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## EDITORIAL

## Global projects: Strategic perspectives

**Summary** Most project management research to date has developed extended theories and concepts that de-contextualize projects from their cultural and institutional surroundings. Such de-contextualization tends to highlight instrumental factors and considerations, while at the same time downplaying norms, practices, ideologies, and other cultural, institutional and psychological effects related to projects and their management. We claim that cultural and institutional variation becomes significant in relation to what we call “global projects”. These are large-scale and complex business or military ventures and engineering projects that involve participants from more than one country, and require participants to negotiate great geographical distances and cultural and institutional differences. Global projects often carry high expectations to resolve local and global ills. They have also been criticized for some perceive as managerial shortcomings. To date, little research knowledge exists on global projects. With the goal of improving project performance and increasing understanding of debates concerning ways that global projects are managed – and resolving at least some of these debates – we review in this introductory article the editorial starting points and the research articles of this special issue, as well suggest further research and draw conclusions. The introductory editorial article ends with suggestions for future research.

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### Introduction

A project is a temporary, resource-constrained form of organization, typically partitioned with milestones and into a set of deliverables, with the deliberate goal of designing and implementing a unique good, service, or solution (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Practitioners and researchers specialized in project management are usually quick to remind a relative novice in this discipline that, as long as a project lasts, it is necessary to have a strong “project culture” (e.g. Milosevic & Patanakul, 2005). They advise that the project culture should build on and reflect the special and unique cultural values and basic assumptions of the focal organization in the project (Chevrier, 2003, p. 147; PMBOK, 2000, p. 19). The whole point in a disciplined approach to project management is, in this view, to organize an integrated effort where the strategies, culture, and institutions of the focal organization remove people from their usual routines and context, “setting them an unusual task to be solved in interaction with unknown individuals” (Packendorff, 1995, p. 331). In this view, it makes little strategic sense to allow participating people to emphasize differences in their culture or institutional understandings. Allowing for these differences complicate project implementation and threaten to throw the project off course (e.g., see analysis of the Three Gorges Dam in China in Alberts, Alberts, Bloom, LaFlamme, & Teerikan-

gas, 2004). The phrase “Going global is not helpful” (Meredith & Mantel, 2006, p. 143) is testimony to this worldview.

This *SJM* special issue on “Global Projects – Strategic Perspectives” is driven by three contrarian motivations with respect to core of the project management discipline, as portrayed above.<sup>1</sup> The first motivation is that, around the world, a diverse set of cultural and institutional ingredients persistently continues to exist in the environments in which projects are carried out (Verona & Ravasi, 2006; Whitley, 2006; Power & Hauge, 2008; Corona & Godart, 2010). The second motivation is to take into account suggestions coming from anthropology and sociology that warns that projects involve more than instrumental aspects (Appadurai, 2006; Appadurai, 1990; Cova & Salle, 2006; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The third motivation is a synthesis of motivations one and two. We call a project “global” when it involves *key participants that represent*

<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that there is only one conception about project management among leading practitioners and researchers in the domain of project management, but rather that this kind of crystallization of what project management is about is how project management specialists who have read or internalized through learning by doing the contents and philosophy of the project management discipline tend to communicate with novices who have not experienced this process of internalization.

*national systems separated by great geographical distance and potentially significant cultural and institutional distances.*<sup>2</sup> Over time, research on cultural and institutional differences may amount to ingredients with which to manage a global project strategically rather than merely as operational obstacles or hindrances to project performance.

Within this context, we address the managerial challenges of intercultural and inter-institutional interaction in a global project (Braa, Montero, & Sahay, 2004; Chevrier, 2003; Orr & Scott, 2008). In relation to the second motivation, we acknowledge that we currently lack adequate research knowledge as to what, precisely, is the meaning of the expression "more than instrumental aspects". We do not believe there is yet enough research-based knowledge to prescribe what project management practitioners should do. Rather, the lack of knowledge on what we believe act out as trans-cultural and trans-institutional relations is precisely the reason why this special issue is needed. With proper research knowledge over time, project management specialists may learn to be (1) more globally effective, (2) more responsive to local needs, and (3) more efficient. The overall research question is: How and why do the above three kinds of potential improvements in project performance substitute or complement each other when cultural and institutional variation is taken into account?

The unique research challenges of global projects include tension resulting from a diversity of cultural values and institutional assumptions (Orr & Scott, 2008). At least in principle, some of this tension may make the project site one of the "creative tension". An equal consideration is that this tension may result in Machiavellian "creative treason", or even cultural clashes. A project has both more potential and more risk when it is global than when it is a project where key participants through the design-and-build phases come from one and the same national culture and institutional system. We believe it is worth considering critically and strategically if, when, how, why, and whose managerial actions ought to buffer, treat, mitigate, circumvent, or leverage the special ingredients and consequences at play in a global project.

In the first part of this article, we specify reasons why cultural and institutional variation matters more in projects that involve participants from more than one cultural and institutional system than it does in a project where participants all come from the same system. In particular, we point out to how a global project may at the outset involve positive expectations concerning the potential of a global project to be an instrument for contributing to the resolution of local ills or global ills. The second part of the article discusses the outcomes and consequences of a global project, including both those that are unintended and those that are intended.

<sup>2</sup> Here, we distinguish between the traditional view of projects as being oriented toward accomplishing a given *instrumental* task and a more recent view whereby projects first and foremost have no instrumental base of materials, techniques and people but rather represent an *ideal* "world society" (Appadurai, 2006; Myer, 2002). In this article, we primarily build on the former, traditional, instrumental, and micro-level view of what is a global project. Only secondarily, we touch upon the macro-level project of building a world society, how it is socially constructed, and how this world society is a key part of the overall process of globalization of the economy, society, and so on.

In connection to discussions about both the ingredients and the consequences of global projects, we review the related papers in this special issue and how they relate to strategies. In both parts of the editorial introductory article, we point out how, as of yet, relatively little is known about the cultural and institutional variation that is built into a global project and how this may produce unintended or intended consequences, and these may stray the project from its strategic path, or help to keep it there. In sum, this editorial introductory article shows why global projects are worthy of focused research. Furthermore, it also shows characteristics that a global project can have at its outset and those that it can leave behind after it has been formally terminated. The editorial ends with suggestions for future research.

### **"Problem of cultural differences": embeddedness of a project in more than one national context**

The traditional approach to cultural and institutional differences has thus been to treat them as a problem. The "problem of cultural differences" (Meredith & Mantel, 1995, p. 130) is something to avoid by ruling the differences out of the scope of the project. This approach derives from the *Guide to Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK, 2000)*. The Guide has become a global institution in the field of project management. The goal of the Guide is to ensure a consistent body of knowledge for project operations and project management around the world (cf. Packendorff, 1995). Adherence to standards set forth in it will ensure that project activities are regulated and that these activities keep in check from the perspective of the focal organization that is most in charge of carrying out the project. The principles and instructions drawn from this Guide, and the application of the instructions, orient an experienced project manager to discount any practice, culture or institution that is locally peculiar and not in conformance with the Guide's standards.

The rationale or logic of treating cultural and institutional differences as a problem is organizational control. It is the project manager who is responsible for both efficient uses of resources in the projects she manages and "holding the organization together while it is being constantly ripped apart by...projects" (Engwall & Söderholm, 2004, p. 183). Ignorance of culture and institutions is thus an operation that is purposeful, reductionist measure to decrease the scope of the project and thus to decrease the degree of uncertainty in the project. Such a measure will lessen how intercultural and institutional relations are analyzed, which in turn may result in problems down the road. Yet, in pragmatic terms, any managerial choice is legitimate when it allows for "control of an unpredictable future, rather than prediction of an uncertain one" (Saravathy, 2001, p. 259). Moreover, problems arising from cultural and institutional differences are somebody else's problems, when they have been explicitly ruled to be outside the scope of the project.

Whether by reading PMBOK or knowing its contents by experience, global project managers may come from different corners of the world and different cultures and different institutional systems, never have encountered each other before, and they will still be able to work together in ways that are seamless, given their shared agreement about fea-

sible management and design-and-build techniques. A quote from a recent review article inquiring into extreme variants of project-based ways of organizing can be said to be illustrative of PMBOK and this kind of 'can do' attitude (Corona & Godart, 2010, p. 286):

For example, at the beginning of the current war in Afghanistan, a senior US commander recounts that highly sensitive discussions with then Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf were smoothed by shifting to a common and familiar. . . soldier-to-soldier exchange. . . the idiom of military acronym and jargon. (Franks, 2004, p. 227)

Whether in large infrastructure projects, construction projects, foreign aid projects, military projects, other large engineering projects, or projects in other fields, two project managers representing different cultural and institutional systems will tend to quickly find among themselves common ground and idiom and jargon that are familiar. They will know intimately both the standards and the philosophy of PMBOK.

The persistent dedication to 'one best way' across national borders may be because project management practitioners and researchers still today draw on ideas and concepts that originally developed in one or a few settings (Tassava, 2003, p. 25). Most of the research literature and frameworks on projects and globalization are embedded in U.S.-based values and U.S. models of business and society, with writings and concepts mainly created in the U.S. context (Chevrier, 2003, p. 142). Consequently, North American cultural conditions institutional environments have been in the back of most project management researchers' minds. Three significant imprinting conditions for PMBOK are (1) the U.S. Civil War, (2) the construction of railroads in the U.S.A. in the 19th century, and (3) the U.S. war effort during the Second World War, with the latter including both the Manhattan Project and the aid generated by the Marshall Plan in the immediate aftermath of the War.

Indeed, some researchers argue that global projects are one key manifestation of the role of the global economy as a main driver of world-society and modernity at large (Appadurai, 2006) and the U.S. contribution to it, in particular (cf. Djelic & Quack, 2003).<sup>3</sup> Despite the recent and increasing evidence concerning the historically constituted effects of nationally, culturally, and institutionally peculiar ways of managing in different countries (e.g. Djelic & Ainamo, 1999; Guillén, 1994; Whitley, 1992), much of the research on project management continues follow the standard practice of framing projects and their management as a culturally and institutionally monolithic system (cf. PMBOK, 2000).

However, other more marginal participants or still others who are outsiders may be slower and reluctant to shift to that set of ground, idiom, and jargon. They may hardly have heard about PMBOK. They may feel that the way the project is managed is arbitrary rather than systematic, or that the way is otherwise not locally or globally legitimate. Not paying

attention to cultural and institutional differences does not make them disappear.

A recent updated approach to managing cultural and institutional differences in a project – one which evolved out of the traditional managerial approach – is to focus on improving work processes in relation to cultural differences (Jin & Levitt, 1996; Nasrallah, Levitt, & Glynn, 2003). Research has begun to address differences beyond only culture to include also differences across institutional contexts (Chevrier, 2003; Cramton & Hinds, 2005; Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Lau & Murnighan, 2005; Miller & Lessard, 2001; Orr & Scott, 2008). The goal has been to search for and apply a standardized logic to managing a culturally and institutionally diverse project (Järvenpää & Leidner, 1999).

With the evolution of project management research, project management practice has also evolved. Practitioner literature acknowledges that a set of institutions in terms of a developed engineering profession and a working state apparatus, legal institutions and infrastructure tend to be basic structural prerequisites for large-scale project success in any country (PMBOK, 2000). Research, in turn, has argued that development of any one of these structures will increase large-scale project performance, while the lack of such development will decrease such performance (Alberts et al., 2004). Project manager's skills have improved as a result of this research. Project managers have translated what they have learned into everyday project practice. When the constraint-set is particularly challenging, they may still sort to leadership even in the form of command and control, if need be. The standardization and the leadership aspects have both become accepted interpretations of what the project management body of knowledge is about.

### "Other" perspectives on perceived problems and solutions

Sociological and anthropological research related to project management increasingly acknowledges that evidence is scarce for the existence of a single (universal) blueprint for project management across industries (Whitley, 2003), forms of organization (Corona & Godart, 2010), countries (Djelic & Ainamo, 1999), or national systems of culture and institutions (Orr & Scott, 2008). Global projects in organizations based outside the U.S. and understanding about them among non-U.S. researchers may differ from those in the U.S. (Chevrier, 2003, p. 148).<sup>4</sup>

Even if foreign cultures and institutions may still remain in a hidden relationship *vis-à-vis* the sense-making processes of instrumentally oriented key participants, increasing attention has been paid to them in project management research and practice (Ainamo, 2009). Key participants in a global project sometimes consult representatives of other cultures or institutions (McAdam et al., 2010). However, it is frequently the case that these representatives of the anthropological "Other" (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000) are not invited

<sup>3</sup> Instrumental and macro-level projects differ. In an instrumental project, project engineers have clear goals and they can at least in principle fully determine what happens in the project. In contrast, in a macro-level project also other participants than project managers, often with competing goals and interests, affect what happens and to what effect(s).

<sup>4</sup> We make these observations about the historical origins of project management to construct for ourselves as well as for others a legitimate starting point for critical debate about what is a global project and why it matters.

to be full participants as a result of consultations. The "Other" ends up having to play the role of a passive audience member – or be left totally outside. In either scenario, differentiating between those who are and those who are not key participants in the project will develop a layered structure, with the key participants at the core deciding the positions of everyone and the various layers of representatives of the "Other" occupying positions spread across the core's boundary and the totally outside.

The layered structure of a project will tend to be symbolized, even celebrated, in various ways. Myths, ceremonies, and rituals are integral parts of a project (Ainamo, 2009; Cova & Salle, 2006). The key participants in a project typically choose the culture and institutions dominant in their own focal organization. Purifying the project from all other cultural and institutional ingredients can never be a fully accomplished task. Thus, whenever more than one organization is involved in a project, participants will be encounter practices and elements of cultures and institutions of also other organizations than those coupled with the focal organization.

A currently mushrooming theme in the literature is paying attention to the apparent shortcomings in the management of large infrastructure projects, development aid projects, national reconstruction projects, and national-policy interventions by the governments of foreign states (Rodrik, 2006), and the ills caused to stakeholders. Within this literature, a recipe that has been suggested to those ills is to invite participation of non-governmental organizations or NGOs in global projects, in order to increase the effectiveness also from an NGO perspective (Edwards, Hulme, & Wallace, 1999; Frynas, 2005; McAdam et al., 2010). One challenge that remains, however, is that even those representatives of an NGO that have *not* been invited may with considerable tenacity consider themselves equally legitimate participants to the organizationally or self-proclaimed elite of key participants.<sup>5</sup>

One project will differ from another according to the underlying assumptions about the instrumental task and about the uniqueness of the project at hand, as well as with associated cultural beliefs and institutionalized understandings of what is appropriate given these circumstances (Appadurai, 2006, 1990). In this view, what is legitimate project performance depends on the overall ecosystem of global and local conditions and circumstances, such as that related to instrumental rationality, the cultures and institutions of the organizations in which projects are carried out, the systems of cultural and organizational environments, and how these are intertwined (Grabher, 2004; cf. Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1987; Djelic & Ainamo, 1999; Orr & Scott, 2008; Sakakibara, 1995). A global project is a special and worthy phenomenon of explicit and separate research attention in this kind of critical worldview. A purely local project – with only one local set of cultural and institutional ingredients – does not

involve the same kind of ready space for tension and controversy as does a global project.

### Origins, framing, and focusing of this special issue

The research on global projects involving Stanford University and Finnish researchers started in 2003.<sup>6</sup> *Scandinavian Journal of Management* is a journal that has always acknowledged that the contextual setting of management has a potential influence on both theory and practice. The decision to take this focus for a special issue on global projects in the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* came from Janne Tienari, the journal's chief editor. This was in 2005 in conjunction with the first author of this article just leaving to visit Stanford University for 15 months.

The U.S. bias in project management practice and research provided us guest editors with our provisional frame for this special issue. We made the guest-editorial choice to focus the special issue on why and how organizations' relationships with cultural and institutional arrangements that surround them will vary relative to cultures and institutional systems within which action is embedded. These relationships may not always translate globally in ways that would automatically be meaningful in another cultural and institutional context. Similar to our choice to focus on culture and institutions, we made a decision to downplay the role of particular technologies or particular industries.

We included in our extended research teams participants not only from the United States and Finland, but also from countries such as Canada, Germany, India, Japan, Taiwan, China, Kenya, Cameroon, and Romania. This diverse set of researchers will help facilitate a less U.S.-centric perspective. We increased our awareness of and sensitivity to the role and position of business in the respective sets of culture and institutions, including the various configurations of norms, tradition, legacies, legal regimes, and history, as well as practices locally considered to be the best ones (e.g. Orr & Scott, 2008).

The intent of this special issue is to further the global-project research agenda by bringing together voices from different national, cultural, and institutional contexts, and to use this as a way to gain better insight and understanding of global projects as multifaceted context-dependent phenomena. In this special issue, we have accepted that the practitioner project management body of knowledge is, on the whole, appropriate, and took as our goal to develop and understand project management practice building on this platform. If a global project is strongly influenced by one or several geo-political, cultural, and institutional contexts, then impacts of these contexts on the legitimacy of the focal organization and its global project – as well as on the interconnections of these legitimacies – warrant more research attention. The foregoing discussion has also pointed to our second aim: to address how aspects of cultural and

<sup>5</sup> Somewhat playfully we may think that if an actor is at first ruled out by a global project manager or another key participant as an actor that is not significant but then rises to such a position during the course of the project, then this actor can duly be considered a "Significant Other".

<sup>6</sup> This special issue has been funded from several sources, included with funding from the National Science Foundation (U.S.A.), Tekes grant 40490/04, and a grant from the City of Turku to the University of Turku (Finland).



institutional context dependency play out at the level of individual projects. The call for papers for this special issue resulted in high quality submissions, many of which we were unfortunately forced to select during the highly competitive process of submission, review, reject or revise and resubmit, as space was limited.

Our focus on global projects and their management involving non-U.S. business and NGO organizations by no means is intended to discount the worth of traditional deliberate and instrumental dimensions of why projects exist in the first place (that is, the instrumental rationality of setting up a temporary organization to carry out a task that is deliberately transient). Rather, this issue underlines that a global project has more than one dimension, including those of instrumental rationality, culture, and institutions. These dimensions of the global project are at least partially inter-related. As the articles in this special issue hopefully make clear, these dimensions need not be uniformly coupled across global projects.

For lack of space, we cannot in this special issue consider projects that would be coupled loosely from instrumental rationality to the extreme or specify such an extreme (for discussion, see e.g. Anderson, 1983; Appadurai, 1990; Aho-nen & Tienari, 2009; Brunsson, 1989; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Neither are we able to include in this special issue research on projects that build from culture and institutions towards instrumentality, rather than vice versa (Ainamo, 2005; Packendorff, 1995, p. 329).

### The four research articles in this special issue

The first article by Hällgren and Söderholm (2010) addresses trade-offs in project management between standardization and efficiency, on one hand, and specific attention to the unique aspects of projects, on the other. On the basis of a reinterpretation of Weick's (1976) loosely coupled systems perspective, as well as participant observation of project managers, and critical analysis of their vocabulary and patterns of speech, Hällgren and Söderholm find that project managers respond to deviations from project plans with a standardized template that involves a maximum of four sequentially ordered phases: (1) documentation of all project activities that deviate from project plans, (2) further analysis of the activities with unacceptable level of deviation, (3) treatment of these unacceptable deviations to return the activities in question to the acceptable level, and (4) continuing the project practice as 'business as usual'.

Hällgren and Söderholm distinguish between two categories of project practices when it comes to the above phases. The first of the two categories is what they call a "good enough" practice. A "good enough" practice is one where there either is no deviation or the deviation in relation to a project plan is within a zone of acceptability. The existence of a deviation is subordinated to more pressing concerns such as the flow of standardized work processes. In effect, the "good enough" practice is a condensed adaptation of the template, involving phases "(1)" and "(4)", only. The other kind of category is one where a deviation from a project plan is "carefully assessed". This "carefully assessed" deviation is considered so serious that its treat-

ments require all four of the sequentially ordered phases. Boundary-spanning beyond organizational boundaries is a legitimate especially in phases "(2)" and "(3)" to discover treatments to a deviation.

The second article by van Marrewijk (2010) brings a different kind of voice to the debate on global projects, as van Marrewijk's discipline is that of an anthropologist. Van Marrewijk's study of cross-cultural cooperation of employees in globally distributed project teams in the information technology (IT) industry reveals how Dutch front-office employees and Indian back-office employees in four multinational IT service providers – IBM, Accenture, Atos Origin, and Philips – strengthens the view of how and why national cultural differences are socially constructed. According to this anthropological study, Dutch front-office and Indian back-office employees in a global project engage in tactics such as emphasizing and denying cultural differences, as well as legitimizing and de-legitimizing asymmetric power relations. The front-office employees in the Netherlands and the back-office employees in India struggle over project control, client contacts, and high-end jobs. Across a matrix of cultural and institutional system and organizational positions, the account portrays employees from the two countries grouping in two according to both their organizational position and nationality, rather than according to whether they work at IBM, Accenture, Atos Origin, and Philips. The research article illustrates how cultural differences are not static or fully fixed. Rather, they are continuously reconstructed and used as a strategic resource to orchestrate and orient power constellations related to the work processes. The self-image of the Dutch managers is that they are cosmopolitan rather than provincial, international rather than local. They view the Indians as their mirror image. The self-image of the Indian subordinates is more complex. While India is traditionally a caste society, the highly educated and professional Indian subordinates have a strong sense of community and a culture underlined by egalitarian and participatory values. Adhering to Western standards is a daunting task for Indian employees when they view themselves judged by the Dutch according to the reputation of the average Indian or the national stereotype of an Indian, rather than what they are as employees. Van Marrewijk's study raises a theoretical question about the cultural fit of systems and standards that originate from Western management and back office work in India. The two "systems" in the anthropological account are characterized by very different ways of handling manager-subordinate relations. It is not only that educated Westerners always codify social relations with explicit rules and Indians and other non-Westerners rely on folklore and other primordial philosophy; in this case, the associations appear to be quite the converse.

This special issue includes two research articles that explore project management where projects have been much less studied than in Sweden, the Netherlands, or even India. These three countries, as argued in the papers are Uruguay and Argentina in the case of Aaltonen and Kujala (2010), and Peru in the case of Manning and von Hagen (2010).

Aaltonen and Kujala's study serves to illustrate how, globally, there has been increased pressure for global projects to be more environmentally and socially responsible. As a design-and-build project of a pulp factory at the border of

Uruguay and Argentina was nearing completion from the perspective of the Finnish project managers, the project sparked protests. The factory was somewhat irrationally – from the perspective of these Finns – accused of being environmentally harmful. The Uruguayans and especially the Argentines on the other side of both the river and the border assessed the consequences for the natural environment in large part on the basis of visual cues and a beach front they experienced as irretrievably spoiled. In contrast, the Finnish designers had considered environmental impact on the bases of technical measurements focusing on elaborate programs involving simulations of forest growth, forestation and reforestation, and chemical testing.

Aaltonen and Kujala argue that a global project affects and is affected by multiple stakeholders with differing interests and demands. They argue that global project theories, concepts, and ideas work best in a modern market economy such as Finland with well established rules of the game for regulation and contracting. In a country with a relatively weaker institutional environment in these respects such as Uruguay, a global project may develop a very different twist from what it would develop in Finland (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2009). Aaltonen and Kujala show that a project involving such a tension can evolve in a stage-wise manner and a “life-cycle”. The overall proposition is that, ultimately, a better understanding of especially secondary stakeholders’ influence behaviour during the project lifecycle will enable the use of more effective project stakeholder approaches on the part of project and organizational managements. By adopting a lifecycle perspective on secondary stakeholders’ behaviour, Aaltonen and Kujala develop a set of propositions that promise to significantly increase our understanding of the potential of secondary stakeholders to influence the project management’s decision making during the different phases of the project lifecycle.

In the final research article of this issue, Manning and von Hagen describe and analyze how a group of Peruvians, originally marginal actors in the worldwide coffee industry, managed to institutionalize an industry standard. This involved (1) promoting one’s interests, (2) developing connections with like-minded actors elsewhere, and (3) emerging with a social network of like-minded actors that (4) institutionalized the interests of all the like-minded as a global standard for and in their industry. The argument of Manning and von Hagen is that this project was a success because the focal actors were able to mobilize many other actors and also to establish common ground with these other actors. Manning and von Hagen show how a series of local development projects, originally more or less isolated from one another, spread in their particular localities at first. Success stories were strategically coordinated by the focal actors into a series of “project networks”. Over time, the ever tighter coupling within the networks amounted to the emergence and institutionalization of a common code for the community of those in the worldwide coffee industry and related fields.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In our editorial view, the account by Manning’s and von Hagen is not unlike the one we have provided as concerns the body of knowledge in the case of the worldwide project management community.

On the basis of their empirical case, Manning and von Hagen develop a process model of how and why global standard development happens. They argue that project networks are important intermediary organizational forms that both carry and translate what is going on particular locations and who appears to exhibit agency and where. Signalling of quality elsewhere than in the West and the Northern Hemisphere tend to differ from Western ways in terms of how it is made transparent, evidenced, and measured. This is not to argue that quality is worse outside the West; rather, quality is measured, assessed and signalled differently. The work of Manning and von Hagen suggests that creation, development and promotion of new norms and compliance to them on quality issues, for example, can be an important competitive strategy for non-Western organizations.

### Suggestions for future research

The literature review of “other” perspectives in this editorial introductory article suggests that the institutionalized body of knowledge about project management can be traced to particular places and times. Understanding this may help explain what provokes confrontations between labour and management, as well as how expectations vary among different countries. Global projects appear as a new bond between organizations, on the one hand, and culture and institutions, on the other hand. The nature of this bond is constructed in terms of ingredients that have accumulated over time. This is one proposition in response to the call for further research to explain why, in large infrastructure projects in Africa, organizations from the West are often less welcome as focal ones than are Chinese corporations (see McAdam et al., 2010).

An important point that all of the articles in this issue ought to make clear is that what determines pertinent cultural and institutional ingredients for an organization in India, Uruguay, Argentina or Peru may be very different from what determines them in a U.S. organization. If project managers doggedly keep talking about global projects using notions informed by predominantly notions of projects management informed in the U.S. and PMBOK model, much of the potential of global projects to renew cultural and institutional infrastructure in intended ways both in a U.S. and in “Other” perspectives threatens to be lost. We need concepts and theories grounded in action embedded in different cultural and institutional contexts, particularly those that have been neglected in the global projects literature such as in the contexts of the “South”, including Africa, and in the “Orient”, including other countries of Asia than China.

Our view is that research on international and global projects needs to be extended to cover the cultural and institutional fields beyond instrumental-project or project-business performance. Such extension of scope means to touch upon such aspects of the focal organization as the national and/or other cultures and institutions in which action is embedded (Ainamo, 2005; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1987), effectively amounting to various overlapping research directions in international business, project management, institutions, and cultural differences and commonalities.

In the articles in this special issue, the backdrop of global projects in different geographic, cultural, and institutional

conditions that influence the norms, thinking, and practices of projects and their management can be seen as at least a partial return to an appreciation in institutional theory to the challenges of leadership. Managing both the instrumental and the institutional challenges in an organization involves challenges tension of “leadership” and “statesmanship” (Scott & Davis, 2007; Selznick, 1957). This may amount to considering the worth of viewing instrumental and institutional challenges of organizational action with an explicitly individualistic lens or with the lens of distributed leadership.

With the amplification of the magnitude of global culture and global institutions – exemplified by the studies of global coffee culture and environmental norms in this issue (Aaltonen and Kujala and Manning and van Hagen, respectively) – projects are increasingly looked upon for solutions to both local and global challenges (Kudo, 2008). Organizational managers as well as many other constituencies outside of the professional and project management community, such as politicians and global aid institutions, put trust in project-based organizations as agents that will provide solutions to economic, social, cultural, institutional, and other challenges (Edwards et al., 1999). Specialized organizations have emerged that mediate between various constellations of local grassroots, local politicians, Western leaders, and global aid institutions, coming up with apparent ways to cope with or overcome these challenges, resulting in new specific forms of global-project practice. If we take seriously the recommendation that neither practitioners nor researchers in project management should lose their grip on cultural and institutional ingredients and consequences, we must improve our understanding of how these ingredients and consequences relate to instrumentality.

Another important point in terms of a need of further research relates to agency and the extent of intentionality of outcomes in relation to how global projects touch upon local cultures and institutions. Global projects amount to global phenomena that are acted upon in local contexts. To address the concerns and biases on the part of the locals, many transnational organizations and institutions such as the World Bank OECD, IMF, the EU and the United Nations put trust in and encourage “social projects” (Frynas, 2005), indicating that at least in the West some assume and expect social projects to work (Halme, Roome, & Dobers, 2009). However, others, especially small and medium-sized business organizations, tend to choose single-cause efforts rather than seeing global projects as leading to societal development (Frynas, 2005). The spread of the various practices of project management in the cultural and institutionalized systems from the West to other cultural and institutional systems, and vice versa, together with globalization of project management, calls for locally robust yet comprehensive definitions of a global project. In the future, these should also come to incorporate cultural and institutional differences based on criteria other than national boundaries. Included in such criteria are self-organizing processes and other seemingly unique social interactions in global projects.

It is paradoxical that the prime areas that appear to require extensive attention to institutional and cultural ingredients tend to be in developing or emerging countries. Such countries are generally taken to be characterized by conditions of weak institutions and governance so that there are significant gaps in governance, in particular when it

comes the social capacity of the government and interaction with local NGOs (Edwards et al., 1999; see also Aaltonen & Kujala, 2010). If the weakness of their institutional and cultural conditions provides a rationale for pulling in cultural and institutional ingredients from the outside, then the question is whether a global project as outlined in this special issue is dysfunctional in a country with strong institutions and governance. The project management community ought to have incentives to participate in developing criteria by which project performance evaluation will in the future include at least rudimentary measures of a project’s ability to contribute to building or maintaining institutional and human capacity, as well as the project’s ability to contribute to instrumental project performance. In developing countries and emerging economies, for example, foreign direct investments might have more local grassroots support than is the case today. There is evidence that such support contributes to project success (Pralhad, 2010, p. 33, 45). The evidence is only seminal, however, interesting research questions remain about capacity building in the neediest parts of the globe and at the grassroots level.

Future research should give attention to different types of global projects, as well as their possibly different effects on intended and unintended consequences. Hence, rather than simply repeating that cultural and institutional differences should be allotted more attention, future studies ought to refine the question and ask “what type of global project is associated with what type of financial and societal outcomes and under what particular circumstances?”

A number of important implications arise from this special issue for project management researchers in their role as educators as well as analyzers of project-management practice. If institutional and cultural conditions are important to managerial choices about projects, how do we support the development of managers so they are more aware of context and its effects on the orientation of global projects and organizational practice? What are the best pedagogic techniques to help future project managers build knowledge in this area and who are the educators with the experience to support that (cf. Edwards et al., 1999; Frynas, 2005; Halme et al., 2009)?

When the significance of context is great, then there ought to be a move away from either standardized techniques or ad hoc practice toward appreciation of a “glocalization” framework that systematically envelops cultural and institutional ingredients. Such a framework involves managerial choices about standardization in terms of what belongs to the global framework and what belongs to the local one will tend to result in an overall strategic framework where all the pieces will not fit in nicely but will require considerable improvisation and flexibility in the operational phases of the project. Hollingsworth and Boyer (1997) have explored tension between standardization and flexibility at the macro level and concluded that the way it is resolved has significant implications for Quality, success, and strategies at the micro level. The research articles in this special issue have not extinguished the possibilities of micro level inquiry on these issues.

## Conclusion

While research in project management has given adequate attention to improving efficiency of instrumental arrange-

ments, the treatment or leveraging of cultural and institutional ingredients in projects has received less attention. This editorial has critically examined the discipline of project management in relation to the issue of cultural and institutional diversity. Project managers have traditionally been intent to focus on efficiency and keeping investments and costs as small as possible. This bias has translated into downplaying cultural and institutional diversity in the project being managed. The option of adding to the value of the project with consideration of culture and institutional ingredients rather than taking away from the costs has received less attention in project management research and practice. In a local project or an export project, the cultural and institutional ingredients can often to a large extent be standardized and pushed back. In contrast, in a global project, cultural and institutional ingredients sometimes need to be worked in side by side with instrumental concerns.

Global projects inherently involve project workers, stakeholders and so on who are representatives from more than one cultural and institutional system. This type of project challenges the wisdom of the worldview of many experienced project managers to rule out culture and institutions and to focus their perspective single-mindedly on operational ingredients. In global projects more than one worldview and perspective are in tension. The four research articles in this special issue each show, from a different perspective, how and why culture and institutions matter in the strategic management of global projects. The four articles can be said to relate to three broad research perspectives: intra-organizational project relations in global projects, organic growth of global project activities, and inclusion in global projects of project participants beyond those originally intended. Who, precisely, are in charge of global projects; how, precisely, we (or they) are open or closed to perspectives of the "Other"; and specification of strategies for managing tension between dominant and other perspectives in global projects would appear to offer further relevant perspectives for global project management practice and research.

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