

**Engineering and Human
Sciences.
Journal of Trans-Disciplinary
Studies on Project-
Management Cultures**



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Editors' Notes

The journal "Engineering and Human Sciences" aims at establishing a trans-disciplinary discussion on the cultural issues, technical aspects, institutional and organizational patterns of project-management.

The discussion has a threefold purpose. First of all, it aims at the redefinition of the project manager's anthropological configuration, which should be able to sustain new ways of operating and a new cognitive responsiveness. In this sense, it is a matter to strengthen a socially-oriented reflexivity and ethics by developing and applying the broad meaning of technical action, in the perspective that technical action is a pragmatic and creative activity with sound constituencies that lay upon trans-disciplinary and collective issues.

Secondly, the discussion aims at outlining the evidence that project-management approaches and methodologies are sources of growth and maturity of social sciences. Last but not least, it aims at opening and strengthening the cross-fertilization approach as a style of reasoning as well as a system of practices between engineering, architecture, technical sciences, social and human sciences, by discussing emerging methodologies, approaches, and analytical tools.

To foster the interlacement among the purposes mentioned above, the journal aims to shed the approach and the methodologies of complexity sciences. Complexity sciences constitute a toolkit that should increase both the analysis of project-manager's action and techno-scientific artifacts, and the analysis of social and cultural dynamics that emerge through the project-management action. Moreover, they allow to avoid the trap of specialization and disciplinary outlook that characterizes the traditional way of conceiving technical phenomena, by means of outlining issues and questions that constitute a framework of epistemological bricolage driven not only by theoretical models, but also by practices.

The journal is composed by a section of papers that take up a general theme, and a miscellaneous section with interviews, books review, description of web sites, useful links, research and educational projects, and presentation of Ph. D dissertations.

Information

The journal is published twice a year on-line with papers in English, Italian and French. It is an initiative of NEHS, Network of Engineering and Human Sciences (<http://www.dds.unibo.it/nehs>). The first numbers are released at the end of January and July 2004, on the NEHS web site.

The copyright of the materials published by the journal is a property of Bologna University, but authors alone are responsible of what they write and maintain the right to use their papers on their beliefs (republishation in other journals or on personal home pages , and so on).

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Call for papers for General Themes (2004)

The foundations of project-management at the edge of vision and discipline

The issue aims at analyzing the project-management activities in the light of cognitive processes that establish a connection between activity, rules, imagination, and creativity. Such connection has broad implications, for instance, in the field of arts, plastic sciences, literature, and so on. The call for papers aims at framing the project-management activities, as though it was a reproduction of complexity foundations, at the edge of factors related to act of synthesis and art of vision, and factors related to praxis, methodology and disciplinary knowledge.

Examples of topics are as follows:

- The project-manager as a creative subject and a social actor able to internalize social visions and to translate them into artifacts;
- The project as a complex phenomenon, with case-studies and descriptions able to outline the core of project-management action, that is to say the capability of synthesizing different processes, actors, and needs in a sinergetic, functional, and sustainable complementarity framework;
- Analysis of cases and biographies of engineers, architects, designers that get closer to the idea of "humanistic project-manager", that is to say people able to create and communicate new paradigmatic visions of their society into artifacts and creative actions.

From Industrial Districts to Cultural Districtualization. Historical Heritages, Cultures, Territories as Carriers of Projects.

The issue aims at analysing the ties of interdependence-integration between knowledge and governance as factors of growth in the framework of project-oriented cultures at the edge between private actions, commons, environmental development and territorial embeddedness. The idea of district is not referred to a system with well-defined boundaries, specific components, and sound outlines, but rather to a set of dynamics of thickness and the emergence of synergies among actors and processes (the concept of districtualization rather than of a district as a system) that find complementarities on the ground, over time. These patterns of complementarity should become the real framework of design and "agency", with the emergence of innovative connections able to impress new social, institutional, economic and territorial configurations.

Examples of topics are as follows:

- The capacity of a territorial community to set up collective initiatives related to the development of its historical, cultural, and environmental heritage, while giving rise to new visions and new synergies at the same time;
- The districtualization as a path of complementarity and synergy: theoretical insights and analysis of the literature;

- The cultural districts in Italy and in other international contexts;
- The empowerment of actors as a product and a carrier of districtualized synergies.

Robustness: criticality and reinforcing

The issue aims at analyzing the processes of adaptive consolidation in critical phases of institutional, organizational and strategic transitions. The understanding of robustness should be viewed as a way of escaping the conceptual traps that are related to the traditional idea of equilibrium and as a way of specifying and improving the body of metaphors that are related to the idea of adaptation. In engineering, natural and social sciences, the robustness is conceptualized with respect to different characteristics of a system: the functional persistence of the organizational software of a system in condition of environmental changes, emergence of conflicting inputs, and so on; the capacity of a system to appropriately react upon irregular circumstances, or its capacity to evolve along self-organizing paths, and so on.

The issue aims at collecting exploratory contributions coming from different areas and different languages (for instance, engineering, architecture, organizational sciences, history of institutions, and linguistics), and that are characterized by a plurality of matters (analysis of technological artifacts, architectural projects, institutional development, organizational models, case-studies at a different level). The basic idea is to frame a polyphonic conception of robustness that should be able to translate a synthetic vision at different level of observation. The main reference of this call for papers is the research project on robustness recently held by Santa Fe Institute. To have information, see: <http://discuss.santafe.edu/robustness/>.

Examples of topics are as follows.

- Theoretical analysis of the concept of robustness in engineering, architecture, designing, and social sciences
- Robustness as a conceptual framework of designing efforts in systems and artifacts at different level (anticipatory strategic decisions in phase of design, internalized complexity in phase of decision and pragmatic actions, design as the art of creating robust artifacts, and so on)
- Description of cases of robustness and expansion of systems at a different level in environmental contexts characterized by strong forms of criticality (for instance, the robustness of a learning organization)
- Analysis of phenomena with an emphasis on the articulation between “long durée” institutional persistence and rapid change, that is to say on temporal scales of evolution (for instance, the articulation between “long durée” persistence of institutional and cultural phenomena, and change of economic phenomena)
- Analysis of the translation of “consistency principles” within systems among levels
- Methodologies to analyze robustness (for instance, agent-based simulation modeling)

Civilizing Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship: Practices and Paradoxes of Corporate Social Responsibility

The issue aims at analyzing corporate social responsibility as a by-product of a project-oriented culture, which lays upon the firm but aims (with different degrees of concern and strategic orientation) to involve organizations in a wide-spectrum. The journal aims at opening a discussion on the different approaches through which social responsibility is stated and practiced in different contexts. Moreover, it aims at developing a discussion on the relation between corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy, in order to reflect upon the building of frameworks of equal partnership between for profit and not for profit organizations.

Examples of topics are as follows:

- Firms as wide-ranging social actors: case-studies and theoretical models
- Case-studies on social and community-based projects driven by firms
- Self-reflexive methodologies and approaches of firms as social actors
- Case-studies on paradoxes and “badly-situated concreteness” in social responsibility practices of firms, for instance cases of aporia in the environmental and ethical codification of rules of action.