

The garden bridge was a proposal made to erect a pedestrian bridge over the river Thames in London. Its main aims were to make the city greener which would lead to tourism and create jobs. However, lack of transparency and misuse of a large amount of public funds caused the proposal to fail. This essay observes this project through the eyes of a professional engineer and looks at the ethical problem surrounding the project.

### Facts and concepts

A trust was created to build and maintain the bridge, this acted as both a company and a charity. Initial plans and drawing were created in 2014, with plans to start construction in 2015 but the project was scrapped before any construction had begun. The BBC posted an article on how money was spent during this time, the amount published totalled to £53.5 million, £9.5 million went to designers, £2.3 million were spent on legal fees, £1.7 million was spent on the salaries of the top executives of the trust. The largest sum was £21.4 million which was spent on construction contracts. Smaller amounts were spent on miscellaneous parts of the project, such as a gala (£417,00) and a website (£161,000). They received backlash over the cost of the website due to a lack of transparency. (Anon, 2019).

The project was to be partially funded by the public, this totalled to £60 million, £30 million came from Transport for London (TfL) and £30 million from the Department for Transport (DfT). The total projected cost of the project was \$185 million, £120 millions of which was to come from private investors, none of which lost out massively by the cancellation of the project. As a cancellation agreement TfL had to make a final payment of £5.5 million to the trust for reasons that remain unclear to the general public. (Anon, 2019).

### Ethical issues

This rose up concern by the public. How could such important payment have been made for a cancelled project and how much of it was public funded? The main issue with this project is the lack of transparency of how the funds were used. This raises questions about the responsible stewardship of public resources. Without detailed breakdowns of expenditures provided to the public and stakeholders, it becomes challenging to ensure accountability in the use of taxpayer money. This can be seen as dishonest not because the information given is a lie but more about how the information conveyed can be seen as misleading. When dealing with public fund it is important to keep transparency in order to avoid scandals as many headlines depicted such as “Full cost of London Garden Bridge fiasco revealed” (Anon, 2020).

From a utilitarian perspective it can be argued it can also be said that transparency could potentially lead to adverse consequences. For example, transparency could also lead to people opinion diverging thus creating conflict. This is especially important as people feel like they are contributing to the project since public funds are being used. However, it is hard to argue this point as this may be beneficial on the short term, but, in the long-term transparency builds trust and credibility. It is also hard to use a cost benefit analysis to argue this as it is hard to assign a monetary value to intangible assets benefit like improving aesthetic or tourism. A good argument for transparency is the respect for the autonomy and intelligence of the public, allowing them to make informed decisions.

Another point would be to come back on the concept of nepotism in the project. From an ethical perspective the lack of due diligence in the selection of candidate undermining the integrity of the recruitment process. This erodes the public trust in the fairness of the government decision demonstrates unjust, dishonest, and detrimental ethical awareness.

### This view to me

This project presents a utopic idea which seems great and a big step in the right direction for the environment and bringing more green life to a very affluent capital. This idea poses no problem as it will bring jobs in the picture as well as greater tourism while doing good for the environment. However, the poor management of this project has led the project to its failure. Another reason for the failure of the project is the enormous cost. The fact that the project is not profitable makes it hard to make it sustainable. Various parks such as Éze parc in France makes people pay for their visit to maintain it without using public funds. This would affect the accessibility arising problems with certain local, but it could also be thought that London resident or student might be able to enter for free and this could also authorise the use of a small amount of public funds.

However, the lack of managing skills and misuse of public funds should not be allowed at such a scale. This project forecasted to uses large amount of funds and even with the project cancelled used an outstanding amount of public funds. The lack of transparentness on this underline the lack of ethical awareness. This along the problem of nepotism emphasize the unethical behaviour and demonstrate how they lost the trust of the community.

Ethical transgression can also be seen through the concept. When I first viewed the concept I though if it being a good concept to help the biodiversity in a major city. However, as the concept was researched it has been found that I might not impact the biodiversity in a positive way due to the construction and maintenance.

In conclusion, I can strongly say that it is very understandable that this project failed. The lack of transparency and ethical transgression led to the whole scandal. I cannot guarantee that more transparency or other suggested change would bring this project to a success but form an ethical point of view there are a lot of improvement that would be right to do.

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