"Problem-Solving Skills for Multi-Stakeholder Projects"

Instructor:	Nicolas Rode
Format:	Online Course
Duration:	7 weeks
Language of Instruction:	English

Description

In all types of organizations, people face various external challenges and internal problems along their professional journey. What kind of role do I have in my job? Does my job allow me to work collaboratively? How much uncertainty will I have to navigate as part of my next job? Do I have enough flexibility? How quick do my responsibilities change? How independently and/or creatively will I be able to work? How does trust develop? Are there other fields I would like to explore? Uncertainty about priorities, resources, processes, interests, actions and repercussions is what makes areas of human communication and cooperation so difficult to handle.

Strong problem-solving skills are therefore key to professional and personal success. For example, the ability to shape constructive partnerships in multi-stakeholder settings plays a crucial role for successful collaboration. Sometimes challenging one's own approach becomes necessary, too, when navigating between formal structures and informal rules. While these skills as well as creativity are very important for professionals, their success in solving the issues at hand is also crucially influenced by the organisational operating system and its culture: The division of labour within and between organisations and projects leads to different goals, interests and rationalities, which involved actors have to face and deal with. Likewise, the distribution of resources and power among other things may be part of the problem – or the solution.

This seminar will equip you with key competences and knowledge in order to prepare and act on complex challenges in the workplace. The application of knowledge and skills plays a central part during the course. You will get a comprehensive overview of proven problem-solving theories and methods, such as design thinking, organisational theory and role-play. Besides creative and critical thinking, you will develop a deeper understanding of challenges by engaging with your peers in a two-day online workshop that will help you premeditate, plan and test your learnings and skills. By analysing existing case studies, participants will increase their ability to identify conditions for success and failure in complex project settings. Understanding social dynamics in areas of uncertainty will help them navigate negotiation processes in order to reach consensual and actionable goals.

Learning Objectives

This course will help you acquire necessary cognitive and affective competences to solve complex, multi-stakeholder challenges. Besides the technical methods, you will train fundamental skills such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, negotiation, team and leadership skills. At the end of the course, you will be able to reflect on your own position and options for positive change in the workplace and employ these soft skills, concepts and methods in developing realistic problem-solving strategies. You will be able to ask the right questions, win and engage partners, apply innovative methods and ultimately launch well-embedded and impactful solutions. In this interactive course, you will analyse and experience the balance between reflection and action, between control and trust, centralisation and decentralisation. This will help you navigate a sometimes volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous work environment.

Target Group

Young professionals, advanced students, graduates, postgraduates, professionals from all fields are welcome. This course is of particular relevance to those who work or would like to work in international teams and multi-stakeholder settings such as projects, administrations, start-ups or larger companies.

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General Requirements

Participants need to possess English language abilities in speaking and writing on the Upper Intermediate Level (at least B2). Attendance of the live sessions is essential for your successful and meaningful completion of the course. To receive a certificate for this course, you will need to attend at least two of the three live sessions. These live sessions will be combined with additional material and intensive work through the online course platform, both individually and in groups. Please see course requirements for the various assignments.

To ensure a comfortable learning environment for all, please adhere to our Code of Conduct.

Technical Requirements

Stable internet connection.

Fully functional device, such as computer, laptop or tablet (use of smart phones is not recommended) with camera and microphone, headset recommended.

Recommended operating systems: Windows 10 or higher or MacOS 10.13 or higher. Avoid using a VPN.

Software: Webex Meetings. Please log in to Webex at least a day before course start in order to avoid any technical delays on the first live session.

Course Requirements

Analysis of existing case studies

Participation in-group discussions

Readiness to step out of one's comfort zone

Voluntary assignments to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Literature

Readings, podcasts, videos and other online material will be made available.

Modules

Module	Topics, Guiding Questions, Reading, Assignments
1	**LIVE SESSION // Introduction:** **How to identify and define the right problem to tackle? What are useful problem-solving tools?** We constantly have to deal with complexity, uncertainty, volatility and ambiguity at the work place. How can you (re)frame problems as opportunities to explore new possibilities for cooperative solutions? In order to start this course properly, we want to engage with you as much as possible. We will meet our peers. We will collect work issues, experiences and look at some problem-solving frameworks and tools that might help to solve complex problems together. At the end of this first session, you will be able to navigate this course and solve the tasks together with your peers in the program. One helpful framework is Design Thinking. It is a rather strategic mind-set for approaching challenges with user-focused methods and hands-on experiments in groups. With the help of this framework, you will learn to ask the right questions and develop more interconnected solutions. **Task** A fundamental exercise in Design Thinking: Formulate a challenge, in this case in the framework of SDG 11 smart and resilient cities. Please use the parameters below to create one of the following challenge sentences. X = potential users Y = users need / wish / problem Z = context / influencing factors / restrictions

	How can we help X to solve Y considering Z. Redesign the experience of Y (users need/ problem/ wish) for defined User X in a world where Z influencing factors / restrictions apply. Write between 5 and 10 sentences and send them to us.
2	## Asynchronous Work // Topic: Balancing chaos and order – How can we thrive in uncertainty? As we have seen before, crisis situations are often "the new normal". Individuals and organisations have to cope with crises and find ways to tackle them. In such situation, it becomes important to differentiate the assets from the noise. Organisations that support the learning journey of their members, understand adaption to change as part of their internal institutional code of conduct. Consequently, in this session we will explore and discuss the follow questions: How can we analyse the symptoms, causes and consequences of a crisis? How can we make a crisis an excellent starting point for innovation in our organisation? How can you take agency and even leadership from your position? **Task** Describe a crisis you (or your role model) managed to get out of. How did you manage it? What did you learn? Join your peers and discuss the crisis management. Why is it important for organisation to learn continuously? Can you imagine different ways of organisations to handle certain crisis?

3	## Asynchronous Work // Topic: Future Skills for challenges
	
	In this session we will explore why problem-solving skills are fundamental to tackle 21st-century challenges. We will learn the basics in order to use some of these techniques later in the course.
	
	- What are future skills?
	- Why are they so important?
	- Why do we need more "soft skills"?
	
	Task
	Analyse the Future Skills Map. Write a short note on the future skills you consider being the most important.
	   - Why are these skills particularly important?
	   - In which situation are they relevant?
	Discuss your favourite future skills with your peers. Improve your notes, write between 5 and 15 sentences and send them to us.

4	## Asynchronous Work // Topic: Who are your Stakeholders? Build your Community
	The more complex the challenge, the more help you might need. To be relevant, your solution must probably appeal to several stakeholders. Ideally you want to build a community of practice, where a lot of people are voluntarily engaged.
	Needless to say, every stakeholder has different interests, relations and resources. Consequently, it is key to understand how we can organize our actions in order to engage in positive feedback loops.
	By looking at community dynamics, we can critically analyse the context in which our project is situated and gain a deep understanding of the distribution of resources.
	Task
	Read the literature. Imagine you are the new community organizer of a specific community. It's your first day and you want to talk 1) to a colleague and 2) to an inhabitant to find out more about the local challenges.
	What would you ask? Map the symptoms and the sources of the issue. What would be the first steps to approach the issues? Then outline how you would build up this community. Please send us your text. It can be between 10 and 20 sentences.

5	## Asynchronous Work // Topic: Build your Ecosystem
	Once you have identified your challenge and your stakeholders, you can map your ecosystem around the issues at hand. For this task, we will use the Innovation Ecosystem Strategy Tool developed by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering - IAO.
	Task
	Use a current challenge your organisation faces or the challenge you might have formulated in the first session. Take a stakeholder and its role out of the CeRRI - Ecosystem Strategy Tool. Use the Stakeholder Empathy Map to find the "why", meaning the motivation for engaging in this specific challenge. Continue with as many stakeholders as you consider useful.
	You might want to discuss the challenge with your peers. Why is the challenge important? How can the stakeholder help and how would you include the other stakeholders in the process?
	Write between 5 and 10 sentences and send them to us.

6	## LIVE SESSION
	## Workshop Session 1: Scenario-Building and Ideation
	In scenario-building we will flesh out the SDG 11 on the basis of a realistic city.
	In the Persona Lab we will then deepen our understanding for the most relevant stakeholders, their motivations and challenges. To develop solutions for the main challenge, teams will engage in an ideation phase to come up with an integrated solution.

7	## LIVE SESSION
	## Workshop Session 2: Persona Lab and Project Simulation
	On the second day of the workshop, we will start the project simulation. It will be a co-creation process with different roles within dynamic situations. We will see shifting and unexpected developments and interactions, challenges and skills at play. After a cool-down phase, we would like to evaluate with you the skills used and the workshop in general.