Call for papers: Project stakeholder management

Introduction

No concept is more essential to understanding the notion of projects as temporary forms of organizing, than that of a stakeholder. In essence, a project brings together a changing and temporary constellation of different stakeholders with their diverse backgrounds, objectives and goals that are constantly shaping the overall goals and outcomes of the project (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2010). Stakeholder research and discourse has a long tradition and an established position within the field of project management. Over the years, research on project stakeholder management has extended from the practice oriented development of stakeholder management tools and models, to exploring the actual practices of stakeholder management and stakeholders' behavior (Huemann et al, 2016). Project scholars have also increasingly drawn from the plethora of established theoretical models and frameworks in stakeholder theory in their quests to develop new knowledge of stakeholder phenomena in the context of temporary organizations. In recent years, a paradigm shift from the management of stakeholders toward management for and with stakeholders has been advocated (Freeman et al., 2010) and, on this regard, research has expanded to discussing more inclusive approaches toward stakeholders, the moral bases of stakeholder thinking in projects, and the need to take into account the marginalized groups, as well as addressed the value perspective and the value creation mechanisms related to project stakeholders. The same concepts were presented at The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2020 which, building on the original 1973 Davos manifesto, set out for the first time the stakeholder concept that businesses should serve the interests of all society, rather than simply the interests of their shareholders. After almost 50 years, the key message for organizations is still the need to contribute to a more cohesive and sustainable world (The World Economic Forum, 2020).

This has also been reflected in project stakeholder discourse as more and more papers are discussing stakeholder engagement instead of stakeholder management or involvement. Stakeholder engagement includes communicating with, involving and developing relationships with stakeholders (Greenwood, 2007; Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2020). Nonetheless, despite we acknowledge that the developments on project stakeholder studies brought original contributions to our understanding from actualities of stakeholder concepts in temporary organizations, we also believe that at least three main barriers inhibit project stakeholder field, in general, and stakeholder engagement, in particular, from attaining their full potential.

First, majority of stakeholder studies have an organization-centric view on stakeholders (Bondy & Charles, 2018; Derakhshan et al., 2019a), where the knowledge about the nature of stakeholders' behavior, values, demands, concerns and interests are mostly constructed from the organization's frame of reference. In general management studies this organization-centric approach has resulted in an "unbalanced perspective in which the stakeholder voice is under-represented and remains a limitation of stakeholder theory" (Miles, 2017, p.448), and we observe that the same limitation has influenced the approaches adopted by scholars in project management arena. Delving into the articles published in project management journals reveals that the main feature of this concentration can be found in the under representation of the voice of stakeholders whose view is, for the most part, angled by being told through the words of informants from the project organization, such as project managers and project team.

Second, the dyadic relationship between individual stakeholders and a focal organization (Freeman, 1984), is an effective tool for classifying different types of stakeholders. However, as discussed by Rowley (1997), this dyadic perspective has limited capacity for explaining how organizations react to the "interaction of multiple influences from the entire stakeholder set" (p. 890). Stakeholder

engagement plans should provide tools for the integration of complex arrangement of multiple interdependent relationships in stakeholder settings (Missonier & Loufrani-Fedida, 2014; Lehtinen et al., 2019). Nevertheless, while this dyadic perspective is widely adopted and used in stakeholder management studies in project context, the number of studies that incorporate a network view on stakeholders is considerably lower (see e.g. Mok et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2017). We particularly highlight that viewing the stakeholder attributes, such as interest, legitimacy and power (Mitchell et al., 1997), in the light of network attributes, such as density, centrality (Rowley, 1997) and power hierarchy (Derakhshan, 2020), and the consequent decision making regarding this collation are widely overlooked in project management studies.

Third, there is no doubt that stakeholder theory is an effective tool offering grounding for inclusion of stakeholders in decision making. By seeking a normative commitment to democratization, organizations should reinforce accountability and the inclusion of 'new voices' that comprise multiple actors in governance to prevent further urban inequalities opening up in the society (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017; Huemann et al., 2016).   Nonetheless, due to its high level of abstraction, "Stakeholder theory does fail to provide an algorithm for day-to-day managerial decision-making" (Phillips et al., 2003, p. 485). Other interpreting tools that are capable of unfolding the complexities in the human's perception and the factors that bring a change to it are essential to support the abstraction of stakeholder theory. Stakeholder studies in general management field have drawn e.g. on identity theory (Burke & Tully, 1977; Stryker, 1980) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1996), attribution theory (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1986), social network theory (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988; Wasserman & Galaskiewicz, 1994), institutional theory (Zucker, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and feminist studies (Gilligan, 1982; Wicks et al., 1994), to name a few. However, project stakeholder studies have rarely advanced from such theories to support their theory development and elaboration.

Against this background, we contend that the concept of project stakeholder engagement is probably as much used as it is curbed by some limitations stemming from the theoretical application and methodological approach of its scholars. This special issue intends to work as a stepping stone towards a more inclusive, panoptic and innovative view on stakeholder engagement.

Aim & Scope
The aim of this special issue is to broaden our thinking on the emerging discourse on stakeholder engagement in project studies. The originality and   excellence of the theoretical contributions brought by the submitted manuscripts, together with their methodological rigor and practical implications, are among our top criteria for selection of the manuscripts for the review process. Novel perspectives on stakeholder engagement that may use different theories and bridge different, also surprising discourses and disciplines, are particularly welcome. Critical approaches toward stakeholder engagement as well as papers that may address how stakeholder engagement and its tools and techniques transformed, subverted and/or resisted within project contexts are invited.

We welcome conceptual, methodological and empirical papers. The level of analysis may range from micro to macro or address the interplay between different layers. A wide range of methodologies is also welcome. Empirical data should also support the findings robustly. In the light of the limitations in stakeholder studies, explained before, we particularly encourage empirical studies to directly reflect the voice of stakeholders by choosing them as the unit of analysis and sources of collected data. Similarly, the application of novel research methods and ways of collecting stakeholder related data are also encouraged, one example being the data repositories that social media may offer for stakeholders scholars. We do not encourage submissions that are only focused on practical stakeholder engagement models, collect empirical data only from the project organizations and not from the stakeholders themselves, and manuscripts with only practical contributions, dismissing

completely the theoretical contributions. Consequently, the papers should express and describe explicitly all the expected theoretical implications and be clear in terms of their positioning with regard to stakeholder theory and its different streams and formulations.

Potential topics

We do not want to limit and restrict the contributions to specific themes, but the papers may consider the following subjects and questions as examples of potential topics for this special collection:

- The concept and outcomes of project stakeholder engagement: How has stakeholder engagement been defined, debated, and approached in diverse discourses, and how does that translate to the context of temporary organizations? How do the distinctive features of temporary organizations affect stakeholder engagement? How may this challenge general stakeholder discourse and its assumptions? How, and through what kinds of mechanisms, does stakeholder engagement facilitate project performance? How can these practices be interpreted through theoretical lenses?

- Optimizing stakeholder engagement: What are the risks and rewards of stakeholder engagement and their outcomes? How can we operationalize and measure stakeholder engagement in the context of projects? How is public engagement carried out in practice, and what kinds of tactics and strategies can be enacted? What are the potential negative consequences of stakeholder (over)engagement? What kinds of stakeholder engagement levels are optimal in different project contexts and situations? When have stakeholder engagement attempts failed and why?

- The network perspective and dynamics of project stakeholder engagement: What kinds of dynamics may relate to stakeholder engagement over the lifecycle of the project? How does the interplay of engagement and disengagement unfold over the project lifecycle? How may interconnections among stakeholders influence stakeholder engagement practices in stakeholder networks? How do the dynamics in stakeholder attributes influence stakeholder engagement?

- Challenges of multi-stakeholder engagement in projects: How do projects balance different stakeholders in the projects' engagement practices? How do stakeholders with multiple acquired and ascribed roles and identities within the stakeholder network facilitate or hamper projects' stakeholder engagement processes? •Engaging institutions and communities: How do institutional and cultural contexts impact the way communities are engaged? How mature is the institutional environment in which projects take place in engaging different, multiple stakeholders? How is engagement embedded in a context with weak institutions and changing and emerging regulatory frameworks? What should be reinforced legally, and what has moral and ethical value in particular at the societal level?

- Stakeholder engagement in settings that are rarely examined and new horizons: How are stakeholder engagements organized and experienced in areas that are rarely examined, such as emerging work settings (e.g., platform/gig work) and in relation to technological advances?

How do the digital context and digitalization of projects affect stakeholder engagement? What kinds of digital channels and novel tools are used in stakeholder engagement? What kinds of possibilities does social media offer for project stakeholder engagement? How can stakeholder engagement help to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How can we connect stakeholder engagement discourse to project sustainability discourse, and specifically to social sustainability and social value?

Process and key dates

Authors wishing to submit papers should submit a proposal (1500-2000 words) to special issue editors. The submitted abstract needs to cover four components of the research: (i) relevance of the problem (description of the real-world phenomena and need for research), (ii) theoretical underpinning of the research, (iii) methodology (clear steps of research design and description of the data), and (iv) theoretical contributions to the discipline of project studies.

Authors should submit extended abstracts by 15th of February 2022 to the Korsi Aaltonen (kirsi.aaltonen@oulu.fi) . Please use the exact title of the call and journal in the subject line of the email. Guest Editors will review the proposals and contact authors with their recommendations. If the proposal is accepted, author(s) must submit the full paper before 1 August 2022 at https://www.journals.elsevier.com/international- journal-of-project-management. The papers will appear as a Special Collection as soon as they are accepted. Submissions should comply with the standard guidelines of *International Journal of Project Management* and will be subject to the standard *IJPM* double-blind review process. In the submission process, the authors should select the tab for the "Project Stakeholder Management" special collection. If you have additional questions, please contact the guest editors.

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