
Editorial: The need for conceptual and empirical development on atypical projects

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As the world's connectivity increases, the value of information and knowledge is growing, and the pace and complexity of work is increasing (Liu and Phillips, 2011; Ryan and Pulakos, 2007). For instance, manufacturing is moving from mass production to implementing mass customisation (Duguay et al., 1997) which requires strategies that foster combining skills, creating technologies, developing know-how, crafting processes, and forming alliances (Brown and Bessant, 2003). The construction industry is growing to include sustainable development (Menna et al., 2012). Research and development is expanding to include innovations in the service industry (Djellal et al., 2003). Customers and end-users are integrated to the production of services which increases complexity and uncertainty (Skaggs and Youndt, 2004). Partnerships between for-profit and non-for-profit organisations are increasing with complex objectives such as shared human resources and joint financing of projects (Marra, 2004). Organisations used to deliver projects to external customers or within to their internal clients must now engage in inter-organisational collaborations that pierce through boundaries and affect each others' operations (Jones and Lichtenstein, 2008). For large organisations, 'small' is the new 'big' as they move from rigid structures and processes to flexible arrays of interdependent self-managed teams (Zaccaro et al., 2011). For small organisations, 'big' is the new 'small' as they (re)structure to accommodate instantaneous global operations and competition (Hessels and Terjesen, 2010). Together, these forces are contributing to projectising the organisation and management of work in ways far beyond the traditional views current bodies of knowledge, theories and practices were meant to support. In essence, we are witnessing the emergence of atypical projects and the need for management of these projects to be adaptive and dynamic while still ensuring project

efficiency and effectiveness. This special edition is a proactive attempt to push boundaries, challenge doctrinal perspectives on project management, identify gaps between textbook descriptions of typical projects and the vast array of atypical projects, and provide conceptual models, dynamic theories, and empirical evidence in support of project effectiveness in an ever expanding and diversified projectised world.

Koskinen pushed the boundaries brilliantly in his discussion of processual knowledge in organisations dealing with projects. He asserts that traditional project management cannot avoid knowledge fragmentation and loss. A more refined perspective is needed, one that includes meaning creation within the larger confines of context and temporal dynamics. In their paper, Burström and Wilson examine atypical projects by focussing on the need for project leaders to acquire and engage in new roles. Burström and Wilson's contribution is to ground leadership roles in terms of interactions and service management concepts. They argue that this enables project leaders to manage project uncertainty by focussing on service transactions between people. Saint-Macary and Ika suggest that managing complexity requires more than one analytical lens. They assert that it is not enough to adopt a traditional rational view of project management where the goal is to reduce the gap between what to do and how to achieve it. They emphasise that political negotiation with those holding power and meaning-making of those who deliver the project are two other necessary analytical tools. Riol and Thuillier tackle scientific research projects where explicit learning is as much a project output as project results. These authors challenge traditional approaches to project management by suggesting that some aspects of scientific research projects should *not* be managed in order to capitalise on discovery and the emergence of knowledge. Finally, Forgues and Lejeune stress that virtual collaborative technology may be key to construction projects if it fosters the changing of fragmented work practices into a shared understanding of the project's purpose and process. They add that the transformative impact of enriched management of informational flow bears its fruit through strengthened inter-disciplinary collaboration, teams that can self-manage themselves, and new leadership roles of the project manager.

Strikingly, all authors in this special issue focus their attention on non-technical issues that inhabit the project space. They do not advocate new tools, technology or techniques as end-all answers for example. Rather, they position the problems or the solutions of atypical projects and atypical project management around intra- and inter-human processes: managing meaning in complex contexts, leadership roles that help interface with stakeholders through service concepts, political analysis regarding negotiation and power, learning and knowledge emergence, and collaboration in inter-disciplinary projects. Authors in this special issue show that the intricacies of cognitive, affective and behavioural processes characteristic of people and of interactions between people – that is, human factors sometimes considered as soft – are in fact hard to conquer and must be at the forefront of needed developments in the project domain.

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