

OLD THEORIES, NEW CONTEXTS:

EXTENDING OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT THEORIES TO PROJECTS

Call for papers for a Special Issue of the International Journal of Operations and Production Management

Guest Editors: Harvey Maylor, Jack Meredith, Jonas Söderlund, Tyson Browning

Objective:

The objective of this Special Issue is to provide a forum for works at the nexus of OM and project contexts. Project contexts provide particular challenges for both theory and practice, due to the variable levels of complexity^{1,2} present in those contexts. In addition, project contexts have received little attention in OM journals³.

For the development of OM, this represents an opportunity for theory development, testing and extension. For instance, how well do OM theories translate into the projects context? In addition, where project contexts demonstrate novel theoretical insights, these can subsequently be tested in other operations domains. Our purpose then is two-fold: to enrich the discussion of OM and Operations Strategy by focusing on a neglected context, and to develop specific insights for projects by using established OM lenses.

The papers:

This SI seeks innovative research that has the potential to significantly advance the field of OM theoretically and/or practically. Papers are welcome to address but are not limited to one of the following topic areas:

1. Operations strategy for projects

Organisational aspirations for projects are regularly no more than 'internally neutral'. This presents a number of opportunities. Firstly, projects are a means by which organizational strategies⁴ and operations strategies⁵ are delivered. Secondly, (how) can organisations move from an internally neutral stance to gaining competitive advantage from their project operations⁶? This approach proved highly beneficial for both theory⁷ and practice⁸ development in repetitive operations but is still at an early stage in projects. In addition, what constitutes project (dynamic) capabilities, how are they configured, and what are the organisational design choices?

2. Projects as 'change operations'

Projects are temporary endeavours outside the routine work of the organization for the purpose of implementing change (strategic and tactical). For example, lean projects seek to improve an existing, ongoing operational process. What theories can OM offer to help with this effort in comparison to other theories of change that haven't yet been advanced by areas such as "new product development," "innovation," "strategy," and "managerial change"? In addition, does an organisation or an operation that is being transformed, as opposed to a product (manufacturing), a person, or ownership (service), represent a new category of general operations⁹ or perhaps a subset of service operations?

3. Temporariness in operations processes

Whilst many operations can be viewed as having a degree of permanence, most definitions of projects highlight their temporariness. Organization Studies, for instance, has approached projects by considering them as 'temporary organisations'¹⁰. How does this relative impermanence differentiate approaches to managing operations, trade-offs, and operational dynamics? Moreover, what are the particular challenges of managing temporary operations spanning the boundaries between temporary and permanent organisations?

4. Novelty in operations processes

Relative to ongoing, repetitive operations, projects tend to have higher levels of uncertainty, ambiguity and novelty¹¹. This complicates the application of conventional OR and OM approaches to modelling and optimization. How do these characteristics differentiate the approaches to planning and managing operations from those of more established and understood repetitive organisational structures? What are the implications and challenges for agility, adaptability, and managerial control in such dynamic operations that require rapid generation and assimilation of new information?

5. Operations management in projects

Tools and concepts routinely used in the analysis of repetitive processes require reinterpretation in projects. This is in itself an area with significant potential. Further, managing even simple projects requires the use of social capital and engagement with behaviours in addition to processes. Have we therefore reached the limits of the current approach of 'fix the process' in our pursuit of measuring and improving project performance? For instance, optimism bias¹² has been well studied, but what else can projects learn from behavioural operations?

6. Project concepts useful for operations

What concepts useful in project management might have use in traditional operations dealing with "permanent" organizations? For example, what project concepts such as phase gates, project maturity, risk management, project portfolios, programmes, organisational project management, project capabilities or agile project management, might be useful in OM and under what conditions? What are the operational conditions necessary for these and are these more flexible, crowd-based or open approaches useful more generally in information-intensive operations?

Timescales

Deadline for full paper submissions: Tuesday, 2nd January, 2017, 17:00 GMT

Decision to authors: Friday 10th March, 2017

Deadline for revised papers: Monday 8th May, 2017

Second round decisions to authors: Monday 3rd July, 2017

Deadline for final papers: Monday 4th September, 2017

Publication: early 2018.

Papers must be within the scope of this Special Issue, conform to the requirements for IJOPM papers, and be submitted through the ScholarOne system.

Guest editors

Dr Harvey Maylor, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, UK, harvey.maylor@sbs.ox.ac.uk

Professor Jack Meredith, School of Business, Wake Forest University, meredijr@wfu.edu

Professor Jonas Söderlund, BI Norwegian Business School, jonas.soderlund@bi.no

Professor Tyson Browning, Neeley School of Business, Texas Christian University, t.browning@tcu.edu

¹ Geraldi, J., Maylor, H., and Williams, T. (2011), "Now Let's Make it Really Complex (Complicated): A Systematic Review of the Complexities of Projects", *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol. 31, No. 9, pp. 966-990.

² Ramasesh, R.V. and Browning, T.R. (2014), "A Conceptual Framework for Tackling Knowable Unknown Unknowns in Project Management," *Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 190-204.

³ Walker, H., Chicksand, D., Radnor, Z. and Watson, G. (2015), "Theoretical perspectives in operations management: an analysis of the literature", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 35, no. 8, pp. 1182-1206.

⁴ Morgan, M., Levitt, R., and Malek, W. (2007), *Executing Your Strategy*, HBS Publishing, Boston MA.

⁵ e.g. Rytter N.G., Boer H., and Koch C. (2007), "Conceptualizing operations strategy processes", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 27, No. 10, pp. 1093-1114.

⁶ Maylor, H., Turner, N., and Murray-Webster, R. (2015), "It Worked for Manufacturing... Operations Strategy in Project-based Operations", *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol 33, No. 1, pp. 103-115.

⁷ e.g. Meredith, J. (2001), "Reconsidering the Philosophical Basis of OR/MS", *Operations Research*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 1-9.

⁸ e.g. Akinc, U., and Meredith, J. (2015), "Make to Forecast: Customization with Fast Delivery", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 728-750.

⁹ Meredith, J. (1998), "Building Operations Management Theory Through Case and Field Research", *Journal of Operations Management* (special issue on "Theory-Driven Empirical Research"), Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 441-454.

¹⁰ e.g. Sydow, J., Lindkvist, L. and DeFillipi, R. (2004), "Project-based Organizations, Embeddedness and Repositories of Knowledge", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 25, pp. 1475-1489.

¹¹ Browning, T.R. and Heath, R.D. (2009), "Reconceptualizing the Effects of Lean on Production Costs with Evidence from the F-22 Program", *Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 23-44.

¹² Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1992), "Advances in Prospect Theory: Cumulative Representation of Uncertainty", *Journal of Risk and uncertainty*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 297-323.