Editorial

Special issue on managing major and mega projects: opening up for new research eras

In 2017, we proposed to the Board of the Project Organising Strategic Interest Group of the European Academy of Management (EURAM) Conference, a special topic track titled: "Managing major and mega projects: opening up for new research eras." This special research topic was selected and included in the program of the 2017 EURAM Conference held in Glasgow, Scotland, from June 21 to June 24. From this research track, six papers were offered the opportunity to be published in a special issue and Emerald Group Publishing sponsored the Best Paper Award for the special topic in megaprojects. We take this opportunity to congratulate once again Dr Maude Brunet and Professor Monique Aubry of UQAM, Canada who have won the Best Paper Award, at the conference, for their paper titled: "The governance of major public infrastructure projects: the process of translation."

To the six papers selected from the conference, we added three additional papers (Papers 1, 8 and 9) that came from the regular submission process of the Journal and also concerned the management of megaprojects. Finally, to complete this issue, paper 10 that links workplace burnout theories to the project management discipline and a book review by Professor Derek Walker on organizational project management were included.

Since ancient times, civilizations have had a fascination with large-scale monuments and buildings. Today, the appeal of megaprojects persists and their reach has grown globally, as well as into outer space and cyberspace (Pitsis *et al.*, 2017). Governments around the world are committed to investing billions of dollars alongside significant ongoing private sector investment in infrastructure (Infrastructure & Projects Authority, 2016) which often tend to be megaprojects. These governments wish to establish the right framework to ensure that the right projects are delivered; to identify priorities and structure the financials ((Departmental Plan, 2017-2018; Miller *et al.*, 2001). The goals of these megaprojects would also include the quality of life of individuals, benefits to society, the growth of a national economy, sustainable development of the infrastructure and the development of entire cities (Fischer and Amekudzi, 2011). These ambitious goals, which are transformational in impact, require management practices able to deliver benefits not only in terms of economic growth and societal change but also more intangible outcomes such as ecological sustainability, social capital and human well-being (Bornstein, 2010). Current assessment models of these megaprojects mainly focus on indicators of economic performance, risk analysis and cost benefit of projects (Van Marrewijk, 2015; O Oliomogbe and Smith, 2013; Priemus *et al.*, 2008). Limited assessment models seek to include non-financial benefits through the integration of social or environmental indicators (World Bank Group, 2015; Vanclay *et al.*, 2015; Dani, 2003). Firms and governments that are not paying attention to taking societal and environmental factors into account can cause grief with some clear examples. For instance, the Broken Hill Petroleum mining incident in Brazil is a recent one that almost destroyed the Australian company. The exact cause of the burst dam is not known but it appears that the mine owners and the operator failed to live up to their due diligence responsibilities as outlined in the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises (Szoke, 2015; OECD, 2011). Responsible social and environmental conduct cannot be undermined when production costs increases and commodity prices fall. Neglecting such evaluation that identify, mitigate and prevent adverse impacts makes it more difficult to manage such large complex projects and deliver benefits from them.

Given the increasing importance of megaprojects, there is a need for a better understanding of the multifaceted aspects entailed in managing them predicated on the notion that

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infrastructure projects must not only be cost-effective but should also meet societal needs such as building social capital, creating well-being and broad-based prosperity. Thus, it is timely to provide analysis of the main features that make up megaprojects. It is also judicious to explore new eras of focus for megaprojects with a special attention on the mutual impact of megaproject and society drawing on the broad literature of organizational project management (Sankaran *et al.*, 2017; Drouin *et al.*, 2013), project and program management as well as from allied fields such as organization theory, institutional theory, strategic management, cultural and historical perspectives (Clegg *et al.*, 2017; Lenfle and Loch, 2016; Van Marrewijk, 2015). As raised by Van Marrewijk (2015, p. 14), megaprojects are "the outcome of social interactions just like any other form of organising that occurs within a multiple context of socially interdependent networks." Thus, there is a need to provide a broader conceptual lens to better understand social impacts and human behavior in megaprojects. Although we cannot claim that the papers selected for this special issue address all the matters related to the complexity of managing major and mega projects, each of these papers brings a fresh perspective to the merit of providing new and different insights for the advancement of knowledge on that topic. What follows is a short description of each paper that we hope should inspire you to read them in full.

Paper 1. "Megaprojects redefined-complexity vs cost-and social imperatives" by Daphne Freeder, Alexandra Pitsis, Stewart Clegg, Shankar Sankaran and Stephen Burdon sets the table in providing an overview from the literature on how best to define megaprojects in contemporary contexts. These authors raised the need for a definition that encompasses a complex matrix of characteristics, inclusive of positive and negative aspects, which are not necessarily industry or sector specific. Points for future research are also identified, including: contexts, procurement, institutional perspectives, constituting megaproject cultures, and sustainability.

Paper 2, "Increasing project benefits by project opportunity exploitation," by Pernille Eskerod, Karyne Ang and Erling Andersen suggests a new research area for megaprojects, i.e. the phenomenon of project opportunity exploitation as a means to increasing project benefits. The authors studied the Astoria-Megler Bridge that spans the Columbia River between Astoria, Oregon and Point Ellice near Megler, Washington, in the USA as a good social opportunity example. This bridge brought pride and fame to his community despite skepticism around its construction.

Paper 3, "Megaproject management and leadership: a narrative analysis of life stories – past and present," by Shankar Sankaran gains insights into the management of megaprojects from life stories published about four megaproject managers: two contemporary project managers in the Asia-Pacific Region, who led large infrastructure development projects; and two landmark megaproject managers in the USA. Six books were used for the analysis of the life stories. The use of life stories has been a useful exercise to learn about the leadership attributes of megaproject managers, past and present.

Paper 4, "The governance of major public infrastructure projects: the process of translation," by Maude Brunet and Monique Aubry received the Best Paper Award of the research track. It investigates the process of translation of an institutionalized governance framework as adapted to a major project in practice. The authors raised the point that although infrastructure projects have been studied for decades, most of these studies have emphasized economic or contingency-based perspectives. Little is known about the way actors translate and enact those governance frameworks into practice. Understanding this translation process will lead to a better understanding of the overall performance of major infrastructure projects.

Paper 5, "A methodology based on benchmarking to learn across megaprojects: the case of nuclear decommissioning," by Invernizzi, Locatelli and Brookes. These authors also raised the lack of a single and universally accepted definition of major and megaprojects.

They said that these projects often provide fewer benefits than what were originally expected and are affected by delays and cost overruns. It is still extremely hard to gather lessons learned from these projects in a systematic way. This paper presents an innovative methodology based on benchmarking to investigate good and bad practices and learn from the case of nuclear decommissioning projects and programs.

Paper 6, "A fuzzy-based decision support system for ranking the delivery methods of mega projects," by Yaser Hawas, Moza Al Nahyan, Mohsin Raza, Hamad Aljassmi, Munjed Maraga, Basil Basheerudeen and Sherif Mohammad Mohammad. This paper presents a framework to devise a system for ranking of traditional project delivery methods regarding their suitability against the varying levels of mega project attribute. The survey data were used to calibrate the fuzzy logic model of the granular component. The envisioned system index reflects the suitability on an ordinal scale.

Paper 7, Organizing inter-firm project governance – a contextual model for empirical investigation," is by Simon van Danwitz. According to this author, management of major inter-firm projects requires a coherent, holistic governance framework to be effective. This conceptual paper proposes an integrative analytical model of inter-firm project governance, building upon contingency theory and drawing from established constructs rooted in organization theory.

Paper 8, "Evaluating the impact of the land acquisition phase on property owners in megaprojects" is by Vince Mangioni. This paper examines the impact of the land acquisition phase and site assembly of land for large-scale infrastructure road projects and its impact on property owners. A review of one of the largest roadwork projects currently underway in Sydney, Australia demonstrates the adverse impact that has resulted in property owners challenging the approach used by government to acquire land for this project. Similar case studies are used to set out the key measures that should apply internationally in mitigating challenges from property owners in the land acquisition phase. It further shows that while adequate statutory provisions are important, it is the practices of acquiring authorities that ultimately determines the success and expedition of this initial important phase of these projects.

Paper 9 is "The hierarchy of public project governance frameworks : an empirical study of principles and practices in Norwegian ministries and agencies" by Gro Volden and Bjorn Andersen. The authors study public project governance frameworks in various ministries and agencies in Norway, following the introduction of a framework at the topmost level (i.e. the Cabinet) which applies to the very largest projects. The study finds that all of the agencies have introduced their own project governance frameworks, which are basically consistent with recommendations from the project management literature and with the Cabinet's overall requirements in Norway. By contrast, only one ministry has taken a formalized role as project owner. Governance tasks thus seem to be extensively delegated to the subordinate agencies. This even includes strategic tasks such as project selection and portfolio management, and implies there is a risk that public project governance has a narrow and internal focus.

This last paper closes the topic on major and mega projects. We completed this issue with Paper 10 by Kam Jugdev, Gita Mathur and Christian Cook on "Linking workplace burnout theories to the project management discipline." Given the demanding and stressful nature of project work, with a view to explore established concepts of burnout within the project management context, this paper examines two instruments: the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Areas of Worklife Survey. Since there is a paucity of literature in project management anchored within the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Areas of Worklife Survey, this article proposes a high-level model on burnout in project management, drawing on the literature underlying these two instruments. The paper contributes to an improved understanding of the determinants of project manager burnout, engagement, turnover and retention.

Finally, Professor Derek Walker has carried out a book review of the *Cambridge Handbook of Organizational Project Management,* edited by Sankaran, Müller and Drouin.

We hope you will enjoy reading this special issue, Nathalie Drouin, Editor-in-Chief with the collaboration of Professor Stewart Clegg, University of Technology Sydney, Professor Shankar Sankaran, University of Technology Sydney, Professor Martina Huemann, WU Vienna University of Economy and Business and Professor Alfons Van Marrewijk, VU University Amsterdam.

Nathalie Drouin

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