate our interpretation to the informants during the interview, giving them the chance to correct our understandings of what they said. When explaining the empirical data and writing Chapter 4 [Empirical Data](#), we put great effort in reflecting what the informants conveyed, and not our interpretations of it. Moreover, we followed the advice by Tjora (2017) by clearly demonstrating how the analysis of our thesis evolved from the empirical data material in Subsection [3.3.6 Coding](#) and Section [3.4 Analyzing the Research Data](#).

The second criteria, confirmability, is concerned about whether or not the findings of the research answers the raised questions. Complete objectivity is impossible within all kinds of social research, although neutral observers is the ideal (Tjora, 2017). Thus, the aim of qualitative research is not to be unbiased but to be aware of the situation and take the necessary actions to minimize its effect on the results. Confirmability is hence about ensuring that the researcher is minimally swayed by theoretical inclinations or personal bias (Bryman, 2016). We were, from the start, aware of our personal interest for sustainable aid being a possible source to bias and have accordingly taken actions throughout the process to eliminate the risk of unconscious manipulation. By opting

for an inductive approach, we aimed to not be bias by theoretical inclinations or let our personal interest enlarge a narrow issue (see Subsection 3.1.1 [Choosing an Inductive Approach](#)). Moreover, the semi-structured interviews allowed the informants to speak freely (see Subsection 3.2.3 [Research Method](#)). The process of coding the data material according to what the informants said and adhere faithfully to their terms (see Subsection 3.3.6 [Coding](#)), rather than using predefined categories, also reduced the chances of us having predefined the outcome of the data collection.

Lastly, the criterion of transferability is explained and employed. Transferability relates to whether the findings hold in another context, or at some other time (Bryman, 2016; Tjora, 2017). Put differently, it is about whether or not the research could be generalized (Tjora, 2017). Tjora (2017) distincts between three forms of generalizability: naturalistic generalization, moderate generalization and conceptual generalization. The two former requires descriptions explaining the situations in which the findings are considered valid (Tjora, 2017). Our study considers projects conducted in different developing countries. They are highly contextual and it would not be possible to isolate or explain the culture affecting the informants statements. Moreover, the countries and projects our informants have been involved in, are withheld to ensure anonymity. However, our aim has from the very beginning been conceptual generalization, meaning that we have strived towards developing insight related to a phenomena (in our case aid projects) rather than describe specific cases or instances. This aspire was, as explained in Subsection 3.2.2 [Research Design](#), a key factor in the choice of research design. An additional measure taken to increase the transferability of this study was, as explained in Subsection 3.3.1 [Sampling Strategy](#), to employ a broad sample of informants.

## 3.6 Limitations of the Study

This section outlines some of the most significant limitations of this study, rooted in the choice of methodology and the practicalities.

The methodology applied in this work is, of course, not without limitations. A qualitative study is often criticized for having low transparency, being too subjective, being difficult to replicate, and being generalize on poor grounds (Bryman, 2016). The thorough and honest presentation of the methodology in the preceding sections aims to increase the

transparency of our study. Yet, there are certain points, such as the identity of our informants, that are kept secret to protect their anonymity. Subsequently, is it, despite the representation of the data structure in Figure 3.4, impossible for externals to fully establish how we arrived at our conclusions. The subjectivity influencing our interpretation of the data also contributes to reducing the level of transparency. Subjectivity may have been a limitation in our research process, as it may have affected the way information was perceived. We have however, as explained in Section 3.5 *Quality of the Research*, taken measures to limit the subjectivity by, for instance, adhering faithfully to the informants terms in the coding and initial data analysis. We acknowledge that it is almost impossible to conduct true replication of our study and that no final conclusion regarding all aid projects can be drawn based on the ten interviews we conducted. However, it is our impression that the broad sample of informants giving corresponding answers can make it possible to assume a similar result with a different sample.

The lack of relevant theory, rival explanations and relevant logic models in the present literature has also limited this study as the foundation for the research was not as sound as it could have been.

The time restrictions of this study forced us to limit the number of respondents and favor a mix of convenience and purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016). Increasing the sample size and applying a more random sample could have improved the quality of the study. We do however argue, as already touched upon, that the diverse sample with corresponding answers indicate that the findings still are valid.

Most of the interviews were, as mentioned in Subsection 3.3.4 *Conducting the Interviews*, conducted in Norwegian while this thesis is written in English. This contributes, as we will return to in Section 3.7 *Ethical Considerations; Preserving Privacy and Securing Anonymity*, to protect the anonymity of the informants but may also result in content being lost in the translation process.

## 3.7 Ethical Considerations; Preserving Privacy and Securing Anonymity

In social research it is important to take the ethical considerations necessary to preserve the rights of the participants. [Bryman \(2016\)](#) breaks the ethical considerations down into four main areas:

1. *"Whether there is harm to participants;*
2. *Whether there is a lack of informed consent;*
3. *Whether there is an invasion of privacy;*
4. *Whether deception is involved."*

([Bryman, 2016](#), p. 125)

These four categories were constantly considered throughout this thesis. This section explains how ethical considerations have always been favored in our work, both based on the points from [Bryman \(2016\)](#), and also on tips given by The [British Sociological Association \(2017\)](#).

The contents of our research project were never regarded as harmful or sensitive to the informants. However, as soon as we had decided on the topic and procedure for the research, our first step was to send in an application to Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (NSD). All relevant information about the research project was provided, and an approval was awaited before continuing. The approval process protracted as we had informed NSD that we planned to ask the informants about their background and place of residence. However, as soon as we clearly explained that the sole reason for this was to separate informants with an internal and external view on the culture of which the projects they are involved in are executed, the application was approved.

Prior to commencing the interviews, a "study information sheet and informed consent form" ([Bryman, 2016](#)) was sent to the informants. This document, which can be found in [Appendix A3 Study information sheet and informed consent form](#), provided details about the research topic and its content, in addition to explaining what participation would entail. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the participants had the right to withdraw

from the research project at any point and for whatever reason ([British Sociological Association, 2017](#)). At the beginning of each interview, the informants were asked for their consent to participate ([British Sociological Association, 2017](#)), and they were never coerced into giving out information that they themselves did not voluntarily provide.

Preserving the richness of the data material, while at the same time securing the informants anonymity, is an act of balance. Most of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian but the presented quotations have been rendered to English. To further enhance the anonymity, specific details that might make the informant identifiable have been altered or left out. The real names of the participants have not been used in this thesis.

The ([British Sociological Association, 2017](#)) states that research should, to the largest extent possible, be characterized by trust and integrity. The anonymity and our confidentiality was thoroughly explained at the start of every interview and in the study information sheet and informed consent form sent out upfront of the interview. This was done to facilitate the sharing of honest, open and critical reflections from the informants.

When the project comes to a conclusion, and this master's thesis has been handed in, all material and information about, and from, the informants will be deleted.

## 3.8 Personal Reflections

This section offers some reflections on the research process and discusses what we would have done differently if we were to embark upon this process again. We will also touch upon the consequences the pandemic, Covid-19, which happened to have its outbreak just as we were conducting this study, had on our work.

### 3.8.1 Change the Approach, or Change the Scope?

As already elaborated on in Section [3.1 Finding a Project](#), the process of carrying out this research project was not as straight forward as we had thought it would be. In hindsight, this might just have been "our savior". When we embarked on this journey, in the beginning of January, we thought we would follow a standard setup for a deductive qualitative project, testing theoretical propositions. If we would have stuck to the approach, though, the chances are great that we would have ended up changing the focus area and

letting go of our original ambition with this master's thesis. The lack of relevant theory made it challenging to formulate purposive theoretical propositions that we would be able to test. Adding to this was the criticism and negative feedback we received on the APIM-model we developed during the fall semester, causing us to discard the model. Instead of changing the overall focus area of the thesis to something more attainable, we rigorously held on to it and rather changed the *approach* from being deductive to inductive. We do realize that it would have been much easier to simply go for the firstly mentioned solution. Still, we are now glad that this is not what we did.

No matter the approach applied, it would have made the process much easier if we had been able to clarify the topics and research questions at an earlier stage. Moreover, a sooner specification could also have resulted in a more in-depth study. With the approach we chose to apply, we found ourselves in a situation where interesting in-depth topics arose when we no longer had the time or possibility to collect empirical data. Before conducting the interviews, we were oblivious of what theoretical topics would be relevant. However, as we started to read articles on the topics our informants had touched into, numerous questions arose, that we wished we had asked. It could, to mention some examples, have been interesting to ask more in-depth questions about project management tools and efforts in the aid sector (Golini & Landoni, 2014; Ika et al., 2010), critical success factors (Khang & Moe, 2008; Steinfors & Walker, 2007) or a more narrow consideration of the project planning myth (Ika & Saint-Macary, 2012). In other words, the change of approach might in some ways have impeded our research, and the task of writing a master's thesis might have become more complicated than necessary. Still, we are confident that our findings are of value for later research. Important topics and points have been identified, which can be good starting points to dive deeper into.

One of the research questions we considered, and discarded, was related to aid planning and reporting. We spent a considerable amount of time reading about this topic and talking with a person in the process of developing a digital tool based on the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). We even got invited into the process and were offered a complete data set to use for our research. The idea was that, by digitizing the process, it would become easier and less time-consuming to both make detailed project plans and utilize the reports for further learning. Looking back, we realize that not following that

lead was a smart move. Both the theory and empirical findings reveal that there is a huge room for improvement in terms of utilization of the data gained through aid reporting, but our empirical findings also made us question the value and necessity of the reporting formalities and the urge for detailed planning. It is our impression that the desire for such a digital tool is rooted in the unconscious projectification of the aid sector. Thus, we now believe that there is a grand chance that the project we almost went for would not have contributed to lasting positive impact in developing countries, which was our main goal.

### 3.8.2 Two Optimistic Students and a Master's Thesis

This master's thesis is written by two optimistic students. Thus, it might not have been a surprise to any of our closest friends and family that we, led by our passions, chose to embark on an unknown path for this research, as described in Section 3.1 [Finding a Project](#) and Subsection 3.8.1 [Change the Approach, or Change the Scope?](#).

It is, moreover, noticeable that, despite this thesis raising a critical voice and questioning the impact projectification has had on the aid sector, both of us find it challenging to be negatively oriented. We prefer finding opportunities rather than limitations, and challenges instead of problems. This is evident in our subdued critique of current scholars, but vociferous call for a different focus.

The fact that we tend to sometimes be too optimistic also strongly affected the final stage of the process. The change of approach and COVID-19 crisis (See Subsection 3.8.3 [The COVID-19 crisis](#)) resulted in a situation where our work, regardless of long hours, was lagging behind schedule. When June approached, there was still a decent amount of work remaining. However, one of us did not, at this point, have the possibility to continue writing and editing. Our solution was that she would only focus on proofreading, and the other of us would finish off what remained incomplete. The situation was, by no means, ideal, yet, it felt like the best possible solution to the challenge.

### 3.8.3 The COVID-19 crisis

Almost two weeks into March, the Norwegian government decided to shut down the country as a reaction to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. This disrupted, not only our, but most Norwegians' everyday life. It is no exaggeration to say that we were unprepared

for this exceptional change of circumstances to happen so suddenly. At this point of time a lot became uncertain and we had no clue for how long the state of emergency would last.

The COVID-19 crisis has affected our work in various ways. The closure of the libraries limited our access to written material. There has been several cases where we came across interesting book titles, but we considered it unfeasible to buy all the books we came over without being sure of their added value. The limited access to the library is also an explanation of our narrow use of sources in the methodology chapter. However, we feel confident about the trustworthiness of the sources we had available. [Bryman \(2016\)](#), [Ringdal \(2007\)](#) and [Tjora \(2017\)](#) are all well recognized books on methodology.

More significantly, some of our informants canceled the interviews or rejected the invitation due to the implications of the outbreak. The consequences were a slight change of scope. We had initially planned to also interview some of the people influencing policy and practice of the Norwegian aid system and representatives from the Norwegian directorate of aid. As we realized that this would not be achievable within a reasonable period of time, we decided to move ahead with the data we already had and adjust the scope of this thesis accordingly. Looking back, that might have been favorable for this thesis due to the limited research on the field. We do, however, suggest that future research should look further into the findings of our study in the context of also the policy makers, as we initially had intended.

The most impacting consequence was still the fact that our everyday life changed. This includes the shift in working conditions. After the shutdown we, as master's partners, have not met in person. We have both been working remotely and all communication has been done online or via telephone. The same goes for the communication with our supervisor. Working separately has made it challenging to fully exploit the benefits of being two people on the same project as we have not been able to discuss in the same manner as we normally would. Moreover, transitioning and finding a new working rhythm always takes time, and we both spent some time to adapt to the new situation. This, naturally enough, impacted the efficiency of the work. In short, working from home has been a situation with more hours spent and less work done.



## 4 Empirical Data

This chapter is dedicated to present the key findings from our empirical research. The presentation is split in three sections: Section 4.1 **Importance of Local Ownership and Involvement** concerns one of the most central topics in the interviews. This is followed by Section 4.2 **Aid Projects as "Standard" Projects**, where the design and method for implementing aid projects are discussed. Lastly, Section 4.3 **Aid Projects in a Broader Context** presents viewpoints on a topic brought up by the informants themselves.

### 4.1 Importance of Local Ownership and Involvement

There are always at least two parties in any aid project: the project donor(s) and the project recipient(s). The relationship between these two, and the extent to which the recipients should be included in the project organization, were central topics elaborated on by the informants. The degree of the recipients' involvement and say in choosing the design and setting the goals of the project was discussed in light of striving towards sustainable projects.

#### 4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project

When reflecting on successful projects that result in lasting change, all the informants highlighted ownership as being important. Change in society takes time, and as a project terminates and the donor pulls out, local ownership is needed to continue the processes that have been initiated. The informants explained that without the recipients having ownership, chances are great that they will not maintain the project results and benefits over the long run.

*"I think it is extremely important to have proper local ownership. [...] The progression that has been started will not continue if the locals do not have ownership."*

— Scholarship Patron

The Evaluations Expert elaborated on the need for local ownership, underlining that the recipients must not only be involved in the process, but feel that it is actually their own

project. He believed this was essential to obtain a lasting impact. He stated that there is a one-to-one relationship between sustainability and ownership.

*“What does it take? There is one term that is both ‘alpha’ and ‘omega’. It’s ownership. [...] There is basically a one-to-one relation between sustainability and ownership.”*

— Evaluations Expert

Obtaining this ownership often requires that immediate efficiency must be sacrificed in favor of slower, more costly, and often more complex processes. While the need for this was repeatedly stated by the informants, they acknowledged that there was often a lack of time and options to prioritize local ownership of the project.

*“You have to accept more costly processes. They take more time and are sometimes more complex but in return they ensure ownership.”*

— Evaluations Expert

However, ownership does not solely depend on the donor. The Researcher emphasized that it is also a result of communal effort and initiatives, and that without engaged people from both parties there is little chance for lasting results. This view surfaced while reflecting back on an experience from a recent project with partners from both developed and developing countries. In this project they found it difficult to get clear-cut initiative proposals from the partners coming from the developing countries. This resulted in the project’s participants not contributing to and fulfilling the tasks they were designated.

*“It was more me pushing the deliverables, and I don’t think that’s necessarily the best methodology or the way to make a project last the longest. [...] Everyone needs to be on board, to contribute to decisions, and really own those decisions.”*

— Researcher

When the receiver is engaged, involved, and has something at stake, a majority of informants specifically asserted that the chances of ownership increase. The Evaluations Expert especially stated the importance of the recipient actually being the driving force behind a project. He underscored that the donor’s job should be to support and facilitate, not to be the one pushing the project forward. He further stated that, although it is beneficial if the receiver also puts money into the project, what is of actual importance is

that they spend a lot of time and get their social network committed to make it succeed.

*"You could say that it should be the recipient's responsibility to run the project, not an outside entity pushing it. The donor should focus on supporting and facilitating them as best as possible. This sounds ideal, but it is of course not always that easy."*

— Evaluations Expert

### 4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community

The importance of having locally grounded ideas and strategies was repeatedly emphasized by the informants. While it cannot always be expected that people in need of aid are aware of all the existing options and possibilities, implementing purely Western or personal ideas and strategies is not a desirable game plan either. When the project organization delivers a "turnkey" solution, or invests considerable resources without including the recipients in the process, it will often turn out to be ineffective. This will also be the case when projects are run without knowledge about the basic foundations already in place. Most informants mentioned three main reasons for the need to prioritize locally-grounded ideas and strategies: local knowledge, support, and willingness to sustain the results upon project termination.

*"It has happened that we have come with ideas from our Norwegian way of seeing the world and think that it will work. But then they say: 'No, that does not work in [our country].' So we have to always have a close dialogue around that."*

— Scholarship Patron

Examples were given of situations where people with local knowledge realized, upfront, that a project would fail because the concept was unsuitable for the local area. It is not uncommon for projects to try to tackle a problem that does not exist, or that is not a priority for the locals. Therefore, for a project to have a significant, positive impact, in depth knowledge about the local situation and conditions is essential.

*"If I were to point at one thing that is absolutely crucial for success, both in the short and long term, it would without doubt be knowledge about the local situation."*

— Development Economist

*"In the end, the locals just laughed at the foreigners who had planted these tomato plants, because they knew that in that area there were lots of hippopotamuses."*

— Scholarship Patron

Instead of including the local community and building on what is already there, many projects are based on ideas and strategies developed from the outside, in a completely different context. The Microeconomist compared it to how Norwegian agriculture is structured. In Norway, some areas are better suited for pig farming, others for cattle. By considering the greater picture and building on the strengths of an area, Norway has taken advantage of the given conditions. However, we do not always succeed in doing the same when implementing projects in developing countries. Instead of considering and utilizing local capabilities and conditions, projects are blindly implemented based on pre-determined ideas and strategies.

*"It is about building on their strengths and improving what already is good."*

— Microeconomist

*"We have considered what you need. This is not a white man's idea on how to save Africa, without validation from the real world."*

— Philanthropist

The Philanthropist made a distinction between identifying what the target group is missing, and choosing the correct interventions. While the donor might be the most capable of identifying needs, local knowledge is important to succeed with the implementation and accomplish lasting alleviation.

*"For example, if you are a doctor in Norway you probably know a lot more about what vitamins an average African needs than that person himself, because they do not have a medical education. But which interventions work best, and how to implement them, often depends on demographics, geography, etc."*

— Philanthropist

He continued by explaining that utilizing typical Western solutions might require a significant change in the daily routines of the recipients, and these types of interventions

may not be sustainable. The changes must, therefore, be implemented in a way that does not expect an untenable change of local patterns of behavior and habits.

Locally grounding of a project is also important for gaining local support, and ensuring that the project will be maintained and cultivated after the project organization pulls out. The Development Economist stated that in cases where both the concept and interventions are suited, the project is more likely to last and attain the desired results.

*"Sometimes development project designers assume that their own ideas will be understood and liked by the recipients. Thereby, projects start without being grounded in local conditions and interests. I think that can lead to projects, that otherwise could have had good results, becoming the typical 'funded for three years and then just disappears' type of project."*

— Development Economist

The International Expert, Evaluations Expert and Development Economist had all been working closely with highly prestigious international development organizations. It is thus noteworthy that they underscored that people tend to perceive things according to their own mandate and self-interest and, subsequently, will present their ideas as essential to the development of a country, without necessarily making sure that they are clear on what the problem actually is and what the best response is. Too often, they stated, are projects being initiated based on how the initiator perceive the situation.

*"You know, the [international agency] will tell you that a certain kind of thing that relates to its mandate is absolutely essential to the development of a country, then please give us the funding for it. But people tend to perceive things according to their mandates and self-interest. And there's a lot of that."*

— International Expert

With the aim of this project being to contribute in the discussion of how to obtain lasting impact of aid projects in developing countries, the informants views on this question was naturally enough raised in all of the interviews. What surprised us was the fact that all of them seemed to be on the same page. There is a need to take the local context more into consideration and ensure that the solution is relevant and possible to maintain over time. "Maintaining" was in this context employed to describe the locals priority and ability to

use and sustain the project result.

*" Since there are so many different types of aid projects it is of course difficult to define exactly what that includes. [...] But firstly, it must be whether the recipients benefit from it. In other words, does it result in the wanted effects for the recipients. There is no doubt that that must be the first point. Number two: Is it possible to maintain it with time. If these two are present, one will get a lasting positive impact for the recipient, or the targeted group. [...] If these two are present one should be able to say that it was a success."*

— Development Economist

### 4.1.3 Aid Projects as "Business Development"

One method of ensuring local ownership of a project, especially affirmed by the informants, is to "turn it all into business". Words such as "business", "market", "trade", "job creation", and "local economy" were mentioned on 44 separate occasions, in total, during the interviews. By helping the locals start up their own businesses based on local resources and ideas, they will much more easily feel responsibility and the pride of ownership. The informants observed that this leads to a much higher chance that project results will last.

*"Many aid projects are kind of like relying on an artificial heartbeat. If we leave, production will sooner or later come to halt. But if they become profitable, they will continue to grow, and this will lead to great job creation. In theory, you then have something that can last forever."*

— Development Economist

The principal concept behind aid as business development is to benefit from the mechanisms in the economy. Thus, it is important to make sure that the concept is designed to be sustainable on its own. The Aid Investor, Evaluations Expert and Development Economist stressed the importance of building strong value chains based on the "gravity rules" of the economy. The Development Economist underscored that the same concept is valid for all kinds of aid.

*"You have to work with the gravity of the economy. [...] The point is that it will cease, unless a value chain, a self-sustaining activity driven by the laws of economic gravity, is created."*

— Aid Investor

A widespread method to promote aid as business is to support smallholders. This is commonly done by focusing on increasing their production, and often accomplished through providing inputs that are subsidized or directly supported. But the approach is not necessarily sustainable, unless the period of subsidies and support is used to balance demand and supply. The Development Economist exemplified it with the lacking effect of the Nerica rice initiative in one of the countries he had been working. A new rice variety, called Nerica (New Rice for Africa), was developed to improve the yields of rice. The new rice type was better suited for the local conditions than the traditional rice variety and successfully increased the yields. The project was accordingly stated as a success. Nonetheless, when the project came to an end, things went back to the situation that was before the project was implemented. Supply and demand had not been balanced, and hence, the farmers could not afford the expensive Nerica seeds.

*"A study showed that the seeds were too expensive, so as soon as the project was over, the farmers returned to the traditional varieties. The increased production and what they could earn from it was not enough to offset the increased cost."*

— Development Economist

#### 4.1.4 The Informants' Definition of Sustainability

In the context of aiming towards sustainable results in aid projects, the informants all explained what they associated with the word "sustainability". Their definitions fell into two categories. One focused on terms having to do with lasting results after official project termination. The other was closely tied to the concept of a triple bottom line.

*"If you are supporting something, it should ideally continue when you are no longer there. This means that when you are no longer providing the aid, things should continue without your help. That is the core of sustainability."*

— Evaluations Expert

*"That you increase the wealth in a way that doesn't compromise people, climate, nature, etc., in an unjustifiable way. [...] Everyone talks about that one should have a triple bottom line."*

— Business Promoter

One third of the informants fell into each of these categories, but the last third included both perspectives when defining the term. The Scholarship Patron, for instance, specifically distinguished sustainability from sustainable development, the first being value that lasts for a longer time, and the latter being value creation to all the three aspects of the TBL - economy, environment and society.

The Researcher also used both viewpoints when talking about the term. However, she expressed that there were complications connected to this subject when cooperating with others. Her explanation was that the participants in a project she took part in had different views on sustainability. Defining the term and setting common sustainable goals with people from different cultures was, therefore, not always that simple.

*"We had a lot of discussions between all of the groups on what sustainability really was. [...] We ended up having to allow a common conceptual model to be the base case, but then letting everyone take it in their own way and focus where they needed."*

— Researcher

## 4.2 Aid Projects as "Standard" Projects

In the interviews, the actual design and methods for implementation of aid projects were also discussed extensively. It was concluded that there should be a different and unique focus in aid projects. However, the described set-up and implementation resembled, to a large degree, the one of any "standard" project.

### 4.2.1 Need for Planned Flexibility

In their descriptions of general aid projects, all the informants mentioned setting up a plan as one of the first stages of the process of such a project. They all agreed that it is necessary to plan upfront, yet the level of detail and degree of flexibility became topics for reflection. The fact that situations change, and local contexts or needs often differ from what one originally anticipated, was brought up in most interviews. This aspect was the reason why the informants concluded that an upfront plan is important, but that



one must have the ability to be flexible when arriving on the ground and rolling out the project.

*“Some projects can be planned and followed up on easily. Others are living processes with surroundings or market situations that can change unexpectedly. In these cases one has to be dynamic. [...] Plans are important but they are not written in stone.”*

— Business Promoter

Informants in favor of a high degree of flexibility underscored the importance of having clear objectives and recorded assumptions. As plans are usually made based on limited knowledge and uncertain assumptions, these should be tested during project implementation, and changed if needed. Flexibility can, based on the informants descriptions, be considered as allowing for adjustments in order to reach the overall goal. In other words: "flexibility with a direction".

*"If you are going to use flexibility, you will also have to know where you are, where you want to go and how you want to get there. Otherwise, there will be flexibility without direction, and that will lead to poor results."*

— Evaluations Expert

The Philanthropist's view, though also building on this, was slightly different from the others'. He insisted that solid long-term planning is indispensable. One should know exactly what to do in all potential scenarios, and have a type of "planned flexibility". This meant preparing many different plans and concrete alternatives but then being flexible to choose between them. The Philanthropist saw this as a valuable key solution to know what to do when things do not go as planned. He understood that some people might conclude that due to the endless amount of mistakes one can make, it might be easier to simply avoid planning. This would make unexpected events less prominent. However, he was convinced that haphazard management could make things even worse.

Several of the informants, especially the International Expert and the Business Promoter, were also concerned about the possibilities for aggravating the situations in developing countries. They explained that projects in these places will be affecting some of the poorest people in the world. Therefore, if something goes wrong, it can potentially have serious

repercussions. The informants concluded that this is one of the reasons that planning upfront of commencing an aid project in a developing area is extremely important.

*"The point that I was trying to make, is that an unplanned, badly implemented project often has a serious consequence. And the more fragile the situation is, usually the bigger consequence."*

— International Expert

In contrast to this, the Aid Investor, despite being in favor of having a plan, had a concern that a set plan can be disadvantageous. He described that plans often do not work as one had expected because they are typically based on what life looks like in the donor's context instead of the recipients'. Thereby, he viewed plans as tending to be inadequate, and impossible to fully implement in the respective country. However, the problem, according to him, and also the Researcher and the Evaluations Expert, is that donors often require plans and will seldom be open for a redistribution of the funds. He explained that they wish to see documentations of their original expectations being fulfilled and are often not flexible enough.

*"You become tied down and restricted. This is something which I think is very unfortunate because when you dive into Africa, things don't always go as planned."*

— Aid Investor

*"I think it would have been very beneficial if we could have said: 'Okay, we see this isn't working so well. Let's maybe take it in another direction'. I think that is the best way, maybe being more concrete in the beginning, but then having the flexibility to make some changes as you go."*

— Researcher

### 4.2.2 Standard Project Management in a Different Context

While conversing with the informants about aid projects it became apparent that most of them, when seeing it from a project manager's point of view, treated these projects as any other "standard" project. This implies that they would speak about typical project management tools and strategies. They would also utilize typical models for projects and project management when explaining certain concepts or processes.

The Evaluations Expert pointed out that there should, in principle, be no difference between projects conducted in developed and developing countries. However, he was sure that there are huge contextual differences, not only from the donors' world to the recipients', but even between the developing countries. This changes the way projects need to be directed.

*"There should in principle not be any difference. [...] But it depends a lot on the developing country. Developing countries are very different, because the context of each country is different."*

— Evaluations Expert

### 4.2.3 A General Aid Project Structure

Seven of the ten informants laid out what they believed to be a suitable phase by phase set-up for a general aid project. Their approaches differed slightly, depending on whether the design was based on a traditional aid project, or one that is instituted more like a business project. Regardless of the two, distinctly different starting points, all the suggested models aggregate to one general outline, as explained in the subsequent paragraphs, which has been made into a model that is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

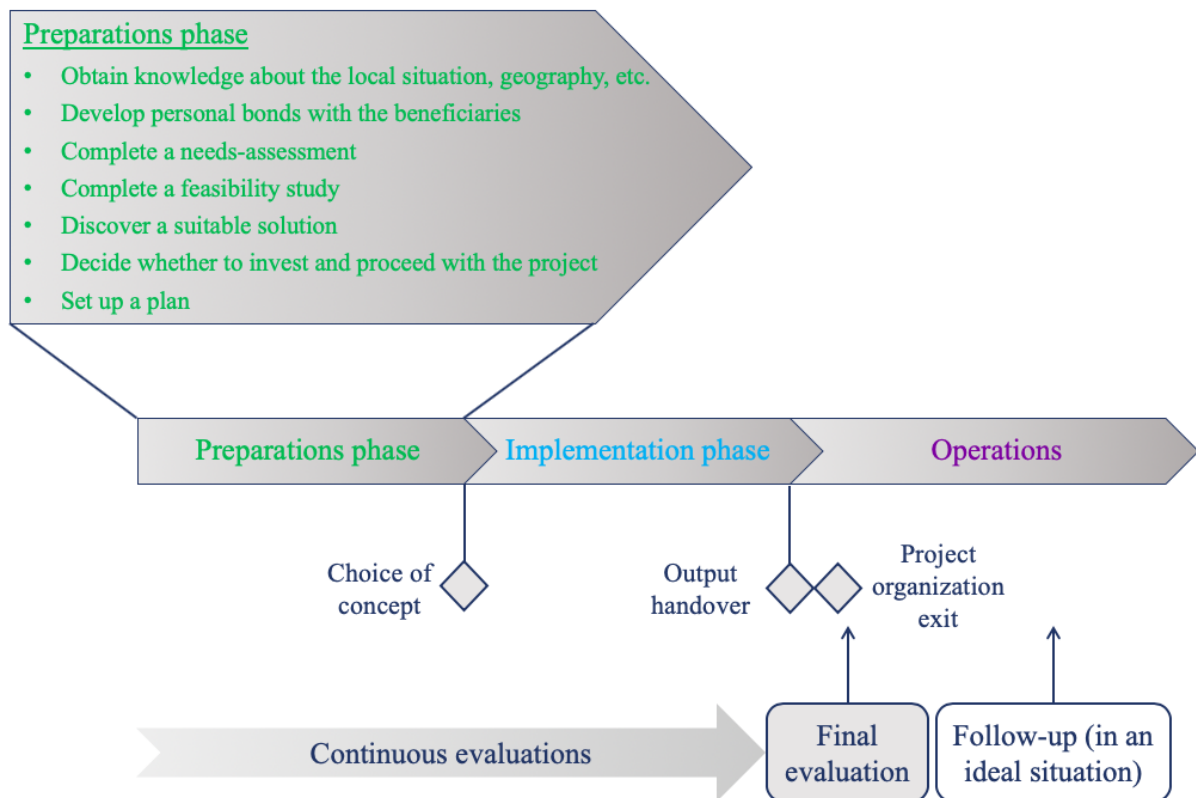
The first part of the process turned out to be challenging to put into words and structure in explicit phases. However, a general conclusion was that there must definitely be a stage of preparation before a project can be put into motion. This part would include elements such as the ones specified in Figure 4.1.

Connecting with the locals and considering them in this preparations phase was especially emphasized as important for aid projects in developing countries.

*"I think the first thing one has to do is build a network with the locals and build trust. One has to find out what the needs actually are instead of guessing what they might be, and then doing what one thinks is appropriate. One has to listen to the locals. Build trust."*

— Scholarship Patron

The needs assessment was reiterated and accentuated, especially by five of the informants. They stressed that if a project organization does not have adequate knowledge about the



**Figure 4.1:** A general outline of an aid project, as explained by the informants of this research project.

local society, the result might be that they force inappropriate solutions. In this case, the informants explained, there is no chance for an aid project to survive or have a positive impact in the long run. Without carrying out a comprehensive needs assessment in the local community, it was feared that projects will likely end up being based on the donor's own background and experiences from other areas. As mentioned earlier, these concepts will not necessarily lead to the same results elsewhere.

*"First of all, the projects have to be relevant. Whatever priority development need is in the society, the project has to reflect that. Projects that are imposed and do not do this, fail because they are irrelevant."*

— International Expert

It recurred in all seven answers that the subsequent phases, after the preparations part, were easier to list. An implementations phase was mentioned, followed by a handover of the project and the project organization's exit. Lastly, it was concluded that, in an ideal situation, some type of followup or post-project evaluation should be made after the official project termination.

#### 4.2.4 Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation

The need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation was stated repeatedly by half of the informants. At the same time, even more of them confessed that there is often too much focus on formalities such as reporting, instead of focusing on the actual goals of the aid project - to the point that it actually diminishes the positive impact for the recipients. Close to all the informants expressed their feelings that reporting can be a nightmare and that there are arguments that there should be less of it.

*"To me it is a paradox, spending so much time and money trying to report and measure the effects of what one has done. I sometimes think that organizations are pushed too hard when it comes to what they have to document.*

— Business Promoter

The Evaluations Expert distinguished between reporting on the "output" level and the "outcome" level. The output level is easy to consecutively monitor along the way and could say something about the direction of the project. However, he continued, the real value is attained at the outcome level, and indicators should be identified there as well. Reporting too frequently, on the other hand, can be challenging on the outcome level, and stocktaking at regular intervals is therefore preferable.

As an illustration, a project focusing on girls education could, on the output level, use indicators such as the number of girls enrolled in school, the amount of hours they spend there, the qualifications of the educators, the extent of the curriculum, and the quality of teaching. Indicators on the outcome level, on the other hand, could be the share of girls continuing on with higher education or whether they get a job afterwards.

Unfortunately, the informants pointed out that the assessments of aid projects often focus too much on the immediate outputs instead of the longer term results.

*"In general I would say that the long-term consequences are undervalued. [...] They made a point out of that - that the evaluations we do are too short-term, and that that results in us not prioritizing the most long-term projects."*

— Philanthropist

Despite there being many strict rules on reporting, a general opinion among the informants

surfaced that reporting, and the evaluations of the reports, often does not have the desired effect. In many cases, these evaluations are not taken much into consideration afterwards.

*"One actually knew it in 2010. An evaluation had already been made by then. [...] Already at that point one was aware of the problem. However, the recommendation from that evaluation was virtually ignored."*

— Evaluations Expert

The informants were eager to underline that there is no point in evaluating projects if the evaluations cannot be utilized to improve other projects.

*"It doesn't make sense to make evaluations if they do not result in changes in the way aid is done in practice."*

— Evaluations Expert

The Evaluations Expert furthermore reflected on how evaluations are received and used differently in different cultures. He said that some cultures make good use of evaluations and are open for discussing their own projects, with the aim to improve. However, he also revealed that there are other cultures, Norway included, where evaluations are ignored. In these cases, he agreed that reporting loses its value.

*"It depends on the culture. Evaluations delivered in Sweden are taken very seriously. They lead to good discussions trying to find useful recommendations. Denmark and Norway and the Brits are maybe a bit less open for criticism."*

— Evaluations Expert

### 4.3 Aid Projects in a Broader Context

Despite not being a topic brought up by us as interviewers, several of the informants elaborated on the relation between aid projects and their larger context. These reflections were often mentioned in a context underscoring that no aid project exists in a vacuum. Aid projects are both affected by and have impact on, their surroundings, and hence they have to be considered in a larger context.

*"Anytime we're looking at causality and success or failure of a project, there are many variables that affect it. No aid project is done in isolation. It's interacting with, and depending on, many other things, many other cultures,*

*and many other variables."*

— International Expert

### 4.3.1 The Diminishing Importance of Aid

While all the informants spoke enthusiastically about nurturing local economies and markets, most of them agreed that traditional aid also has its importance. They found that emergency relief aid is often too acute to operate using only local resources. Assistance projects that provide education were another example which they did not see as possible to carry out through a business model. The need of projects that not only serve, but also develop an area, was however highlighted.

*"I could easily fall into the trap of favoring the type of projects I do myself. But as I said, emergency response is something we have to do for humanitarian reasons, so it is not that those projects are wrong. But I do think projects that make people able to increase their own living standard, purchasing power, and dignity, is a good approach."*

— Aid Investor

The International Expert, on the other hand, believed that there is a diminishing relevance of aid. To further elaborate, he defined aid as the transfer of knowledge and technology, and money to support an activity. He pointed out that trade and finance are examples of elements that are more important.

*"Trade! Financing. Remittances are more important to many countries than aid."*

— International Expert

The Philanthropist also shared this opinion. He said that aid projects should always be evaluated and compared with a benchmark. A project is only worth going through with if it will culminate in results that are better than simply giving the locals that amount of money directly. He claimed that all projects that do not have a higher cost efficiency than this benchmark, are inferior.

*"There exists very good documentation showing the effect of simply giving money to the extreme poor. It shows that they use it very wisely."*

— International Expert

The Business Promoter drew attention to the existing fear against handing out money with no targeted purpose or plan. People and organizations within the field of aid projects are afraid of not being able to document and defend their intentions if a project ends up going wrong.

*"[...] 'Helicopter money' just dropped over the community without knowing what will happen. In the field of aid, there is an extreme anxiety for doing something wrong or to be caught doing something that has no effect."*

— Business Promoter

### 4.3.2 Framework Conditions

The importance of making sure that a proper infrastructure exists in the society one is planning on entering, was highlighted in the interviews. All basic service delivery presupposes that there is a bigger system behind to support it, and, not least, a local government that accepts the changes.

The Evaluations Expert, the International Expert and the Scholarship Patron emphasized that outputs only matter if the communities are able to translate them into outcomes. Building schools was again used as an example. If the goal is to provide girls with schooling, this cannot be satisfied by building an institution where the government essentially only allows education for boys. The International Expert underscored that a vast number of project reports report positively with respect to outputs and go on about *anticipated* outcomes. However, he commented, if you *"go and dig a little bit deeper"*, you will see that the assessment of causal change often stops there.

*"The bigger systemic things that needed to sustain the project were not considered, weren't taken care of and things collapsed."*

— International Expert

They furthermore pointed out that the locals must be equipped and have the expertise to maintain and repair the outputs in order for the outcome to survive and lead to development. This was also demonstrated through the school example. Buildings (outputs) will have no outcome if there are no resources to maintain and run them, or children to attend.



*"What is important regarding aid as business development, is that one also has to contribute in building the infrastructure around it. The infrastructure is a prerequisite for creating growth and development over time."*

— CSR Consultant

Without a decent baseline, all three informants admitted, there will be no point in trying to make changes.

*"Projects deliver outputs, right. Dig a well, build a school, that's an output. Outputs only matter when communities translate them into outcomes. That the school is actually used. For a school to be used there has to be students, there has to be teachers, there has to be funding, etc. [...] So success comes when outputs become outcomes. And translation into outcomes often requires that things are valued and used and that they're appropriate, and that the sustaining resources are there in place."*

— International Expert

### 4.3.3 Aid as a Political Instrument

Both of the experts, who have assessed many aid projects run by major development programs, highlighted the fact that all aid is political. This statement was further strengthened by the remaining informants who, at separate points, also mentioned the topic and the fact that there is often a political motive or dependency connected to aid projects.

The general understanding was that, when considering aid in a larger context, the fact that the allocation and transfer of resources is political cannot be ignored. It was specifically mentioned by the International Expert that aid can be used as a political instrument by the donor, as bringing additional resources into an area represents a potential for political influence. He said, and the Development Economist, the Evaluations Expert, and the Philanthropist also indicated the same impression, that it is commonly the donor who decides how the funds will be distributed. This was presented as an issue, both if there are political differences between the donor parties and a political consensus cannot be reached, and even more so if the donors have underlying motivations that focus on their own benefits from the project.

*"A minority of Norwegian aid money is allocated based on the experts' advise. The rest is given and managed by politicians. [...] Norwegian aid is too politically motivated."*

— Philanthropist

*"In the past five years there has become a greater focus on the donors' own interest and what's in it for them."*

— Evaluations Expert

The two experts also both mentioned that bringing additional resources into an area represents a risk of negatively affecting the interaction and relations between different subgroups in the area. Several concrete examples were given, one of them being a market and basketball court built in an African town by a reputable international aid agency. The intention was to improve the neighborhood and enhance the credibility of the government. But the cement workers did not do proper due diligence, monitoring of the cement and technical quality assurance of the construction. Within two months into the rainy season, the construction cracked and fell in. This resulted in a situation aggravating the legitimacy of the government and having negative impacts, despite the project being run by an international organization aiming to improve the community. A similar aspect mentioned was the often unseen consequences of an implemented change.

*"There was a large influx of donor money. The short story is that it was incredibly badly managed [...]. So when things aren't done right and the work is divorced from the political reality, they can actually increase problems as opposed to mitigating them."*

— International Expert

#### 4.3.4 Higher Level System Change Versus Small-Scale Initiatives

The Evaluation Expert brought up the topic of aid being driven as small-scale initiatives versus larger-scale system changes. It also became apparent in the other interviews that the informants had differing views on what level aid projects should be conducted.

After spending a year abroad, the Scholarship Patron founded an organization providing scholarships for girls who otherwise would not have had access to an education. When asked why, the answer given was: coincidence. In contrast, the Evaluations Expert,

with his background from major development projects and organizations, problematized aid projects being driven as minor initiatives. Despite being beneficial for the people involved, he believed that they will not change the higher level systems. He presented a concrete example of a school project in the same country as the scholarship organization. The project receives a great amount of money from different funds and is driven by a successful Nordic businessperson. While the institution run by this project has more resources per student and is probably better than the other institutions in that country, there is also a risk that the schooling might suddenly stop if the project terminates. The Evaluations Expert summarized all this as being a trade-off between gradually improving all the schools, through time-consuming work on the educational system in general, or concentrating all the time and resources to deeply improve only a few schools.

*"A good example is that there are many private philanthropists. [...] The problem is that, when it is over, when you have no more money, then what? So in that way, the larger institutional type of aid projects are typically the most sustainable, but it takes longer to see the results."*

— Evaluations Expert

The International Expert also meant that without including the larger political context when giving aid and remittances, simply injecting money and resources into a society has no purpose. He was sure that smaller projects that ignore politics and do not intend to change the underlying system, do not have the probability of succeeding in the long-term.

*"I think we have to keep aid in context. Aid alone is of diminishing relevance. There are many more important things that influence development outcomes than aid."*

— International Expert

### 4.3.5 The Forgotten Purpose of Aid

Throughout the interviews, several informants questioned whether aid has become too project oriented, the consequence being that the main purpose is forgotten. Could it be that aid projects are more focused on being successful on the "project management" level than actually helping? Examples given were a dominant focus on meeting the deliverables, making processes, and finishing on-time and on-budget. Other informants also gave

examples of projects reported as successful at the point of termination, but where the actual long-term value and outcome was only anticipated and afterwards forgotten.

*"You could run all kinds of projects, but in the end if you cannot say that they have made a difference for people on the ground, then it is completely indifferent what you do, right?"*

— Evaluations Expert

One of the examples originated in a country in East-Africa, where an agency funded by several major organizations conducted an agriculture development project. A costly road was built into a village to make it possible to deliver milk. The problem, however, was that about half of the amount of milk they received had to be drained away because of the lack of electricity and the equipment needed to process it. The locals tried their best to pasteurize the milk over an open fire, but without success. The local farmers also received a herd of cows, but with no training on how to take care of them. In other words, the project managed to produce its planned deliverables - roads had been built, machines delivered and cows bought - but the intended result was never achieved.

*"That is how they work. Projects run for three to six years and then they're over. [...] Did they get that road? Yes. Did they buy those cows? Yes. [...] There are no follow-up questions. Do they produce milk? Are they able to process the milk? Nothing. They had built the building and finished the road. Check."*

— Microeconomist

The Aid Investor used the term "project industry" to describe trends in modern aid. Before a project terminates, the project organization is already looking for the next project to work on. Western people have made a living out of running aid projects, and might end up being more concerned about their own careers and income than the long-term benefits for the people in need of help.

*"And then, there is a hunt for the next project. It could almost be a designated PhD to study what percentage of aid activity suffers from projectification. How many people are earning their livelihood from this project industry?"*

— Aid Investor

## 5 Discussion

Now that the theoretical foundation and methodologies have been established, and we have reviewed some of the key findings of our interviews, we are ready to dig deeper into the questions at the core of our thesis, that is, the **Problem Statement**: *How can development aid projects help people in a relevant and sustainable way?* The structure of this chapter is based on the data structure presented in Figure 3.4 in Section 3.4 **Analyzing the Research Data**, and explores the two sub-questions laid out in Chapter 1 **Introduction**.

### 5.1 Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset

In Chapter 1 **Introduction** we present the **first Sub-Question** of our **Problem Statement** as having to do with the extent to which traditional project management is also suitable in aid projects. We query whether, by implementing standard tools and methods, aid projects might be having a harder time achieving their goals. **Sub-Question 1** is worded as follows:

*"What possible mistakes can prevent the attainment of relevant and sustainable aid project results?"*

To guide the discussion, the question is broken down into three propositions, **SQ1-P1**, **SQ1-P2** and **SQ1-P3**, at the end of Chapter 2 **Theoretical Background**, in Subsection 2.7.1 **Propositions to Sub-Question 1**. Now, in this section, we start each subsection by restating these propositions. Thereafter, we present the relevant key empirical findings and summarize what they mean to the proposition. An attempt is made to note any convergence or divergence of opinions, looking for consensus. Additionally, conclusions on the empirical findings in light of the theory are discussed, before concluding with our own reflections and suggestions.

#### 5.1.1 A "Sustainable" Definition of Sustainability

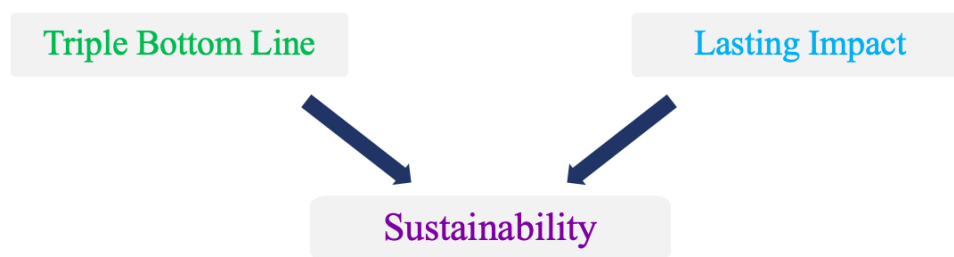
When seeking to maximize the sustainability of aid projects, a good starting point is to have the appropriate mindset about what that exactly means. **SQ1-P1** proposes that *"'sustainability' defined as the 'triple bottom line' is appropriate for aid projects"*.

The empirical findings from Subsection 4.1.4 [The Informants' Definition of Sustainability](#) show that there was no clear consensus on the meaning of sustainability. The insight from the Researcher at the end of the subsection, nevertheless, identifies that it is necessary to find a prevailing definition. Considering that there was an equal split between informants explaining sustainability as having a lasting impact, ensuring a triple bottom line, or including both definitions, we do not believe that [Proposition SQ1-P1](#) is valid.

The theory from Section 2.2 [Sustainable Projects](#) states that the field of project management contains multiple definitions of the concept of sustainability. Additionally, several sources mentioned in Subsection 2.2.2 [Sustainable Results in Projects](#) find that each definition also has fragmented interpretations. This can moreover be confirmed through the information given by the informants, which signals that a clearer definition of sustainability is needed. Subsection 2.2.1 [Definition of Sustainability Within Project Management](#) considers, in alignment with the informants' proposals, two separate notions of the term sustainability. However, theory from Subsection 2.2.2 [Sustainable Results in Projects](#) says that there is, in literature and in traditional project management, a great focus on sustainability defined as the TBL. This does not cohere with our empirical findings, which indicate that neither notion is more important than the other when it comes to the term used in practice.

Section 2.2 [Sustainable Projects](#) showed that sustainability as the TBL is thoroughly elaborated on in the literature, whereas theory on sustainability as lasting impact is not as well documented. Realizing that "Lasting Impact" is also a vital component, reveals that the dominant focus on sustainability understood in terms of a triple bottom line might be misleading. Thus, we suggest that conducting projects with a TBL perspective of sustainability is insufficient if it leads to results that are not relevant, or that will not be used and maintained further into the future. The long-term impact must, therefore, also be considered. Hence, we argue that the triple bottom line and lasting impact represent two components of sustainability, as illustrated in [Figure 5.1](#). These two are complementary: While the first perspective is related to conducting projects in ways that will not lead to results *compromising* the future, the latter perspective concerns finding results that will *last into* the future.

The fact that project management literature applies a definition of sustainability slightly



**Figure 5.1:** True sustainability is obtained by ensuring both the TBL and a lasting impact.

skewed towards the triple bottom line, seems, in particular, not adequate for aid projects. [Carvalho & Rabechini \(2017\)](#), [Chofreh et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Martens & Carvalho \(2016a\)](#) find a positive correlation between conducting projects sustainably and projects being successful (see Subsection [2.2.2 Sustainable Results in Projects](#)). For this to be correct for aid projects we identify that the definition of sustainability must be altered and asserted more appropriately. Aid, being processes aiming to help or support someone, requires a long-term perspective. This also becomes clear through the [OECD \(2008\)](#) evaluation criteria, which include the elements "impact" and "sustainability". Without these perspectives being considered, there are great chances that a project might implement a solution which only momentarily helps or fixes a problem. This might, in the end, lead to the situation going back to its original state before project implementation (or maybe to one that is worse). The project might end up having a negative impact on the beneficiary in the longer run and will evidently not be successful. The definition of sustainability given by the Brundtland Commission ([WCED, 1987](#)), and the TBL framework developed in light of it ([Elkington, 2018](#)), can, therefore, not be used alone as a definition of sustainability when speaking of aid projects. The findings in our research confirm this, and affirm the approach suggested in our [Figure 5.1](#). Sustainability should be a collective term, consisting of two complimentary components: "Triple Bottom Line" and "Lasting Impact".

### 5.1.2 Compulsory Planning - One Size Does Not Fit All

Structure and systems have become a great part of today's world. In Subsection [2.3.1 Planning Projects](#) the contemplation about how much planning and how much flexibility are necessary in aid projects, leads to proposition [SQ1-P2](#), that: "*Failing to plan is planning to fail.*"

Subsection 4.2.1 *Need for Planned Flexibility* begins by clarifying that all the informants agreed that planning is one of the first steps of a general aid project. Further reflections showed, however, that while some elements can and must be planned, others are too context dependent. The findings in Subsections 4.1.2 *Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community*, 4.2.1 *Need for Planned Flexibility*, and 4.2.2 *Standard Project Management in a Different Context*, all indicate that planning for aid projects in a developing area while sitting in a comfortable, isolated office in another, developed country, is problematic. This is a situation which makes it arduous and almost inconceivable to foresee and account for the many unexpected changes, unpredictable reactions, or undetected culture differences and needs that might exist in the target group's context. Once a project gets into the execution phase, some of the assumptions the planning was based on might be proven wrong. These unpredictable elements are uncertainties for which one cannot make a checklist or a manual. They will vary between every project and every context. We can already detect here that there is something about how aid projects require flexibility that does not conform to the statement in *Proposition SQ1-P2*, that planning is indispensable in order to succeed.

Time is also an important part of the discussion around the required amount of planning and the allowance for flexibility. These two elements have a lot to do with having and portioning out time. As discussed in the previous paragraph, aid projects were regarded by the informants as having a high degree of uncertainty. Adjusting to these unpredictabilities when implementing a project requires time. In contrast to what *Proposition SQ1-P2* asserts, an overly strict plan might ensure that a project fails, as the planned implementations, set time frame, and finite resources force the project to move forward too quickly. An example that the Researcher elaborated on (mentioned at the end of Subsection 4.2.1 *Need for Planned Flexibility*) was a program pressed on all of these aspects. The Researcher believed that they could have achieved much more with the project if they had only had more time and the flexibility to change their plans. Unfortunately, they did not have this option, and the Researcher regarded the project as having failed to reach its full potential. This indicates that planning can result in a situation where one is rushed to finalize by a predefined time, and perhaps sacrifice some (or all) of the goals, due to the lack of time to adapt to new, surfacing needs.



There was a notably split opinion, revealed in Subsection [4.2.1 Need for Planned Flexibility](#), about what the informants believed leads to failure and negative consequences in aid projects. Some claimed projects go wrong when the designers attempt to plan them too rigidly. Others stated the opposite, that too little planning is the pitfall. Two solutions suggested as more appropriate by the Evaluations Expert and the Philanthropist in Subsection [4.2.1 Need for Planned Flexibility](#), were "Flexibility With a Direction" and "Planned Flexibility". By being flexible, but having a focused direction (the Evaluations Expert's recommendation), or making several different plans between which one can be flexible to choose from (the Philanthropist's recommendation), a successful outcome can more easily be attained, and unwanted, negative results avoided. Another method, also explained by the Philanthropist and supported by statements from the International Expert, is to evaluate a project against the benchmark of giving the same amount of money directly to the target group. The different approaches, including today's practice, are summarized in Table [5.1](#), which is made to guide the reader.

There is no doubt that theory and traditional project management practices expect projects to include thorough planning upfront. This goes for aid projects as well. As explained in Subsection [2.3.1 Planning Projects](#), a comprehensive plan and justification is required to apply for project funding from [Norad \(2019b\)](#). The findings in the previous paragraphs of this subsection, indicate that this is not convenient in the context of aid projects.

The graph in Figure [2.2](#), shows that with time, the achievable and available information related to a project goes up, while the possibility to be flexible goes down. We see that this backs up the informants' concern about the conflict between the large degree of uncertainty at the beginning of an aid project, and the simultaneous demand for precise plans. As the amount of information achieved goes up, and the uncertainties become less prominent, the flexibility has already been drastically reduced due to obligations towards the donors, and spending limitations.

[Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) emphasize the importance of making evaluations, not only during and right after the project implementations phase, but also during the front-end and operations phases (see both Subsection [2.3.2 Needs Assessment](#) and [2.4.2 Learning From Success and Failure in Projects](#)). This practice could allow for the need for flexibility

**Table 5.1:** Different approaches to making aid project plans and having flexibility. The alternate approaches to the current practice are based on the empirical findings and are given names based on the informants' wording.

Approach	Description	Pros	Cons
<b>Current Practice</b>	A detailed plan is presented to the donor. The project must be conducted according to the plan.	-> Predictable for the donor.	-> Lack of flexibility during project implementation -> Increased chance of total failure.
<b>Flexibility with a Direction</b>	The project has an overall goal and direction, but only a general plan. There is flexibility, as needed, to reach the goal.	-> Enables a high degree of "fit-for-purpose" adaption when needed. -> Reduces the chance of failure due to the unexpected.	-> Requires more agility from the people implementing the project. -> Possible overall time and cost overrun.
<b>Planned Flexibility</b>	An action plan for possible scenarios is made before beginning a project. During project implementation there is flexibility to switch between appropriate plans.	-> The project implementers are prepared and know how to react when necessary.	-> Challenging to anticipate and plan all scenarios and contingencies. -> Time consuming and more costly in the front-end phase.
<b>Benchmarking Process</b>	An evaluation and comparison between implementing a project and giving money directly to the recipient is done. The method with the highest cost efficiency is selected.	-> The recipients, who might understand their needs best, can implement a relevant solution which they can and will use and maintain. -> Time efficient for project implementer.	-> The recipients might not be aware of possible solutions or have capacity to implement them. -> No certainty that the donations will be spent as wished by the donor.

desired by practitioners. The suggestions of "Flexibility With a Direction" or "Planned Flexibility", could be sufficient if a project is reevaluated and adjusted multiple times throughout the project phases. In the firstly mentioned approach, the donor (e.g. [Norad \(2019b\)](#)) could allow a project to apply for donations with an attached explanation of the overall goals, together with a schedule of planned, milestone evaluations. This could, for example, be obtained by requiring the applicants to present their "theory of change" (Subsection [2.3.3 Interventions](#)). For the second alternative, not only one single, written in stone plan would be presented. Several different approaches and plans for what to do in certain possible situations and project directions could rather be attached to the application. In other words, through these two approaches, an important compensation between the practitioners' and the donor's expectations could be established.

The theory in Subsection [2.3.1 Planning Projects](#) introduced the popular saying "failing to plan is to plan to fail" and elaborated on how rigorous planning and control basically are synonyms for good project management. The extensive use of the LFA, as referred to in the theory section, indicates that the aid sector has adopted this orthodoxy thinking. This indication was further demonstrated by how our informants talked about their experiences. Yet, as already elaborated on, we challenge this view. Rigorous planning and control does not only seem to be fruitless, but also harming unless the plans are allowed to be changed. The empirical findings of this thesis affirm that the view of [Dvir & Lechler \(2004\)](#) is likely to hold within the aid sector; Planning is important, but it is unimaginable that aid projects can be performed without any changes. Aid projects are conducted in a highly contextual setting and to secure that the project delivers its intended outcome, the ability to adapt is needed. Thus, "plans are nothing, changing plans is everything".

A project calls for, according to [Maylor et al. \(2006\)](#) (see Subsection [2.1.1 What is a "Project"?](#)) a significant quantity of pre-determinism. This includes clear terms of what to achieve, in what time frame, and with what resources. However, it became apparent in the interviews that one does not always know what the product, service or results of an aid project should be before entering the implementations phase. This is a contradiction to the widely accepted theory that a project should be 100 percent clear on what it should achieve. The informants also underscored the need for flexibility and the challenge of pre-determining a project due to contextual differences. This does not

suit the requirements, from (e.g.) Norad (2019b), that applications for donations should include attached finished, detailed plans.

As stated in Subsection 4.1.1 [Local Ownership of the Project](#), based on the informants' responses: "Change in society takes time". We see that the "time" aspect can be difficult to plan and constrain. The intent of doing so might just prevent a project from actually having an effect and creating positive impact. We therefore conclude that failing to plan is not necessarily planning to fail. Aid projects seem to require flexibility.

We suggest that a good approach can be to take the advice from [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) (see Subsection 2.4.1 [Evaluating the Effect of Aid](#)) and perform an evaluation quite early in a project. This so-called "ex ante evaluation" can be the established "Benchmarking Process". In light of what [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) state, that doing an evaluation in the front-end phase of a project has a high benefit relative to the cost, the Benchmarking Process can be a useful tool to make sure that the absolutely highest benefit is achieved. If a project is indeed found to have a higher cost efficiency than simply donating the money directly, it should be implemented. This should be done with an overarching aim and guiding goal leading towards what the project is designed to achieve. In some cases it can be advantageous to have solely "Flexibility With a Direction". In others, "Planned Flexibility" should be a part of it.

### 5.1.3 A Reporting Nightmare

Reports and evaluations arose early within the field of aid, due to skepticism about its effectiveness (see Subsection 2.4.1 [Evaluating the Effect of Aid](#)). The belief that evaluation helps optimize aid has led to an increased demand for reporting. Based on this theory, we made the following proposition, [SQ1-P3](#): "*Reports and evaluation can verify the impact of aid projects, and are essential to improve and optimize future aid projects.*" Our empirical data, however, has ended up leading us to question the value and necessity of these formalities.

Reports and evaluations were an ambivalent topic among the informants. Subsection 4.2.4 [Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation](#) reveals that, although several of them felt there is a need for these practices, there also existed a wish to escape from them. This was especially due to two reasons - performing these routine tasks is too time

consuming, and the produced documents are often both erroneous and ignored.

The Business Promoter reflected on all the time and money spent on elements that should measure what a project has delivered and accomplished (see Subsection 4.2.4 [Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation](#)). He saw the whole concept as a paradox. Why spend so much time looking back on what one has done correctly or incorrectly, when one could have spent that time actually getting the project right? The same viewpoint was shared by a majority of the informants. Referring back to [SQ1-P3](#), it becomes evident that the use of time is certainly not optimized through reporting and evaluating.

We could possibly argue that spending time on reports and giving advice and suggestions can save time in future projects' evaluations in the front-end phase, planning and preparations. It could make it easier to more quickly make decisions and find good solutions. However, as Subsection 4.1.2 [Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#) unfolds, working in other parts of the world, with unique cultures, geographies, contexts, etc., can be unpredictable. The informants explained that it can be anything from slightly altering, to completely disparate each time. This means that learning from one project and planning the tactics, operations and strategies of a new project based on the old, will not necessarily be successful.

Additionally, the empirical findings highlight that at the termination of a project, it is only possible to adequately report on the output and the *anticipated* outcome (see Subsections 4.2.4 [Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation](#) and 4.3.5 [The Forgotten Purpose of Aid](#)). The requirement of reporting can lead a project to become too output oriented, as a successful output is a lot easier to document than a successful outcome. The difficulties of evaluating the actual long-term effects and impacts of a project, can cause the reporting to become irrelevant and ignored. This is endorsed by the first quote in Subsection 4.3.3 [Aid as a Political Instrument](#), stating that a minority of Norwegian aid is allocated based on the experts' advice, and the last part of Subsection 4.2.4 [Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation](#), confirming that people from a Norwegian culture tend to ignore evaluations.

The [UNDP \(2011\)](#), and also [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#), advice that evaluations should be done throughout a project (see Subsection 2.4.2 [Learning From Success and Failure in Projects](#) and especially [Figure 2.3](#)). This was also acknowledged by the informants when

listing the process of an aid project (Subsection [4.2.3 A General Aid Project Structure](#)) and while talking about reporting on, and evaluating aid projects (Subsection [4.2.4 Too Strict Rules on Reporting, and Poor Evaluation](#)). Despite their, in some ways, little positive demeanor towards all the time spent on reporting and evaluating, the informants stated that, *ideally*, there should be evaluations throughout a project. We interpret the emphasis of an *ideal* situation to possibly mean that this does not necessarily happen in today's practice. Perhaps this is because of the reasons pointed out at the beginning of this subsection, that reporting and evaluating takes too much time, or is incorrect or overlooked. Yet, we cannot be certain that this is what they meant, and it remains unclear to us what exactly today's practice actually is.

As elaborated in the theory (Section [2.4 Reports and Evaluations](#)), and addressed in the first part of Proposition [SQ1-P3](#), one main purpose of reporting and evaluating is to verify the effectiveness of aid projects. Theory from Subsection [2.4.1 Evaluating the Effect of Aid](#) explains that reports are requested because people are skeptical about where government funds go and whether they are spent wisely. This existing skepticism is confirmed through the last quote in Subsection [4.3.1 The Diminishing Importance of Aid](#), where the Business Promoter tells that projects are afraid of donating money directly to the beneficiary. This is because they fear they will not be able to document the effect and will be accused for throwing away donated money.

We have also seen that reports do not necessarily even reflect the actual outcomes. The findings from [Clements et al. \(2008\)](#), that evaluations often focus more on inputs and outputs, than outcome and impact, were confirmed by the informants. Especially Subsection [4.3.5 The Forgotten Purpose of Aid](#) reveals that aid projects are more focused on what [Baccarini \(1999\)](#) calls "project success" (delivering outputs and finishing on time and budget). It seems that there is not a holistic approach, as encouraged by [Watkins et al. \(2012\)](#), to the tactical, operational, and strategical perspectives.

The evaluation criteria presented by the [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation \(2019\)](#) have good intentions, attempting to guide a project on the correct course. The six principles of evaluation are highly relevant for aid projects, as they purportedly take both the outputs and the outcomes into account. Both [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) and [Picciotto \(2013\)](#) conclude that, through the "impact" and "sustainability" criteria, one can

evaluate the long-term outcome of a project. As pointed out previously in this subsection, on the other hand, the informants made a point that all evaluations regarding the outcome of a project will only be anticipations. We therefore challenge the [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation \(2019\)](#), [Samset & Christensen \(2017\)](#) and [Picciotto \(2013\)](#), together with our Proposition [SQ1-P3](#), and state that reports and evaluations do not automatically *prove* that aid money is spent shrewdly.

The second part of Proposition [SQ1-P3](#) focuses on another purpose of reports and evaluations: to learn from previous, completed projects in order to improve future ones. As mentioned in Subsection [2.4.2 Learning From Success and Failure in Projects](#), [Balogun et al. \(2018\)](#), [Schaumburg-Müller \(2005\)](#), and [Clements et al. \(2008\)](#), criticize the current practice, and conclude that reports are not enhancing aid projects. Their findings cohere with the opinions expressed by the informants. Our findings, showing that reports often are incorrect and are ignored, adjudge that today's system and routines might not be doing any good for future aid projects. Furthermore, [Picciotto \(2013\)](#) points out that an aid project will not have the same effect in any two countries, because of the contextual differences. As elaborated earlier in this subsection, this exact same observation was mentioned by the informants. Besides this, the fact that our empirical data in Subsection [4.3.5 The Forgotten Purpose of Aid](#) indicate that aid has become a "project industry", makes us doubt that the correct motivation is embedded in reporting and evaluating. All this together, signals that people cannot, or deliberately will not try to, learn from previous aid projects.

In the end, our conclusion is that routine reports and evaluations will not necessarily improve and optimize aid projects. The embedded demand for continuous documentation and recounting of projects (see Section [2.4 Reports and Evaluations](#)) does not seem adequate. Still, reporting and evaluating has turned out being such a self-evident part of projects that it is nearly demanded without questioning. This was reflected in the way that the informants naturally concluded that reports and evaluations are important, despite their clear frustration about the routines being time consuming and without clear evidence of being efficacious. Their many counter-arguments lead to our suspicion that discussing the subject with people higher up in the hierarchy has become close to a taboo, and that people involved in a project will almost be ridiculed if suggesting not to report.

Our empirical findings neither approve nor disapprove [Picciotto \(2013\)](#)'s recognition that the [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation \(2019\)](#) evaluation criteria might be one of the most viable models when evaluating projects. They rather denounce the degree to which evaluations should be done at all. We feel that there is little point in having the project implementer waste a lot of time making thorough reports and evaluations. There is not much value in giving advice, if nobody cares to take it. Our understanding is that this is valuable time which could advantageously have been spent elsewhere to improve aid projects.

However, we have the impression that, due to the institutionalization of reporting and evaluating in projects today, people do believe that they make a difference and that they do foster learning when, as [Picciotto \(2013\)](#) says, implemented properly. We therefore compromise that, alternatively, specialized evaluators or consultants, independent of the project, could be hired to report and evaluate. Thereby, the paradox referred to by the Business Promoter could be avoided, as valuable time would be liberated for project implementers. At the same time this would still allow for the attempt to document and learn within the field for the future. Another advantage is that this could refrain the particularly positive judgment, mentioned by [Schaumburg-Müller \(2005\)](#) and [Clements et al. \(2008\)](#). People outside the project are likely to be more objective and constructive when doing evaluations, leading to more impartial and useful evaluations, based on the correct motivation.

#### 5.1.4 Questioning the Use of Projects in the Aid Sector

Our findings to the three propositions in this section can be summarized as follows:

##### Conclusion to [Proposition SQ1-P1](#):

The definition of sustainability should consist of two complimentary components:

"Triple Bottom Line" and "Lasting Impact".



Conclusion to Proposition SQ1-P2:

Aid projects are too unpredictable and context dependent for today's requirements of thorough project planning. Another approach can be favorable in order to avoid project failure:

Starting off with a "Benchmarking Process", resulting in either donating money directly to the beneficiary or going through with a project, implementing "Flexibility With a Direction" or "Planned Flexibility".

Conclusion to Proposition SQ1-P3:

Reports and evaluations are not certain to be correct or ensure learning. For these to possibly have more value, external evaluators or consultants should be hired to report on, and evaluate projects. This could also liberate precious time for the project implementers to "get their projects right".

Projectification implies an increased share of work conducted as projects. It is noted in the theory of this thesis (see Subsection 2.1.2 A Trend Towards Projectification), that there is a tendency to treat the basic project management framework as compelling, and focus on improving projects. However, some scholars are critical of this trend and propose that the fundamental questions regarding the foundation of project management should be brought into attention.

One of the starting points of this thesis was the realization of aid being a project-driven sector, that often adopts methodologies from the more traditional project-sectors. The widespread emphasis on the project planning tool LFA (see Subsection 2.3.1 Planning Projects), that has held a strong position since the 70s, is in our opinion a clear example on the projectification of the aid sector. However, the empirical findings have made us question if projectification of the aid sector is an issue in itself. The three propositions, SQ1-P1, SQ1-P2 and SQ1-P3, allowed us to dig deeper into three specific areas, to see whether traditional project management is suitable for aid projects or not.

There are often good reasons for conducting work as projects, but that does not mean that projects are always the most suitable way of organizing. Some of the informants

implied that people within aid are afraid of doing wrong, and that they can feel overly constrained by the project boundaries. Is there too much focus on conducting a good project instead of doing good? This is an immense question and a definite answer cannot be given through this thesis, however our findings indicate that it might be the truth.

## 5.2 Focusing on the Locals

While the [first Sub-Question](#) queries whether implementing standard project management tools and methods might give aid projects a harder time in achieving their goals, the [second Sub-Question](#) of our [Problem Statement](#), introduced in [Chapter 1 Introduction](#), deals with what *should* be done in order to increase the likelihood of aid projects having a lasting positive impact. [Sub-Question two](#) is worded as follows:

*"What should be done to increase the chances of an aid project having a lasting positive impact?"*

This section will thus present the most significant findings of what *should* be done to achieve lasting, positive outcomes within aid projects. We have, as stated in [Section 2.7 Theoretical Framework](#), not developed any propositions for the [second Sub-Question](#). This is intentionally omitted, as we regarded it as counterproductive to split up the question, when the key takeaway is the importance of keeping the overarching goal and situation in mind.

In short, it is evident that it is critical to focus on the locals and have a holistic, long-term view on how to achieve the base purpose of the project, rather than following the "school-book" example of how to conduct a project. [Subsection 5.2.1 This is the End-User's Project, Not Yours](#) discusses the importance of local recipient ownership, while [Subsection 5.2.2 Benevolent Ideas With the Wrong Solution](#) points to the need to ensure relevant solutions to real issues. These findings are, in [Subsection 5.2.3 An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model](#), summarized and discussed in light of the model presented in [Section 2.6 The Aid Project Impact Mapping model \(APIM-model\)](#) in [Chapter 2 Theoretical Background](#).

### 5.2.1 This is the End-User's Project, Not Yours

A project is per definition a temporary endeavor ([Project Management Institute, 2000](#)) but the results and impact of aid are intended to last. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that the result of the work persists upon project termination. Project literature often emphasizes the importance of securing a smooth handover of the project, yet, we argue that this is not enough. Section [2.3 A Project's Time Frame and Phases](#) presents the concept of project phases. A similar outline was laid out by the informants (see Subsection [4.2.3 A General Aid Project Structure](#)). Handover of the project output is, as illustrated in [Figure 2.1](#) and [Figure 4.1](#), the last action of the active project phase. However, it is insufficient to simply hand over the output and expect the locals to transform it into outcome ([Hussein, 2018](#)). Instead, ownership must be established from the very beginning - it is the end-user's project, not yours.

When talking with the informants, there was no doubt what they considered to be one of the most important factors to ensure lasting project results: local recipient ownership. The Evaluations Expert's quote in Subsection [4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project](#) especially made this clear, stating that lasting results and ownership have a one-to-one correspondence. The local ownership being so important was reasoned by that if there is a feeling of a project being their own, the chances that the recipients actually maintain the results would be enhanced. If the end-users are entirely included they can more likely accept the project, feel that it is actually theirs and work to maintain the outputs.

The theory presented in Section [2.5 The Recipient as a Stakeholder](#) states that the end-user is an obvious stakeholder. When the active project phase is over, it is the end-user that will utilize the outputs and deal with operations, support and maintenance ([Hussein, 2018](#)). In the case of an aid project, the recipient is equivalent with the end-user and hence, is a recognized stakeholder in literature. [Hussein \(2018\)](#) underscores that the recipients, to a large degree, influence the outcome of a project and, therefore, should be kept in mind from the outset of the project. He concludes that close cooperation and involvement is a fundamental strategy. This is backed up by the large focus among the informants on tasks including the recipients, in the preparations phase of a project (see [Figure 4.1](#)). Moreover, the [UNDP \(2009\)](#) underlines the beneficiaries' ownership as fundamental for development results. It is then noteworthy that the empirical findings identified a scarce focus on

involvement of stakeholders and that all of the informants sought more local ownership. While ownership is acknowledged as an important aspect in theory, the experiences of the informants demonstrated that ownership, in reality, seldom is made a priority. The reason for this was, according to the informants, the lack of time and option to prioritize local ownership, as a result of the donors expectations to efficient projects.

Obtaining ownership was, in Subsection [4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project](#), revealed to be a long, costly process. This challenges the current planning and reporting regime discussed in Subsection [5.1.2 Compulsory Planning - One Size Does Not Fit All](#) and [5.1.3 A Reporting Nightmare](#). However, it was made clear that obtaining ownership cannot be overlooked if the aim is to create relevant and sustainable results.

The fact that ownership takes time and might change your game plan contradicts the present urge for planning discussed in Subsection [5.1.2 Compulsory Planning - One Size Does Not Fit All](#). Most aid projects are based on applications for donations or sponsoring. In those applications, the applicant usually has to include a certain time aspect and a specific plan (see Subsection [2.3.1 Planning Projects](#)). Subsequently, the possibility of spending time on establishing ownership, and adapting based on the gained insight, is limited. Thus, there is a need for more time to get to know the locals and their situation, and also to incorporate planned flexibility. Concurrently, as discussed in Section [5.1.3 A Reporting Nightmare](#), the extensive focus on reporting is experienced as overly time consuming. The time and resources needed to secure ownership and incorporate flexibility could therefore be taken from all the time that today is spent on reporting and evaluating. The empirical findings in Subsection [4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project](#) and Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#) clearly indicate that one should rather spend time on getting to know the locals in order to succeed in a project, instead of reporting and evaluating.

The informants recognized ownership as a two-way undertaking. It does not solely depend on the donor, and the recipients must also engage and involve themselves. One thing is to listen to the informants and take the beneficiaries into consideration, but another, more radical approach, is to create ownership. As underlined by the Evaluations Expert in Subsection [4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project](#), the recipients should be so involved in the project that they become the driving force behind it. However, we underscore that

this also includes that the project body must let go of some of the control, which appears to conflict with the current practice discussed in Section [5.1 Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset](#).

The UNDP (see Subsection [2.5.1 Importance of the Recipient](#)) states that end-users often are not included because it is assumed that they do not have the sufficient knowledge. Our findings contradict this point of view. While it cannot always be expected that the people in need of aid are aware of the existing possibilities and have the sufficient knowledge to point out the best solution, they still have valuable experience and knowledge about the local area and culture. As exemplified in the quotes by the Scholarship Patron in Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#), the end-users often see what works on a local level. Based on the empirical findings, we strongly disagree about the locals not having sufficient knowledge to be involved, contribute and take ownership in the projects. While the educated project implementers are likely to have more theoretical knowledge, knowledge about the local situation is also of great importance. Thus, we suggest that the project implementers should aim towards a balance, where they guide the locals and contribute with their knowledge and experience, while letting the locals take ownership and be the driving force of the project.

Arguably, as some of the informants proposed in Subsection [4.3.1 The Diminishing Importance of Aid](#), traditional aid has become of diminishing importance. Other suggestions were stated as preferable and to have a better effect, such as business development or simply giving money directly to the target group. By focusing more on implementing aid through a business model, the challenge of creating ownership might become a more natural part of the process and be easier to face. As indicated in Subsection [4.1.1 Local Ownership of the Project](#), giving the target group an incentive to maintain what a project has given them, and educating them and helping them to help themselves, can naturally lead to effective ownership. Implementing aid as business development could also address one of the issues presented in the previous Section [5.1 Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset](#): the challenge of making informative, constructive, and correct reports and evaluations, particularly about the future impact. With trade and finances in the picture, if the local business continues to exist and be profitable after the helping organization has pulled out, this is an automatic "report" that the project has been

successful. Thus, we argue that giving aid through business development could be a means to achieve ownership and lasting positive impact.

### 5.2.2 Benevolent Ideas With the Wrong Solution

Throughout the interviews, nearly all the informants shared experiences of projects being well implemented. Some of these projects had even tried to establish ownership and undertake actions to ensure a smooth handover. Paradoxically enough, they still did not necessarily result in a lasting positive impact. The common denominator for the failing projects were benevolent ideas but a wrong solution.

Project management theory emphasizes the importance of needs assessments. This is normally done in the front-end phase of the project, but theory suggests that it should be extended into to a continuous monitoring process (Watkins et al., 2012). It became apparent, when talking with the informants, that a problematic area in context of aid projects and needs assessments is the distinction between *perceived* and *actual* needs. Not to mention, that different parties of a project will view it differently, as their perspectives will affect how they perceive and see the project. Similar issues are identified in literature (see Subsection 2.5.2 *Prioritizing Recipient Ownership*). Diallo & Thuillier (2004) found that most stakeholders assess projects based on their own agenda. It is then noteworthy that the recipients are key stakeholders of aid projects (Khang & Moe, 2008), yet hold a weak position in terms of influence (Golini & Landoni, 2014).

If a community is lacking clean drinking water, most western people would argue that the need for fresh water is indisputable. Consequently an aid project with the aim of providing the community with drinking water seems suitable. This is what happened during the UN's international water decade, a ten-year period between 1981-1990 (Samset, 2003). Large investments were made in projects striving towards implementing clean water for the poor populations of developing countries. Surprisingly, many of these projects did not have lasting positive impact as it did not take long before the water wells were dilapidated. The projects had not taken into consideration that the project recipients might also have other needs and priorities. It showed that they would not prioritize maintaining the facilities, as there were other things, such as food and work, that captivated more importance than clean water (Samset, 2003). Clean drinking water was not *perceived* as a

prioritized need by the recipients. Three decades have passed since the UN's international water decade. However, our empirical findings indicate that the same mistakes are done today. Hence, we stress that a needs assessment should not only be used to optimize the chosen concept or to identify actual needs, but also to consider how the recipients perceive the situation. Aid projects must be conceived and planned in the local context, to ensure that they are compatible with local traditions and societal norms, and address issues that rank high in local needs and priorities.

Today, needs assessments are most commonly conducted to find the most suitable means to achieve the purpose (e.g. should there be a well or a water purification plant, what size is optimal, what is the best location, etc.), rather than to understand the situation in the community. The International Expert highlighted the challenge of self-interest in how people perceive things (see Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#)). Having witnessed a vast number of aid projects, he expressed that he constantly could see things failing because the underlined "theory of change" ([Vogel, 2012](#)) is based on what people want to see and not on evidence. Theory urges the importance of needs assessments (see Subsection [2.3.2 Needs Assessment](#)), however, they do not deter one-sidedness or ensure that all perspectives are included.

The quote by the Philanthropist in Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#) exemplifies the distinction between knowing what is needed and knowing how to get there. Local knowledge is not necessarily needed to identify a need for nutrition, and what nutrition supplement that is needed is an objective fact. There is, however, little use in identifying the need if the wrong solution is implemented. There exists several possible means to make sure that people get enough nutrition, and it is vital to make sure that the chosen solution is relevant and suitable in the local context. Learning from the discipline of change management, we adopt the term "interventions" to describe the "knowing how to get there". In the context of change management, [T. Cummings & Worley \(2015\)](#) presents "interventions" as a sequence of actions to create a positive, planned change. We propose that the same term can apply to the sequence of actions taken to "get there" in aid projects. Thus, as suggested in Subsection [2.3.3 Interventions](#) in Chapter [2 Theoretical Background](#), we perceive the two first criteria for an effective intervention, proposed by [T. Cummings & Worley \(2015\)](#), as relevant and adequate for

the field of aid. The interventions chosen in aid projects need to be relevant and based on valid information regarding how the unit of change functions. Furthermore, they need to be based on causal knowledge. This is backed up by the empirical findings presented in Subsections [4.3.1 The Diminishing Importance of Aid](#) and [4.3.2 Framework Conditions](#).

Our findings support the recognition of a knowledge gap between the project donor and project recipients (Khang & Moe, 2008). However, this gap does not always favor the donor as the most knowledgeable in all areas. Connecting with the locals and building trust in the early stages of a project is, as presented in Subsection [4.2.3 A General Aid Project Structure](#), vital to understand the actual needs. The tomato example presented by the Scholarship Patron in Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#), where the locals were aware of the hippopotamuses that ended up eating the plants, is a good example on such a case.

The issue behind benevolent ideas with the wrong solution is related to the concept of ownership, discussed in Subsection [5.2.1 This is the End-User's Project, Not Yours](#). Involving the recipient increases the chances of identifying the best solutions. The empirical findings rendered in Subsection [4.1.2 Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#) underscore that the need for knowledge about the local situation is absolutely crucial. The best solutions are obtained by building on the existing knowledge and abilities, as well as taking the local conditions into consideration. If local ownership is obtained and flexibility to adjust is allowed, is it more likely that the final solution will be relevant. Correspondingly, it is easier to obtain ownership if the solution is relevant for the people you are trying to engage.

### 5.2.3 An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model

The question of how to obtain a lasting positive impact through aid projects could be based on the empirical findings and the foregoing discussion be summarized by two critical factors:

- There must be a high likelihood that the solution is used and maintained, also after the active project phase.
- The solution must be relevant, meaning that it provides the wanted effects for the recipients.



These two factors correspond with the axes of the 2x2 matrix constituting the model introduced in Section 2.6 [The Aid Project Impact Mapping model \(APIM-model\)](#). The APIM-model is a suggested tool to help facilitate predicting whether an aid project will succeed in having a long-term positive impact on its target group, or not.

The vertical axis of the introduced APIM-model evaluates the likelihood of use and maintenance. This axis is related to a longer time perspective, and has to do with ensuring that the results will last. It was, as pointed out in Subsection 4.3.2 [Framework Conditions](#), emphasized by the informants that project outputs only matter if the communities are able to transform them into outcomes. This is confirmed by theory from [Hussein \(2018\)](#). Thus, there must be a high likelihood of use and maintenance for the outputs to last and become outcomes.

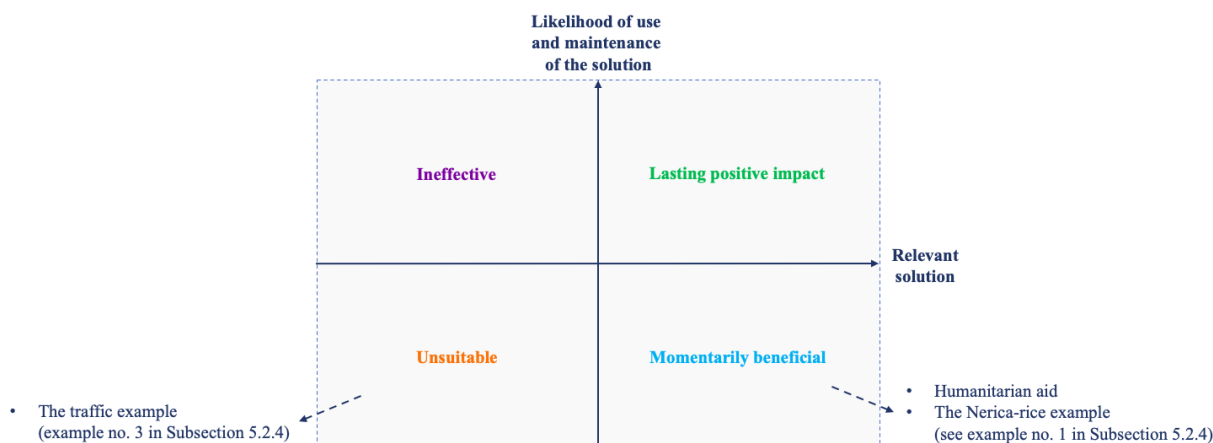
The horizontal axis of the APIM-model addresses to what degree a project has a relevant solution to the present problem. This axis views the problems in the present, and aims to indicate whether a project has found the appropriate output to relieve a current problem.

When the issue of how to obtain lasting impact was addressed in the interviews, all of the informants seemed to agree largely. There is a need to take the local context more into consideration and ensure that the solution is relevant and possible to maintain over time. The viewpoints are summarized by a quote given by the Development Economist in Subsection 4.1.2 [Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community](#). The proximity between these statements and the APIM-model, which was not presented to any of the informants, surprised us. We had, as explained in Section 3.1 [Finding a Project](#) rejected our own model with the belief that it was irrelevant. Based on the empirical findings, we now strongly advocate that the APIM-model is valid and should be given consideration.

True ownership will contribute to lasting project results by both increasing the likelihood of use and maintenance, and a relevant solution. The importance of recipients as stakeholders is not totally forgotten in theory ([UNDP, 2009](#)), however, the empirical findings indicate that they are given too little emphasis in real-life aid projects. We question whether this might be a result of the projectification of the aid sector and suggest that the focus presented with the APIM-model, combined with flexibility (see Subsection 5.1.4 [Questioning the Use of Projects in the Aid Sector](#)), should be given more emphasis instead of performing projects according to the traditional schoolbook example.

Section 5.1 [Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset](#) argues that aid projects require a different project mindset than traditional project management. There is a need for more flexibility and a transfer of focus from creating reports to delivering outcome. Thus, we depart from what [Schoper et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Hodgson & Cicmil \(2006\)](#) identify as the trend within the project management discipline, by being critical to the concept of standards within project management. The APIM-model is not meant to be "just another tool" but an alternative to help alter the focus of aid projects. Instead of focusing on improving and adapting the project management tools originating from the construction and engineering industry ([Hodgson, 2004](#)), we stress that there is a need to "zoom out" and focus on the most crucial factors to obtain sustainable aid projects (as defined in Subsection 5.1.1 [A "Sustainable" Definition of Sustainability](#)). The empirical findings suggest that these factors are to establish local ownership, base a relevant solution on the recipients' ideas, and identify the true needs of the target group. In this manner, a relevant solution that is likely to be used and maintained, will be the focus and thus, a lasting positive impact is more likely to be achieved.

Despite humanitarian aid being out of scope for this thesis (as defined in Chapter 1 [Introduction](#)), we find it relevant to make a short comment on humanitarian aid in light of the APIM-model. Several of the informants found that emergency relief aid is often too acute to operate using only local resources ([4.3.1 The Diminishing Importance of Aid](#)). Moreover, humanitarian aid, by definition, deals with urgent crises ([Riddell, 2014](#); [Zürcher, 2017](#)). We argue that a short-term perspective obtaining a *momentarily beneficial* solution (the bottom right quadrant of the APIM-model) therefore could be justified for humanitarian aid. In case of a disaster causing famine, the primary focus is to ensure that people get nutrition and in-kind food distribution is, despite being unsustainable, a reasonable action to deal with the acute needs. But as projects cannot last forever, the ultimate goal of any development project should be to obtain projects that result in lasting positive impact. In a longer term, when the aim is to develop the society, food shortage should rather be resolved by assisting the locals in providing food by, for example, teaching them how to improve their yields in a sustainable matter.



**Figure 5.2:** The Aid Project Impact Mapping model with examples

### 5.2.4 Explaining the APIM-model With Three Examples

We have, during our period of working on this project, encountered many examples related to the APIM-model in Figure 5.2. To summarize the importance of establishing local ownership, basing a relevant solution on the recipients' ideas, and identifying the true needs of the target group, we would like to include three specific real life examples. This is done to guide the reader and provide understanding through some practical implications of the APIM-model, similar to what we did in Subsection 2.6.2 [A Practical Example Placing a Project in the APIM-model](#).

#### Example number one: Unaided “repeat performance“

Aid projects in developing countries can be designed to yield substantial, sustained benefit for years beyond a projects' completion, even without further outside support. But this usually does not happen by accident. We will use agricultural aid as an example. Let us say you want to plant a seasonal crop in a developing country. You need to clear and prepare some land. Seeds must be supplied and planted in a proper manner. There may be a need for fertilizer and irrigation. You need to harvest and transport the resulting yield at the end of the season. The materials, equipment and labor can all be locally or outside supplied, but you might want to use outside supervision and project management to maximize the chance of success. This should yield a good harvest at the end of the first season. But if the official project comes to an end, at the end of (or during) the first season, similar yields are not guaranteed in future seasons.

In this example, actions must be taken and responsibility must be built into the project to guarantee sustainability. Seeds will be needed at the beginning of each season. Part of the harvest needs to be set aside and processed for this, or sold so there will be funds available to purchase the seeds. Proper expertise and equipment must be available, and in working order, to till and fertilize the land prior to each planting. Cost-effective and renewable sources of fertilizer must be included in the plan. The same for irrigation, if needed. In addition to this, there needs to be thorough mitigation plans (and training) for possible threats, such as drought, flooding, pests (e.g. birds and insects) and disease. To optimally prepare for all likely scenarios, it will take a combination of both local and global knowledge and experience.

In this example, sustainability means planning to have “repeat performances”, year after year, without additional outside aid or supervision. To do this, a number of steps and routines have to be built into the project setup and guidelines, from the very beginning. To do this optimally, the local population should be involved from the start, teaching them every step of the way, so when they are eventually left to carry-on on their own, they will be both competent and confident. If in addition they feel ownership of the project, they will be motivated and work hard to maintain it. The Nerica-rice example provided by the Development Economist (See Subsection [4.1.3 Aid Projects as "Business Development"](#)) illustrates an instance of an agriculture project that failed to achieve repeat performance. The solution worked fine as long as the project was running, but the seeds were too expensive. The increased crop did not cover the additional cost and risk associated with the investment, and thus, the farmers returned to their traditional varieties when the seeds no longer were provided for free.

#### Example number two: Planning for the unique context

A slightly different, and maybe not so obvious, type of aid project sustainability is the case where a specific deliverable is produced at the end of the project, and the only further work or activity required is maintenance. A good example of this is a water well, as presented in Subsection [5.2.2 Benevolent Ideas With the Wrong Solution](#). You plan the well, move the equipment and personnel in, drill the well – and it is done. The project is complete and no more funding is required. In this case, though, there is still the element of sustainability which needs to be considered and built into the project, to optimize the

longevity of the results.

In this example, geological knowledge and local expertise are needed to choose the optimum well placement, well diameter and depth. A casing or liner might be needed, in certain circumstances, to prevent wellbore collapse. It must be determined if there will be artesian flow, or if pumping will be needed (from the very start, or down the road). If surface storage is needed, will the optimum be a tank, reservoir or pipeline? Should there be a plan for surface control, monitoring (e.g. of water quality, pressure or volumes) or maintenance? So even in the case where the end of a project is a specific, one-time product, there are important considerations, which might involve additional costs, planning and infrastructure, that need to be considered from the start to achieve maximum sustainability.

#### Example number three: Relevance and prioritized projects

There are many examples of how foreign aid projects have, despite having the best of intentions, completely missed their mark because they were not relevant to begin with. One example comes from a former expat who lived in a large city in the Middle East. This example comes from personal communication and is not stated by an informant of this study, as including one of the equivalent examples, with so much detail, from the informants, would put their anonymity at risk. It is noteworthy, though, that the example summarizes several of the examples we were presented to through the interviews.

The city the expat told about had a population in the millions, and visiting westerners could not believe the progress-halting chaos of the local traffic jams. So they found funding and embarked on an expensive aid project, painting traffic lanes and installing traffic lights on all of the major downtown roads. They failed, however, to take into account the type of “traffic” they were dealing with. There were automobiles, of course, but there just as many motorcycles, carts pulled by ox or horse, people riding donkeys, and even crowds of pedestrians. They also failed to consider local driving rules and customs, which were very different than in the west. You could basically do whatever you wanted, as long as you paid attention to what was in front of you (i.e. you never had to look in your rearview mirror). Vehicles had right of way over non-vehicles, and the more expensive vehicles over the less expensive. And if you ever felt that you were not getting enough

attention, you were free to use your horn as much as you liked.

The result of the aid project was roads having beautiful, bright painted lane lines, and tall, modern stoplights, which no one paid any attention to. Traffic jams and general chaos continued, just like before. The underlying tragedy, unfortunately, was that this aid was given to a country plagued by widespread poverty, inadequate fresh water and sewage systems, poor healthcare, high rates of child mortality and deformity, markedly substandard public schooling, etc., etc. The conclusion we should draw from this is: Relevance needs to be an integral part of aid project prioritization and concept selection.

## 6 Conclusion

Aid has undoubtedly become a project oriented industry, but is currently underexposed in the project management literature. Throughout this study, we have adopted a project management perspective on the aid industry, aiming to address the question of how aid projects can help people in the most relevant and sustainable way.

This final chapter aims to conclude the thesis. We will first summarize our answers to the **Problem Statement** and its **sub-questions**. The following section, **6.2 Practical Implications: Considering the Broader Context**, presents some practical implications, while Section **6.3 Further Research** points to topics for further research. At last, we wrap it up with some concluding remarks in Section **6.4 Concluding Remarks**.

### 6.1 Answering the Problem Statement

As stated at the beginning of this thesis, we worded the **Problem Statement** as follows:

*How can development aid projects help people in a relevant and sustainable way?*

To help answer the problem statement, we also introduced two sub-questions, the first of them being:

**SQ1:** *What possible mistakes can prevent the attainment of relevant and sustainable aid project results?*

The **first Sub-Question** examines whether the typical way of thinking within projects is also appropriate for aid development projects. As the aim of this study is to contribute to the discussion on how to generate sustainable project results within aid, we started off the discussion by considering the meaning of the term "sustainability". "Sustainability" is in project management literature commonly related to the concept of the triple bottom line (TBL) (Elkington, 2018), but the term can also point to the importance of obtaining a lasting impact (OECD, 2002). The empirical findings of this study supports both definitions. Instead of considering the interpretations as competitive perspectives, we suggest that the two interpretations are complementary components that must both be ensured to obtain true sustainability, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. While the TBL is

related to conducting projects that will not lead to results that *compromise* the future, the perspective of "Lasting Impact" is related to finding results that will *last into* the future.

Rigorous planning and control are in theory basically synonymous for good project management, but aid projects are too unpredictable and context dependent for today's requirements for thorough planning. Instead, we advocate that aid projects should have a clear goal and allowance to incorporate either "Flexibility With a Direction" or "Planned Flexibility", as presented in Table 5.1, while adjusting and steering towards that goal.

Similar findings and conclusions were found with regards to reporting and documentation. Reporting and evaluating have become institutionalized and there is an extensive demand for these formalities. Our impression, based on the empirical findings is, however, that the immense focus on reporting draws resources and focus away from the intended purpose of the project without offering significant value.

With the trend of projectification extending into the field of aid and development, the focus and performance of aid are influenced by project theory. The findings of this study indicate that this might be misleading, and we query if there is too much focus on conducting a good project instead of doing good.

The second sub-question is repeated below:

*SQ2: What should be done to increase the chances of an aid project having a lasting positive impact?*

The findings of this thesis reveal that the focus should be redirected from conducting good, by the book projects, to achieving results that are vital to the target group. Aid project goals need to be specific, and have an overarching focus on the "outcome" rather than the "output", and the recipients rather than the donors. Allowing aid projects to become "turnkey operations" increases their chance of losing focus on their original goals and becoming irrelevant. We propose that the APIM-model presented in this thesis could help alter the focus of aid projects towards the projects purpose. The APIM-model consist of a 2x2 matrix with "likelihood of use and maintenance" along the vertical axis and "relevant solution" along the horizontal axis. The model was first developed based on theory (see Section 2.6 The Aid Project Impact Mapping model (APIM-model)) and later reappeared in the empirical findings (see Subsection 5.2.3 An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model).



Thus, we advocate that the APIM-model is valid and should be given consideration.

Moreover, the project team must be allowed the time and flexibility to create ownership. Increasing the chances that an aid project will have lasting positive impact, all comes down to including and basically giving the project to the locals. “Local ownership” is key to any successful aid project, to create local acceptance and enthusiasm, ensure relevance, and help obtain sustainable results. Ownership, locally grounded strategies and concepts, and knowing exactly what the recipients need and how that need can be fulfilled, are all points that can contribute to reaching the top right quadrant of the APIM-model - obtaining a lasting positive impact.

The short, yet not comprehensive, answer to the [Problem Statement](#) is thus that aid projects can help people in a relevant and sustainable way by focusing more on their overall purpose, establishing ownership and ensuring relevant solutions that are likely to be used and maintained upon project termination. Concurrently, we argue that the mistakes and pitfalls of having a too narrow view on sustainability, too rigorous planning and onerous reporting, must be avoided.

## 6.2 Practical Implications: Considering the Broader Context

In Subsection [2.1.2 A Trend Towards Projectification](#) it is pointed out that the discipline of project management is rooted in engineering ([Hodgson, 2004](#)). Through detailed planning and control routines, projects are intended to secure that the end product is delivered on time, within cost frames and with the desired quality. But the context of aid is completely different than the one of construction and engineering ([Khang & Moe, 2008](#); [Pollack & Crawford, 2007](#)). A fundamental distinction is the fact that construction and engineering projects have a definite end when they are completed ([Samset, 2003](#)). That is not always the case for aid and development. Our study has shown that aid requires a different project mindset. This section, therefore, considers some practical implications from our study.

The empirical findings suggest that there is a possibility that the projectification ([Maylor et al., 2006](#)) of the aid-sector has partly lead to a situation where the purpose of aid is

forgotten. Projectification of the aid sector seems to have become a huge industry, where project managers often are focused on activities three to six years down the road. Some informants pointed out that there is often a "hunt for the next project" before the current one is close to being finished (see Subsection 4.3.5 [The Forgotten Purpose of Aid](#)). Based on the impression we gained through the interviews, it seems like there still are projects that try to solve non-existent problems, although this has improved. We understand the current situation as a systemic issue and thus, something that should be confronted by policymakers. The fact that all informants drew a picture of aid as a sector drifting towards an industry, where the initial purpose is forsaken, cannot be left unnoticed. We urge that this realization should be reflected in the policies and sponsoring schemes within the aid sector. When the aim is to obtain a lasting positive impact, practitioners, sponsors, policymakers, scholars, etc., must realize that "relevant solutions" should gain higher priority than "mass production" of turnkey solutions.

### 6.2.1 Is it time to phase out certain types of projects?

The discipline of project management is most commonly focused on standalone projects isolated from their context (L. Crawford & Cooke-Davies, 2010). Yet, as presented in Section 4.3 [Aid Projects in a Broader Context](#), when discussing aid projects, the informants recurrently elaborated on the relation between aid projects and their broader context, underscoring that no aid project exists in a vacuum. Although immersing into this topic falls outside the scope of our thesis, it compels us to question our starting point. The International Expert (see Subsection 4.3.3 [Aid as a Political Instrument](#)) exemplified this by referring to a project which was intended to create a better neighborhood, but was so poorly implemented that it negatively affected the local community's relation to the government.

The empirical findings do not only advocate that it could be unsuitable to view aid and development as isolated, standalone projects. The findings presented in Subsection 4.3.1 [The Diminishing Importance of Aid](#) also suggest that the importance of aid in general is diminishing. Remittances, trade and finance have become more important. While aid, as stated by the Development Economist (see Subsection 4.1.3 [Aid Projects as "Business Development"](#)), relies on an artificial heartbeat, profitable businesses could in theory be self-sufficient and last forever. We therefore question if we have picked the

wrong starting point: Might it be that traditional aid projects are not the way to make a relevant and sustainable difference to people in developing countries? We advise that the ministry of foreign affairs and the Norwegian directorate of aid, as well as other major aid agencies, consider this further. Regardless of the answer to the question, we argue that the considerations stated in Section [5.1 Aid Requires a Different Project Mindset](#) and [5.2 Focusing on the Locals](#) are still relevant.

As projectification has spread into all parts of society, we increasingly structure our work as projects ([Maylor et al., 2006](#)). Another possible implication of the projectification of aid is the high number of small-scale initiatives. The diminishing relevance of aid is, by the International Expert (see Subsection [4.3.4 Higher Level System Change Versus Small-Scale Initiatives](#)), stated to be especially true when the larger context is ignored. While small-scale initiatives are beneficial for the people who are explicitly involved, they are unlikely to change the higher level systems and are highly dependent on only a few individuals. It is suggested that higher level system changes are less vulnerable and more sustainable. Such higher level changes cannot typically be initiated through small projects. Practitioners and philanthropist in desire of making a lasting positive impact should keep this in mind and be conscious about where they put in an effort.

### 6.2.2 Positive Impact - For Whom?

The objective of this thesis has been to contribute to the discussion of how aid projects can produce relevant and sustainable impact. However, an important clarification is left unaddressed: For whom is that positive impact intended? While some could argue that this is "given" in the nature of aid, and it is needless to specify that aid is intended to create a better life for the people receiving it, we would claim differently.

The empirical findings imply that projectification of the aid sector has led to a dominant focus on being successful on the project management level, and has fostered an industry where the real purpose of aid is partially forgotten. This is exemplified with the observable realization that many aid projects, such as the agriculture development project presented in Subsection [4.3.5 The Forgotten Purpose of Aid](#), are more concerned about meeting the deliverables, and successfully producing outputs rather than outcomes. Effort should, on a system level, be taken to move the focus from outputs and project management success,

to outcomes and lasting positive impact. Furthermore, aid projects are, as pointed out in both Subsection 4.1.2 *Ideas and Strategies Rooted in the Community* and Subsection 4.3.5 *The Forgotten Purpose of Aid*, often funded and considered in a 3-5 year perspective (this is aligned with the requirements given by Norad (2019b), as stated in Subsection 2.3.1 *Planning Projects*), and then they disappear. Development is, on the other hand, an ongoing process that spans over a longer time frame. Although it was mentioned by multiple informants, one of them clearly stated that there is a whole community of westerners who are earning their livelihood from the aid project industry, hunting for the next project as soon as, or even before, the previous one is over. We therefore recommend policy makers and sponsorship schemes to make arrangements that foster a more long-term focus. The APIM-model, presented in this thesis, could be a valuable tool in this transition.

Adding to this, is the recognition by all of the informants (see Subsection 4.3.3 *Aid as a Political Instrument*) that aid is political and is often used as a political instrument by the donor country. While there may be justifications for this, as lobbying might be beneficial for Norwegian interests, it clearly illustrates that it is not a "given" that the primary purpose of aid is to create a positive lasting impact for the people receiving it. Based on this discussion, we conclude that there is a need to underscore that the purpose of the aid projects discussed in this thesis are to create a positive lasting impact on *the people where the project is implemented*. It is our opinion that any secondary goals that detract from the primary one should be viewed as detrimental to the projects' success.

Extending the boundaries of a project and considering its larger context may be difficult, but isolating a project is naive. In normal project management one typically says that it is necessary to set the boundaries of a project, but in aid projects this can actually cause a lot of harm. Practical strategies should therefore recognize the broader context in which aid projects are performed. We suggest that the APIM-model is a useful tool in this process.

## 6.3 Further Research

We have, with this research project, concluded that today's requirements for planning, and the lack of allowance for flexibility, is disadvantageous for aid projects. As a result of

this finding, we have suggested three (non-exclusive) approaches, based on our empirical findings: A Benchmarking Process, Flexibility With a Direction, and Planned Flexibility (see Table 5.1). However, our empirical data does not provide the basis to distinguish and specify when each method is suitable. This is, hereby, a topic for further research.

As explained in Chapter 1 [Introduction](#), we found it imperative to consider aid projects with an overarching project management perspective, due to the lack of relevant literature. Through this study, we have obtained a thorough overview of the situation within the aid sector and pinpointed interesting trends. Following the applied perspective, our proposed APIM-model (Figure 2.4) and "flexibility approaches" (Table 5.1) adopt a broad perspective. Moving forward, it would be interesting to study the model and methods with a portfolio of projects as the unit of analysis.

Moreover, it is yet to be discussed how projects should be placed in the APIM-model presented in Section 2.6 [The Aid Project Impact Mapping model \(APIM-model\)](#) and Subsection 5.2.3 [An Aid Project Impact Mapping Model](#). While it, due to contextual differences and uncertainty, seems unfeasible to suggest a set checklist of evaluation criteria, we believe it should be possible to propose guidelines based on historical results. Furthermore, it could be interesting to investigate if the model extends beyond the aid sector, as the theoretical foundation applied when developing the model is by no means limited to this sector. This is also a question relevant to the findings regarding the traditional mindset and practices within project management. How much emphasis on planning, reporting and evaluating is appropriate within each separate sector in project management? Projectification is a phenomena present in many sectors, and it would not surprise us if the discipline of project management could draw valuable learnings from the aid sector.

Our findings demonstrate that that the aid sector has adopted methodologies and a way of thinking from the school of project management. This has led both to development of the discipline, together with the identification of possible defects within project management. Improving development aid projects and developing new tools have become fields of great interest to large institutions, something that is exemplified with the LFA ([Hummelbrunner, 2010](#)) and OECD evaluation criteria ([OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019](#)). Both of these tools have been adopted outside of their initial domain, and are, for

example, applied by [Samset \(2003\)](#) on major governmental investment projects. There is no reason to assume that there cannot be lessons learned in both directions between the two disciplines of aid and project management. We therefore argue that scholars within the field of project management should pay more attention to the aid sector, in order to enhance both disciplines.

The empirical findings of this thesis clearly underscore that no aid project should be viewed in isolation. An important observation falling outside of the scope of this thesis is the fact that any attempt to solve an anticipated problem could unintentionally have an unforeseen, negative impact on other issues. Examples provided by the informants are endeavors harming the local market and economy, actions fostering aid dependency, or poorly implemented projects hurting the relation between communities and the local authorities. While these topics are not unfamiliar to the aid and development sector ([Booth, 2012](#)), it seems that there still is a need for further research in order to find methods to diminish the negative side effects.

Lastly, the empirical findings and discussion in this thesis reveal important topics related to the projectification of the aid sector, that until this day are underexposed in the literature. We therefore suggest dedicated, deductive, in-depth studies regarding the definition of sustainability, the need for planning versus flexibility, the formalities of aid reporting, ownership, and relevant solutions. The work conducted in this study could thus be regarded as a critique of the current practice and a pointer to topics needing more attention.

## 6.4 Concluding Remarks

The development aid sector is a grand field that certainly is project-driven and has adopted methodologies and a way of thinking from conventional project management. However, little project management literature pays attention to aid projects. Our study queries whether the projectification of the aid-sector has led to a misplaced focus, hampering aid projects in achieving lasting impact. The study contributes to the field by raising questions regarding current practice, and proposing a change of the aid project management mindset.

## References

- Ahsan, K., & Gunawan, I. (2010). Analysis of cost and schedule performance of international development projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, 28, 68-78. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2009.03.005
- Albert, M., & Mickel, F. (2019). Sustainable project management. In Z. Fields & S. Huesig (Eds.), *Responsible, sustainable, and globally aware management in the fourth industrial revolution* (p. 124-153). IGI Global.
- Andersen, E. S. (1996). Warning: activity planning is hazardous to your project's health! *International Journal of Project Management*, 14, 89-94. doi: 10.1016/0263-7863(95)00056-9
- Andersen, E. S. (2018). *Prosjektledelse: et organisasjonsperspektiv* (2nd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Annan, K. (2009, November). *Problems without passports*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/09/problems-without-passports/>.
- Aubry, M., & Sylvain, L. (2012). Projectification: Midler's footprint in the project management field. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 5, 680-694. doi: 10.1108/17538371211268997
- Azam, M., Haseeb, M., & Samsudin, S. (2016). The impact of foreign remittances on poverty alleviation: Global evidence. *Economics and Sociology*, 9(1), 264-281. doi: 10.14254/2071-789X.2016/9-1/18
- Baccarini, D. (1999, Dec). The logical framework method for defining project success. *Project Management Journal*, 30, 25-32. doi: 10.1177/875697289903000405
- Balogun, P., Lloyd, R., Villanger, E., & Lagaay, M. (2018). Evaluation of the norwegian aid administration's practice of results-based management. Itad and Christian Michelsen Institute. (ISBN: 978-82-8369-053-8)
- Booth, D. (2012). Aid effectiveness: bringing country ownership (and politics) back in. *Conflict, Security Development*, 12, 537-558. doi: 10.1080/14678802.2012.744184
- British Sociological Association. (2017). *Statement of ethical practice*. [https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa\\_statement\\_of\\_ethical\\_practice.pdf](https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf). (Last accessed: 21st February 2020)
- Bruke, R. (2013). *Project management techniques*. Burke Publishing.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods - 5th ed* (5th ed.). Oxford: OXFORD University Press.
- Carvalho, M. M., & Rabechini, R. (2017). Can project sustainability management impact project success? an empirical study applying a contingent approach. *International Journal of Project Management*, 35(6), 1120-1132. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2017.02.018
- Chofreh, A. G., Goni, F. A., Malik, M. N., Khan, H. H., & Klemeš, J. J. (2019, Jul). The imperative and research directions of sustainable project management. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 238. doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.117810

- Clements, P., Chianca, T., & Sasaki, R. (2008, Jun). Reducing world poverty by improving evaluation of development aid. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29(2), 195–214. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1098214008318657> doi: 10.1177/1098214008318657
- Cracknell, B. E. (1996). Evaluating development aid: Strengths and weaknesses. *Evaluation*, 2, 23-33. doi: 10.1177/135638909600200103
- Crawford, L., & Cooke-Davies, T. (2010). Managing projects in context: Responding to strategic drivers. In *Defining the future of project management* (1st ed., pp. 1–28). Project Management Institute.
- Crawford, P., & Bryce, P. (2003). Project monitoring and evaluation: a method for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of aid project implementation. *International Journal of Project Management*, 21, 363–373. doi: 10.1016/S0263-7863(02)00060-1
- Cummings, C. (2018). Cross-sectional design. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p. 315-317). SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781483381411
- Cummings, T., & Worley, C. (2015). *Organization development change* (10th ed.). Stamford: Cengage Learning.
- Diallo, A., & Thuillier, D. (2004). The success dimensions of international development projects: the perceptions of african project coordinators. *International Journal of Project Management*, 22, 19-31. doi: 10.1016/S0263-7863(03)00008-5
- Diallo, A., & Thuillier, D. (2005). The success of international development projects, trust and communication: An african perspective. *International Journal of Project Management*, 23, 237-252. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2004.10.002
- Dufková, G., & Sejkora, J. (2020). Project management tools in international development and their influence on the project success. In H. Kratochvilova & R. Kratochvil (Eds.), *Proceedings of iac 2020 in budapest* (p. 155-166). Czech Institute of Academic Education z.s.
- Dvir, D., & Lechler, T. (2004). Plans are nothing, changing plans is everything: the impact of changes on project success. *Research Policy*, 33, 1-15. doi: 10.1016/j.respol.2003.04.001
- Dvir, D., Raz, T., & Shenhar, A. J. (2003). An empirical analysis of the relationship between project planning and project success. *International Journal of Project Management*, 21, 89-95. doi: 10.1016/S0263-7863(02)00012-1
- Elkington, J. (2018, Jun). *25 years ago i coined the phrase "triple bottom line." here's why it's time to rethink it.* <https://hbr.org/2018/06/25-years-ago-i-coined-the-phrase-triple-bottom-line-heres-why-im-giving-up-on-it>. (Last accessed: 17th Nov 2019)
- Fred, M. (2015). Projectification in swedish municipalities. a case of porous organizations. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 19(2), 49-68.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman Publishing Inc.



- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods, 16*, 15-31. doi: 10.1177/1094428112452151
- Golini, R., & Landoni, P. (2014). International development projects by non- governmental organizations: an evaluation of the need for specific project management and appraisal tools. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 32*, 121-135. doi: 10.1080/14615517.2014.894088
- Hodgson, D. (2004). Project work: The legacy of bureaucratic control in the post-bureaucratic organization. *Organization, 11*, 81-100. doi: 10.1177/1350508404039659
- Hodgson, D., & Cicmil, S. (2006). *Making projects critical*. Macmillan Education UK.
- Hummelbrunner, R. (2010). Beyond logframe: critique, variations and alternatives. *Beyond logframe; Using systems concepts in evaluation, 1*.
- Hussein, B. (2018). *The road to success: narratives and insights from real-life projects* (1st ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Ika, L. A., Diallo, A., & Thuillier, D. (2010). Project management in the international development industry. the project coordinator's perspective. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business, 3*, 61-93. doi: 10.1108/17538371011014035
- Ika, L. A., & Saint-Macary, J. (2012). The project planning myth in international development. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business, 5*, 420-439. doi: 10.1108/17538371211235308
- Jensen, A., Thuesen, C., & Geraldi, J. (2016). The projectification of everything: Projects as a human condition. *Project Management Journal, 47*, 21-34. doi: 10.1177/875697281604700303
- Khan, S., Saher, N., & Yunis, M. S. (2003). Project planning, project success and project risk. *Global Social Sciences Review, 4*, 219-225. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2019(IV-I).29
- Khang, D. B., & Moe, T. L. (2008). Success criteria and factors for international development projects: A life-cycle-based framework. *Project Management Journal, 39*, 72 - 84. doi: 10.1002/pmj.20034
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE publications.
- Kvale, S. (2012). *Doing interviews* (U. Flick, Ed.). London: SAGE publications.
- Kwak, Y. H. (2002). Critical success factors in international development project management. *Paper presented at the CIB 10th International Symposium Construction Innovation Global Competitiveness, Cincinnati, Ohio*.
- Laplume, A., & Sonpar, K. (2008, 12). Stakeholder theory: Reviewing a theory that moves us. *Journal of Management, 34*, 1152-1189. doi: 10.1177/0149206308324322
- Larsen, A. K. (2017). *En enklere metode: Veiledning i samfunnsvitenskapelig forskningsmetode, 2. utgave* (2nd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Leiras, A., de Brito Jr, I., Peres, E. Q., Bertazzo, T. R., & Yoshizaki, H. T. Y. (2014). Literature review of humanitarian logistics research: trends and challenges. *Journal of*

- Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain*, 4, 95-130. doi: 10.1108/JHLSCM-04-2012-0008
- Martens, M. L., & Carvalho, M. M. (2016a). The challenge of introducing sustainability into project management function: multiple-case studies. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 117, 29–40. doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.12.039
- Martens, M. L., & Carvalho, M. M. (2016b). Key factors of sustainability in project management context: A survey exploring the project managers perspective. *International Journal of Project Management*. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.04.004
- Maylor, H. (2001). Beyond the gantt chart:: Project management moving on. *European Management Journal*, 19, 92-100. doi: 10.1016/S0263-2373(00)00074-8
- Maylor, H., Brady, T., Cooke-Davies, T., & Hodgson, D. (2006). From projectification to programmification. *International Journal of Project Management*, 24(8), 663–674. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2006.09.014
- McGrath, S., & Whitty, J. (2017, 07). Stakeholder defined. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 10, 00-00. doi: 10.1108/IJMPB-12-2016-0097
- Metzger, L., & Gunther, I. (2015, Nov). How to assess the effectiveness of development aid projects: Evaluation ratings versus project indicators. *Journal of International Development*, 27, 1496-1520. doi: 10.1002/jid.3189
- Midler, C. (1995, December). “projectification” of the firm: The renault case. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11, 363-375. doi: 10.1016/0956-5221(95)00035-T
- Miles, S. (2012, 07). Stakeholder: Essentially contested or just confused? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 108. doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-1090-8
- Minasyan, A., & Nunnenkamp, P. (2016). Remittances and the effectiveness of foreign aid. *Review of Development Economics*, 20(3), 681-701. doi: 10.1111/rode.12193
- Munk-Madsen, A. (2005). The concept of a ‘project’: A proposal for a unifying definition., *Presented at IRIS’28, Information Systems Research in Scandinavia, Kristiansand, Norway*.
- Norad. (2019a). *Norsk bistand i tall*. <https://norad.no/om-bistand/norsk-bistand-i-tall/?tab=geo>. Author. (Last accessed: 6th May 2020)
- Norad. (2019b). *Tilskudd til styrking av sivilt samfunn i utviklingsland - norske organisasjoner (2020)*. <https://grants.mfa.no/#call/1301>. Avdeling for sivilt samfunn, Norad. (Last accessed: 1st May 2020)
- OECD. (2002). Glossary of key terms in evaluation and result based management. (ISBN 92-64-08527-0)
- OECD. (2008). *The paris declaration on aid effectiveness and the accra agenda for action*. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>. Author. (Last accessed: 4th May 2020)
- OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation. (2019). *Better criteria for better evaluation*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation>

- criteria-dec-2019.pdf. OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation. (Last accessed: 24th April 2020)
- OECD/UNDP. (2016). *Making development co-operation more effective: 2016 progress report*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266261-en>. Paris: OECD Publishing. (Last accessed: 29th April 2020)
- Paweska, M. (2018). Logistics for humanitarian aid. *MEST Journal*, 6, 89-96. doi: 10.12709/mest.06.06.02.11
- Pearse, N. (2019). An illustration of deductive analysis in qualitative research. *European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies; Kidmore End*, 264-270. doi: 10.34190/RM.19.006
- Picciotto, R. (2013). The logic of development effectiveness: Is it time for the broader evaluation community to take notice? *Evaluation*, 19, 155–170. doi: 10.1177/1356389013483715
- Pinto, J. K., & Slevin, D. P. (1987). Critical factors in successful project implementation. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 34, 22-27. doi: 10.1109/TEM.1987.6498856
- Pinto, J. K., & Slevin, D. P. (1988). Project success: Definitions and measurement techniques. *Project Management Journal*, 19, 67-72.
- Pollack, J., & Crawford, L. (2007). How generic are project management knowledge and practice? *Project Management Journal*, 38, 87–96. doi: 10.1177/875697280703800109
- Project Management Institute. (2000). *A guide to the project management body of knowledge* (2000Edition ed.). Pennsylvania: Project Management Institute.
- Project Management Institute. (2013). *A guide to the project management body of knowledge (pmbok guide)* (5th ed.). Newton Square, PA: Project Management Institute.
- Reinertsen, H. (2015). *Optics of evaluation making norwegian foreign aid an evaluable object, 1980-1992*. TIK Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo. (ISSN 1564-3991)
- Riddell, R. C. (2014). Does foreign aid really work? an updated assessment. *Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper*, 33. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2409847
- Ringdal, K. (2007). *Enhet og mangfold samfunnsvitenskaplig forskning og kvantitativ metode*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Sabini, L., Muzio, D., & Alderman, N. (2019, May). 25 years of ‘sustainable projects’. what we know and what the literature says. *International Journal of Project Management*, 37(6), 820–838. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2019.05.002
- Samset, K. (2003). *Project evaluation: Making investments succeed*. Tapir Academic Press.
- Samset, K. (2010). *Early project appraisal: Making the initial choices*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Samset, K., & Christensen, T. (2017). Ex ante project evaluation and the complexity of

- early decision-making. *Public Organization Review*, 17, 1-17. doi: 10.1007/s11115-015-0326-y
- Samset, K., & Volden, G. H. (2016). Front-end definition of projects: Ten paradoxes and some reflections regarding project management and project governance. *International Journal of Project Management*, 34, 297-313. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2015.01.014
- Schaumburg-Müller, H. (2005). Use of aid evaluation from an organizational perspective. *Evaluation*, 11(2), 207–222. Retrieved from [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1356389005055541?casa\\_token=jZyRbly4YdYAAAAA:ZxpPMWeXHNRC1j4UfxHwz7Zf4jV3hWfsRWaZsjEYawVPYrad3awxJFHzaYQazUxZImaG1XMste-8XQ](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1356389005055541?casa_token=jZyRbly4YdYAAAAA:ZxpPMWeXHNRC1j4UfxHwz7Zf4jV3hWfsRWaZsjEYawVPYrad3awxJFHzaYQazUxZImaG1XMste-8XQ) (Last Accessed: 19th May 2020) doi: 10.1177/1356389005055541
- Schoper, Y.-G., Wald, A., Ingason, H. T., & Fridgeirsson, T. V. (2018, January). Projectification in western economies: A comparative study of germany, norway and iceland. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(1), 71-82. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2017.07.008
- Silvius, G., Schipper, R., & Nedeski, S. (2013, Feb). Sustainability in project management: Reality bites. *PM World Journal*, 2(2). (Second Edition)
- Singh, R. K., Murty, H., Gupta, S., & Dikshit, A. (2012). An overview of sustainability assessment methodologies. *Ecological Indicators*, 15, 281–299. doi: 10.1016/j.ecolind.2011.01.007
- Sjösted, M. (2013). Aid effectiveness and the paris declaration: A mismatch between ownership and result-based management? *public administration and development*, 33, 143–155. doi: 10.1002/pad.1645
- SooHong, K. (2016). A philosophical approach to project management: Project as a phenomenon and the case of incheon bridge. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 225, 455 – 462. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.06.211
- Steinfort, P., & Walker, D. H. (2007). Critical success factors in project management globally and how they may be applied to aid projects. in D. Baccarini (ed.) *Proceedings of the PMOZ Achieving Excellence - 4th Annual Project Management Australia Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 28-31 August 2007*.
- Steinfort, P., & Walker, D. H. (2008). A critique of the pmi post-disaster rebuild methodology. *paper presented at the ONU Research Conference, Varsovie*.
- Thermistocleous, G., & Wearne, S. (2000). Project management topic coverage in journals. *International Journal of Project Management*, 18, 7-11. doi: 10.1016/S0263-7863(99)00030-7
- Thornton, P., Schuetz, T., Förch, W., Cramer, L., Abreu, D., Vermeulen, S., & Campbell, B. M. (2017). Responding to global change: A theory of change approach to making agricultural research for development outcome-based. *Agricultural Systems*, 152, 145-153. doi: 10.1016/j.agsy.2017.01.005
- Tjora, A. (2017). *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis* (3rd ed.). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Toledo, R. F. D., Junior, H. M., Filho, J. F., & Costa, H. G. (2019, Jul). A scientometric

- review of global research on sustainability and project management dataset. *Data in Brief*, 25. doi: 10.1016/j.dib.2019.104312
- Turner, J. R. (2006). Towards a theory of project management: The nature of the project governance and project management. *International Journal of Project Management*, 24, 93–95. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2005.11.008
- UNDP. (2009). *Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development*. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/documents/english/pme-handbook.pdf>. United Nations. (Last accessed: 28th April 2020)
- UNDP. (2011, Dec). *Outcome-level evaluation: A companion guide*. [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/UNDP\\_Guidance\\_on\\_Outcome-Level%20Evaluation\\_2011.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/UNDP_Guidance_on_Outcome-Level%20Evaluation_2011.pdf). United Nations. (Last accessed: 20th May 2020)
- Uribe, D., Ortiz-Marcos, I., & Uruburu, A. (2018, 04). What is going on with stakeholder theory in project management literature? a symbiotic relationship for sustainability. *Sustainability*, 10, 1300. doi: 10.3390/su10041300
- Vogel, I. (2012). *'theory of change' in international development. review report for the uk department of international development*.
- Volden, G. H. (2018). Public project success as seen in a broad perspective. lessons from a meta-evaluation of 20 infrastructure projects in norway. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 69, 109-117. doi: 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.04.008
- Watkins, R., Meiers, M. W., & Visser, Y. L. (2012). *A guide to assessing needs*. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/644051468148177268/pdf/663920PUB0EPI00essing09780821388686.pdf>. World Bank. (Last accessed: 27th April 2020)
- WCED. (1987). Our common future—call for action. *Environmental Conservation*, 14(4), 291–294. doi: 10.1017/s0376892900016805
- Winter, M., Smith, C., Morris, P., & Cimil, S. (2006). Directions for future research in project management: The main findings of a uk government-funded research network. *International Journal of Project Management*, 24, 638-649. doi: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2006.08.009
- Youker, R. (1999). Managing international development projects— lessons learned. *Project Management Journal*, 30, 6-7. doi: 10.1177/875697289903000202
- Zürcher, C. (2017). What do we (not) know about development aid and violence? a systematic review. *World Development*, 98, 506-522. doi: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.05.013

# Appendix

## Content of Appendix

A1	Interview guide [English] . . . . .	116
A2	Interview guide [Norwegian] . . . . .	119
A3	Study information sheet and informed consent form . . . . .	122

## A1 Interview guide [English]

The English version of the interview guide was used in the interviews with English speaking informants.

### Interview Guide (*semi-structured interview*)

<p><u>Fase 1:</u> <i>Getting started</i> Time: 10 mins</p>	<p><b>Information</b> We are 5th-year students in the Indøk (Industrial Economics and Technology Management) department at NTNU, and are currently writing our master's degree in project management. In our thesis, we are focusing on projects intended to help people in developing countries. The purpose of this study is to look closer into how one can increase the chances for these projects to have a long-term positive impact. In this interview, we would like to hear about your thoughts and experiences.</p> <p>We are conducting multiple interviews of experts in the field, which together will form the empirical data of our thesis. It is important to emphasize that we have the responsibility to keep all of the interviews confidential and that everything we write in the paper will be anonymized.</p> <p><b>Consent</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Before we start, we would like to ask for your consent to participate in this interview.</li> <li>2) We ask for a confirmation that you have received and understood the information letter about our thesis.</li> <li>3) Before we start the interview, do you have any questions?</li> <li>4) Do you approve that the information gathered from this interview may be used, until the project is completed, in June 2020?</li> </ol> <p><b>Background</b> We would like to understand a little bit more about your background.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) As we are focusing on projects in developing countries, we are curious about how much contact you have had with people from developing countries in their hometown or village?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What type of contact have you had?</li> <li>b) <i>Checkpoint:</i> Do we understand how the informant's knowledge of the context can influence his/her response?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) What is your current place of work?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What tasks do you have?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><u>Fase 2:</u> <i>Experience</i> Time: 10 mins</p>	<p><b>Experience</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Have you been involved in projects that aim towards helping others in developing countries?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If yes - What types of projects?</li> <li>b) If yes - What was your role?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) What do you associate with "project sustainability"?</li> </ol>
<p><u>Fase 3:</u> <i>Sustainability in projects</i> Time: 30 mins</p>	<p><b>Thoughts about long-term projects</b> As an introduction, we would like to hear what you ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) ...think is necessary for aid projects in developing countries to have a lasting positive change in society?</li> <li>2) ...think about the way aid projects are carried out today?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What is done correctly?</li> <li>b) What is done wrongly?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) What do you think are the biggest differences between implementing projects in developing countries versus in Norway?</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Today's situation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Can you tell us a bit <b>in general</b> about how you have worked and thought in the projects you have been involved in?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What type of help have the projects given?</li> <li>b) What is the reason you have done it that way?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) In general, what would you do differently in the projects that you have worked on?</li> <li>3) Where do the funds and resources come from?</li> <li>4) What happens to the local communities when the project ends and the funds and resources are no longer provided?</li> <li>5) More generally, how would you describe a successful project?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) How can one achieve this?</li> </ol> </li> <li>6) There are many different ways to help. What type of projects do you regard as the most effective?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) For example, we have emergency aid, competence building, infrastructure development, health promotion, political aid (create democracy, hold elections, fight corruption, prosecution, equality, etc.), job creation, etc.</li> <li>b) <i>Checkpoint</i>: Do we understand what they mean by their categorization?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>Planning and implementation of a project</b>        (We have already touched the topic of planning and implementation of projects.) We would now like to move a bit further into that topic.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When starting a new aid project: To what extent do you think one should have a concrete plan or not?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) If a plan is necessary: How should one plan?</li> <li>b) If a plan is necessary: What should be planned?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) What do you think will affect the long-term impact after the donor organization pulls out?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What can be done to ensure that the long-term effect is positive?</li> <li>b) How have you done this in the projects you have been a part of?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) If you were to divide a generic aid project into different phases, what would these phases be?</li> <li>4) If you were to create a checklist of what to do in each phase, in order to ensure a positive long-term outcome - what points would you include for each phase?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Let's start with the first phase you mentioned, "xx". [Etc.]</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Will these points be sufficient to ensure that the recipient does not become dependent on the donor?</li> </ol>
--	--



<p><u>Fase 4:</u></p> <p><i>Closing the interview</i></p>	<p><b>Anything to add</b></p> <p>We have now reached the end of the questions we had prepared in advance.</p> <p><i>Ask co-interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to ask about?</i></p> <p>1) Is there something we should have asked about, that you would like to add?</p>
<p>Time: 10 mins</p>	<p><b>Thanks</b></p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to talk to us.</p> <p>As we said at the beginning, we will be conducting multiple interviews before analyzing all the data we have collected. If we see that there is something more we should have asked you, we will contact you to find out if you have the possibility for a follow-up interview.</p> <p>All the empirical data we collect and use in our thesis will be anonymized, and we have the responsibility to keep all of the interviews confidential. After our master's thesis is handed in, in June, we will delete all the information obtained from this interview.</p>

## A2 Interview guide [Norwegian]

The Norwegian version of the interview guide was used in the interviews with Scandinavian speaking informants.

### Intervjuguide (semistrukturert intervju)

<p><u>Fase 1:</u></p> <p><i>Rammesetting</i></p> <p>Tid: 10 min</p>	<p><b>Informasjon</b> Vi er 5.-årsstudenter på Indøk (Industriell Økonomi og Teknologiledelse), og skriver dette semesteret masteroppgave innen prosjektledelse ved NTNU. I oppgaven ser vi på prosjekter hvor hensikten er å hjelpe mennesker i utviklingsland. Formålet med oppgaven er å se på hvordan øke sannsynligheten for at disse har langvarig positiv effekt og påvirkning på samfunnet. I dette intervjuet ønsker vi å høre litt om dine tanker og erfaringer.</p> <p>Vi gjennomfører flere intervjuer av eksperter innenfor feltet, som sammen utgjør empirien i oppgaven vår. Det er viktig å understreke at vi har taushetsplikt og at alt vi skriver i oppgaven vil bli anonymisert.</p> <p><b>Samtykke</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Før vi starter ønsker vi å innhente ditt samtykke til å delta i dette intervjuet.</li> <li>2) Vi ønsker også din bekreftelse på at du har mottatt og forstått informasjonskrivet om oppgaven vår.</li> <li>3) Har du noen spørsmål du ønsker å stille?</li> <li>4) Samtykker du at opplysningene dine og informasjonen hentet fra dette intervjuet brukes fram til prosjektet er avsluttet, i juni 2020?</li> </ol> <p><b>Bakgrunn</b> Vi ønsker først å forstå litt mer om bakgrunnen din.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ettersom vi ser på prosjekter i utviklingsland, er vi nysgjerrige på hvor mye kontakt du har hatt med mennesker fra utviklingsland, på deres hjemsted?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvilken type kontakt har du hatt?</li> <li>b) <i>Sjekkpunkt:</i> Forstår vi hvordan intervjuobjektets kjennskap til konteksten kan påvirke hans/hennes svar?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Hva er ditt nåværende arbeidssted?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvilke arbeidsoppgaver har du?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><u>Fase 2:</u></p> <p><i>Erfaringer</i></p> <p>Tid: 10 min</p>	<p><b>Erfaringer</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Har du vært involvert i prosjekter som skal hjelpe andre i utviklingsland?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvis ja - Hva slags prosjekt?</li> <li>b) Hvis ja - Hva var din rolle?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Hva forbinder du med bærekraft innen prosjekt?</li> </ol>
<p><u>Fase 3:</u></p> <p><i>Langsiktighet i prosjekter</i></p> <p>Tid: 30 min</p>	<p><b>Tanker om langsiktighet i prosjekter [Oppvarmingsøvelse]</b> Som en innledning synes vi det er spennende å høre hva du ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) ...tenker skal til for at hjelpeprosjekter i utviklingsland gir en varig positiv endring i samfunnet?</li> <li>2) ...tenker rundt måten dagens hjelpe- og bistandsprosjekter blir utført i dag?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hva gjøres riktig?</li> <li>b) Hva blir gjort feil?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Hva tenker du at er den, eller de største forskjellene på å gjennomføre prosjekter i utviklingsland kontra Norge?</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Nåsituasjonen</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Kan du fortelle litt <b>generelt</b> om hvordan dere har jobbet og tenkt i de prosjektene du har vært involvert i?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvilken type hjelp er det prosjektene har gitt?</li> <li>b) Hva er grunnen til at dere har gjort det slik?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Hva ville du generelt gjort annerledes på de prosjektene du har jobbet med?</li> <li>3) Hvor kommer midlene og ressursene fra?</li> <li>4) Hva skjer med de lokale samfunnene når prosjektet avsluttes og midlene og ressursene ikke lenger blir gitt?</li> <li>5) Mer generelt, hvordan vil du beskrive et vellykket prosjekt?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvordan oppnår man dette?</li> </ol> </li> <li>6) Det finnes mange ulike måter å hjelpe på. Hvilken type prosjekter mener du er mest effektive?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Eksempelvis har man nødhjelp, kompetanseheving, utvikling av infrastruktur, helsefremmende hjelp, politisk hjelp (opprette demokrati, avholde valg, bekjempe korrupsjon, rettsforfølgelse, likestilling, osv.), opprettelse av arbeidsplasser, osv.</li> <li>b) <i>Sjekkpunkt</i>: Forstår vi hva de legger i kategoriseringen sin?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<p><b>Planlegging og gjennomføring av prosjekter</b>        (Vi har allerede snakket litt om hvordan hjelpeprosjekter planlegges og gjennomføres.) Vi ønsker nå å gå litt videre innpå det.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Når man setter i gang med et hjelpeprosjekt: I hvor stor grad tenker du at man burde ha en konkret plan vs å ta ting som de kommer?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hvordan burde man i tilfelle planlegge?</li> <li>b) Hva burde man i tilfelle planlegge?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Hva tenker du at påvirker den langvarige effekten etter at giverorganisasjonen har trukket seg ut?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hva kan gjøres for å sikre at den langvarige effekten er positiv?</li> <li>b) Hvordan har dere gjort dette i de prosjektene du jobber i?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Hvis du skulle delt et generisk bistands- eller hjelpeprosjekt i ulike faser, hvilke faser ville du delt det inn i?</li> <li>4) Hvis du skulle laget en sjekklister for hva man burde gjøre i hver fase, for å sikre et positivt langvarig utfall - hvilke punkter ville du inkludert i hver fase?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) La oss begynne med den første fasen du nevnte, "xx". [Osv.]</li> </ol> </li> <li>5) Vil disse punktene være nok for å sikre at mottakeren ikke blir avhengig av giveren?</li> </ol>

<p><u>Fase 4:</u> <i>Tilbakeblikk</i> Tid: 10 min</p>	<p><b>Tilføy</b> Da har vi kommet oss gjennom de spørsmålene vi har forberedt i forkant. <i>Henvende til medintervjuer: Har du noe mer du vil spørre om?</i> 1) Er det noe vi ikke har spurt om, men som du ønsker å tilføy?</p>
	<p><b>Takk og veien videre</b> Takk for at du tok deg tid til å snakke med oss.</p> <p>Som vi sa innledningsvis skal vi gjennomføre flere intervjuer før vi analyserer det datamaterialet vi har samlet inn. Hvis vi ser at det er noe mer vi burde spurt deg om, tar vi kontakt for å høre om du har mulighet til et oppfølgingsintervju.</p> <p>All empirien vi benytter i oppgaven vil bli anonymisert, og vi har taushetsplikt. Masteroppgaven vår skal leveres i juni, og når oppgaven er levert sletter vi informasjonen hentet fra dette intervjuet.</p>

## A3 Study information sheet and informed consent form

The following information letter was sent out to the informants upfront of the interview, in accordance with the guidelines from NSD.

### Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

#### *Masteroppgave: Obtaining lasting impact of aid projects in developing countries ?*

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i en studie om langsiktigheten i hjelpe- og bistandsprosjekter i utviklingsland. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for studien og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Studien er en masteroppgave innen prosjektledelse som utføres våren 2020. Det gjennomføres mange prosjekter i utviklingsland, men hva skjer etter at giverorganisasjonen har trukket seg ut? Formålet med denne oppgaven er se på hvordan øke sannsynligheten for at prosjektene har en langvarig positiv effekt og påvirkning på samfunnet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

I empiriinnsamlingen legger vi vekt på å ha et utvalg med ulike perspektiver og innfallsvinkler. Du blir bedt om å delta i denne studien fordi vi ønsker høre dine perspektiver og erfaringer.

Ved å dele vår motivasjon og studiens formål med personer i vårt nettverk har vi blitt tipset om flere aktuelle intervjuobjekt. Vi har også kontaktet relevante bedrifter og organisasjoner, samt personer vi har funnet gjennom relevante avisartikler eller lignende.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

- Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det i utgangspunktet ett personlig intervju. Det vil ta ca. 60 minutter. Intervjuet vil inneholde spørsmål om dine erfaringer med hjelpe- og bistandsprosjekter, samt tanker rundt hvordan prosjekter kan bidra til varig positiv endring i samfunnet. Det vil bli tatt lydopptak av intervjuet, som deretter transkriberes og anonymiseres. Alt dette vil bli slettet innen masteroppgavens innleveringsfrist i juni 2020.
- Dersom det er aktuelt å gjennomføre et oppfølgingsintervju vil vi kontakte deg. Her står du fritt til å velge å delta.
- Utover intervjuet/intervjuene vil vi kun benytte offentlig tilgjengelige kilder for å samle inn data.

#### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil kun bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Dine svar vil kun behandles av oss, Anna Solberg og Hanne Briedis, og eventuelt vår veileder Ola Edvin Vie.
- Det vil kun bli lagret én lydfil av intervjuet som oppbevares sikkert. Ved transkripsjon vil navn og eventuelle kontaktopplysninger bli erstattet med pseudonym.

#### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter studien?**

Studien skal etter planen avsluttes i juni 2020. Alle personopplysninger og opptak vil bli slettet innen dette.

**Dine rettigheter**

Du har rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

**Hvem er ansvarlig for studien?**

Studien gjennomføres av to masterstudenter. NTNU er ansvarlig for studien.

**Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU har NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS) vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i denne studien er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

**Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- NTNU ved
  - Anna Solberg, på e-post [anna.solberg@ntnu.no](mailto:anna.solberg@ntnu.no) (masterstudent)
  - Hanne N. H. Briedis, på e-post [hnbriedi@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:hnbriedi@stud.ntnu.no) (masterstudent)
  - Ola Edvin Vie, på e-post [ola.edvin.vie@ntnu.no](mailto:ola.edvin.vie@ntnu.no) (veileder)
- Personvernombud ved NTNU: Thomas Helgesen, på e-post [thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no](mailto:thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på e-post ([personvertjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personvertjenester@nsd.no)) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Anna Solberg og Hanne N. H. Briedis

---

**Samtykkeerklæring**

Du vil på starten av intervjuet bli bedt om å:

- Samtykke til å delta i intervjuet.
- Bekrefte at du har mottatt og forstått dette informasjonsskrivet og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.
- Samtykke til at dine opplysninger behandles frem til studien er avsluttet, i juni 2020.

