Project studies and engaged scholarship: Directions towards contextualized and reflexive research on projects

Purpose

In 2006, the "Rethinking Project Management" network called for a paradigm shift in project research, and proposed five research directions. The directions inspired research and marked a milestone in the development of the field. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the past decade and to rejuvenate these research directions.

Design/methodology/approach

The authors propose the umbrella term: "project studies" to denote the research related to projects and temporary organizing. Project studies is conceived not only as a body of research, but also as a social process embedded in research communities, and contemporary Zeitgeist. Based on Sandberg’s interpretative approach to the fit between work and works (in this case research-researcher) and Habermas’ three types of human interests: technical, practical, and emancipatory, the authors develop a conceptual framework circumscribing three types of research in project studies.

Findings

The conceptual framework is used to craft future research directions, in the lines proposed by Winter et al. (2006b).

Research limitations/implications

The authors conclude by proposing for a sixth theme on the practice of theorizing, and call for engaged, ambidextrous scholars, who's "job" goes beyond the writing of articles and research applications, and includes shaping discourses of project research, nurturing new project scholars, contributing to project practice and carefully considering the legacy of projects and project studies in society.

Originality/value

This paper positions research as a social process, and the role of researchers as actors shaping research in project studies.

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