This special issue compiles some of the best papers of the Project Organizing Special Interest Group track of the European Academy of Management conference (EURAM) organized 17–20 June, 2015, in Warsaw, Poland. The papers were chosen for consideration based on the ratings of the double-blind reviews of the conference papers, and they were further developed during the journal’s review process through the feedback of additional reviewers.

EURAM2015 Project Organizing track featured some 30 paper presentations, a discussion with the editors of key journals in project management about The Future of Project Research, and a plenary meeting of the special interest group members. The Project Organizing Special Interest Group (SIG) offered a full program during the entire conference and continued as an active and lively forum for discussion and debate both during the official program and over the well-organized evening program in the interesting locations of Warsaw.

IPMA (International Project Management Association) and PMI (Project Management Institute) sponsored prizes for the best paper and best student paper. The results of a double-blind review process for the conference were used directly in selecting the best papers. The IPMA PMI Best Paper Prize EURAM 2015 was awarded to Stephan Manning and Thomas Bejarano from University of Massachusetts Boston for their article “Projects as ongoing journeys or results-in-progress: on the narration of crowdfunding campaigns”. This paper also received an overall EURAM Best Paper Prize.

The IPMA PMI Best Student Paper Prize EURAM 2015 was awarded to two excellent student papers. A student paper is a paper of which at least the first author is a doctoral student. The prize was honored to a paper based on the PhD work of Bastion Ekrot from TU Berlin: Bastion Ekrot, Johannes Rank, Hans Georg Gemünden, “Antecedents of Project Managers’ Voice Behavior — The Moderating Effect of Organization-Based Self-Esteem and Affective Organizational Commitment”. The prize was shared with Robert Joslin from SKEMA Business School for the contribution: Robert Joslin and Ralf Müller “Using philosophical and methodological triangulation to identifying interesting phenomena”. We gratefully acknowledge the continued support of PMI and IPMA for EURAM’s project organizing track and the pursuit for relevant, high-quality research publications. Further developments of both papers are published in the Special Theme EURAM 2015 in this issue of the International Journal of Project Management.

The theme of the 2015 EURAM conference was “Uncertainty is a great opportunity”. For the project organizing research community, the theme is highly relevant and increasingly attractive in research (e.g. Laine et al., 2016; Martinsuo et al., 2014; Perminova et al., 2008). Besides risk management as part of projects, researchers are more and more looking into how uncertainty emerges both within the project, in its organizational context, and in its business environment, and how uncertainty can be managed. Not all uncertainty is known or foreseen, which is why risk management in its classical form is not enough. Uncertainty is also one motivation to take a critical or practice-based perspective to project-oriented research, as it calls for improvisation and causes deviations to the plan and, thereby, complements the planning-centric view to projects (Böhle et al., 2015). Even if only some of the papers in the Project Organizing track studied uncertainty, it is apparent that research is acknowledging the uncertain contexts in which projects take place and the different management styles needed for different projects.

The papers in this special issue demonstrate the diversity of research going on in the project organizing community. Topics covered a range from project managers’ voice behavior, philosophical and methodological approaches in Project Management research, to uncertainty management, and collaborative contracting and its consequences for project performance.

Bastian Ekrot, Johannes Rank and Hans Georg Gemünden (Ekrot et al., 2016—in this issue) discuss in the article “Antecedents of Project Managers’ Voice Behavior — The Moderating Effect of Organization-Based Self-Esteem and Affective Organizational Commitment” the construct of voice behavior in the context of project management. By employee voice behavior they define discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, or concerns with the intent to improve organizational functioning positively. In their empirical study, the authors analyzed which specific contextual factors interact...
with individual-level variables to predict project managers’ voice behavior. Their results suggest that idea encouragement, career perspectives, qualification opportunities and peer collaboration related more positively to voice behavior of project managers with a high level of organization-based self-esteem. For project managers high in affective organizational commitment, they found stronger positive relationships of peer collaboration and idea encouragement with project managers’ voice behavior.

Robert Joslin and Ralf Müller report a conceptual study: “Identifying interesting project phenomena using philosophical and methodical triangulation” (Joslin and Müller, 2016–in this issue). Their focus is on the philosophy of science and, in particular, the way to face the observed world through multiple meanings. By philosophical triangulation they take a step forward from methodology triangulation and challenge researchers to adopt alternative ontologies when studying a single phenomenon. The paper introduces an example from project governance as a complex problem, requiring philosophical triangulation to highlight alternative perspectives and offer a rich and holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Their claim is that philosophical triangulation is needed for identifying really interesting, new phenomena as other forms of triangulation can only confirm or question phenomena identified earlier.

The paper by Fiona Saunders, Andrew Gale and Andrew Sherry: “Mapping the multi-faceted: Determinants of uncertainty in safety-critical projects” (Saunders et al., 2016–in this issue) is very closely aligned with the conference theme, both through its focus on uncertainty and its chosen context of safety-critical projects. The authors build upon an earlier study that has already designed a framework on the key dimensions of uncertainty in the form of an “uncertainty kaleidoscope”, by refining the framework in a broader sample. The interview study with thirty project management professionals in nine safety-critical projects offers evidence on how the dimensions of the uncertainty kaleidoscope are experienced in practice, and how the experiences differ between civil nuclear and civil aerospace contexts. The fine-tuned mapping of uncertainties is helpful in guiding forthcoming uncertainty-oriented research and also in promoting project managers’ capabilities of identifying and responding to uncertainties.

The contribution by Mohammad Suprapto, Hans L.M. Bakker, Herman G. Mooi, Marcel J.C.M. Hertogh “How do contract types and incentives matter to project performance?” (Suprapto et al., 2016–in this issue) discusses collaborative contracts and contractual incentives and their influence on project performance. The authors analyzed a sample of 113 capital projects. Their results suggest that partnering/alliance contracts and incentive contracts do not necessarily result directly in a better project performance but the relational attitudes and team working quality are essential for better project performance. Collaborative contracts only provide the potential basis for this.

To sum up, EURAM continues to attract and communicate rich and versatile results in research on project organizing. The year 2015 reminded us of the importance of acknowledging uncertainty as a source of opportunity. Lechler et al. (2013) suggest to understand uncertainty not as a special case of project risk, but conceptually different from risks and associated with opportunities. Uncertainty is not a quantifiable phenomenon only, but a contextual condition that skilled, educated project business professionals need to sense, assess, and transform to actionable possibilities.

In the future, perhaps the viewpoint of uncertainty-driven opportunities could be considered more also in project management research.

References


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