

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Improving IT Project Outcomes by Considering Alternative Perspectives

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In the domain of information technology (IT) project management, research has a strong focus on improving project outcomes. Study after study cites statistics that suggest abysmal success rates for IT projects. There are many different research perspectives that can be used to study how project outcomes can be improved. Some research in this area focuses on the skills and knowledge of the project manager. Other research considers the relationships between firms that occur in large, complex, megaprojects. A third research perspective uses theory to shed light on past events to improve our current understanding. In this special section of the *International Journal on IT Project Management*, we are pleased to present three articles that consider each of these alternative perspectives to improve project outcomes.

The papers in this special section are selected from completed research papers presented at the 4th *International Research Workshop on IT Project Management* which is sponsored by the Association for Information Systems (AIS) Special Interest Group on IT Project Management (<http://www.SIGITProjMgmt.org>). Of the nine completed research papers and six research-in-progress papers, these were considered by

peer reviewers as the papers most appropriate to be shared with readers of *IJITPM*.

IT project managers are the parties that are most often held accountable for project outcomes. In their study, "Critical Behavioral Competencies for IT Project Managers: What Are They? How Are They Learned?," Hazel Taylor and Jill Woelfer explore the competencies that are most relevant among IT project managers. Using data collected from interviews of project managers, Taylor and Woelfer not only identify the most important behavioral competencies that IT project managers rely on in their day-to-day job, but also identify how project managers learned these skills. By considering the competencies of IT project managers and identifying strategies to teach IT project managers these skills, this research offers an interesting perspective about improving project outcomes through the development of better IT project managers.

Within the IT domain, the size of projects can certainly vary. There are classes of projects that are so large, that they can only be considered as "megaprojects." These megaprojects require extensive cooperation and coordination between multiple organizations to achieve suc-

cess. Roman Beck, Oliver Marschollek and Robert Gregory explore this phenomenon in their paper entitled “Establishing Preconditions for Spanning the Boundaries in Public Private Megaprojects.” By reviewing a case study of the Toll-Collect project funded by the German government, Beck et al. provide insights about the preconditions that are necessary for boundary spanning to improve project outcomes in these large, complex projects.

The final paper in the special section introduces Morphogenetic Approach to Analytical Dualism (MAAD) as a theoretical lens to explain the outcomes of IT projects. Michael Cuellar’s paper, “Using Realist Social Theory to Explain Project Outcomes” applies the MAAD theoretical lens to a well-known case study and illustrates some additional insights that can be gleaned from the case by using this alternative perspective when analyzing IT projects. Cuellar challenges researchers to consider if the theory he presents can help researchers better understand IT project outcomes.

These papers offer very different approaches to improve IT project outcomes. We hope the articles will stimulate your thinking and your own research about IT project management.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank John Wang, the Editor-in-Chief, for allowing us the opportunity to present this special section. We also would like to thank the reviewers and participants at the 4th *International Research Workshop on IT Project Management* for their helpful comments to improve these papers. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the authors that substantially revised their papers from the workshop in a very short time period. We hope you find this special section interesting.

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