From the Editors: Introducing the Special Issue on Megaprojects—“Symbolic and Sublime”

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We complete our 2017 volume of Project Management Journal® with a special issue on megaprojects—projects of enormous scope with associated increases in benefits, complexity, risks, and resources. Megaprojects tackle “powerful economic, social and symbolic roles in society” (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Success entails tangible and intangible benefits to large populations, providing widespread services, promoting advancements to achieving recognition, advancing public health, caring for the environment, and enhancing transportation and logistic infrastructures.

The topic foreshadows an emergence of even greater megaprojects in 2018, with expectations that dramatic amounts of money will be invested in megaprojects around the world, in all nations and among partnerships of nations. Performance is historically poor, with no trend of doing better (Flyvbjerg, 2017).

Scholars have long considered the topic of megaprojects, although particularly strong attention has been placed on the topic this past year. We do not claim this topic to be more important than others, but we recognize this is a field in which research has great potential to make a difference in the world. Indeed, the recent book by Alvesson, Gabriel, and Paulsen (2017) calls for social science to be meaningful not to the researcher’s ego, but rather to specific groups and even society as a whole. The research on megaprojects has such potential. We, as scholars, must continue working to change the negative pattern of poor performance, all in a context of challenges in environmental threats, political uncertainty, human migration, extreme weather situations, and other serious concerns with wide scope and impact.

This final issue in the 2017 volume continues the objective of Project Management Journal® to provide in-depth consideration of specific current concerns in the discipline of project management through special issues, in addition to independent, quality studies on project management topics. Agile development projects, project networks, and process studies of project organizing are scheduled for publication in the near future. Currently, there are two open calls for papers on the topics of: (1) exploratory projects and (2) career paths and systems for project managers.

For exploratory projects, the strategic roles of innovation and exploration in today’s competitive environment have given birth to a research stream in the management of exploration projects for which neither the goals nor the means to attaining them are defined from the outset. This work links the project, innovation, entrepreneurship, and discovery management literature with a new approach to projects as experimental learning processes for which new management principles, such as selectionism and sequential learning, have been defined. From the same perspective, this literature underlines the need to differentiate between the management processes for exploratory projects—since the traditional stage-gate approach often results in failure—and to develop new appraisal methods for their “expansive” nature. We are only at the beginning of this research. Thus, the goal of this special issue is continual development of exploratory project research. Full papers must be submitted by 28 February 2018.

For career paths and systems, the literature alludes to a relationship between project team management and the performance of projects. While “project management” has developed into a recognized profession, the routes into the profession and progression within the profession have little-recognized structure. To a number of scholars, project management has been and continues to be the ‘accidental profession’ (Richardson, Earnhardt, & Marion, 2015). Rarely does a project management career begin within the profession. The typical project management career follows as a consequence of another career within the industry (Marion, Richardson, & Earnhardt, 2014). How well do we understand these entry routes? Do we understand what
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Influences their progression? Career paths are, in part, a function of organizational structures, which may comprise training, clear-cut career pathways, appraisal and feedback mechanisms, and other factors. **Full papers must be submitted by 30 June 2018.**

More information on the calls for papers of these special issues is on the Project Management Institute website: PMI.org (go to the Learning tab to find the *Project Management Journal*).

**References**


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