This article presents adaptive heuristics as an alternative approach to navigate uncertainty in project decision-making. Adaptive heuristic are a class of simple decision strategies that have received only scant attention in project studies. Yet, they can strive in contexts of high uncertainty and limited information, which are the typical project decision context. This article develops a conceptual model that supports a systematic connection between adaptive heuristics and project decisions. Individual adaptive heuristics succeed only in specific decision environments, in which they are 'ecologically rational'. The model builds on the individual definitions of ecological rationality and organizes them according to two types of uncertainty ('knowable' and 'unknowable'). Decision problems and heuristics are furthermore grouped by decision task (choice and judgement). The article discusses several resulting propositions for future research and analyses the scant project literature on heuristics with regard to its fit to the model and the propositions. This conceptual approach supports future prescriptive research that can foster the development of efficient and intuitively applicable decision support tools. It finally highlights current boundaries of research on adaptive heuristics regarding the missing reflection of different types of uncertainty.