

New Editors and a New Editor-in-Chief: Making the Manifesto a Reality

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In this editorial, we inform readers and authors about recent changes in the *PMJ* Editorial Board and discuss how the journal will move forward under the auspices of the Manifesto (Locatelli et al., 2023). We will describe how the new editors will embrace the vision of the Manifesto and develop initiatives according to its five theses.

Before doing this, we would like to celebrate Professor Ralf Müller's contributions to the *Project Management Journal*[®] (*PMJ*). After serving for six years, Ralf has decided to step down as Co-Editor-in-Chief. As authors and Editorial Board members, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Ralf for his exceptional achievements during his tenure and generous support to the entire community of project scholars. Indeed, Ralf's contributions have been remarkable. He played a significant role in elevating the impact factor of *PMJ* from 2.0 to 5.0 and improving its Scopus CiteScore, positioning the journal at 49 out of 436 journals in the field of Business and International Management. This achievement places *PMJ* among the top 12% in its category, which is indeed fantastic progress for the entire field of project studies.

At the time of this writing, Ralf is clearly one of the most prolific authors in the history of project management journals, with some 75 papers published in the classic project management journals: *PMJ*, *International Journal of Project Management (IJPM)*, *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business (IJMPB)*, and *Project Leadership and Society (PLS)*. These 75 papers include 15 editorials in *PMJ* to assist both potential and existing authors in enhancing the quality of their submissions, moving the field forward, and sharing his experience with junior scholars. Furthermore, Ralf has collaborated on various initiatives across the project studies community, including organizing micro-conferences, contributing to establishing an academic project management society, and supporting development of the project research Manifesto of which he is a coauthor. Ralf has also been able to publish books for researchers and practitioners. His 2012 book *Project Governance* (Müller, 2017) and his most recent book entitled *Research Handbook on the Governance of Projects* (Müller et al., 2023) have been groundbreaking works in the field of project studies. His work in this area is much cited and he has inspired a generation of project scholars to do research in the areas of project management, project leadership, and project governance. Indeed, Ralf has played a significant role in moving research on project leadership and

project governance forward and has always worked to make a difference among practicing managers and policy makers. His latest thoughtlet about artificial intelligence (Müller et al., 2024) is another example of his lasting legacy in project studies.

We extend our best wishes to Ralf in his new endeavors and warmly welcome him in his new role as member of the *PMJ* Scientific Committee, where he will continue to provide valuable support in shaping the strategic direction of our journal.

A New Co-Editor-in-Chief

It is with great pleasure we announce that Professor Jonas Söderlund is joining us as the new Co-Editor-in-Chief. Jonas has been on the *PMJ* Editorial Board for more than 10 years. He began his service with Professor Hans Georg Gemünden, was the first to accept the role of associate editor, and was instrumental in developing the original action plan to make *PMJ* a top-ranked journal in management. During this time, Jonas was also active as a contributor and member of the scientific committees of *IJPM* and *IJMPB*. Now it is time for Jonas to step in and serve as the Co-Editor-in-Chief of *PMJ* and maintain the spirit developed over the past decade.

Jonas began his career in project studies in the mid-1990s and published his first paper in a top journal in the late 1990s (Lindkvist et al., 1998). This was one of the first contributions addressing the foundations of a theory of project management that had appeared in a mainstream organization theory journal. Since then, he has published multiple papers in top-ranked journals, including *Human Relations*, *Organization Studies*, *Human Resource Management*, and *Research Policy*.

Moreover, Jonas is a regular contributor to the field of project studies through publications in *IJPM* and *PMJ*. Specifically, his two papers on the field of project studies (Söderlund, 2004a; Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018) are among the most cited in the last 20 years. His paper (Söderlund, 2004b) on the fundamental questions of project management

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research—with a focus on why projects exist, why/how they differ, how they behave, what the role of project management is, and what determines project success and failure—is one of the most influential contributions to the theory of project management. In that respect, Jonas has emphasized the need for a multilevel perspective on projects as well as a stronger focus on theory development.

Jonas has been a member of the PMI Academic Insight Team for 10 years and has worked overseeing the journal and its development along with PMI-sponsored research programs. He has participated in numerous workshops and conferences organized by PMI; in 2023, he was awarded the PMI Research Achievement Award for his work on project studies, linking strategy and projects and developing theories of projects and project management. Currently, he focuses his research on creating a better understanding of the linkages between knowledge and time in complex projects.

Jonas has been the head of the project management unit and leader of executive education at the BI Norwegian Business School, one of Europe's largest and most prominent business schools. He is currently a professor of strategy at Linköping University, Sweden, head of its Strategy & Organization Unit, and resides in Stockholm.

The Vision of the New Co-Editor-in-Chief

PMJ aims to “shape new thinking around the management of projects and other temporary organizations by publishing research that advances theory, meaningful discussion, and evidence-based practice.” The following sections present some thoughts from Jonas on his new role.

I want to continue my work of promoting an inclusive agenda for project studies. In that respect, I think it is important that we welcome contributions from a wide range of disciplines and that project scholars strive to publish their work outside of project studies. In my role as editor-in-chief, I would like to encourage contributions from scholars who have never published work on project studies and encourage those who have established themselves and contributed to project studies to publish their work elsewhere. Because there are numerous scholars who want to publish in the more project-oriented journals, I think it is essential that project-oriented journals help them develop their ideas and make contributions outside the project studies community. *PMJ* is already a key player in that process and will continue to make outsiders (scholars typically not publishing in project management journals) able to speak to insiders (scholars publishing most of their work in project management journals)—and vice versa—make insiders better able to speak to outsiders. In that respect, *PMJ* should be the “gateway journal” to cross-fertilization and the developmental arena for interdisciplinary research on projects and project management. As was clearly emphasized recently in the *Manifesto for Project Management Research*, we need that interdisciplinary

approach to fully understand the nature and challenges of contemporary projects (Locatelli et al., 2023).

Moreover, I think it is important we work toward improving the theory (theories) of projects and project management, which has been a strong focus of *PMJ* in the past few years (Müller & Klein, 2018; Müller & Locatelli, 2023) and is something we should continue developing. For instance, along with Joana Geraldi and Alfons van Marrewijk, I edited two special issues on the bright and dark spots of project studies and the need for a lively debate about the theory of projects (see, for example, Geraldi et al., 2021; 2020). I also think it would be important to not only publish empirical papers but actually work toward developing papers along with what has been done in the *Academy of Management Review* and the *International Journal of Management Reviews*. We should be the place for conceptual as well as literature review papers. However, we should always aim to develop better concepts and better theories. In that regard, I also believe we need to work toward better constructs and welcome scale development papers that could lay the foundation for a new stream of empirical research.

Additionally, project management and project studies have always been fields of rich empirics—a good understanding of the practice and concerns of practitioners in projects and project management (see, for example, Winter et al., 2006; Cicmil et al., 2006). Our work could become even richer and better at using our unique access to fascinating achievements by humanity and the fatal failures of overambitious project planners. No matter the result, project scholars play an important role in establishing a better sense of what best practice is and how to achieve it and in investigating the intricacies of failed projects—not by blaming the people involved but rather by engaging in a conversation about what happened, why, and what we can learn from those failures. To be able to do that in a reflexive manner, I think we need to be open to a variety of empirical contributions. Not that empirical contributions are sufficient, but the foundation of papers can differ; to do this, we need to master a variety of research methods and approaches. Some papers would be based on database investigations, others on direct observations, some on interviews, and so forth. We need that breadth and depth of data. *PMJ* should not only be quantitative or qualitative; given the current stage of where the field and journal are a mix of both makes the most sense.

On that note, we need to further explore the history of projects. In general, I believe there is more to be said about project history in addition to the existing fine contributions (Morris, 1994; Morris et al., 2011). By looking further into the history of projects and project management, we can develop an even stronger agenda for future research (Söderlund & Lenfle, 2013). By learning from the past, we can better steer our way into the future. This is also a way of building an understanding of projects that is even richer empirically. I think there are several important cases still to be discovered from a project management viewpoint. My friend and

coauthor Sylvain Lenfle has offered a number of interesting historical cases that have greatly contributed to the field of project studies. Thomas Hughes, the technology historian, has explored many of the most important projects in society and demonstrated the essence and significance of project management (Mayntz & Hughes, 1988; Hughes, 1998). We should do more of that kind of empirical research.

Indeed, the ranking of *PMJ* has improved substantially over the last decade and we want to continue this trend. The ranking is important as a selection mechanism, and because anyone can create an academic journal these days, there is no shortage of dubious academic journals and publishers. We need to ensure the quality of our papers is first-rate, that the review system is best in class, that our journal continues to be considered among the best in its genre and establish *PMJ* as a top journal in the broad field of management studies. There are no shortcuts to high recognition and quality. I believe we should continue doing the impressive work we already do and expand upon it by involving talented junior scholars in various roles and inviting senior scholars from other fields to take part in the ongoing development of project studies. If we publish top-quality papers and make people aware of them, then the high ranking will follow.

Some journals are established as the leaders of research on organizations and management in more general terms. Some journals are more critical with more emancipatory purposes than others, others are more empirical, some are predominantly positivistic, and yet others are more social-constructivist. All these journals are important; we need this plurality of knowledge, science, and methods. Some of these more general journals are interested in projects—we need to publish work on projects and encourage those journals to be even more interested in project contexts and project studies. This is important because it will give the entire world more insights into what we do as project scholars—and why it is so important to know more about projects and project management to understand innovation, change, and management in general. The scholars supporting *PMJ* want to teach the world more about projects and project management and we need to engage in that conversation and be active in a wide range of arenas and a diverse set of publications.

There is also a place for more specialized journals, and perhaps the importance of specialized journals has never been greater. For sure, such journals play a very important role in facilitating the academic conversation and debate within focus areas—be that projects, supply chains, operations, tourism, innovation, or construction—in other words, journals that focus on specific areas and subdisciplines of organizations and management. In our world, *PMJ* is the journal that should address the world of projects and it should be considered the leading one. We should have a steady stream of contributors and, hopefully, many scholars will publish at least one paper per year in *PMJ* to keep the conversation going about key issues within project management. Basically, this means that *PMJ* will be an arena for other scholars who publish papers they

believe would be interesting for a project management readership; project management scholars publish papers that primarily target the project management readership. Of course, it also means that we should target a broader readership, although those papers might fit equally well with the more general management and organization journals such as *Human Relations*, *Organization Studies*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and *Organization Science*.

Most of the top-ranked journals, such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, are those that address the broader issues of management and organization, so it might not be realistic for *PMJ* to compete head-to-head with them, but rather attract the scholars and readers who are specifically interested in the realm of projects. *PMJ* should be the highest-ranked journal among those journals and be considered one of the best-specialized organization and management journals in the world—well on par with journals within operations management, supply chain management, and innovation. Specialized journals clearly have a role to play, and we trust that scholars are interested in publishing both more general contributions and contributions primarily targeting the project management community. We have several prominent examples of such scholars firmly committed to making our journal even better, including Jörg Sydow, Andrew Davies, and Stewart Clegg, who all have made important contributions to *PMJ*, as authors, associate editors (Jörg Sydow, Andrew Davies), and a member of the Scientific Committee (Stewart Clegg). Such scholars are essential to the journal as they signal to younger scholars that it is important to work on a broad arsenal of publications, that different journals serve different purposes, and that specialized journals have an important role to play in strengthening our research and scholarly impact. And, who knows, if projects continue to play an increasingly important role in society, then project studies will become an even more important discipline and area of research and, consequently, more part of the mainstream. As a result, our journal will be the go-to publication for anyone targeting issues within management and organization.

I think it is important we establish a culture where authors engage in a conversation with prior research and try to resolve any issues with current understanding, inconsistencies, and problems with prior research. Frankly, we need to invest more time in problematization and not only gap-spotting, as pointed out by Alvesson and Sandberg (2011). Many papers contend that there is no research on a specific topic; several of those papers tend to focus on an increasingly narrow field and issue rather than properly reviewing what we really know about a particular topic, reviewing the relevant literature, and then pointing out what the problem is. It makes little sense to write page after page on the incompleteness of current research; by doing that, we say very little about what we really know.

My point is the following: I think it is important we start where others have ended rather than where they started. This would make the field progress in a much better way. Instead of reiterating the gaps that Engwall (2003) and other project

scholars have argued were missing, we should instead build on what Engwall really did in his study. This would make our research more trustworthy and would also give much more credit to those who have contributed to the problem addressed rather than merely giving credit to those who have identified a similar kind of problem.

In summary, I would like to formulate the following set of pillars for my vision of the journal:

Pillar I: An interdisciplinary and inclusive “gateway” journal. *PMJ* should be the place where outsiders and insiders meet to advance our understanding of the nature of projects and project management. *PMJ* should provide that collaborative arena where we can develop new concepts, exchange ideas, and develop a new language to better address, understand, and progress projects.

Pillar II: Contributions that are theory driven and inspiring. *PMJ* should be a leader when it comes to developing our theories of projects and project management. The journal will be targeting fundamental questions such as why projects exist, why/how they differ, how they behave, what the role of project management is, and what determines the success and failure of projects.

Pillar III: Contributions that are empirically rich and nuanced. *PMJ* should always keep one eye on the literature—and one eye on the real world. As for the latter, it is absolutely essential we produce empirically rich contributions and stay open to a diverse set of research approaches and methods. We are, after all, a phenomenon-driven field, and our work rests on our ability to capture what goes on in projects in different sectors. We need to be better than others in understanding what happens in society’s projects.

Pillar IV: Contributions that are management relevant and solid. *PMJ* is primarily a journal for academics and those interested in project management research. The language and format will be similar to what are typical of scientific journals within the social sciences more generally. In that respect, it is important that we have traditional structures and policies like other scientific journals. However, the topics we address should be relevant to project practitioners. I am not sure the journal should be targeting practitioners as readers throughout; instead, there might be more practical offspring from our scientific papers, be that as managerial summaries or short papers for practitioners published in more practitioner-oriented journals.

Pillar V: Contributions that explore project mysteries and debates. We need to engage more in the mysteries and deeper problems of projects and project management (see, for instance, Hällgren, 2012). Gap-spotting is half of the solution, but even more important is to challenge our theories, challenge conventional wisdom, and seek alternatives to current knowledge. This makes the introduction of papers increasingly important. We need to work on ways to challenge conventional wisdom and state-of-the-art research

and engage in debates that address the fundamental questions of projects and project management.

Pillar VI: Building an engaged community of project scholars. Journals rely on good reviewers. To be a good editor we need good reviewers. Developmental reviews should be the hallmark of *PMJ*, which is an important message to editors as well as reviewers. The journal should act in this important capacity to stimulate the vibrancy of the project studies community. It should do so not only by publishing good research; there are so many other ways the journal can help build an even better and stronger project studies community. First, developmental reviews are essential. Second, dedicated editors select the best reviews and help authors carve out the essence of their contributions. Third, stimulating research through initiatives such as special issues and workshops. Fourth, editorials and thoughtlets to bring attention to issues that are central to the future of project research. Fifth, building a community of reviewers and authors who share experiences and the state of the art within project management.

New Senior Editor and Editors

Along with Jonas’s position, we would like to introduce to the readers and authors new editors who want to move forward with the research published in *PMJ* in the spirit of the Manifesto.

Dr. Joana Geraldi has joined the *PMJ* Editorial Board as a senior editor. She is an Associate Professor of Project Organizing at the Department of Organization at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. She has been an associate editor for *PMJ* since 2018 and is on the review boards of *IJPM* and *IJMPB*. Joana has been published in several leading management and project management journals, including the *Journal of Management Studies*, *IJPM*, and *PMJ*, and edited books such as the *Oxford Handbook of Project Management*. She has led several special issues on project studies and, along with Jonas, has co-edited a four-volume collection on *Critical Perspectives on Project Management* (Routledge). Her work has received several international awards, including the *IPMA* and *APM* Best Doctoral Thesis of the Year awards and the 2016 *PMJ* Best Paper of the Year award, along with Anders Fog Jensen and Christian Thuesen. Joana’s perspective is that basic research tends to be elegant and detached, confined to ivory towers, whereas applied research in management often lacks depth and struggles to contribute meaningfully to theory and literature. This dichotomy hampers the enactment of our societal role as scholars. As senior editor, she would like to promote project studies as a unique opportunity to bridge excellence, impact, and relevance:

Excellency: Recent strides in project studies offer stronger theorizing within the field, attract renowned scholars, and foster the development of compelling new theories.

Impact: At the same time, the inherent connection of projects to action makes it a fertile ground for translating

knowledge into tangible impact. *PMJ*, with its affiliation with PMI, is particularly well-positioned for this integration. **Relevance:** The world is a melting pot of problems. Never before now have we known with such certainty that our planet is on the brink of collapse; at the same time, our social institutions are crumbling, democracy is eroding, and journalism is veering toward sensationalism. Projects, as tangible expressions of strategies, play a pivotal role in society, materializing imaginaries, and offering stepping stones to better futures. Project scholarship can be essential, helping us understand how projects are enacted and thereby construct societies, for better or worse. Therefore, acknowledging the inherently political nature of research, particularly engaged research, project scholars must be viewed as political actors and reflect on their research *in* and *for* society. In short, following the principles of type 3 research (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018), Joana aims to promote a convergence of excellence and impact in value-driven project studies, actively seeking to understand how society changes through projects.

Three scholars are joining the *PMJ* Editorial Board.


Dr. Shankar Sankaran is a Professor at the School of the Built Environment at the University of Technology Sydney. His research interests are organizational project management, systems thinking, and action research. He is a member of the UTS Robotics Institute, researching the socio-technical aspects of human-robot teams in construction projects. As a member of the *PMJ* Editorial Board, he wants to promote articles on how projects are alleviating significant challenges affecting humanity globally, such as no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, reducing inequalities, which are parts of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as other societal challenges. Add to that projects that support inclusion (topics such as social procurement and accommodating people with a disability), post-conflict recovery (from war), addressing the plight of indigenous people everywhere, and similar issues.


Dr. Kirsi Aaltonen is an Associate Professor of Project Management and Complex Systems at the University of Oulu, Oulu, where she heads the Project Business Research Team. She is also a docent of project business at Aalto University, Espoo, Finland. Her current research interests include stakeholder engagement in complex projects, circular economy in projects, governance of interorganizational projects, game-based learning methods, use of AI-based tools in project management teaching, and institutional change in project-based industries. Kirsi is very excited to join the *PMJ* Editorial Board. Projects are an essential means of advancing sustainability and solving some of the most pressing and complex societal problems of our time. Engagement of various stakeholders in these endeavors is fundamental to making true change happen and enabling the tackling of grand challenges. As a believer in the power of stakeholder

engagement, both in research and the practice of managing projects, Kirsi particularly welcomes project research that is multi-disciplinary, challenges our assumptions on projects and stakeholders, and adopts novel and surprising perspectives to solving societally relevant problems.

Dr. Samuel C. MacAulay is Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland's UQ Business School. Prior to joining UQ, Sam held positions at Imperial College London and the University of Technology Sydney. His research investigates the strategic organization of innovation in project-based settings across resources, civil engineering, and design, and his work has been published in leading international journals, including *PMJ*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, and *Academy of Management Review*. Sam's research is focused on developing new, more socialized models of organizational search, identifying how engineering and design can be used to protect innovation from imitation, and building frameworks that help managers create and capture value through innovation in megaprojects. *PMJ* provides an incredible platform for the development and publication of research that delivers knowledge with rigor and relevance to our community (Davies & MacAulay, 2023). Sam is deeply committed to this mission. As a new member of the Editorial Board, he will draw on his own experience publishing research that speaks to both theory and practice to help support colleagues crafting their research into publications. With *PMJ*'s position at the crossroads of academia and practice and its connections to PMI members globally, Sam can't think of a better place for scholars interested in making an impact and looks forward to doing his part to support colleagues on this journey.

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