



Editorial

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Editors in Chief

Welcome to the first EPOJ issue of 2021. This past year has been challenging for everyone the world over and we hope that you and your near and dear ones are safe and healthy. 2020 has also pushed us as a community to rethink the entire project organising paradigm. Given the shift to working remotely, we have naturally seen newer forms of communicating and coordinating emerge driven by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The way in which work is broken down and distributed has also changed as has the means by which project organisations are governed. In some cases the pandemic has accelerated the trajectory of adoption of technologies – drones and other automatons are fast becoming commonplace in projects across the world. However, while there may have been gains during the pandemic there have been significant challenges as well. The holistic welfare of construction labour, apart from job site safety, has received short shrift historically from academics and practitioners alike. The consequences of this were plain to see particularly in emerging economies where large numbers of migrant labourers were left stranded away from home with meagre savings, no work and facing debilitating social and economic prospects. Elsewhere, lock-downs led to several project based firms going out of business, fundamentally questioning the sustainability of their organising and business models. These and suchlike challenges must now drive enquiry into project organising and we hope that over the next few years several studies will emerge that can benefit academics and policy makers alike in creating a more resilient project ecosystem.

Meanwhile, it is heartening to note that the academic community on engineering project

organisation has been extremely active as evinced by the six excellent papers that make up this issue. Scholtenhuis et al address the thorny problem of coordination in urban utility networks and shed some more light on the role of boundary spanners in these projects. This relates to several papers on boundary spanning that have been published in EPOJ in the past, but also to the role that such intermediaries may play in the ‘new’ normal. Edkins et al show how Project Management can play a critical role in the area of real-estate – two very related thematic areas that are seldom directly connected. Poleacovschi et al address another important contemporary issue – what determines the resilience of ‘micropolitan areas’ (areas with fewer than 50000 people). Their findings suggest that collective building of capacity is critical to the survival of these areas, a fact that has also been highlighted in several theatres the world over where such ‘small towns’ have struggled to stay on their feet but have overcome shocks such as the pandemic due to community based ties. Chapman and Quang dig deep into managing risks on megaprojects and suggest that there are benefits to reconciling two widely differing views on the subject – the notion that risks are strategically misrepresented vs the notion that megaprojects are just extremely complex and front end planning is a means to minimise these risks. Kanjanabootra points out that the adoption of innovation in construction is often incremental and attempts to understand how disruptive innovation can be enabled through insights from professionals. The ability to innovate disruptively is likely to be a critical capability as we rethink how projects are to be organised in a post-pandemic world. Finally

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Puddicombe sheds light on a topic that has been the subject of great debate over the years – productivity in the housing industry. Using empirical data he argues that the growth in total productivity has been negligible over the years thereby critically questioning the ways in which project organisations and incentives are currently designed.

Taken together these papers traverse a wide range of topics within the domain of project organising from resilience to innovation to coordination. While they all provide advances to existing bodies of knowledge, their insights can be repurposed as we look into the

future to see what kinds of changes we can bring about to create greater resilience within our industry. We hope you enjoy reading these papers as much as we did. On behalf of the Editors and Editorial Board, thank you for your continued support of EPOJ and we look forward to bringing you additional works that challenge accepted principles. As always, please contact us or the Editorial Board with any comments regarding this issue.

Stay Safe.

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