



25 YEARS OF PROJECTIFICATION RESEARCH

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Abstract

This paper marks the 25 years of projectification research. This research stream originated in 1995 from Midler's seminal work in a special issue of Scandinavian Journal of Management. During this time, projectification has been ongoing (and seemingly accelerating) process, it has deserved increasing interest, and the research field has significantly evolved. This paper scrutinizes the developments in projectification research, focusing on emerged and emerging trends and streams. Using a loosely structured combination of historical and content analysis, it intends to fix their initial source(s) and/or roots, the latest developments and the current 'end state'. Also, it pays attention to so far less covered aspects, both positive and negative implications of projectification, as well as possible over-projectification.

This study revealed a striking increase of interest, appearing in the numbers of publications in 2016-2018 and extra in the past year. More importantly, coverage of (sub)topics, issues, sectors, levels, etc. has enlarged. Research on projectification has achieved academic rigour and richness, it is reflecting different more general trends, it has been influenced by developments in related (sub)fields and in turn, influences them. Yet, such relations are not equally developed – there are several linkages with (social) entrepreneurship and HRM but no studies on links to financial management, including project finance, and the financial sector. Most appeared relations are expectable, but some – such as relatedness to organizational romance and organizational improvisation – may be surprising. Substantial is the appearance of 'deprojectification' and the fact that research on projectification has been greatly treading in Midler's 'footprints'.

Key words: *projectification, deprojectification, project-based work, research.*

JEL codes: M0, M5, L20.

Introduction

In 1995 Scandinavian Journal of Management dedicated an issue to Project Management and Temporary Organizations. This special issued included several outstanding articles. The most cited is Lundin and Söderholm (1995) where they outlined a theory of temporary organization. In another seminal work, Midler (1995) introduced a novel notion projectification, denoting ongoing (and seemingly accelerating) phenomenon that deserves increasing interest in academic research.

This year (2020) the project management research community can celebrate. During the past quarter of century, this research field has significantly evolved, thus it is not possible to reflect all relevant matters in one paper. To stay in the limits of a conference paper and considering the presence of similar (including quite recent) studies, this work does not tend to provide another all-encompassing overview on projectification. This paper scrutinizes the developments in projectification research, focusing on emerged (and still emerging) trends and streams. Using a loosely structured methodology, combining historical and content analysis, this work intends to assess the initial source(s) and/or roots of a particular trend or stream, and concentrating on the latest developments, to ascertain its most current 'end state'. Another intention is to pay attention on so far less covered trends, streams, fields and sectors, etc., including both positive and negative implications of projectification, as well as on possible over-projectification (c.f. Lundin, 2016).



The Nature and History of Projectification

Projectification is already quite a popular topic in the ‘project’ literature. Thus, there is no need to deepen into its nature and history, albeit some flashback and clarification are probably useful. Projectification as a phenomenon is recognized during decades – a trend that the societies become increasingly projecticised, organised in terms of time-limited sequences of (inter)action, was noticed already in the mid-1960s (c.f. Packendorff, 2002). Projectification as a concept and term was introduced much later, in the middle of the 1990s by Midler (1995) in a seminal article, examining Renault’s way towards project orientation. The construct of project orientation was taken from Gareis (1989) work which proposed a novel management approach ‘Management by Projects’, considering also relationships between the projects and the company (organisation) and between projects – i.e. the network of projects. There are different terms – project orientation, projectification and projectization – that have similar but not coincident meanings. According to Müller (2009), the (level of) projectization indicates the extent to which a business is based on projects and the project way of working pervades. Thus, projectification and projectization should be rather distinguished, even though this is not (yet) commonly accepted. Projectization means the degree of organising activities through projects, what is a precondition for projectification; projectification has a much wider meaning, embracing projectization.

A significant adjustment in the understanding of projectification was made by Maylor et al. (2006), eliciting that the novelty was not in the trend of organising work through projects, but in concurred organisational changes. Their another significant contribution was developing a related notion programmification, meaning the implementation of programmes and portfolios (of projects) as management mechanisms in organisations (ibid.), bringing in the multi-project perspective. As projectification is a wider term and comprises projectization, it can be used when there is no need to differentiate. Such an approach seems to be quite common and will be followed also in this paper. Moreover, it should be noted that wordings like project intensification or project proliferation, projectivization, as well as project or projectified society (economy, business), etc., are often used for describing and disserting the same phenomenon (c.f. Gemünden, 2013).

Albeit projectification is not a novel topic, increasing interest can be observed during the past decade. Jacobsson and Jalocha (2018) examined 86 projectification-oriented publications, including journal articles, books or book chapters, conference papers, etc., and perceived several characteristic patterns. First, after a rather silent period at the end of the first decade of this century (2007-2009), immense growth in numbers of publications is noticed during the following periods (2010-2012, 2013-2015 and 2016-2018). As the stock was taken in January 2018, they assumed that “... *the number of publications in the last interval (2016-2018) is very likely to grow by at least an additional 10-15 publications until the end of 2018, if it follows the present trajectory.*” (ibid.: 8). The author of this paper is glad to mention that their assumption was right: similar (yet probably not the same) screening process resulted in 89 relevant publications, and 12 of these were published in 2018. So, the growth within the last period (2016-2018) is even bigger than depicted (see Jacobsson & Jalocha, 2018, Figure 2). Taking stock about two years later, the author of this paper retrieved 21 relevant contributions that appeared in 2019. This affirms that interest in this topic is steadily growing.

Increased numbers of projectification-related publications, particularly in recent years, indicates growing interest. A notable event was a special section “*Projectification and the impact on societies*” in the *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business* (12(3), 2019). Its editorial (Schoper & Ingason 2019) points to a related special section in an earlier (12(2)) issue of the same journal, headed “*World views on projects and society*”. Two special sections in sequential issues of a respected journal “... *underlines the importance, and also the*



urgence of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of projectification to all members of the society” (ibid.: 517). Moreover, another special section (on relations of entrepreneurship and project management) in the previous issue (12(1), 2019) of the same journal included some projectification-related papers. An evidential example is a work by Auschra et al. (2019) about projectification of entrepreneurial (start-up) ecosystems, shaping the new venture creation towards ‘project-like practices’, such as milestone planning, short-term budgeting, etc. Kuura and Lundin (2019) widened the horizon to business process management and revealed several accrual parallels and linkages. Thus, 2019 can be labelled as ‘year of projectification’ even basing on a single journal. This topic got attention also in other journals – for example, a work of Henning and Wald (2019) in *International Journal of Project Management* on macroeconomic implications of project work in firms. Appearing of projectification-related work in another project-oriented journal should be less surprising than in ‘non-project’ journals. A good example for the last is a work by Fred (2019) on projectification of local government, published in *Local Government Studies* journal.

Trends and Streams in Projectification Research

Increasing numbers of publications on projectification may sign qualitative developments, such as covered subtopics, novel research streams, etc. The first to mention is a typology of levels of projectification by Jalocha (2019): micro (individuals), meso (organisations), macro (industries and sectors), mega (countries, supranational organisations) and meta (transformations of global social structures). This study deals with developments on the meso-, macro- and mega-levels and concentrates on the public sector. Coined by Midler (1995) on the organizational (meso¹) level, the notion of projectification has significantly evolved. Jalocha (2019) claims that projectification causes changes in structures, processes and methods of work in public organizations. Even though the examined case of Poland may be a bit specific², intensive projectification in the public sector is observed also in a quite diametrical country like Sweden (Fred, 2019; 2015). Both afore-cited (Jalocha, 2019 and Fred, 2019; 2015) pay attention to the influence of the European Union (EU) that occurs mainly through huge numbers of projects funded by the EU. It is not immodest to say that massive project-based funding from the EU has caused specific projectification. Fred (2018) claims that such projectification started almost as early as the EU.

Considering this is possible to say that projectification on societal (macro- and mega-level, mainly in the public sector), embraces a specific sub-stream that emerged already about two decades ago. In a seminal work, Dornisch (2002) depicted the role of ‘*post-socialist projects*’ in a Polish region and consequent projectification of restructuring efforts during a comprehensive transition. This supported possessing distinctive ‘*transitional capacity*’ that was useful in dealing with a myriad of practical restructuring problems the regional firms and institutions were facing. As this study involved firms, it included also the meso-level. Notable contributions to this sub-stream were made Kovach and Kucherova (2006). Examining the situation in Hungary and the Czech Republic they claimed that extensive flows of EU, national and other project-based funds caused ‘bottom-up projectification’ in (regional) development and the emergence of a new phenomenon or social group, labelled ‘*project class*’. They reasoned this using another novel notion of ‘*project economy*’ where people with expert knowledge

¹ General disciplines like economics tend to limit with traditional micro and macro levels, the need to discern another meso level between micro and macro is not commonly recognized. This is worth to note because Jalocha (2019) places the firms (organisations) on the meso-level, whereas the firms are micro-level subjects for most economists.

² Poland is the biggest among the 10 new Member States that joined EU in 2004 and was not well developed, thus it has been the largest beneficiary of EU funds in Europe. As the access to EU funds is mostly project-based, the situation caused big misfit between the projectified EU structures and the Polish public sector – and forced its projectification.



(including redistributive and market mechanisms related to development projects) and managerial skills become highly competitive. Kovach and Kucherova (2009) pointed out its originators: changes in administrative structures and EU and national developmental policies, and the emergence of cultural and cognitive elements in spatial development. Moreover, they hypothesized that the projects as a management form obtain key role in European integration. But yet, Kovach and Kucherova (ibid.) manifested also potentially negative – situations where projects do not support development but become a profitable business for the ‘project class’. Both just cited works (Kovach & Kucherova, 2006; 2009) embrace also the micro-level, as they deal with individuals.

It is difficult to label the just revealed sub-stream: let it be ‘*euro-projectification*’ for now. As seen, it has both positive and negative implications, and a specific feature – it appeared in the cases of post-socialist or transition societies. So, this phenomenon may look like an ‘infantile complaint’ that is normal to be suffered from at a certain age, giving immunity for the future, but this is not quite so. For one, Andersson (2009) uncovers an ‘innovation paradox’ – an expectation that the actors in regions are innovative comes true very seldom, most projects lack innovation. This is accompanied by professionalization and gendering (women as project leaders, especially in small projects) of project work. This is in line with the ideas of Kovach & Kucherova (2006) about the emergence of ‘project class’. Similarly, Andersson (2009) noted that the added value of most projects is very small – sometimes just workplaces for involved people until there is funding, but minimal long-term effects, or ‘sustainability’ in Euro-terms. Availability of project-based (EU and national) funding causes situations where “*Projects “that have already been done” are started over and over again, under slightly new names*” (ibid., 196). As this work treats Finland, it denotes that similar problems exist also in developed countries, not only in post-socialist East and Central Europe, meaning that this is not an ‘infantile complaint’.

The ‘innovation paradox’ has similarities with the ‘renewal paradox’ – expectations that project work will be renewed when a new project starts come true very seldom, most projects are treated as repetitive, and at worst, also mistakes are repeated (Ekstedt et al., 1999). The cited work does not name projectification but used labels like ‘*projectised*’ and ‘*project-intensive economy*’ have a similar meaning. Later Lundin (2007) related the renewal paradox to a tendency to ‘stick to established procedures’ that tends to kill creativity and innovativeness in projects.

Regardless of proliferation, ‘*euro-projectification*’ still represents a sub-stream in societal projectification, which relates to projects in public administration. Just a decade ago Andersson (2009) noted that project management propagated in public administration, but it had deserved surprisingly little attention, whereat most existent research was about development aid. The aid topic has intersections with so-called ‘*euro-projectification*’, greatly related to redistribution in the EU. Lundin (2011) saw a trend in projectification the emergence of new application areas, such as the EU – in a modern view it is not a question of government, but of governing – activities within the union. Hence, Lundin (ibid.) deduced that projectification will become an issue also for political scientists. This surmise became true, an example is a contribution by Godenhjelm et al. (2015) about projectification in the public sector, including policy making, in the context of the European Union. They pointed out different (internal and external, push and pull) factors influencing projectification and stressed a need for comparative research of public sector projectification on supranational and national levels. At that, they warned that alluring EU-wide standardisation and formalisation can be counterproductive – the unique nature of projects should remain because the particularities and priorities in different member states will continually vary.



Godenhjelm et al. (2015) commemorated their work as "... *the first steps towards a theory applicable to projectification in a public context*" (ibid.: 344) and called for the following research, posing some questions – such as possible developments at the local level and suitability of projects if long term goals and permanent, hierarchical structures rule. Several authors, including afore-cited Jalocha (2019) and Fred (2019 and 2018) have followed this call. Novel notions, such as ‘projectified politics’ (Sjöblom et al., 2013), ‘politicized projects’ (Krohwinkel-Karlsson, 2013), have been introduced and developed in this stream. Furthermore, there are numerous examples of recent developments. For instance, Fred and Hall (2017) investigated the political-administrative rationale of projectification in a Swedish municipality and detected that it introduces a new mind-set with potential long-term effects, rather than profound organizational change. Jalocha (2018) introduced a notion ‘projectariat’ – employees “*who by performing work within the framework of projects, experience precarious work conditions*” (ibid.: 71). Public servants may be in danger of becoming the projectariat, yet projectification does not harm their professional identity, in their opinion, they remain public servants. Greer et al. (2019) observed the emergence of a precarious projectariat in Slovenian but not French social services. They explained this exceptionality with differences in transactional structures between the countries.

As society comprises several levels (macro, meso, and micro) and sectors (public, private and voluntary), societal projectification should also concern different levels and sectors that must be covered in studies. One such example is Schoper et al. (2018) who targeted on the systematic and complete measurement of projectification across economies, embracing all sectors and all levels. This study measured and compared the level of projectification in three developed Western economies (Germany, Norway and Iceland) and revealed significant differences across sectors.

The last study is important also because of applied quantitative approach in projectification research but this aspect will be covered later.

In an earlier work on ‘euro-projectification’ Jalocha (2012) scrutinized its effects on public labour market organisations. Bogacz-Wojtanowska and Jalocha (2016) examined projectification in a specific and emerging sector – social economy, where the main actors are social entrepreneurs, organized in different forms (formal, informal and semiformal NGOs or non-profit companies, etc.). These works concerned mostly the societal level but involved also the organizational level. Jalocha and Cwikla (2017) used a research question “*How the EU cultural programmes affect the national cultural policies, cultural organizations, and artists?*”, which involves three levels – national, organizational, and personal. The last should be involved because the artists “*wanted to be free and had seen institutions as places of distractions in which art can not be made and showed without pressures*”, although in some cases (such as applying for funding natural persons may be not eligible) organizations are needed (ibid.). Further, Jalocha, Goral and Bogacz-Wojtanowska (2019) examined projectification in the Roman Catholic Church, operationalising research problem on the organisational (meso) level, what (as the authors recognize) is typical. Yet, as it is a global organization, a single level might be too confining. As the authors mention, “*... the Catholic Church becomes, presumably unintentionally, an agent of projectification processes*” and supporting cross-project learning is “*... spreading project realisation knowledge and skills, contributes to dissemination of project thinking in various cities and regions of the world*” (ibid.: 317). Considering the mightiness of the Roman Catholic Church, its projectification presumably affects a mass of organizations and individuals all over the World, thus involving all possible levels of projectification.

Preceding inquiry evinced another trend in projectification research that could be labelled sectoral. Among afore-cited are examples that examined culture (Jalocha & Cwikla, 2017), social economy (or social entrepreneurship – Bogacz-Wojtanowska & Jalocha, 2016), as well as



church and event management (Jalocha, Goral & Bogacz-Wojtanowska, 2019). This list can be continued by the public (national, regional and local) administration, as it also represents a sector. And the ‘classic’ work of Midler (1995) on the automotive industry, continued introducing novel aspects like multi-project lineage management (Midler, 2013) and internationalization in innovation processes (Midler, 2019). Studying a complex phenomenon like culture may answer an auspicious question like “*Why cultural projects don’t provide refreshing ideas for project management although they could?*” (Cwikla & Jalocha, 2015). Recognizing that the arts have always been a source of refreshing ideas, the authors see the possibility to “... *establish the art of project management in a more creative way*” (ibid.: 644). Projectification is ongoing also in media industries “... *where creativity and freethinking is a must.*” (Lundin & Norbäck, 2016: 370), indicating that there is a natural place for improvisation (Clegg & Burdon, 2019).

Projectification in some sectors has deserved very little attention – one example is sport or sports management, treated only by Puusepp and Kuura (2014). But there are popular sectors, such as academic activities, including core science or research, related to topics like innovation (Baur, Besio & Norkus, 2018) and academic careers (Müller & Kaltenbrunner, 2019), and management of educational organisations, including on non-university level (Landri, 2009). Some of the works (especially Landri, 2009) just mention relatedness to projectification, whereas in some works (for one, Fowler, Lindahl & Sköld, 2015) projectification is the focal topic.

A widely used division along with sectoral is spatial (or regional) and this is used also in researching projectification. As in general, this stream tends to use more quantitative comparison, whereas in other streams of projectification research qualitative approach dominates. Yet, not all studies of projectification involving spatial aspects are comparative, nor quantitative – numerous contributions inquire a single spatial unit, using an entirely or predominantly qualitative approach. Inherently, if the work is not purely conceptual, addressing projectification in the public sector (on the societal level) leads to treating spatial unit(s). The units of analysis may vary from (small) municipalities (c.f. Fred, 2015) to regions and/or countries (c.f. Andersson, 2009), even up to the European Union (c.f. Jalocha, 2019). These are just some examples, probably here is no need to repeat all referred before contributions.

Notably, a similar pattern appears – neither sectors nor spatial units are equally covered. The prior overview of the approaches to euro-projectification evinced that this phenomenon has been scrutinized on the samples of post-socialist countries – Poland (c.f. Jalocha, 2012), the Czech Republic and Hungary (c.f. Kovach & Kucherova, 2006; 2009). Looking further, this list can be continued with Estonia, where several aspects of projectification have been treated by Kuura (2011), Puusepp and Kuura (2014), Aunapuu-Lents (2013), and Rungi (2012). It can be noted that some of the just mentioned works appeared also in the sectoral overview. However, as also noted before, similar trends appear and have also been enquired on the samples of developed (Nordic) countries – in Sweden (c.f. Fred, 2015; Fred & Hall, 2017), and in Finland (c.f. Andersson, 2009). This reveals a pattern: covered spatial units follow the locations of the authors. The same pattern appears in the quantitative and comparative research to be examined next.

Quantitative comparison of the extent of projectification across spatial units and sectors is a novel research stream. An early attempt to estimate the extent of projectification – the total share of project activities in the world economy – was made by Turner et al. (2010). Accounting the share of new capital formation (i.e. infrastructure projects) and the share of development projects in the business (SME) sector they claimed that about one-third of the world economy is done via projects, and implied that in developing economies this share is bigger, up to a half. Kuura (2011) used the same approach and estimated that the share of projects in Estonian



economy was 52%, whereas in developed ('old') EU countries the average was about 35%. Later, Turner et al. (2013) claimed this parameter in India is 39% and in China it is 43%.

Within recent years, the quantitative stream in projectification research gets popularity. A notable example is (already mentioned in the context of covering different sectors and levels) Schoper et al. (2018), carrying out systematic and complete measurement of projectification in Germany, Norway and Iceland. Despite significant differences in the levels of projectification across sectors, the overall results of these countries turned out comparable. The methodical basis, used for the development of measurement instrument, was taken from Wald et al. (2015). Survey of 500 German private and public organizations denoted the share of project work in 2013 nearly 35%. This result matches the estimation of Turner et al. (2010), hence it is possible to say that their measurement instrument proved trustworthy.

The quantitative dimension that Schoper et al. (2018) used is simple – the share of project work relative to total work, giving a ratio indicating the share of project work in an organization. Generalized to macro-level (sectors, economies, etc.) it makes possible to calculate the share of projects in general macro-indicators, such as gross value added (GVA). The methodology seems simple, but the difficulty lies in data collection – ensuring adequate representativeness of samples needs extensive surveys (especially in big countries like Germany), which is expensive. The cited authors (ibid.) recognized their limitations – problematic sample sizes, data preciseness (most companies do not record project-related data), etc. Also, there are more ontological issues – such as the definition of a project – a nonroutine task with a specified target, minimum four weeks and three participants – might be not suitable for smaller and agile projects. Hereby it is worth to note that Ingason et al. (2019) measured projectification in Iceland, using and comparing two methods. Iceland participated in the GVA-study and projectification was measured by Schoper et al. (2018). The new approach of Ingason et al. (2019) added a benchmark study – a general survey of a very large sample of managers. The last is less time and resource-consuming and therefore can be repeated after shorter time intervals (three years was recommended). These two types of studies can complement and verify each other.

Projectification Research in Context

Projectification is not a 'stand-alone' phenomenon – it is influenced and influences other fields in practice, thus similar mutual influences can be anticipated in research. This section will examine these relations or (in other words) contextualize projectification research and possibly reveal additional research streams.

Projectification influences work and labour relations, so consequently analogous influence should appear in academic literature. For one, Huzzard (2003) noted that the need for flexibility, achieved via project-based organising, causes more temporal nature of work, thereby influencing the employment contracts and the quality of working life. Arvidsson and Ekstedt (2006) saw the proliferation of projects as a major impact on the new division of labour, and besides the macro-level influences, also bring out the influence of rising project-based work on the organizational and personal levels. Project-based work can be more engaging and inspiring than routine but concurring specified deadlines and performance demands may create stress and require leadership where is less place for 'soft' aspects. Bredin and Söderlund (2006) examined how the proliferation of different project-based structures influences the management of human resource (HRM) in organizations. They found that better understanding of the changes and challenges of HRM in projectified firms is possible through four perspectives: competence, trust, change, and individual. Arvidsson (2009) addressed a 'classic' issue in projectified organizations – tensions in virtue of co-existence and co-dependence of contrary line and projects organizations. Project-oriented and project-based (where revenues are generated respectively by permanent and temporary structures and processes) displayed both differences



and similarities. (Notably, unfolded sources of tension match the main properties (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995) of temporary organizations). The tensions are ‘poison’ but there is appropriate ‘medicine’, as “... *the success rate of complex, knowledge-intensive TOs can be increased if the antecedents of relationship quality and transparency are fully understood.*” (Hanisch & Wald, 2014: 209).

This ‘projectification-HRM’ stream appears proliferous, as affirmed by recent significant contributions. For one, Ballesteros-Sanchez et al. (2019) addressed the main challenges for project managers in the current projectified societies – being (becoming) a project manager and required competences. Ekstedt (2019) problematized how the expansion of the project and temporary work challenges traditional work-life and pertinent institutions, and in addition to notorious aspects, pointed to novel trends, such as digitalization and servitization. Notably, just HRM-related aspects seem intriguing for the representatives of critical management studies in projectification research. Allying the critical perspective Cicmil et al. (2016) explored how project workers and projectified organisations become vulnerable. Among others, they rely on an earlier work of Lindgren and Packendorff (2006) about masculinization and feminization in project-based work. Gendering belongs to this stream, as well as to critical studies. Moreover, Palm and Lindahl (2015) pointed to a novel phenomenon labelled ‘*deprojectification*’, meaning decreasing the distinction between line and project work that may lead to more sustainable project work.

There are more subareas in management related to projectification. Bergman et al. (2013) probed projectification in four perspectives: product (offering), process, structure, and people. People (and to some extent also structure) appeared already in the HRM-stream, while process and product are novel. Yet, further examination renders just one exclusion – operations and supply chain management (Maylor et al., 2018). It appears that projectification has nothing in common with functional areas in organizations – such as financial management. Still, despite sketchy coverage of functional areas in business, in recent years projectification has been related to some current strategic areas. The first to mention is sustainable development, where projects can deliver sustainable goods and/or services, and/or projects can be delivered in a sustainable way, notably in ‘megaprojects’, which is an outcome of projectification of societies (Sabini et al., 2019). In turn, growing importance of sustainability issues under projectification calls for ‘Responsible Project Management Education’ (Silvius & Schipper, 2019). Cerne and Jansson (2019) impress the role of global projectification and projects as global coordination, emphasizing necessary multi-sectoral partnerships, creativity and innovation, achievable through projects. Moreover, they see sustainable development as a market opportunity, which engages the entrepreneurial approach, including entrepreneurial projects. It means that sustainability represents another linkage between entrepreneurship and projects (c.f. Auschra et al., 2019; Kuura & Lundin, 2019).

Demonstrated linkages between projectification and other phenomena in organizations and societies seem expected, at least not surprising. However, screening the literature reveals some linkages that may be surprising. For instance, Clegg et al. (2015) note that projectification (that is related to digitalization and spatial and temporal concentration) leads to less self-regulated, to less ‘civilized’ behaviour. Also, projectification makes governmentality more problematic: if two or more different regulation regimes are represented in a collaboration project, the people do not know, whose norms to follow. The cited implications are almost ‘mainstreaming’, not surprising, but as the cited work deals with organizational romance (sexual relations at the workplace), it casts a shadow to projectification. Also, projectification is related to organizational improvisation, supporting resilience in project management (Klein et al., 2015; Kuura & Sandoval, 2019).



Organizational romance and improvisation (respectively sexual relations and improvisation in organizations) are just mentioned in the literature, they do not (yet) represent a (sub)stream in projectification, but both can be related³ to a (sub)stream that could be labelled governmentality. Governmentality represents “... *the way governors present themselves to those they govern, sets the tone for the interaction between governing and governed individuals ... the human side of an otherwise more structure-oriented governance*” (Müller et al. 2016: 958). Governmentality does not replace but complements governance, settling how the use project management methodology, enforced in an organization by governors (subjects) via governance (process). They contributed to integrating governance and governmentality with projectification in an organization. Burke and Morley (2016) inserted network relations that are increasingly used in the governance of projects. Simard et al. (2018) added organizational design and developed a conceptual framework that challenges the traditional division of formal and informal aspects at the interface of temporary and permanent organizing. Munck af Rosenschöld (2019) shifted from (mainstreaming) firms to environmental governance and public administration and scrutinizing literature on the processes of transforming project outputs into institutional change, proposed three models of projectified governance – mechanistic, organic, and adaptive.

The governance school of project management (see Turner et al., 2010; 2013) deals greatly with interactions between permanent and temporary (project) organizations. Due to increasing attention to time and temporality in general organization theory (c.f. Burke & Morley, 2016) projectification means coexistence of projects and non-projects (repetitive, recurrent operations) or, as put by Nesheim (2019), their balance. Discerning⁴ project-based organizations (PBOs) and project-supported organizations (PSOs), Nesheim (ibid.) analysed the coexistence of projects and non-projects in the core of an organization (a Norwegian state directorate) under both PBO and PSO logic. The study revealed that balance of projects and routine (in terms of outputs, work units and logics) can be institutional stability, rather than a transitory state, yet tensions originating from described state appeared as well. Identification of PBOs and PSOs, taken⁵ from Lundin et al. (2015), has proved useful in explaining the differences in coordination of core (operating) and support processes business processes across the discerned types of project organizations (c.f. Kuura & Lundin, 2019), that is the organizational environment of projectification.

Speaking about coexistence of projects and non-projects (repetitive, recurrent operations), presumes differentiation between projects and non-projects, but van der Hoorn and Whitty (2016) proposed an original view – is an activity a project or not, depends on its ‘projectyness’, which means greater or lesser capability to undertake an activity. Thus, a project is an experience, caused by a lack of capability to undertake the activity. As the capabilities of different people are very different, a clear distinction between non-project (operational) and project work will disappear.

Concluding Discussion

The analysis of (mostly) recent literature on projectification revealed several significant and interesting developments. The first to mention is a tremendous increase of interest,

³ Sources that bring in organizational romance and organizational improvisation do not have explicit links to each other but notably, the authors of cited paper on organizational romance have several works on organizational improvisation.

⁴ In PBOs, the core (creating products and/or services) business processes and revenue stream are organized as projects, in PSOs the main business processes are routine and recurrent and project-based processes support the core operations.

⁵ Lundin et al. (2015) discerned also the third type – project networks (PNWs) that may be both inter-organizational and interpersonal, and include PBOs and PSOs, as well as individual actors and other temporary organizations.



expressed in the numbers of publications during the recent (2016-2018) and extra in the past year. This trend could be reasoned by the growing importance of the phenomenon in practice, chiefly in business but also in the whole society, encompassing all levels – from supra-national bodies to people, including both professional and private spheres. These developments are well depicted in a comprehensive book by Lundin et al. (2015). However, Jensen, Thuesen and Geraldi (2016) go even a bit further, accentuation projectification of everything, including our home and free-time activities, resulting in projects as ‘a human condition’.

Simple quantitative measures like the numbers of publications might be not good indicators, qualitative developments are usually more important. Thus, the second to point out is the enlarged coverage of (sub)topics, issues, sectors, levels, etc. Not so long ago Packendorff and Lindgren (2014) proposed narrow and broad conceptualisations of projectification, where the last extends the area from its initial concern – the primacy of projects in organisational structures – to cultural and discursive processes in societies. Looking at the latest developments, broad conceptualisation may seem already slightly narrow. In a recent trial to conceptualise projectification Maylor and Turkulainen (2019) proposed ‘advanced organisational projectification’ that should fit the current paradigm, characterised chiefly by increasing complexity, especially in major or mega-projects.

Turner et al. (2013) claimed that project management is (i.e. was in 2013) already a serious academic discipline, drawing on other management disciplines and making contributions to them. Projectification research is not (yet) a sub-discipline but its state today is comparable to the main discipline about a decade ago. So, the third point could be achieved academic rigour and richness, as well as reflecting different trends and interchange (‘export’ and ‘import’) with other fields. The first to note is entrepreneurship (c.f. Germain & Aubry, 2019), including social, also HRM, labour economics, and several other (sub)fields, and sectoral studies. Continuing the list needs to decide, where to draw the line – as it revealed, the fields and sectors are not equally covered (for one, in sport management just a conference paper). Probably sport does not interest researchers in project management, and projects do not interest those who are in sport management. The same might be valid for other fields and sectors. An important but not yet covered field is financial management, including project finance, as well as the financial sector. Yet, ‘export’ and ‘import’ may lead to ‘conceptual colonization and epistemological emptying’, as Rehn (2019) warns.

Scrutinising existent research on projectification revealed relatedness with several current developments, such as digitalization and servitization. These relations are logical and expectable, especially digitalization, influencing almost everything and everybody. However, some surprising things came out – such as relatedness to organizational romance and organizational improvisation. The last can be related to the message of Cwikla and Jalocho (2015) about more creativity in ‘the art of project management’. This leads to another research stream that will not fit into this paper, however, learning from fine arts seems to be an emerging trend in business development and education (c.f. Sorsa et al., 2018).

Something substantial is the appearance of the notion ‘deprojectification’ (Palm & Lindahl, 2015; Jensen et al., 2016). Call to deliberate deprojectification of organisations is in line with conclusions of Lundin and Norbäck (2016: 380): “... *applying management by projects on a grand scale may be a useful, even necessary ...*” but “... *everything won’t realise its best results in a project-based approach. Projectification has limits.*”. After all, introduced by van der Hoorn and Whitty (2016) notion ‘projectyness’ may prove helpful, or make all the related matters even more tricky, especially in quantitative research. As the pioneers of quantitative approach Schoper et al. (2018) recognised, their definition of a project might not suit for all, especially smaller and agile projects. Applying the concept of ‘projectyness’ makes any definition of a project highly subjective, because people may have a very different



experience. For example, an experienced ‘projectarian’ may have good capabilities to undertake an activity what will be extraordinary for a novice project worker. On the other hand, following this concept may reduce the separation between project and non-project workers, as Palm and Lindahl (2015) suggested.

Finally, it is worth noting that the research on projectification has been greatly treading in ‘Midler’s footprints’ (Aubry & Lenfle, 2012). Hereby it is essential to note that the founder of this research stream is still active (c.f. Midler, 2019). Within the past quarter of century, research in this stream has significantly evolved and recognized in the project management field. For example, Schoper et al. (2016) see projectification as a basis for all 15 future trends in project management until 2025. Moreover, as Walker and Lloyd-Walker (2016: 732) argued, “*We may also need to be facing a re-think of PM from a political impact of projectification perspective*”, also because this will influence the careers (and thus the lives) of people (Lloyd-Walker et al., 2016). In turn, this will establish new requirements for knowledge, skills, attributes and experience that the project people will need in 2030 and beyond (Walker & Lloyd-Walker, 2019). In brief, all this signifies that successive developments in projectification, as well as its positive and negative consequences, need further investigation.

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