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Developing project management theories: reviewing the literature and formulating future research issues

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Abstract

For a long time, project management was thought of as a discipline that dealt with planning-oriented methods and, to a large extent, as an application of optimisation theory and engineering science. Finding the general factors that contribute to a project's success has also been the subject of a great deal of study. But, in the last ten years, project management has attracted more attention from a variety of academic fields. The need for an internal dialogue and debate over project management research is growing in tandem with the field's fast expansion. We contend that different viewpoints provide valuable light on the complicated topic of project management and project organisation. New viewpoints in the project management industry are covered in this article. Project study should recognise the paper's many questions to a greater extent. Project organisations, their behaviour, and the reasons for their differences are some of the topics covered by the questions. The main point is that we have spent too much time trying to figure out why some projects succeed and others fail, and not enough time talking about certain crucial research issues that are necessary for expanding our understanding of project management.

Keywords: Project management; Project organization; Temporary organization; Project research; Assumptions; Research questions

1. The current state of project management research

The professional field of project management today is diverse, multifaceted and contradictory in several respects. On Professional groups like the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the International Project Management Association (IPMA) have grown rapidly in recent years. In addition to hosting several conferences, these groups have been vocal in their support for project management standards and certification programmes. Here we have a thriving industry of experts that looks to be in need of standards, procedures, and certification programmes to help them advance in their careers. Professionals' interest in project management may be attributed, unsurprisingly, to the widespread trend of incorporating projects into the organisation of corporate operations [1]. This is supported by studies conducted on product development organisational structures [2] and several other industries' business practices [3].
Many of the papers and materials published in magazines like the Project Management Journal support the idea of using project management as "a method" to solve complicated organisational problems. Project management is seen as only one method among numerous for managing organisational activities from this perspective. Many books on the subject of project management research have similar ideas and points of view.
Numerous networks have mushroomed in tandem with the expansion of project management as a discipline, with a primary emphasis on disseminating information derived from research projects. The International Research Network for Organising by Projects, or IRNOP, came into being in 1994 and is one of these networks. Almost 100 people have attended each of the five research conferences hosted by IRNOP since the organization's founding. Bringing together experts from many disciplines has been a common theme at these conferences, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of project management studies. People from all walks of life and academic fields participate, including psychology, education, business, and organisational theory.

science of industry and society. It would seem that project management is an area of study that has the ability to unite several academic fields around a common phenomenon: projects. Although the diversity of viewpoints is intriguing and thought-provoking, we contend that it need to be accompanied by an ongoing discussion of some fundamental concerns about research in the field of project management. Therefore, we contend that the subject of project management research requires a thorough examination of its definition and scope.

Theoretical and practical aspects of project management have advanced swiftly in the last few years, but some writers contend that this progress has been too focused on a small subset of the discipline [4]. Despite the scholarly interest in programmes and courses, some writers contend that the study is lacking in depth. The academic awakening of interest in project-based initiatives is much too gradual, according to Morris [5]. Project management is also supposedly seen as an overarching theory that lacks sufficient empirical support, according to Packendorff's [6] literature and theory study on the subject. In addition, he emphasised that the prevailing school of thought views projects as instruments and project management as a toolbox for organising and directing multi-faceted endeavors. The need for thorough research and a variety of theoretical viewpoints to develop "middle-range" theories for various tasks has been highlighted by many authors in recent years. Much to how Shenhar and Dvir [7] said that the majority of project management studies "suffers from a scanty theoretical basis and lack of concepts," I would add.

Pinto [8] said in a recent literature study that critical chain project management and project risk management have seen the most advancements in project management research. Recent advances in the study of transitory organisations go unmentioned by the author. In addition, the author glosses over the fact that there is a severe dearth of empirical investigations in the mentioned study. By highlighting certain current trends and some of the most crucial concerns for the foundation of project management research, this article hopes to expand upon the evaluations conducted by Packendorff [6] and Pinto [8]. In order to construct middle-range theories of various project kinds, we argue that these problems are fundamental.

Additionally, the paper takes issue with the tendency of studies in the field of project management to zero in on the causes of project success or failure. On the contrary, we contend that in order to further our comprehension of successful project management, it is necessary to address a number of fundamental problems. We hope that by critically discussing the aforementioned subjects of enquiry, we might help to uncover areas where future study could be fruitful.

A good indicator is the growing attention from scholars and practitioners across several fields. On the other hand, it prompts the need to define project management research and to elaborate on some of the core concepts. In an effort to advance the theoretical positioning of their work, researchers in the field of project management should examine the major research issues raised in earlier studies and engage in an internal discussion over the nature and trajectory of project management research. For example, this may help shed light on the increasing diversity and breadth of project management studies conducted in the last few years.

A number of writers have cast doubt on the majority of studies devoted to the study of projects and project management. In this piece, we use these appeals as a jumping off point. However, we contend that criticism must also be crystal clear when it comes to counter-arguments to the prevailing views. Project researchers should pay more attention to a number of research topics that we highlight in this study, and we also provide a framework for analysing project research.

Initiating a conversation and discussion about some basic theoretical concerns in project management research is the purpose of this study. The fundamental rationale behind this is

that having this kind of conversation would help elevate project management as a field of study and advance the field's overall research agenda.

2. The intellectual roots of project management research

Several authors seem to believe that planning approaches like CPM and PERT are where the field of project management got its start [6]. The famed Henry Gantt, creator of the now-standard Gantt chart, is even considered by some to be the progenitor of (modern) project management [9]. Following along these lines would suggest that project management is a distinct approach to addressing problems via the use of strategies and processes for defining and organising tasks. Evidently, engineering schools include project management and project management research in their curricula, since these fields are closely related to optimisation theory and applied mathematics.
Some might argue that research in project management has quite distinct conceptual origins. In this regard, Gaddis's [10] article in the Harvard Business Review stands as a classic. Gaddis defines and proposes the following in that article.

To successfully complete a developed product on schedule, within budget, and in accordance with pre-determined performance standards is the typical objective of most projects. [10]

Because it was one of the few published in prestigious management journals to address the practice and art of project management head-on, the Gaddis paper has great significance. In his dissertation on temporary systems, Miles [11] also emphasised projects as empirical entities; this, in turn, prompted researchers Bennis and Slater [12] and Goodman and Goodman [13,14] to delve more into projects as organisational forms. Research Policy[7], Organisation Studies[15], the Scandinavian Journal of Management[16], and the California Management Review[17] are just a few of the top management and organisational publications that have published project-related studies in recent years. Interestingly, a lot of the literature in project management research is both referenced and critiqued in these publications. “As an organi-zational concept, project management is quite new and not well-understood,” argue Shenhar and Dvir [7]. The majority of the literature on project management is still in its early stages, and as a result, it lacks both a solid theoretical foundation and a set of guiding principles (p. 607-608). Moreover, according to Lindkvist et al. [15], conventional literature on project management treats projects primarily as an analytical process, which fails to address the systemic nature of the majority of initiatives. Thus, it may be said that the field of project management study adheres to two primary theoretical traditions. The first school of thought, which has its origins in engineering and applied mathematics, is concerned with project management strategies and planning tools. A second school of thought has its intellectual foundations in the social sciences, namely in fields like psychology, sociology, and organisation theory; this school places a premium on the behavioural and structural components of project management.

3. Foundational beliefs in studies of project management

We are interested in, and our study is based on, basic assumptions. From a scholarly point of view, "a project" may be seen as a tool for analysis, similar to how a social process has an established start and finish. The researcher who embarks on the study of the project creates it via practice and then recreates or modifies it. We are aware that the researcher's conception of a project and the social construction of the same actor may diverge on occasion [18]. Therefore, the researcher may not care what the practitioner considers to be the project. As project management scholars, we tend to see all empirical occurrences as projects, which leads us to believe that they are all quite similar. But we'd also bet that no two projects are ever the same. The difference between viewpoint and phenomenon is a major issue in empirical social research. One may argue, for example, that projects are only a lens through which to see organisational and industrial processes. In this regard, it makes little difference whether projects really exist; this is related to the earlier point that the researcher's view of a particular project need not align with the players'. Therefore, studying projects primarily

entails observing and attempting to record the distinct, intricate, and time-bound procedures of administration, organisation, and interaction. Therefore, there may be studies that say "project research" is a way of looking at whole sectors or even whole enterprises as the most essential unit of analysis. However, studies highlighting the significance of disseminating information and ideas about project management and organisation may be found. In keeping with this line of thinking, it may be said that studies examining "management by projects," or studies examining organisations with a focus on the project dimension, argue that projects provide a prism through which to see corporate actions [19,20]. Identical to what is presented in the introductory chapters of project management textbooks, the universal features in a project environment are essentially uniqueness, task complexity, and time-limitedness [21]. The idea here is that although analysing project variances is important, it is as necessary to explain the project's universal features. The significance of this phenomenon for the evolution of organisation theory was first highlighted by Thompson [22]. Scholars and practitioners alike have begun to use the phrase "project theory" very lately [3]. Despite the writers' lack of precision about the meaning of "project theory," the concept's application exposes key elements. Project theory, which encompasses textbooks, checklists, optimisation, and key success factor research, is sometimes rigidly called the "practical knowledge" or the "normative tradition" [6]. Those who study project management have long been familiar with this line of enquiry. These areas of study, on the other hand, don't provide much theoretical groundwork for those who want to construct hypotheses from empirical evidence. At the same time, we think that projects are fascinating occurrences that might provide the groundwork for robust theories that expand our understanding of certain facets of social life. We contend that this theory or theories would Managers who lack a solid understanding of projects fail to grasp a significant portion of the responsibilities that come with leading modern businesses, since project organisation is an essential corporate process and an important industrial activity [24]. We need new methods of thinking about organisations and their management, according to writers on the topic of project-based firms, boundary-less professions, and time-paced strategies [17]. We propose "project research" as a fruitful strategy for learning more about the contemporary business. Research into what makes a project successful is being propelled by the increasing prevalence of projects in modern organisations. There is still no consensus on what makes a project successful, despite a lot of study in the field in recent years [25]. We attribute this in large part to the prevalent belief that one universal paradigm of project management is applicable to all endeavours. Because every project is unique, it may not be wise to try to find a single, applicable theory. To be sure, as Winch [24] points out, the argument is not that every project is the same, but rather that a general form may be described as project organisation. Many perspectives are needed, and we hope that the discussion of crucial contextual and situational factors will be helpful. Because one tradition seeks certainty by avoiding uncertainty while the other accepts uncertainty and indeterminacy, the argument here is that the two traditions are irreconcilable on crucial matters [22].

We state that several kinds of theorising are required, some of which focus on the general features of projects and others on the details of individual endeavours. I would like it if the latter were linked to a certain "project category" or belonged to specific industry or businesses. On the other hand, project management requires ongoing critique of proposed dimensions, exploration of potential new ones, and maintenance of a balance between the two. While there seems to be a number of general processes present in "the project field," Lundin [26] argues that empirical and theoretical research should be separated.

The issue here is that there is no rule that says universal theories must advocate for a single theory or method of project management. On the other hand, if there were no common ground among project theories, then the very study of "projects as a field" would be in jeopardy. Therefore, striking a balance between generalizable and domain-specific theories is crucial. While "universal" may refer to overarching ideas or interests in this context, it does not always mean a universal proposal for project management.

An examination of the connections between project theories and firm theories [27,28] may reveal some important points. Business models and conceptualisations that attempt to describe

and forecast the structure and behaviour of firms are known as theories of the firm. Economists may use the phrase "theory of the firm" interchangeably, although no such thing exists. Any theory of the company will address a certain set of characteristics and actions of the real-world economic enterprise by creating an abstraction of it [29]. Consequently, several theories of the business exist, each providing an alternative explanation for a separate phenomenon while also competing with one another to provide an explanation for the same phenomenon [27]. Therefore, we propose that theories of projects are models and conceptualisations that explain and forecast the structure and behaviour of projects (or temporary organisations). To advance the project field, it would be necessary to present a variety of these theories, some of which would be complementary and others contradictory. We propose in this study that five essential questions would be useful to ask in any such endeavour. We pose and explore five topics in the next section of this study that have the potential to advance the project field and make it easier to construct theories of project management.

3. Questions for building theories of project management

In the following we will comment upon these ques- tions seriatim. We begin each section with a brief lit- erature review in order to discuss the ‘‘state of the art’’ on project management research. Second, we try to pinpoint the dominating line of research and its answer to each question. Finally, suggestions on some alter- native sub-questions are presented.

3.1. Why do project organizations exist?

As stated earlier, the term ‘‘project’’ has become the vogue in describing contemporary organizations. Both large multinationals to small technology-based firms are being described as organized by projects, project-inten- sive, and the like. Typically, the term ‘‘project’’ is used to describe the observed pattern of organization or interaction. But just as often, it is used normatively: to advocate what organizations must become if they are to be competitive in today’s business environment. As put by Lundin [31] ‘‘if projects are so damned good, how come everything ain’t projects?’’ This relates to one of the fundamental issues for project research, i.e. why do project organizations exist?

Inspired by the discussion about why firms exist [32], one would think of a multitude of reasons why project organizations exist. Project researchers tend to use a fairly rationalistic argument in this respect. First, a project exists because there is something important and complex to be solved [14]. Second, a project organiza- tion exists because there is a need for a purposeful organization effort and a high need of coordination in order to execute a number of tasks/activities. As it seems, the ‘‘project form’’ is applied when activities are tightly integrated. Much project management research, even the one that is based on a social science tradition, would thus argue in fairly rationalistic fashion, mainly pointing to the task at hand [16].

Other explanations have, however, been suggested. One such explanation is found in the

In the above sections, the article has given evidence of contradictory basic assumptions about project manage- ment. In the following section we present five key ques- tions. Our argument is that these questions are not only important for building sound knowledge of project management, but also essential for highlighting the weaknesses of current project management research. The questions[1] we consider to be crucial for the research on the management and organization of projects would include:

1. Why do project organizations exist?
2. Why do project organizations differ?
3. How do project organizations behave?
4. What is the function of, or value added by, the project management unit[2]?
5. What determines the success or failure of project organizations?

[1] The questions are inspired by the overview of strategy research given by Rumelt et al. [30].

[2] The term unit here signifies the group in charge of managing the project, or if not a group, the person in charge of managing the project.

literature on industrial marketing [33]. Here projects are considered to be solutions to generate above normal rents by grouping activities as ‘‘turn-key deliveries’’ [34]. How- ever, alternative explanations, we argue, would be useful for the development of our understanding of project management on a more general level. Important con- cepts would, for instance, be explained by transaction cost reasoning [28], by knowledge-based reasoning [27] or power perspectives [35].

There are, for sure, alternative explanations to be found in the literature. The problem is that these expla- nations are very few. Kreiner [36], for instance, puts forward that project work is a way for organizations, and for researchers, to release the creative forces within themselves rather than to plan; and a way to enhance participation rather than to control. He especially stressed ‘‘learning,’’ ‘‘participation,’’ ‘‘renewal,’’ and ‘‘innovation’’ as indispensable in project management terminology as they have been for years in modern organization theory. As it seems, not many project researchers have taken this plea seriously. Relevant questions would include the following ones. What are the alternatives to project management? Do projects provide efficient alternatives to develop and implement strategies? How can we understand the relationship between strategy formation and project management? Are projects efficient means to trigger learning, partici- pation and renewal?

3.2. Why do project organizations differ?

Expanding on the previous point, a lot of studies have shown that the tasks themselves are the main reason why different project organisations do things differently. The reasoning goes like this: different projects call for different kinds of structure [37]. The issue is that research in the field of project management has only looked at a handful of so-called contingency variables, and even then, these aspects haven't been thoroughly evaluated. The work of Shenhar and Dvir [38], published in the highly regarded journal Research Policy, is perhaps the most comprehensive investigation in this field. Their research differentiates between several scopes (assembly, system, array) and levels of technical uncertainty (low-tech, medium-tech, high-tech, super high-tech). It would seem that their primary goal is to develop a theory similar to organisation theory, namely the contingency tradition of organisation theory [39]. However, in more recent works, they have reverted to the more reasonable strategy of cataloguing and naming crucial success determinants [38]. A second piece of writing by Lindkvist et al. [15] appears in a top European publication for organisational research. Various forms of project organisation are analysed using a contingency model. While discussing "heavy-weight project teams," it is reasonable to add mention the work of Wheelwright and Clark [40]. Despite being firmly grounded in the product development tradition, their work has had a significant impact on project management. Scholars in the field of project management have paid close attention to their classification [2]. The disparity across project organisations as a whole has not received nearly enough attention. There is a very limited number of citations in the main scientific publications. It would be beneficial to better understand the differences between projects and project organisations in order to identify and address them. A number of significant contextual and situational factors have been highlighted. Project researchers are also interested in a number of other concerns, such as those pertaining to the industry and corporations (such as questions of strategy and organisational structure). challenges related to the project (such as its age, scale, environmental unpredictability, and complexity of many types), as well as industry regulations and tradition. Therefore, we argue that project management is best seen as an activity that is contextual, with cultural, social, and institutional factors playing a pivotal role [41].

3.3. How do project organizations behave?

Several authors have stressed that we only have lim- ited knowledge of the behavior of project organizations [23]. The main part of the literature points to the well- known project life cycle in determining (or predicting) the behavior of project organizations [16]. The project- life cycle has also, for obvious reasons, been the foun- dation for illuminating and capturing the inherent dynamics of project organizations, for instance in terms of pre-study and conclusion phases. This is, however, merely one way of looking at the behavior of project organizations. The work by

Gersick has convincingly shown that the project life cycle is not a good descrip- tion of how real projects evolve [64,65]. Hence, a num- ber of questions might be raised whether the project life cycle is used normatively and if it is an adequate and appropriate description of reality or not. Only a few studies have discussed the behavior of project organiza- tions in theoretical terms [16].

The main point here is that the many models and techniques found in the project management field do not explain or increase our understanding about the behavior of project organizations. One fruitful meta- phor of projects is that of ''temporary organizations'' [14,16]. As it seems, the label temporary organization is used, not only to capture the characteristics of project organizations, but also to clearly separate it from tradi- tional (or more permanent-like) organizations. The basic traits pointed out is that of a time-limited, and often time-pressured, organization that is built up by a group of people who has never worked together before and with limited possibilities of working together again in the future [44,45]. The literature on temporary orga- nizations has, in this context, emphasized themes as ''learning'', ''participation'', ''commitment'' and ''action'' in order to focus on the behavioral aspects of such organizations. Of course, the aspects of time-limitedness are considered to be at the core of understanding temporary organizations.

In sum, project-oriented literature has only modestly considered the mentioned aspects as vital in under- standing projects, and thus our knowledge is limited in terms of the action triggers, the key obstacles of learn- ing, and the important commitment processes in project organizations. A number of questions evolve. How are the organizational processes affected by the time-limited nature of projects? How do people react on time pres- sure and control by deadlines and milestones? How do project organizations move through the various stages of work? How is the behavior of project organizations affected by the uncertainty and complexity normally connected with many projects?

3.4. What is the function of, or value added by, the project management unit?

To a great extent, planning has been viewed as the main task of the project management unit. Several studies have documented the increased role of project managers and project directors in contemporary firms [2]. The task, for sure, is not merely one of planning in these cases. This leads to some further issues that should be taken into account in an analysis of the project management unit/team. This could be, for instance, the handling of different knowledge bases, the handling of differences in rates of time, the making of priorities and decisions, the setting of deadlines, and the overall information process of the project. Furthermore, as stated above, the project management unit should be responsible for the processes and structures related to commitment, participation and learning. There are thus a number of functions that the project management unit performs. These functions have accorded scant atten- tion from researchers.

In some contexts, the project management unit only is in charge of the planning activities, or providing administrative support to the rest of the managerial hierarchy. In other cases the project management unit has a senior executive position, as in the case of the earlier mentioned heavyweight project management structure [46]. The trend towards ''projectification'' would considerably change the role, and also, most likely, the value added by the project management unit [2]. The focus on the value added by the project man- agement unit is at the core of understanding the increased application of ''project-based structures'' on a general level. Whittington et al. [1] has convincingly documented project-based organizing to be at the top of the strategic agenda of many European companies. The so-called ''project office'' has been launched by, for instance the research and advisory firm Gartner Group, as an organizational solution that would increase the performance of many companies [47]. Other issues in the project managerial hierarchy are also of importance, for instance, the role of project portfolio managers, project management offices and program managers.

From a theoretical point of view, we should in addi- tion address the question in a more critical sense. What positive effects do project organizing lead to? What are the downsides to project structures? Research in pro- duct

development and matrix management is definitely helpful on this matter [40]. However, the specific focus on the work of project management units has not been dealt with, highlighting questions such as in what way does the project management unit trigger action, in what way does it promote learning, participation and commitment, and how do we determine the value of their work? What competencies are required in order to take on the role as project directors and senior project managers? How could their respective roles be under- stood from a knowledge perspective, e.g. in the integra- tion of technology and knowledge bases within the firm? And further, is certain behavior of the project manage- ment function correlated with the level of value added?

3.5. What determines the success or failure of project organizations?

As mentioned earlier, a considerable body of project management research, particularly of North American provenance, is grounded in critical success factor think- ing [48]. Publications both in the *International Journal of Project Management* and *Project Management Jour- nal* reflect the search for factors of success and failure ([49,6,23] for reviews of the literature). Research on cri- tical success factor is also observed in other academic disciplines, for instance in product development [50,51]. In a project context, this approach seeks to system- atically determine the set of generic factors that are cri- tical to project success [48,52,53]. The logic of the search for critical success factors has been justified with refer- ence to the many observed examples of project failure and the belief that the identification of generic factors will greatly facilitate the project implementation process in practice [48].

The study by Pinto and Prescott [48] published in the renowned *Journal of Management Studies* presents evi- dence of the following set of critical factors: clarity of goals, top management support, clear project plans, cli- ent relationship and communication. The studies by Baker et al. [54] were one of the first to focus on the behavioral dimensions and organizational issues of project organization. This study also employed a broader definition of project success than the typical triple constraints of cost, time and conformance to spe- cifications. However, as has been pointed out by Turner [49], although much of the research into this particular area has adopted broader definitions of project success, the traditional triple constraint criteria seem to prevail. The critical success writings have been one dominant line in project management research. So¨ derlund [23] traces its history back to the empirical studies of project failures in which writers sought to explain the reasons for the fre- quent failures of projects in practice. In the 1980s, this led to several publications in, not only project management journals and books, but also in other management jour- nals, such as the *Journal of Management Studies* and *Journal of Management.* A continuing issue for debate has been how to look upon these success factors, their generic applicability and the sampling methods used [55]. Recent writings have documented the difference in success factors among industries and project types and also exten- ded the original success criteria [37]. Further, recent literature also acknowledge the variation of project success factors along the project life cycle [56].

We acknowledge the importance of researching success and failure in project management contexts. However, we believe that a certain tradition of success- oriented research has dominated. We argue that the major part of critical success factor research does not give us deeper knowledge about real life project man- agement. This research does not acknowledge the dynamics and the social embeddedness of project management. We suggest instead a greater focus on the four above-mentioned questions in order to further the development of project research.

4. **Discussion**

The main argument put forward in the present paper is that there are openings for additional perspectives and there are openings for more empirical studies. Still, the field lacks in-depth case studies, studies of processes, and studies in real time—studies that would be bene- ficial in building theories for understanding funda- mental issues of projects and project organizations [57]. The reasons why projects exist have in most part of project writing mainly

been explained by referring to the type of task, most frequently by adopting ‘‘transaction cost theory’’ [58] or ‘‘contingency theory’’ approaches [7]. A project would thus be explained by fairly ratio- nalistic arguments, i.e. the reason why project organi- zations exist is because there is a complex task with certain characteristics to be carried out. However, there are many more explanations that could be given a part from that one, for instance the fact that ‘‘the task’’ itself is a social construction. We need to know more about these issues in order to understand the background and reasons for the increased reliance on project-based organization of today [1].

The second and third key questions relate to some classic organization theory inquiries. There has been quite a lot of interesting work within these particular strands of research. In any case, we need to know more about these issues, partly because very little empirical work and only a few case studies have been carried out. Besides the adoption of contingency frameworks, it would be argued that in order to understand the beha- vior of project organizations we need more dynamic elaboration. The ‘‘riding on the project lifecycle’’ is a key aspect here [16,24]. For instance, activities vary dramatically over the life of the project, from, e.g. con- ceptualization, feasibility studies, detailed engineering, to testing and commissioning. It might be assumed that each of these requires a different authority system. The motivational and commitment matters of project organizations might also change over the lifetime of a pro- ject, the various hurdles facing project members during a project might explain and increase the knowledge on the behavioral dimensions of project organization.

Project management research has traditionally paid limited interest in the actual work and performance of the project manager and the project management unit. It is time for more thorough studies on the role, style and function of the project management unit. We wel- come in-depth studies in the same vein as Kotter [59] and Mintzberg [60] have done on general managers on the theme ‘‘what do project managers really do (and why)?’’.

Many researchers of project organization claim that organizational researchers have focused (or enacted) their studies on permanent, self-producing organiza- tions [6,61] and have, according to Kavanagh [62], largely ignored temporary, unique organizations (such as project organizations). The irony of this situation is that there is now a rapidly growing interest in the so-called ‘‘post-Fordist’’ organization [62], which are strikingly similar to many traditional project-based organ- izations [63]. Research on project management is thus not only important for understanding projects. It is also important for wider purposes and can improve the understanding of management in general. The article maintained that in order to develop the field into a stronger academic discipline, five key questions require alertness.

5. Concluding remarks

This article has argued that analysing projects as organisations, with an emphasis on their differences and behaviours, is crucial. The paper has laid forth a plan for further studies that would investigate the cornerstones of project management. This theoretically-inclined perspective sheds light on why "classic scientific" perspectives on project management research are just as important as more contemporary ones. It was emphasised that the fundamental assumptions are often not articulated. "Project management research" has recently expanded its focus to include company-wide challenges, including project-based sectors, vocations, and the management of project-based enterprises (cf. [66]). An internal discussion over the nature of project management research is becoming more necessary in light of this trend. In "project research," instead of tying everything to the one project, would it be more fair to discuss several levels of analysis?
The paper concluded by outlining five important areas for further study in the field of project management. We hammered home the requirement of building project theories in the same vein as those in management more generally.

research on management. We must not forget to ask why initiatives exist and how they vary if we want to increase our understanding and promote

the exchange of ideas. It is not enough to base a theory of projects on empirical findings; a distinct theoretical framework is also required. Given the prevalence of similar viewpoints in other domains, it was argued that they might theoretically be tested inside a project setting as well. But we must not lose sight of the unique characteristics of projects as material things. To comprehend the multiplicity occurring in the realm of project research at the present time, we must engage in conceptual development and discussion. This area of study has the potential to enhance the efficiency of whole industries as well as the management and organisation of individual projects.

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