

Best practices in geosciences: universal or geographically bound?

From a project perspective

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Introduction

As project managers in geo-science, we have the honour to experience working in different types of projects in various countries with different sectors. These experiences have helped us to identify and execute the important skill set necessary to achieve the expected results within our projects.

According to our experiences, soft skills such as people and expectation management, communication, and knowing the best approach to collaborate with certain partners are very important in intercultural projects.

This poster presents the project management aspects a project manager needs to take into consideration and whether these aspects are influenced by geographical location, i.e. whether each aspect differs between European projects and global projects with partners from the Southern hemisphere. For several of those aspects we have provided best practices based on our own project management experiences.

Diagram explanation

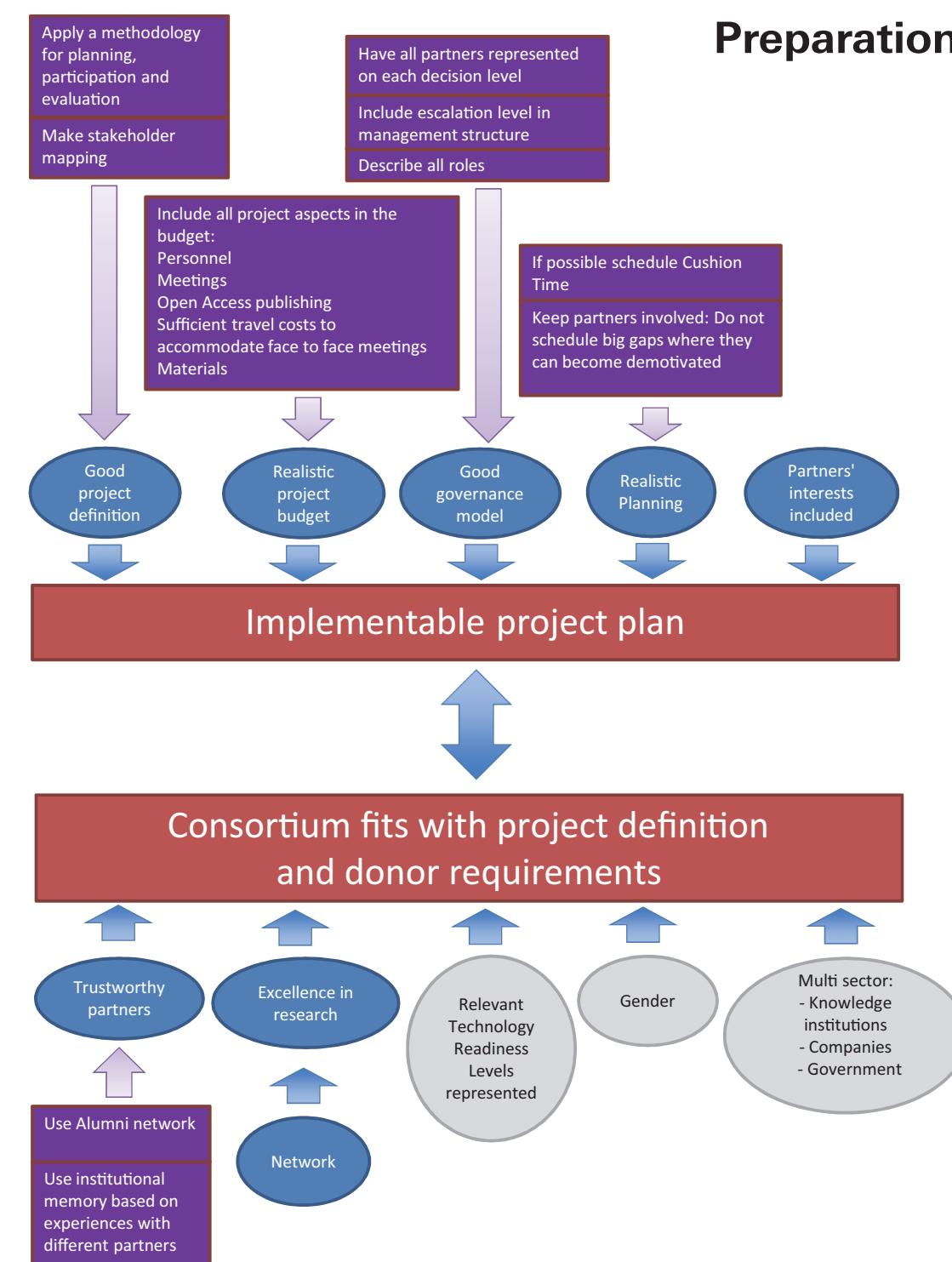
Red elements - The red boxes are the products necessary to carry out a successful project. Subsequently, we have identified the aspects that a project manager needs to take into consideration to successfully deliver the product (yellow, grey and blue elements).

Yellow elements - The yellow circles are the aspects within the project where geographic location has significant influence i.e. differs between European projects and global projects with partners from the Southern hemisphere.

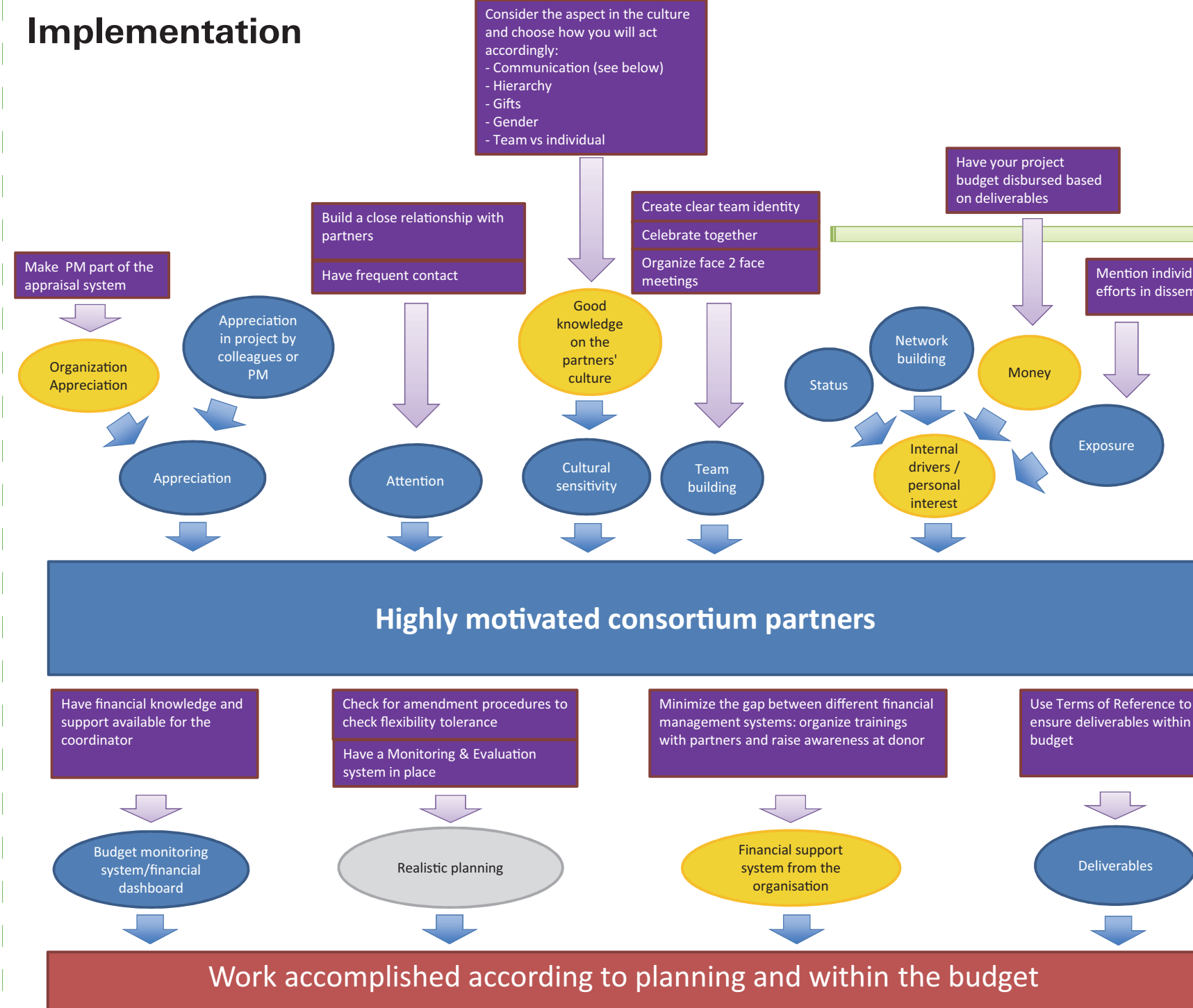
Grey elements - The grey circles are the aspects which at first glance seems geographical, but are mainly determined by the donor.

Blue elements - The blue elements represent project management aspects that apply universally, despite the geographical location.

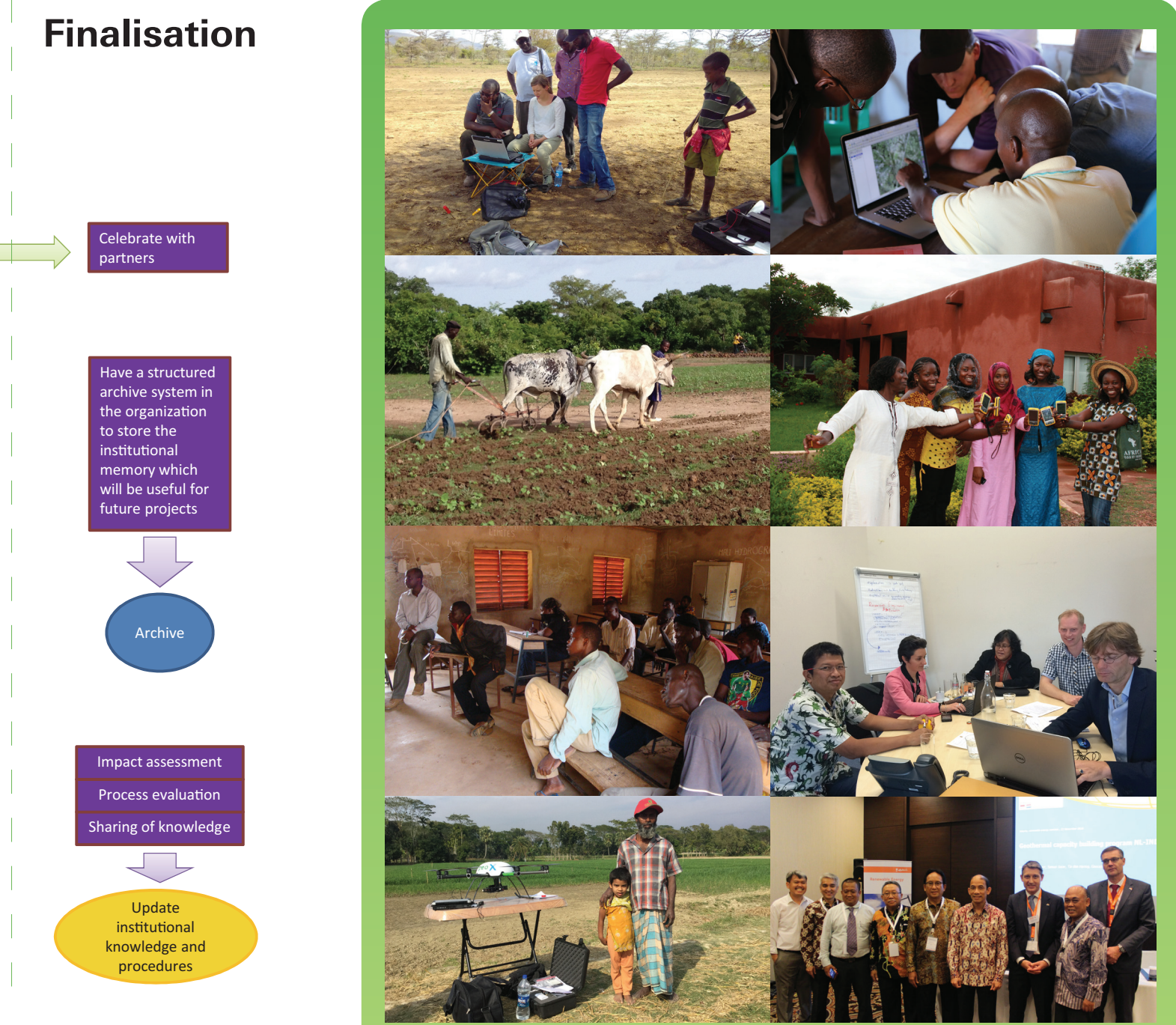
Purple elements - The purple boxes are the compiled best practices from our project management experiences.



Implementation



Finalisation



Conclusions

- Give careful attention to an **implementable project plan**. Tailor it to include all partners' interest and capture all roles and responsibilities of all partners.
- Donors' requirement usually predetermine the **types of partners**. The lead organization must make a selection of trustworthy partners. Institutional memory can support this selection process.
- **Communication and motivation** are strong drivers in a project and they vary with the geographical origin of partners.
- **Cultural sensitivity** of the project manager is key to good communication and an important skill to keep all partners motivated.
- **How to communicate** must be carefully considered in global projects with partners from the Southern hemisphere. Electricity and internet are not always available.
- **Flexibility** in the project execution depends on the donor. If possible, allow for changes on the ground when planning.
- Carefully **consider location, culture, and politics** when planning.
- Many projects are not yet focusing on - and measuring - the **impact** after the project ends. Projects need to be aware of this. Develop impact measurement process and procedures.
- **Hard project management skills are universal, soft skills should be geographically adapted.**

Acknowledgement

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