Now, let’s make it really complex (complicated): A systematic review of the complexities of projects - DTU Orbit (03/12/2018)

Now, let’s make it really complex (complicated): A systematic review of the complexities of projects

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to contribute to operations management (OM) practice contingency research by describing the complexity of projects. Complexity is recognised as a key independent (contingent) variable that impacts on many subsequent decisions in the practice of managing projects.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper presents a systematic review of relevant literature and synthesises an integrated framework for assessing the complexities of managing projects.

Findings – This framework comprises five dimensions of complexity – structural, uncertainty, dynamics, pace and socio-political complexity. These five dimensions present individuals and organisations with choices about how they respond to each type of complexity, in terms of business case, strategic choice, process choice, managerial capacity and competencies.

Originality/value – The contribution of this paper is to provide a clarification to the epistemology of complexity, to demonstrate complexity as a lived experience for project managers, and offer a common language for both practitioners and future empirical studies considering the individual or organisational response to project complexities. The work also demonstrates an application of systematic review in OM research.

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