

# Projects and Networks

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**Deadline for full paper submissions: 31 October 2016**

## PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

Two basically different perspectives have brought projects and networks together. On the one hand, projects have been researched from a social network perspective, using social capital or structural holes or other network theories. On the other, as in project networks, the network notion is used to point to a very specific form of governance, using a wide range of organization theories. We welcome contributions from both viewpoints and integrative views.

### ▪ **Projects from a Social Network Perspective**

Organizing projects has fascinated observers and analysts for a very long time. There are a range of ways to conceptualize the nature of the project as an organizational form. Some have argued that the project is a system for managing information flows (Winch, 2002). Others have conceived the project as comprising a network of relationships that need to be managed (Pryke & Smyth, 2006). Few would deny that projects comprise systems and subsystems that need managing—most specifically, integration. Project definition is followed by a resource identification and award process. Typically, the client acquires the means to deliver a project rather than the completed project. The hierarchy of resources—designers, tier one contractors, and other tiers of the supply chain—once appointed by whatever means, then has to transition into a network of actors, with each actor charged with delivering a specific project function. All of these activities occur in an environment of changing client requirements and environmental constraints—a context of high uncertainty. Tier one contractors and their suppliers seek information and some measure of certainty; clients seek flexibility while they finally realize their needs and ambition and incorporate the most recent technology into their projects (Pryke, 2012). This complex and rich environment demands a fine-grained method of analysis, which goes beyond the hard tools and techniques of project management that have hitherto prevailed. Social or organizational network analysis not only provides a means to analyze project networks and develop theories of the flow of information and other resources through projects but also provides a theoretical lens on control and coordination. There is scope here to extend beyond network analysis and apply network theory (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011) to generate broader theories of project-based organization.

## ▪ **Projects from a Network Governance Perspective**

Project networks as a specific form of governance are to be found in film and television production, in science-based industries such as biotech or optics, the event industry, and the construction industry, for instance. The study of these networks as a distinct archetype or organizational form, characterized by latent as well as activated ties to project entrepreneurs and/or organizations, supplements the research on classical project-supported as well as truly project-based organizations (Lundin et al., 2015). Additionally, it addresses tensions between the temporary and the permanent in a particular way. In its purest form, project networks embed projects as a form of temporary organization (Lundin & Söderlund, 1995) into longer-term, eventually even open-ended networks of relationships. More often than not, projects are tied to other forms of interorganizational networks such as strategic alliances and networks, business ecosystems, regional clusters, or global production networks (Sydow et al., 2016). In consequence, their analysis requires not only investigations of the particular modes of organizing but also their specific contexts (DeFillippi, 2015).

The goal of the special issue is to assemble papers that focus on projects either from a network perspective or as a form of network governance to significantly advance our knowledge in these areas. To this end, all papers should be based on theoretically informed and empirically rigorous research using qualitative or quantitative designs and methods. Questions that might be addressed in the papers include:

- If we conceptualize the project as a network of role-holding actors, what are the features of these networks and how are they managed?
- Self-organizing interpersonal networks—how do they arise in and across projects?
- What are suitable methodologies for gathering network data in large and/or complex project environments?
- How do interorganizational and interpersonal relationships interact in temporary organizations?
- How do network behavior and actor attributes interact in and across projects?
- How do project networks, usually considered a very flexible form of temporary organizing, become inert, even path-dependent?
- What are the specifics of partner selection and retention in project networks?
- How does institutional context influence the organizing of project networks?
- How do project networks coordinate their project work and what are the mechanisms that coordinate project design and project implementation?
- What impacts do project networks as an organizational form have on the development of industries or regions?

This list of questions is not exhaustive. We welcome submissions that address questions beyond what we have listed as long as they contribute to a richer understanding of the projects as networks within the scope of this special issue.

## SUBMISSIONS

Full papers must be submitted by **31 October 2016** via the journal submission site. Papers accepted for publication but not included in the special issue will be published later, in a regular issue of the journal.

If you have any additional questions, please consult any of the following guest editors:

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## AUTHOR AND REVIEWER GUIDELINES

Special issues follow the same guidelines as those for regular articles. However, we expect the authors and reviewers to react promptly with their revisions and reviews. A special issue is a project with a scheduled deadline. While some variance may arise, timeliness matters more than with regular submissions.

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