Project goal-setting: reconciling superordinate objectives and parties’ different ambitions to form final project requirements.

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**Title of thesis:** Project goal-setting: reconciling superordinate objectives and parties’ different ambitions to form final project requirements.

**Abstract:** As there is comparatively little research on the foundation of project management – the role of objectives and ambitions in defining a project’s requirements, the purpose of this study is to explore the process of formulating project requirements. To facilitate analysis, the study summarizes relevant theories from project management and organizational behaviour – literatures.

The research conceptualizes experience-based knowledge to be subjective, and reality to be based on interpretation. Therefore the research is carried out using deep, unstructured interviews of 13 seasoned project professionals from several companies and various industries.

Besides fulfilling its primary objective to explore, by identifying several related areas of interest as well as leading to the formation of a number of precise topics for future research, the study is able to identify a number of factors guiding requirement-related decision-making. Firstly, the overall setup of the project (number of primary parties, procurement method) is definitive for subsequent relations between actors. Secondly, project professionals are aware of the cognitive difficulty in transforming conceptual objectives into practical requirements, and mostly do not feel they have suitable tools for the task. Thirdly, the study is able to identify a number of principles guiding the reconciliation of diverging interests.

**Keywords:** Project management, goals, objectives, ambitions, requirements, decision-making, organizational politics, power, information processing, procurement
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1 INTRODUCTION

I would like to start by telling you a story. The story is based on reality (at least, it’s based on my recollections), but all names have been changed to protect the participants.

It was the year 1997. Mark was the publishing director of children’s literature at the country’s largest publishing house and he was convinced that multimedia titles offered fantastic opportunities for growth – especially if they were done right, if they were able to capture their audience and offer an intense experience.

Johnnie was head visionary of the country’s foremost multimedia agency and he was tired of having his creative talents wasting their time on company presentations – he wanted a project which would allow his agency to display what multimedia could accomplish. Fate drove Mark and Johnnie into meeting and a preliminary agreement was quickly reached – they would show the world how ambitious multimedia could revolutionize publishing...

Jill was the author of the series of children’s books. Initially she was sceptical of Mark’s plans, as she feared all the technical gimmickry would distract from the value of captivating storytelling. But she had long been fascinated by the concept of alternative storylines and wanted to experiment. She acceded to Mark’s request to make her next book a pilot project, on the condition that she would be allowed to write an interactive (non-linear) story for the title.

Tom was Johnnie’s agency’s lead programmer and a fan of computer adventure games and he desperately wanted to take the whole title some steps into that direction. He convinced the others, that if you add some elements to the title which, while not advancing the narrative, are entertaining as such, the users would perceive more value.

Sam was a respected graphic designer at Johnnie’s agency, but his real dream was to become an animator – a talent he had honed in his spare time. Although the initial plan did not call for animations, he presented a few scenes with animations he had done (while having been asked to do it differently) and the audience was sold.

I’ll end the narrative here, because I assume you get the picture.
If you’ve worked on a project, you’ve probably encountered a set of "project requirements". These requirements are the goals the project shall meet. Depending on the project these requirements may be of widely differing natures – they may be specifications on the house to be built; they may be functional and structural explanations of the website ordered; they might be the order to create a report detailing how a legal change impacts the organization’s accounting department or it could be the storyboard and manuscript for a children’s multimedia title. The definition of these requirements may also take multiple forms – from detailed drawings to written explanations of different lengths to spreadsheets to a set of bullet points. While these requirements seen as a set describe the product or service the project exists to achieve, each separate requirement also exists to form distinct goals, toward which project personnel may proceed without close supervision.

Although the project team(s) may take these requirements as Holy Scripture, they do not exist in isolation. They are often the result of long and complex negotiations between primary parties. Assuming that two primary parties partake in the project (and for simplicity’s sake, let’s call them the buyer and the supplier), the buyer’s need is usually the initiating factor in the conception of the project, but the objectives of the supplier(s) may nevertheless have a significant impact on the final requirements.

Projects also involve people and people have ambitions. Just as Jill wanted to experiment with interactive storylines, Sam wanted to animate and Tom wanted to do an adventure game, people’s ambitions may influence project requirements. This influence may either impact the requirements from the onset (so that they influence the original specification of requirements) or their impact may be delayed. In a similar vein, we’ve heard and read dozens of accounts of projects and ventures, which are influenced by people who are not part of the actual project, but can be considered as stakeholders. Sometimes they are referred to as “concerned citizens”, sometimes as “parts of the civil society” or “NIMBY’s”.

Further we can stipulate that although a person’s ambition (or indeed an organization’s objective) may revolve around a single issue (such as a supplier doing a project only to get paid) there may be multiple objectives and ambitions, which may or may not be of equal importance (and may or may not be congruent).

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1 For the definition of "requirements" used in this thesis, refer to chapter 1.3.
2 NIMBY is a common acronym for "Not In My BackYard", and is a somewhat derogatory term used to refer to people who (most often) oppose ventures, which (in their opinion) would change or deteriorate their neighborhood conditions.
Also, we already see that there is a conceptual divide between the objective of a project (such as getting paid well) and what the project is to deliver (building a specific product or service). Whether a party’s objectives are abstract or concrete, they are usually some steps removed from the actual project deliverable – the publisher does not need a multimedia title as much as a product which creates revenues and/or proclaims the publisher’s ability to embrace modern times (just as a carpenter does not need a hammer as much as a device to drive nails).

Quite often, the buyer’s objective may be as simple as to “reduce costs in customer support”. The project started based on this need may then aim to deliver a new customer support information system. The requirements then define the actual characteristics of that information system. On the other side of the equation there is the supplier’s objective, which in the given case may simply be to “do a profitable project” and thus improve the bottom line. In both cases the specified set of requirements is but one way to achieve the objectives – the supplier may have a number of potentially profitable ventures to select from, and the customer support information system may not be the only way fulfil the buyer’s objective of cutting costs.

Thus we have already unearthed three distinct and different levels of (project) goals: the objectives for the project, the project requirements and the ambitions of parties and players. To summarize this short introduction, it would seem that project requirements may be influenced by a multitude of parties and that this interaction could be depicted as in Figure 1. This figure will hopefully help to clarify the three interesting aspects of studying the formation of project requirements: different planes of tangibility, inherent conflict-potential and decision-making.
Firstly, it is worthwhile to note that the three goal levels regularly exist on, what I will for the lack of a better term call, *different planes of tangibility*. Whereas the project requirements are most concrete and tangible, the objective(s) of the primary parties may be more conceptual and less tangible and need not be directly linked to the requirements. Also the individual ambitions are removed from the requirements, in that the project becomes a vehicle for realizing (or frustrating) individual ambitions. Whereas the requirements are often fashioned to be measureable, so that their level of attainment can be ascertained, the question of the level of satisfaction of the individual ambitions is highly subjective, instinctive and somewhat unpredictable. The central importance of this is, that it by no means is a simple task to transform objectives and ambitions into requirements – it is a minefield, which every project professional can tell anecdotes about.

Secondly, whereas objectives are organizational (implying that objectives are bound to the organization holding them) and ambitions are personal (each person or party has her/his/their own ambitions), requirements should be commonly held and collectively agreed upon. Thus, most projects (as indeed most relationships between organizations) exist in ceaseless state of latent conflict, as the buyer wants to maximize his goal-attainment, as quickly and cheaply as possible and the supplier’s preference would be practically the opposite (Turner, 1993). Furthermore, one party’s limitation

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3 There is a well known cartoon "the project management swing", which depicts this problem.

4 Even when deliverables are collectively agreed upon, the parties might prioritize different subsets of deliverables (see Bryde and Robinson, 2005,626–627).
may be the other party’s goals (Simon, 1964). Although these conflicts rarely flare up into active hostility, they may nevertheless act in the background and thus have an impact when defining the project requirements.

Thirdly, there are a lot of decisions to be made when formulating project requirements. Not only are decisions necessitated by the conflicting interests of primary parties and players, they are made a lot harder by the fact that conceptual objectives as well as personal ambitions have to be transformed into concrete project requirements. There is reason to believe, that the process of formulating project requirements is of immense significance to how projects turn out. There are numerous studies, which largely attribute a project’s success or failure to the project requirements. To name a few, Nelson, in his study of 10 infamous failures in IT-projects names bad or wrong requirements and related reasons as the culprit in the majority of cases (2007). An experiment by Abdel-Hamid, Sengupta and Swett goes as far as noting that merely different prioritization among otherwise identical project requirements leads to essentially different projects (1999). In a similar vein, Williams and Samset note, that the formulation of requirements constitutes the foundation of any project, and that it is of immense significance to the project that they are set well (2010).

Today, project management has become a management discipline, which is in many ways of central significance in any modern economy. According to one statistic published in 2001, roughly one fourth of the world GDP is produced in project-like ventures (Schwalbe, 2006). According to another statistic, projects in small and medium-sized enterprises alone make up approximately one fifth of the European Union’s GDP (Turner, Ledwith and Kelly, 2009). The Project Management Association Finland (the Finnish chapter of the IPMA) evaluates that a third of the Finnish GDP is created within Projects (Projektiyhdistys, 2013). The perception, that an organization’s viability may hinge on its ability to successfully manage projects is not uncommon (Saravirta, 2001; Kerzner, 2009). Even further, while evolutionary improvements can be achieved within a process (or continuous-work) setting, radical or revolutionary changes are almost solely in the domain of project-typed work (Turner, 1993; Cleland, 1994; Berggren, 2001; Williams, 2009), thus, if possible, further heightening the economic significance of projects.

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5 The delimitation between goals and limitations is thus first and foremost a question of perspective (Simon, 1964:20).
However, there is no question that projects fail regularly. Considering the extent of project-based work today, lessening the failure-rate of projects would be of immense significance to almost everyone. The question naturally becomes why they fail and what can be done about it. A number of authors posit, that increasing the success rate of projects necessitate research and theoretical development on projects (Knight, 1976; Ford and Randolph, 1992; Thomas, 2006). What the author especially finds interesting is that this need has remained largely unaddressed for several decades.

Roughly, projects may fail in four ways (non-exclusive): stated requirements remain unmet; requirements match objectives badly; objectives do not match reality; and reality changes during the project (See also Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006). While the later two types of failure are on a general/strategic management plane and usually no blame can be placed on the project organization, the first two types of failure are within the management domain of the project and thus of interest to this thesis. Hoping to be succinct, the first two error types will be referred to as execution failure and planning failure. Quickly characterized and applying the terminology used in this thesis, planning failure is the failure to set project requirements to meet the needs of primary-party objectives (or the failure to correctly set these objectives) and execution failure is the failure of the project to fulfil the project requirements, which can be based simply on ineptitude but also can be partly be related to frustrated ambitions of involved individuals or actions of third parties.

In summary, there is a strong case for being interested in studying the interrelations and interactions between project objectives, project requirements and players’ ambitions toward projects. The case for such study is further strengthened by the fact that mainstream project management literature largely ignores the topic.

1.1. Research topic

Although projects have become a central and well-established way of structuring activities, and the scientific community has shown interest in project-related topics, there is comparatively little research on what arguably could be defined as the foundation of project management – the role of objectives and ambitions and the setting of project requirements.

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6 The terminology is partially borrowed from Gilbreath, 1986, except that Gilbreath uses the terms "planning failure" and "actual failure"
The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the process of formulating project requirements, specifically:

- To survey, in general, the layout of projects’ early stages and those factors which influence decision-making in projects.
- To enumerate and evaluate the actors who have objectives for and ambitions toward projects and to study the methods different actors have and use in order to influence project requirements.
- To explore the ways in which differing influences are reconciled in order to formulate final project requirements.

As the thesis sees project the relationship between primary parties’ objectives and parties’ and players’ ambitions on the one hand and project requirements on the other hand as prone to disagreement and thus envisions final project requirements predominantly as a result of human decision making, the thesis will study the process from a organizational behaviour –based viewpoint.

1.2. Structure and approach

This thesis follows a quite ordinary setup, in that the first part starts by laying out the general rationale (chapter 1) and the detailed research questions of the thesis (chapter 1.1). The first part then continues by describing the general structure of the thesis (chapter 1.2), enumerating the used definitions and specific terminology (chapter 1.3) and finishes up by going through the delineations of the thesis (chapter 1.4).

Part two focuses on exploring the relevant literatures to the extent in which they relate to the research questions. As two distinct sets of literature are of relevance the review of existing research will be done in two parts – first reviewing project management literature to describe it’s view on objectives, requirements and ambitions (chapter 2.1) and the second giving a concise description of how the organizational-behaviour – literature describes decision-making and related activities (chapter 2.2). Subsequently the central results of both literature reviews will be compared and potential intersections will be studied (chapter 2.3).

The third part is dedicated to describing the research methods the author uses. Chapter 3.1 describes the author’s ontological and epistemological assumptions. Chapters 3.2 and 3.3 cover the topics of subject selection and the process of data gathering respectively. Chapter 3.4 enumerates the author’s reservations regarding the selected
research method and chapter. Chapter 3.5 contains the author’s reflections regarding the selected research approach and chapter 3.6 is a description of how the empirical data was processed and analyzed. The part is thus divided, with chapters 3.1 through 3.4 having been written before gathering empiric data while chapters 3.5 and 3.6 were written after data gathering was completed.

The fourth and longest part of the thesis starts by describing the interviewees, thereafter going into detailing the empirical findings of the thesis. Along with presenting findings, the chapter offers specific, targeted discussion. The part is structured along the lines of the aims of the study, chapter 4.2.1 focusing on surveying the layout of projects’ early stages, chapter 4.2.2 detailing the findings regarding actors influencing project requirements and chapter 4.2.3 covering reconciliation and decision-making.

Part five finishes the thesis with general and reflective conclusions and rounds off by offering some avenues for further research.

### Figure 2: Visual structure of thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction:</th>
<th>Research topic, structure and approach, definitions, delineations and limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature review of:</td>
<td>Project management</td>
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<td>and analysis of literatures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methods:</td>
<td>General approach, subject selection, interview description, reservations; reflections, analysis of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empiric results &amp; specific discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>General conclusions</td>
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</tbody>
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1.3. **Definitions and terminology**

Firstly, a few terminology-related delineations: Projects today pervade all facets of our lives and projects are no longer solely the domain of business activities. Thus the author has consciously decided to, as far as possible, avoid business-centric terms – e.g. instead of writing about companies, the author writes about organizations. Likewise, project management still remains a male-dominated (more than three quarters of the
interviewees were men), something the author hopes will change. As the English language sadly does not offer a gender-neutral pronoun, the reader will repeatedly encounter constructs such as “s/he” and “her/his” etc.

As is often the case, one word can have several meanings and several words can be used to denote one and the same thing. Especially this is the case in the field of project management, where some of the terms central to this thesis are at times used interchangeably (such as objectives and goals). For the sake of internal clarity, this thesis will define a set of terms, and explain what they are used to denote.

There is no consensus on the exact definition of a project. Within this thesis, a project is defined as “a unique venture having specific goals, which by nature is temporary and utilizes different types of resources with the aim to produce a result. A project creates own organizations within its parent organization(s)”.

As the main focus of this thesis is to study the interactions between goals on different planes – all of which are often colloquially referred to simply as “goals” – this thesis must clearly delineate between the different levels. Thus this thesis adopts the terminology differentiating between project objectives, project requirements and ambitions towards projects (these three may also be referred to simply as “objectives, requirements and ambitions” or collectively as “goal planes”). The following paragraphs will make the definitions more precise.

To denote the characteristics of the work to be done or the end product to be produced, the terms “requirements”, “specifications” and “deliverables” are commonly used. For clarity’s sake, this thesis uses only the word “requirements”. The descriptions of these requirements may exist in varied formats (such as written definitions, drawings, flowcharts, use-case scenarios, storyboards etc.), but their common element is that they describe what the project’s work is intended to produce.

When speaking of project objectives, this thesis refers to the reasons why an organization has decided to start or participate in a project. From the viewpoint of a

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7 In the context of interviewees this delineation is part of the author’s commitment to anonymity.
8 This definition is a compound from several sources, specifically PMI, 2008:5; Kerzner, 2009:2 and Turner, 1993:8
9 Although the author acknowledges, that the different terms (requirements, deliverables, specifications) have a somewhat different tone, the author does not select “requirements” based on the harshness implicit in the term, but instead prefers to use the term for the verbal distinctiveness (compared to objectives, ambitions and deliverables) it offers.
project’s initiator, the relevant objectives are those, which necessitate the project and which the project is intended to serve (should it meet its requirements). Whereas requirements are specific to a project, objectives may be specific to a single project, be specific to a number of projects or be of a general nature. Furthermore, while one organization may have several objectives relevant to any project, every participating organization has its own set of relevant objectives. Some of these objectives may be clearly stated (e.g. in sources such as strategy documents, business plans etc.), whereas others may be less explicit (such as when they are derived from organizational culture).

Ambitions toward a project signify those wishes and ambitions parties and players may have for the project. These may signify the agendas of sub-organizations (such as a department’s desire to increase its revenue), the agendas of parties or they may be akin to Sam’s desire to do animation for the sake of personal satisfaction. Again, every party or player may have a unique set of ambitions and these ambitions may be explicit or tacit\(^\text{10}\).

In common parlance “deliverable” predominantly refers to the physical result of the project (such as a house) – something, which (upon completion of the project) may be handed over or delivered to the buyer. At the same time, especially when used in the form “deliverables”, the term is also used to refer to the specifications or requirements regarding the item or service to be delivered. Aiming for clarity, this thesis uses the term deliverable sparingly, and only to refer to the result of the project.

The term **project management** (or PM\(^\text{11}\)) is seen as encompassing both project leadership and project administration. The **project organization**\(^\text{12}\) is used to describe the organization within a project, partially in contrast to the **process organization** (also known as “operations” or the “line organization”), which is responsible for an organization’s process.

Management theory sometimes uses the terms actor, party and player synonymously. To facilitate clarity, this thesis will use the term **party** to denote groups of individuals who share a specific interest regarding an issue. A single-person party is defined as a **player**. The term **actor** is used to collectively refer to parties and players. In contrast,\(^\text{10}\)
\(^{11}\) Classification as used by Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995.
\(^{12}\) N.B.! PM is only used to abbreviate "project management" in context of the activity/task, the management discipline or the literature pertaining to the discipline. PM is not used to abbreviate "project manager".
\(^\text{12}\) Some organizations use the term to refer to that part of their organization which handles projects, which in turn will be referred to as the **project department**.
the term **primary party** is reserved for the organizations contractually bound to the project, such as buyers, suppliers and intermediaries. On a related note, the term **politics** is reserved solely to refer to organizational politics, not “party politics”.

Projects may have several project managers. To facilitate clarity, this thesis defines **project manager** to refer to the supplier’s senior project official\(^\text{13}\), whereas **project owner** refers to the buyer’s senior project official. Likewise, projects may have several teams, which are (using terms derived from interview 12) referred to as **solution team**(s) when they are working for the supplier and **problem team**(s) when they’re at the buyer’s end.

### 1.4. Delineations

Projects come in a plethora of shapes and forms, from organizing a family celebration to connecting two countries by bridge or tunnel (or both). Also, the subject matters of projects, from stacking blocks of concrete via rearranging invisible bits to the internalization of knowledge, vary as much as anyone can imagine. There are also other differentiating factors, such as form of organization, used methodology etc., all of which may have a significant impact on how a project or a project manager behaves. Thus any limitation a researcher could make would not eradicate the fragmentation based on differentiating factors, merely reduce it.

As this study aims to be explorative, such a self-imposed limitation would, in the author’s opinion, do more harm than good. Thus this study will not focus on any sub-field within project management but will instead aim for a broad cross-section of professional project management, limited only by its respondents. In other words, this thesis makes no restrictive delineations and is instead interested in any and all views on its main topics, from anyone defining her/himself as an experienced manager of projects.

\(^{13}\) Thus also a supplier’s scrum master (if he has no supplier-side, project-specific superiors) meets the definition of “project manager”.
2 EXISTING RESEARCH

This part will explore the relevant bodies of literature in two fields essential to this thesis. The first literature, project management (subsequently PM) literature, will cover what the author refers to as the contextual dimension, the type of activities in question. Thus it will study what project management literature has to offer in regards to objectives, goals and ambitions. The second literature concerns itself with decision-making and focuses on the process of making decisions – the antecedents of decision and the act of deciding – and aims to describe different ways in which decision-making can be conceptualized.

These two fields are scientifically separate: PM literature does not focus on decision-making and literature in organizational behaviour does not focus on projects. The necessary attempt at a focused synthesis of these literatures will be done in chapter 2.3.

2.1. Objectives, requirements and ambitions in the PM literature

The question of goals – objectives, requirements and ambitions – within project management is both fundamental and highly complex. Thus a literature review based solely on scholarly sources\textsuperscript{14} is not enough. Consequently also project management handbooks and practitioners guides have been included in the literature review. In selecting also not strictly scientific sources, the author has nevertheless subjected the works to significant scrutiny\textsuperscript{15}.

Further, the author needs to make one aspect clear to the reader: existing literature in project management does not use the author’s classification of goal levels (objectives, requirements and ambitions) and sometimes uses the words purpose, objectives, requirements and goals synonymously. Thus, when referring to literature the author has superimposed his own classification on source material. The goal holder has been used as primary criterion of superimposition: If the goal is held by a primary party, it is deemed to be an objective, if the goal is bound to the project and exists to influence the project’s end-product, it is deemed to be a requirement and if the goal is held by a player or a party (see definitions in chapter 1.3) it is deemed an ambition.

\textsuperscript{14} This would refer to peer-reviewed articles, scholarly monographies and anthologies.

\textsuperscript{15} The author has deemed a non-academic book as a valid source if one or more of the following criteria have been fulfilled: the author holds a respected academic position, the book is widely referred to in academic literature or the book has been deemed valid in academic use (e.g. as a textbook in project management at a distinguished institute of higher learning).
The following treatment is divided into three subtopics. Firstly, the study will explore basic questions such as the amount of goals as well as inter-goal relations. Secondly, we will delve into the effect the properties of requirements have for a project. Thirdly, we will try to enumerate PM literature’s view on the parties and players, which influence requirements and how their influences are reconciled.

2.1.1. Goals and their interrelations

Simon defines goals as: "By goals we shall mean value premises that can serve as inputs to decisions" (1964). Simon’s definition implies that any definition or specification, which is intended to steer decision-making and subsequent action towards a wished-for end-result constitutes a goal.

That projects are oriented towards goals is beyond doubt (Harrison, 1981; Choudhury, 1988; Frame, 1995; etc.). Furthermore, this orientation happens on two levels: the project has its internal goals (requirements) and its external goals (objectives). Internally, the simplest way to describe a project’s requirements is to define the project as a venture aimed to produce the project deliverable described by the requirements, in a way that the project’s costs do not exceed a given limit, while also finishing the project before a given deadline. This simple model is called the triple constraint\(^\text{16}\) (Frame, 1995; Berggren, 2001; Meredith and Mantel, 2010; etc.) and is depicted in Figure 3.

The triple constraint implicitly creates the hypothesis that projects are started to fulfil requirements, and that cost and time use are calculated based on what the

\[\text{Requirements (Scope)} \quad \text{Cost} \quad \text{Time} \]

Figure 3: The triple constraint

\(^{16}\) The triple constraint is also sometimes referred to as the “iron triangle” of project management (see Bryde and Robinson, 2005). It is noteworthy, that the triple constraint is by no means beyond criticism. There is a widely used variant – the quadruple constraint – which adds the factor of “quality”. This thesis does not take sides, but instead uses the triple constraint mainly as a tool to highlight the potential for latent conflict between inputs and outputs.
requirements necessitate\textsuperscript{17}. Therefore, literature often describes the requirements as actual or proper goals, and perceives duration and expenditure as limitations or constraints.

Some authors state that a project may only have one objective (Wysocki and McGary, 2003), whereas others state that projects must have at least one objective, but can have several (Futrell, Shafer and Shafer, 2002), or further, that projects usually have several (two to five) main objectives (Andersen, Grude and Haug, 2004). Projects having several objectives raises the question how the different objectives relate to each other? To exemplify the problem we can utilize the example given by Futrell et al.: that a supplier aims to use the project as a reference and as a vehicle for developing its personnel (besides fulfilling the requirements) (2002). This example is suitable as it exemplifies that fulfilling an objective can be dependent upon the attainment of another objective (reference value and fulfilling requirements) and may be independent of each other (personnel development and fulfilling requirements).

Andersen et al. state that project goal-levels should be structured in complete hierarchies, so that higher-level objectives are broken down into more tangible intermediate goals, which are subsequently broken down into actual requirements. This “mission breakdown structure” serves the dual purpose of firstly linking abstract objectives with the desired requirements and secondly to embrace the non-technical aspects of the project. (2004)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{mission_breakdown_structure.png}
\caption{Mission breakdown structure\textsuperscript{18}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{17} Very few works of literature explicitly pronounce this assumption, but it is nevertheless clearly evident. For instance if and when books contains chapters on outputs (scope or deliverables) and inputs (money, resources and time), the chapters usually are reproduced in this order, with every subsequent chapter building on the previous. See e.g. Kerzner, 2009.
The above reproduction of a mission breakdown structure clearly shows the relationship between general objectives (top of hierarchy) and specific objectives (bottom of hierarchy), but also highlights that fulfilling an objective may necessitate more than purely technical work and may necessitate working with external partners as well as some internal work.

Further, it is quite apparent that projects are by no means static, in fact change seems to be a well-known feature in projects, both within the project (e.g. Choudhury, 1988; Meredith and Mantel, 2010) and in relation to the environment (Turner, 1993; Kotsalo-Mustonen, 1996; Arto et al., 2006), as is also exemplified by the amount of attention directed towards change control and management (e.g. Metzger, 1981; Lock, 2003). The central implication is, that actors’ objectives and ambitions may change during the duration of the project. While this change may be originated from the external environment or internally, any change in objectives or ambitions may thus also create pressure to adjust requirements after the project has started.

Schultz, Slevin and Pinto describe projects as composed of a strategic phase, encompassing decision-making on project requirements and planning, and a tactical phase, constituted by working to produce results (1987). Although coarser than other lifecycle models, such as the commonly used four-stage model: starting; planning; implementing; closing (PMI, 2008; etc.), this simple division is suitable for this thesis. While not disregarding decision-making on requirements in the tactical phase, this literature review’s main focus is on requirement-specific decision-making in the strategic phase.

### 2.1.2. The significance of project requirements

The discussion of the properties of project requirements in project management literature can be divided into two categories. On one hand there is a discussion regarding what kind of requirements have a strong influence (are efficient), while on the other hand there is a discussion on what kind of requirements lead to the desired results (are effective) (Williams and Samset, 2010). As whether requirements are effective is dependent on them being aligned with objectives and enable meeting the

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18 According to Andersen et al., 2004 [author’s reproduction]. Original caption: “The mission breakdown structure of the project ‘Implementation of new computer-based financial system’ with project scope marked.”
objectives (Artto, 2001; Saravirta, 2001), it is impossible to generalize effective requirements.

Several scholars offer guidelines for efficient requirements: Requirements should be clear (clarity) – this conclusion is widely mentioned in literature, e.g. Turner and Cochrane use the clarity of requirements as one of two criteria to ascertain a project’s risk level (1993). On one hand, requirements must be specific, measureable and not too complex (Kerzner, 2009), measureable and monitorable (Krishna, 2006), specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and tangible19 (Futrell et al., 2002; Kerzner, 2009; etc.). On the other hand, requirements must be well communicated, understood and generally accepted (Hong, Nahm and Doll, 2004) and teams shall be provided with simple, unequivocal directions (McComb and Green, 1999). In an empirical study on what competencies project managers need in different project stages Skulmoski and Hartman note that the project’s strategic phase necessitates above all communication competencies and the ability to articulate complex situations in an understandable manner (2010).

This discussion points to a dichotomy, in which some scholars see clarity as something, which is primarily reached through requirements being quantifiable and measureable, whereas others emphasize the importance of communication and the project manager’s capacity and willingness to articulate qualitative requirements.

2.1.3. What makes requirements effective?

As noted earlier, requirements are effective when they and the primary parties’ objectives are congruent. When this congruence is weaker the requirements still exist, but they are not as effective. Although this seems simple, there are a number of factors, which typically make the situation less straightforward and more complex.

Firstly, projects mostly encompass more than one organization, and different organizations may have different objectives. Furthermore, even when the project may strictly speaking be internal, the departments’ objectives may be sufficiently different to make the project indistinguishable from an external project. This difference in objectives is critical because, unless one organization can dictate its terms to the other(s), the requirements will need to be congruent with more than one set of objectives.

19 These five characteristics are usually referred to as the S.M.A.R.T – method.
Secondly, although we might easily envision a situation where two primary parties agree to begin a project and end up with a situation encompassing only two primary parties, the reality is quite far removed. As Cyert and March note, organizations are not unitary actors, but are instead compounds of greater numbers of individuals (1963). Thus, when focusing on objectives, we actually need to look behind the screen we call organization and study the parties and players within the organization and these actors’ impacts on objectives.

Thirdly, to further complicate matters we are interested not only in requirements (and the setting of these), but also on agreeing upon effective requirements – meaning requirements, which fit (primarily) the primary parties’ objectives and (secondarily) fit the ambitions parties and players may have.

As we define the effectiveness of requirements in relation to how well they fit objectives and ambitions, we naturally also have to concede that this fit may be anything but universal – specifically, that the extent to which this “fit” is perceived may vary between primary parties, other parties and players. Thus this literature review on effective requirements takes a two-step approach, by firstly reviewing what literature has to say on which parties and players have a stake in defining requirements (in other words: which parties and players have objectives and ambitions) and secondly reviewing what project management literature has to offer us regarding how decisions are made on project requirements, in light of these objectives and ambitions.

2.1.3.1. Parties and players with objectives and ambitions

Firstly, it is quite apparent, that the project owner has influence on defining requirements (Krishna, 2006; PMI, 2008). Also the project owner’s organization’s top management has a central stake (PMI, 2008) and has a central influence on the project’s ability to produce results (Young and Jordan, 2008). In close relation to the project owner, literature describes that projects may have sponsors\(^\text{20}\) – players who have a special interest in the project (Artto, Martinsuo and Kujala., 2006; Kloppenborg, Tesch, Manolis and Heitkamp, 2006), possibly the person originating the idea of the project, who is able to use his position to benefit the project (Kerzner, 2009), who can

\(^{20}\) “Sponsor” is the term most often used in project management literature, but also the term “champion”, more commonly used in literature regarding e.g. corporate strategy is sometimes used. The author interprets the terms to be synonymous.
have a significant impact on the form the project takes (Miller and Hobbs, 2005) and who can also influence the project’s requirements (Meredith and Mantel, 2010).

Secondly, the solution team’s expectations may influence the project requirements (Andersen et al., 2004). Likewise, there are clear indications that the project manager, is able to influence the project’s requirements (e.g. Turner, 1993; PMI, 2008).

Thirdly, project management literature also notes, that stakeholders have ambitions for a project (Turner, 1993; PMI, 2008; etc.). A theoretical foundation (Turner, 1993; Englund, 2006) and practical examples (Sahlin-Andersson, 1986) point to, that stakeholders are able to influence projects and their requirements. Also, there is strong evidence on how stakeholders whose ambitions have been disregarded can hinder the project from fulfilling its requirements and thus thwart primary parties’ objectives (Sahlin-Andersson, 1986; Cleland, 1994; Kirby, 1996). Fourthly, even single players can influence requirements (Frame, 1995; Nandhakumar, Rossi and Talvinen, 2005).

Fifthly, Andersen et al. and Turner favour the PSO-view (People, Systems, Organization) of projects, which implies that projects affect not only their primary realm (e.g. systems), but also the other realms (e.g. people, organization) (Turner, 1993; Andersen et al., 2004). The PSO-view’s relevance for the process of defining requirements lies in that overall objectives may not be reached purely through systems-related requirements, and that systems-related requirements may spawn supporting people-related and organization-related requirements (Andersen et al., 2004) (see also Figure 4 on page 14).

Sixthly, literature also notes that the parent organizations’ strategies influence project requirements. This discussion follows two distinct avenues. On one hand, the organizations’ strategies can be seen as launching pads for projects (Turner, 1993; Cleland, 1994; Artto and Wikström, 2005; Artto et al., 2006; PMI, 2008; etc.), meaning that projects are initiated to support or reach organizations’ strategic objectives. On the other hand strategic objectives can be seen as factors influencing requirements or constraining projects (Wysocki and McGary, 2003; Schwalbe, 2006).

Finally, it is to be noted, that projects seldom exist independently of an organization’s other projects. A project’s requirements may be influenced by other projects either through competition for limited resources (project selection and scheduling conflicts) or through the desire to align several projects (project co-ordination). Top-
management decisions regarding which projects to start or take on, also referred to as project selection, can be based on quantitative metrics, such as NPV\textsuperscript{21}-calculations (Schwalbe, 2006), or qualitative appraisals such as the project ‘fit’ with strategy or a combination of both types of metrics (Cleland, 1994; Schwalbe, 2006).

Organizations partaking in numerous projects use methods to co-ordinate their projects, often with the desire to align them with each other and/or with the organization’s strategy (Cleland, 1994). To be able to manage a large number of projects, organizations group similar projects into programmes (Cadle and Yeates, 2004; PMI, 2008), which can subsequently be managed in one or more project portfolio (Schwalbe, 2006)\textsuperscript{22}. Also some writers advocate the creation of project offices\textsuperscript{23} to coordinate an organization’s project efforts as well as managing the project-management –related know-how, processes, procedures and methodologies (Turner, 1993; Bloch and Frame, 1998; Frame, 2002).

The implications created by the project selection process on project goals are threefold. Firstly, the desire to get the project started can lead to hurdle-clearing –behaviour, such as optimistic calculations and falsification of estimates (Gilbreath, 1986; Cadle and Yeates, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2009). Secondly, the organization’s limited resources will lead to projects competing for resources and planners having to modify requirements considering the available resources (Graham and Englund, 1997; Schwalbe, 2006). Thirdly, one effect of co-ordination is that other projects as well as programs and portfolios influence a project’s requirements, especially when projects inherit their requirements from the programmes or portfolios.

Finally, some authors even point to the existence of hidden or tacit objectives or ambitions\textsuperscript{24} (Gilbreath, 1986; Turner, 1993; Frame, 1995; Kotsalo-Mustonen, 1996; Nash, Plugge and Eurelings, 2000; Saravirta, 2001). Turner notes about hidden goals, that they can either support or counteract the overt goals (1993). Saravirta, using the

\textsuperscript{21}NPV is short for “net present value” – A method of capital budgeting in which the value of an investment is calculated as the total present value of all cash inflows and cash outflows minus the cost of the initial investment. (Definition from the Oxford dictionary for Accounting (4th edition))

\textsuperscript{22}As Cadle and Yeates note, there seems still to be some confusion about the explicit meaning of programs/programmes and portfolios (2004).

\textsuperscript{23}Project offices are also referred to as “project support offices” or “project management competence centres”.

\textsuperscript{24}The sources cited usually talk about “hidden goals” or “tacit goals”, but the author surmises from the respective contexts that they are referring to what within this study are termed ambitions and objectives, as requirements can by definition not be hidden.
terminology of Nonaka and Takeuchi\textsuperscript{25}, offers one possible explanation: that goals, which can be articulated, are either explicit or implicit, whereas goals, which cannot easily be articulated, stay tacit (2001). Kotsalo-Mustonen further states that organizations as well as players can have tacit objectives/ambitions, and that in organizations these tacit objectives usually relate to organizational tradition and culture, whereas players’ tacit ambitions usually exist to serve the individual’s personal valuations and ambitions (1996). Whatever the case may be regarding hidden objectives and ambitions, they create a problem: as they are hidden and thus not commonly known, they cannot influence requirements in the same fashion as overt objectives and ambitions. Consequently hidden goals can either influence requirements through stratagems and scheming or alternatively create a situation where a hidden, but nevertheless real, ambition or objective is left disregarded in the formation of requirements.

2.1.3.2. From conflicting objectives and ambitions to commonly accepted requirements

Most of the project management literature does not describe how project requirements are set or agreed upon. The (Guide to the) Project Management Body Of Knowledge (henceforth: PMBOK Guide), published by the Project Management Institute, constitutes the basis of a significant fraction of all Project management certifications around the world and thus acts as something of a de-facto standard. Interestingly, the PMBOK Guide has it’s own view of the process of formulating requirements, depicted in Figure 5.

![Figure 5: Formulation of project charter according to the PMBOK Guide\textsuperscript{26}](image)

\textsuperscript{25} See Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995.

\textsuperscript{26} The project charter is a document specifying project requirements (PMI, 2008) [author’s reproduction].
In some ways, the description given by the PMBOK Guide is similar to the description given in Figure 1, but it emphasizes the roles of prior documents, while de-emphasizing the potential roles of third parties as well as that of parties and players. More striking is though the concept of “expert judgment”\textsuperscript{27} as deciding factor in the reconciliation of conflicting objectives and ambitions. Some other works describe the process of deciding upon requirements as exceedingly simple (e.g. Maylor, 2005) or give a very brief account of the process (e.g. Taylor and Watling, 1973; Wysocki and McGary, 2003).

Simultaneously another part of literature points to that project requirements are not born by force of nature, that they are the end-product of a complicated process containing trade-offs and decision-making (Frame, 1995; Andersen et al., 2004), but still does not offer any insight into the actual process.

In summary, it would seem that project goals are significant and complex and are often influenced by a multitude of parties and players. The most apparent trend is nevertheless, that decision-making in the requirement-setting process does not play a part in project management literature. Instead the process is largely described as an automatic and problem-free flow from inputs, in the form of circumstances and objectives, to outputs, in the form of requirements. Considering that there is no reason to believe that decisions concerning actual project goals would not contain an element of conflict or a need to make trade-offs and compromises, this is somewhat surprising.

\textbf{2.2. Decision making in organizational behaviour – literature.}

Decisions can be made in a multitude of ways – for example, you can flip a coin, consult your astrologer or coldly run the numbers. Further, decisions can be made by one person alone, or by a group of persons, and in the later case there are also a number of ways to reach collective decisions. The aim of this chapter is not to describe all potential ways to make decisions, but to present some of the more relevant\textsuperscript{28} ones.

As a basis for the conceptualization of decision-making in this chapter, the author will use Herbert Simon’s three-step model, which states that a decision process contains three steps, usually occurring in the order 1) intelligence: searching for situations


\textsuperscript{28} This selection is based solely on the author’s educated opinion.
necessitating decision-making, 2) design: identifying or creating alternative solutions, and 3) choice: selection of the best alternative solution (1977).

March notes that studies in organizational decision-making can be roughly divided in two parts – studies which try to describe how decisions should be made and those which try to describe how decisions are made (2010). As this thesis’ interest is to understand decisions on project requirements, it is natural for us to take an interpretative approach. In a paper on information and organizational decision-making, Björkman (1987) presents four interpretative models of decision-making, namely the rational choice-model, the justification-model, the political model and the rule-based model. Three of these are essentially also covered in Allison (1971) and in Pfeffer (1981)\textsuperscript{29}.

The models presented are descriptive models, not templates for decision-making. Thus, although no one would use these models to structure their decision-making habits, the models can be used to describe and help analyze decisions made, as each of these models is based on a superordinate\textsuperscript{30} decision-making motive. For instance, a person whose primary motivator is to follow the organization’s rules will make his decisions according to those rules, and his behaviour can thus be analyzed using the rulebook and the rule-based model. As Allison notes, models are not mutually exclusive in the sense that a decision may best be understood when viewed through multiple “lenses” simultaneously (1971).

The following chapters will aim at briefly presenting selected interpretative decision-making models. The models presented are scientifically well founded and probably recognizable to everyone who has worked in organizations. Furthermore, it must be stated that these models are not set in stone, implying that substantial variance between different descriptions exists.

\textsuperscript{29} Allison (1971) covers all but what will subsequently be called the justification-model. For a summary of Allison’s findings, refer to Allison, 1971:256.

\textsuperscript{30} "Superordinate" holds the same meaning as Pfeffer’s term "overarching goal" (Pfeffer 1981:29) and is used in the same context. The author’s preference for "superordinate" is based on the author’s desire to distinguish between overarching goals (in projects, in this thesis: "objectives") and overarching goals (in decision-making, in this thesis: "superordinate motives")
2.2.1. The rational choice model

The central element of the rational choice model is that it assumes that the decision-makers' choice is based on comparative and objective evaluation of the anticipated consequences of different alternatives (Björkman, 1987). In early versions of the model, borne out of the tradition of scientific management, the decision-makers were often conceived of as being perfectly able to know all alternatives and their exact consequences (Björkman, 1987; Miner 2002). Subsequently the model was extended to take into account both the informational and computational limitations of human actors, often referred to as “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1957; Miner, 2002), as well as the problems of ambiguous preferences (March, 1978). Simon's three-step model of intelligence, design and choice also adheres to a later variant of this model, with the explicit notion, that it relies strongly on “taking a step backward” to search for more information, in any situation when decision makers feel that information is lacking, ambiguity is too high or rationality is too restricted (Simon, 1977).

The central supposition of the rational choice model is that decision-makers, while not being omnipotent, aim to ensure that they have evaluated all available courses of action and selected the course of action, which, in a measureable way, is the best. Further, the author sees that the rational choice model can be seen either as the result of the lack of a superordinate motive, as put forth by Pfeffer (1981), or as a model based on a predominant superordinate motive of pure rationality.

2.2.2. The justification-model

The central basis for the justification-model is the body of research pointing to the existence of a behavioural pattern wherein decision-makers escalate their commitment towards long-standing ambitions (Björkman, 1987). This behaviour is sometimes referred to as entrapment – “[a] process by which organizational decision makers escalate their commitment to an ineffective course of action in order to justify the allocation of previous resources” (Brockner et al., 1986). The process of escalation is based on that decision-situations are often not independent instances, but part of a longer series of decisions bound together by the object of decision (Staw, 1981). In short, the justification-perspective posits, that rather than trying to make (independently) optimal decisions, the participants of the decision making process may

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31 Although this theory is not as widely supported by research, there are a number of articles covering these types of motives in action. For instance see, Ross and Staw (1986).
already have committed themselves to a course of action (Björkman, 1987; Staw and Ross, 1987). On some levels this model also relates to what is often called “the fallacy of sunk costs” (Gunia, Galinski and Sivanathan, 2009). On the other hand, the symptom of justification behaviour may be linked to the concept of “groupthink” 33 (Björkman, 1987).

Decision-makers trying to justify their decision-preconceptions are likely to process information, trying to justify the decision they intend to make (Björkman, 1987). Simultaneously they may still attempt to disguise their information use as proper (Feldman and March, 1981).

The central point in the justification-model is that if a decision is part of a longer course of action then it cannot successfully be evaluated separately.

### 2.2.3. The political model

According to a political understanding, organizations can be seen as coalitions, which in turn can be divided into sub-coalitions containing organization members (Cyert and March, 1963; Miner, 2002). As noted by Cyert and March, these coalitions are not stable and the adherence of a member to a coalition is, over any span of time, not a given (1963). Further, these coalitions possess different interests, and conflict between coalitions is to be seen as normal (Pfeffer, 1981). Considering the necessity of conflict resolution, the concept of power is central to understanding the political model (ibid.).

French and Raven define power as the social agent’s (a person, group or norm) ability to influence a person or persons, an ability which can be based on five different sources of power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power (1959).

Politics is generally seen as one way in which organizations may solve conflicts34 (March and Simon, 1958; Miner, 2002; Rollinson, 2008). Conversely, some note that attempts to curb politics may lead to a reduction in an organization’s ability to adapt (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977). Besides conflict, politics is linked to resource scarcity (Ott, 2010:161–165) and some definitions of negotiation (see. Lewicki, Barry and Saunders, 2010:6–8) contain the same elements as political conflict resolution.

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32 The concept of groupthink was introduced in (Janis, 1983)
33 The reader is reminded, that "politics" refers solely to organizational politics.
34 Another method for conflict resolution which is regularly presented in literature (both in project management and general management literature) is "negotiation", although some definitions of what negotiation entails are not easy to distinguish from power-based politics (e.g. Meredith and Mantel, 2010:161–165) and some definitions of negotiation (see. Lewicki, Barry and Saunders, 2010:6–8) contain the same elements as political conflict resolution.
Parkes and Simpson, 2008) as well as to change, uncertainty and instability (Englund, 2006; Rollinson, 2008).

Although some have defined all use of power as politics (Martin and Sims, 1956), the view of politics espoused by other scholars is, that the use of power should be seen as political only when it does not adhere to those methods and objectives sanctioned by the organization (Mayes and Allen, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981; Salancik and Brindle, 2010). Thus, relating to the classification of sources of power by French and Raven, use of power is political if the use of power conflicts with the organization’s hierarchy, either in context (subordinates influencing their superiors) or in substance (a power-holder trying to counteract a management-sanctioned policy).

The political model sees information as something decision makers use selectively to pursue their aims (Pfeffer 1981). Thus, coalitions have a tendency to favour information, which strengthens their position and/or weakens the opposition’s position, as well as attempting to suppress unfavourable information. (Björkman, 1987)

The political model’s comparative strength lies in its ability to explain decision-making in states of conflict. Although the terms of power and politics often have negative connotations (see e.g. Kanter, 1979; Pinto, 2000; Hall, Hochwarter, Ferris and Brown 2004), political behaviour can be seen as a normal human behavioural response (Cartwright, 2002), and it is impossible to ascertain categorically whether political behaviour is ethical or unethical (Cavanagh, Moberg and Velasquez, 1981). Further, although politics is often seen or displayed as related to striving for personal gain, a situation of political decision-making may arise between two parties disagreeing over how to best serve the common good (March and Simon, 1958). It is likewise noteworthy, that according to the description of a political decision-making process, a decision-making process automatically becomes political, when it involves two or more parties with sufficiently different interests or different superordinate motives.

### 2.2.4. The rule-based model

Rules are decisions made in advance (Pearce, 2009). According to the rule-based model, decision-making behaviour is based on individuals usually following the organizational rules (Björkman, 1987). This rule-following often happens unthinkingly

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35 This is also related to Aristotle’s notion of man as a political animal (see also Ebenstein, W and Ebenstein, A. O., 2001. *Introduction to political thinkers*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.).
(Pearce, 2009). In this context, rules need to be understood broadly – from following formalized standard operating procedures (March and Simon, 1958; Cyert and March, 1963; Allison, 1971) to following belief- or value-based commonly shared rules (Björkman, 1987), and acting in ways generally accepted by peers (March, 1981).

Information processing takes two shapes in the rule-based model. Firstly, information is used to determine the nature of the situation and thus to ascertain which organizational rule to apply. Secondly, organizations have rules governing what information is to be collected. (Pfeffer, 1981; Björkman, 1987)

Rules in organizations allow the organizations’ members to act in unfamiliar situations without always having to seek management’s counsel. Thus rules enable people to respond independently. However, this assumption holds true only when the unfamiliar situation is such that an existing rule can be applied. Thus it has two potential weaknesses: Firstly, when encountering a novel problem, the procedure may be cumbersome. Secondly, adherence to rules does not guarantee an optimal result.

### 2.2.5. **Comparison of decision-making models**

Of the four decision-making models covered, two assume that the decision is influenced – if not dictated – by the decision-makers’ personal or group-related interest, whereas the other two assume that the decision-makers are neutral towards the decision (Björkman, 1987). Not surprisingly, in those models influenced by the decision makers’ interests, the decision is often made before information is gathered and the information thus plays no central role in formulating the decision. For a summary see Figure 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate motive</th>
<th>rational choice-model</th>
<th>justification-model</th>
<th>political model</th>
<th>rule-based model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is information gathered before decision is made?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is self-interest guiding the decision-making?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Decision-making models in relation to information-processing

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36 Table based on Björkman, 1987.
Although these decision-making models relate to which superordinate motive decision-making is guided by, relating them to Simon's model on decision-making steps can further expand them, as attempted in Figure 7. It is important to note, that although Figure 7 is based on Simon's delineation of decision-making steps and the decision-making models presented earlier, the tentative synthesis is the authors own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making steps according to Simon</th>
<th>Decision-making models</th>
<th>Rational choice-model</th>
<th>Justification-model</th>
<th>Political model</th>
<th>Rule-based model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching for problems to tackle (intelligence)</td>
<td>&quot;objectively&quot;</td>
<td>searching for problems, which justifies own decision-ambition</td>
<td>searching for problems, tackling which might further agenda</td>
<td>searching for problems according to rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying alternative solutions (design)</td>
<td>&quot;objectively&quot;</td>
<td>identifying alternative solutions, which are in tune with own decision-ambition</td>
<td>identifying alternatives, which suit own agenda</td>
<td>identifying alternatives, which fit the rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of best alternative solution (choice)</td>
<td>&quot;objectively&quot;</td>
<td>selection of solution, which is in tune with own decision-ambition</td>
<td>selection of solution, which best suits own agenda</td>
<td>selection of alternative, which best fits rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Synthesis of Simon's decision-making steps with decision-making models.

2.3. Analysis of literatures

While the project management literature presented in Chapter 2.1 has a lot to offer on which parties and players may affect requirements and how these requirements can be made efficient, it does in fact not offer scholars or practitioners very much on the actual process used to reconcile the interests of different parties and players or how the actual decision on requirements are made. The organizational behaviour literature presented in chapter 2.2 has focused on describing decision-making, but in a theoretical manner. This chapter discusses, based on presented literatures, the process of reaching agreement on requirements and tries to narrow down some areas of interest as well as develop some detailed questions for empiric study.

Using Simon’s three-step approach (see page 21) – *intelligence, design, and choice* – to analyze the manner in which decisions on requirements are made, we conceptualize that: *intelligence* corresponds to the starting point of the project (the project owner stating the objective necessitating a project), *design* entails that the different parties’ objectives and ambitions are mapped out, thus defining the space within which
potential decision alternatives lie and finally, that choice is the process of selecting one decision alternative. Thus, based on the presented models describing decision-making, the following chapters will try to find indices in project management literature, which would either directly point to the usage of different superordinate decision-making motives in project management or indirectly enumerate conditions, which would heighten the probability of usage of a superordinate decision-making motive.

As this thesis perceives the rational-choice –model to be primarily characterized by the non-existence of a superordinate motive, and as most of project management literature describes the process of formulating requirements as a valuation-free process, the assumed existence of rational-choice –based decision-making regarding project requirements will not need to be highlighted. Furthermore, this thesis will assume, that if literature points to a specific model of decision-making occurring within projects, there is little reason to assume that the phase of defining requirements would not be subject to similar superordinate considerations.

### 2.3.1. Justification-based decision making in projects.

Staw and Ross have studied the phenomenon of escalated commitment in projects, and have noted that the phenomenon is quite common: that managers overemphasize the existing commitments; that managers who have committed resources to a project are more likely to view a project favourably than outsiders; and that managers impregnated with success stories of project managers who “stick it out” may tend to attempt to salvage a disaster instead of admitting fault (1987). In a similar vein, as already noted by Flyvbjerg (see page 19), there is a strong tendency to underestimate costs or overestimate benefits to get a project green lighted (2009) – a trait, which while tying in with the trait of selective usage of information typical to the superordinate motive of justification also is linked to what Staw and Ross mention about a project manager’s unwillingness to admit fault. Gilbreath also notes two factors: that the selective use of information is a typical cause for project failure and that the uniqueness of the undertaking makes the reliable estimating of needed inputs notoriously difficult, in turn leading to a tendency to forgive unusually bad estimates, thus opening the door for conscious falsification of estimates (1986).

In its purest form, the justification –motive implies that a previously made decision guides subsequent decisions, as a diverging subsequent decision would help undermine the validity of previous decisions. In the author’s opinion, there is some congruence
between this trait and the practice of strategic decision. When for instance an organization would, as part of it's five-year plan, define something like: “to increase the organization’s competitiveness, manual information processing will be increasingly automated”, this might in turn influence the decision-making regarding any single project concerned with information processing. The author’s point being, that a primary party's strategy influencing a project (see page 18) might reasonably be seen as an incidence of the justification-model influencing decision-making.

### 2.3.2. **Political decision-making in projects**

As noted previously, projects typically exist in a situation of different parties and players having conflicting interests (see chapter 2.1.3), a situation which need not lead to active conflict. Simultaneously, there are a number of indices in project management literature, which point to that projects are subject to a number of tensions, some of which will be enumerated shortly (chapter 2.3.2.1). Thereafter, chapter 2.3.2.2 will briefly explore the topic of politics in project management literature, while chapter 2.3.2.3 will attempt to summarize.

#### 2.3.2.1. **Project tension factors**

Based on project management literature’s description of projects, there are a number of factors, which may raise tensions in projects.

**Projects aim for change**: Aiming for change is central to projects (Artto et al., 2006). This change is by nature qualitative or even revolutionary, in contrast to the process organization, which aims for stability or gradual change (Turner, 1993; Cleland, 1994; Berggren, 2001). Due to this, projects have a tendency to disrupt the process organization (Graham and Englund, 1997; Andersen et al., 2004), which may cause the process organization to distrust projects (Gilbreath, 1986; Meredith and Mantel, 2010).

**Projects brake the dominant organizational principle**: In organizations, which do not regularly cater to projects, the project organization may clash with the primary principle of organization (Cleland, 1994), leading to possible conflicts, especially if project team members still have obligations to the process organization (Turner, 1993; Andresen et al., 2004; Meredith and Mantel, 2010) and even to a temporary reversal of hierarchical relationships (Graham and Englund, 1997).
Projects are temporary: Although project members are expected to focus on the project, accomplishing the project also implies the end of the project organization and thus that project members need to safeguard their positions (Gaddis, 1959).

HR in projects: Project personnel are often borrowed from the process organization (Gaddis, 1959; Meredith and Mantel, 2010), and subsequently the project manager’s grip on his resources is temporary (Cleland, 1994). Furthermore, the project manager may not have the authority to reward or punish his personnel (Pinto and Kharbanda, 1995). Participating in projects can be emotionally strenuous, and project personnel usually pass through five stages of group development (Tuckman’s model) – forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning (Turner, 1993).

Goal-related conflict: As noted, the very existence of the project may lead to tensions, as the relation between teams and project officials is not necessarily amiable.

In summary, based on the particularities of projects, it seems quite obvious, that projects are susceptible to tensions and conflicts. Even though many of these sources of tension are probably well addressed in organizations regularly partaking in projects, some sources of tension cannot be eradicated. Thus the author feels it reasonable to assume that projects exist in a conflict-prone environment.

2.3.2.2. Indices of politics in project management literature

Pinto notes, that project stakeholders have a self-interest in the project, and that they may thus be inclined to influence the project’s conditions, and that project managers therefore should be politically adept (1997). In another article Pinto posits, that politics is strongly linked to projects, based on the particulars of projects, namely the project manager’s low position in the organization hierarchy, the project organization’s customary location outside the main hierarchy and the project manager’s lack of reward power or coercive power. He goes on to note that politics may constitute a project manager’s best friend or worst enemy, and that project managers ignore politics at their peril. (2000)

In a similar vein, Frame draws a broad parallel between project managers and politicians – both being individuals whose formal power is limited and whose way of getting things done is through influencing other people (1995). Frame further notes that projects and politics are linked, partially because projects offer a breeding ground
for politics. Frame goes a step further than Pinto and notes that as projects are temporary organizations and may thus be subject to internal conflicts as coalitions assert their views on how goals are best implemented. (2002)

Several studies note that political behaviour and lack of consensus are central factors to projects being abandoned (Ewusi-Mensah and Przasnyski, 1991; Pan and Flynn, 2003). According to an empirical study conducted by Kloppenborg, et al., there is a strong positive relation between the political adeptness of the project sponsors and the likely success of the project (2006). Also the PMBOK-guide notes that politics is unavoidable in projects and that a project manager’s inability to partake in politics bodes difficulties for the project (PMI, 2008).

Some project management scholars note, that politics and political behaviour are often perceived as disagreeable (Pinto, 2000; Englund, 2006). Subsequently there are some alternate views on what kind of stance project managers should take. One alternative is to see politics as unavoidable (Pinto, 2000) and that project managers should cultivate their ability to act on the political plane (Pinto and Kharbanda, 1995; Pinto, 2000). Another alternative is to view politics as an integral part of projects, and that project managers therefore should take a proactive stance towards politics and cultivate their influence to be able to achieve better results (Frame, 2002; Englund, 2006).

2.3.2.3. Politics in projects, summarized

More generally, organizational behaviour –literature points to centralized decision-making strongly inhibiting politicking, while decentralized management raises the potential for political behaviour (Pearce, 2009), implying that situations in which multiple parties have a valid claim to influence decisions, such as in projects with multiple stakeholders with diverging interests, may lead to political behaviour. In studying group dynamics, scholars have noted that groups, whether formal or informal, have a tendency to create organizational subcultures – own sets of norms, values, sagas, legends and beliefs about reality – based largely on learning from their shared successes and failures (Ott, Parkes and Simpson, 2008). Thus it can be assumed that the teams in projects of longer duration may form their own subcultures.

Based on the existence of conflict and tension-factors in projects as well as based on the number of sources referring to politics in project management, political motivations seem to play a major part in projects in general. Likewise, the author sees strong
potential for conflicts of interest in the setting of requirements: The buyer’s interests may be diametrically opposed to the supplier’s interests and the only common ground might be that both want (or need) to do the project, whereas non-primary parties might primarily want to prevent the project. Parties and players within the buyer or supplier organization may want to influence the project requirements – either to further their own causes or because they think their parent organization is approaching the project in a less-than-optimal fashion.

2.3.3. Rule-based decision-making in projects

Project management literature shows a strong tendency towards proscribing a number of well-defined preparatory studies prior to decision-making (Frame, 2002; Lock, 2003; Schwalbe, 2006; Meredith and Mantel, 2010; etc.). Also a significant part of project management practitioners guides, especially the PMBOK-guide, are by nature normative and formulate rules regarding calculations and documents to be made prior to decision-making. The PMBOK-guide and certifications given on the basis of it can be seen as a set of rules in and of themselves (Hodgson, 2002; Lenfle and Loch, 2010).

Some scholars propose the development of project offices as an aid in developing organizations’ internal procedures and project management know-how (see Turner, 1993; Bloch and Frame, 1998; Frame, 2002). Thus project offices de-facto help create organizational rulebooks on project management. In addition, scholarly literature in project management has developed rules-of-thumb and other heuristics, such as critical success or failure factors in projects (see Pinto and Prescott, 1988; Pinto and Slevin, 1989; Grønhaug and Falkenberg, 1990; Belassi and Tukel, 1996; Kotsalo-Mustonen, 1996; Saravirta, 2001; Prabhakar, 2008; etc.).

That organizations or professions\(^{37}\) may have internal rules and operating procedures guiding operations such as information processing, decision-making and documentation should surprise no one. Thus also it can be assumed that these rules have an influence on the process of deciding on project requirements.

2.3.4. Analysis summarized

While PM literature largely assumes the lack of any superordinate motives guiding decision-making, there seems to be little reason to do so. While the literatures

\(^{37}\) see Hodgson, 2002.
describing organizational behaviour in general and specifically decision-making, give numerous reasons to assume that non-rational decision-making motives occur in projects (just as in other types of management), the PM literature offers no rationale as to why projects would be exempt from superordinate motives. Therefore we can make a number of assumptions:

Firstly, projects exist within an environment where multiple primary parties, parties and players may have conflicting objectives and ambitions for what the project is to deliver and how these results are to be achieved. Secondly, the individuals making the final decisions regarding the project’s requirements may be guided by various superordinate decision-making motives.

What the literature review has not yet covered is, what happens when multiple parties have a say in reaching a decision, and these parties disagree on what the decision should be? Blake, Shepard and Mouton\(^{38}\) present three basic assumption on such situations and their outcomes: That disagreement is inevitable and permanent; that conflict can be avoided since interdependence between parties is unnecessary; and that agreement is possible even while maintaining interdependence. They further stipulate the following reactions to the assumed states: Firstly, when \textit{disagreement is inevitable and permanent}, an agreement is either not reached, or if a superior or superior force can force the parties to agree, the agreement is either based on arbitration or the result of a win-lose struggle. Secondly, when \textit{interdependence between parties is not necessary} or is outweighed by a will to independence, an agreement is not reached as one or both parties withdraw from the conflict. Thirdly, \textit{agreeing while maintaining interdependence} assumes that conflicting parties are willing to smooth over the differences by “splitting the difference”, bargaining, trading and compromising in a genuine effort to discover a resolution. (1964)

Referring back to the detailed aim of the thesis (see page 7):

- To survey, in general, the layout of projects’ early stages and those factors which influence decision-making in projects
- To enumerate and evaluate the actors who have objectives for and ambitions toward projects and to study the methods different actors have and use in order to influence project requirements.

\(^{38}\) When describing the contents of the contribution, the original terminology has been changed to meet the terminology of the thesis.
• To explore the ways in which differing influences are reconciled in order to formulate final project requirements.

The review of PM literature has been able to outline the central actors partaking in projects' early stages and has offered some views on those actors which influence project requirements (point 2), but has not been able to offer any insights on different setups of projects, nor how they influence decision-making (point 1). PM literature has also not given any description of how diverging interests are reconciled (point 3) – unless “expert judgment” is seen as sufficient.

The review of decision-making literature has offered a framework within which the actors identified in PM literature can be placed and has been able to offer some alternative interpretative models for analyzing methods of influence, motives for influencing (point 2), and potential ways of reconciling differences (point 3), but has not shed light on what actually happens in project settings. These tasks remain for the empirical section of the thesis.
3 RESEARCH METHODS

Although the critical reader will find the details as well as the rationale in the following chapters, it is prudent to note in short, the ontological, epistemological and methodological decisions the author has made. These are summarized in Figure 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Author’s approach</th>
<th>Moniker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Reality is subjective, (socially) construed</td>
<td>Subjectivism/construktivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Knowledge emerges through interpretation</td>
<td>Interpretivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Experience – best heard from the horse’s mouth</td>
<td>Interview-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method (data gathering)</td>
<td>Let the subject decide what is salient</td>
<td>Unstructured, deep interviews</td>
</tr>
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Figure 8: Research approach in short.

3.1. General approach

This thesis attempts to take as broad as possible a view on the relationships between project objectives, requirements and ambitions, while remaining in the setting of studying project management.

3.1.1. The nature of the objects of study

Descriptions of project requirements are by nature quite concrete – documents, drawings, spreadsheets, bullet points etc., but they are nevertheless open to interpretation and often use an industry specific nomenclature. Project objectives, the raison d’être of the project’s existence, are often based on a desired future state and are by nature either a relative change to the status quo or a totally new and more-or-less revolutionary change in affairs. A relative change can (when dressed in words) be as simple as a comparative adjective (quicker, more precise, lower etc.) referring to the subject of the project (billing system, accounting practice, energy consumption etc.) whereas in case of a revolutionary change the objective may not even be known and is often not to be expressed in any explicit manner.
A relationship between objectives and requirements can be assumed to exist (otherwise there would be no project), but that relationship may be very tenuous and relative to the point-of-view. The relationship is tenuous because one objective can be served by several different requirements, and one requirement may serve multiple objectives. Similarly, the relationship is limited to one organization’s point-of-view as the primary parties are focused on their own objectives and the requirements, not the counterpart’s objectives. Thus objectives are by nature often both subjective and relative.

Individual ambitions may either be visible and proclaimed or invisible and hidden and the arguments offered by the parties may or may not be able to give a hint of the underlying ambitions. Factors relating to ambitions are highly personal and although they may play a significant part in the forming of a project’s final requirements, they may be exceedingly hard to unearth, while maybe also being hard to put into words.

The primary focuses of this study – project objectives and ambitions of actors are all on a different plane of tangibility and are only connected through the people who have been in a central role in the respective projects. Thus, the project manager, her/his experiences, and her/his interpretations of events become the central points of interest of this thesis. This realization defines the thesis’ ontological and epistemological approach.

Goals, whether they are herein classified as objectives, requirements or ambitions, have significance only inasmuch as humans interpret them, much in line with how Simon formulates it: “By goals we shall mean value premises that can serve as inputs to decisions.” (1964). Thus goals have no meaning without interpretation (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The ontology of this thesis is consequently based on interpretivism, making the assumption, that any person who has a vast experience of managing projects, has seen a great number of projects, has held varying roles in projects and may even has sat on different sides of the table at different stages of her/his professional career and may have gathered personal knowledge on the interrelations of objectives, requirements and ambitions. Further the

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39 Frame is one of the few project management authors who explicitly states that project managers should "not shy away from speculating about psychological motivations, since these may be more powerful than purely work-related motivations" (1995:49).

40 Even assuming that every set of deliverables are the product of an interplay between objectives and ambitions, the author acknowledges that even experienced and proficient may not have been cognizant of the interplay. Further the respondents knowledge of the interplay may be hard for them to explicate.
study assumes that the respondent’s subjective knowledge may or may not be socially constructed\textsuperscript{41}.

By turning to highly experienced professionals and asking them for their experiences, views and heuristics and by further aggregating the responses, this thesis hopes to be able to give a tentative explanation regarding the research topic. In his attempt to study the interrelations of objectives, requirements and ambitions, the author acknowledges that any result will be speculative and tenuous at best. Also, given that this specific field has not previously been the focus of any systematic research an explorative study is deemed to be a suitable first step.

This thesis tries to be as abstract and general as possible, even though this inevitably leads to that its conclusions are neither directly applicable to practice, nor widely generalizable. In summary, this study tries to gather observations/interpretations from involved individuals and - based on the author’s interpretations of the interviews - attempts to construct theories and identify specific fields for further study. Thus the research approach is primarily explorative and secondarily inductive (Saunders et al., 2009) with minor abductive elements (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008), based on the fact that the study’s focus is based on the author’s hypothesis\textsuperscript{42} of interplay between objectives, requirements and ambitions.

\textbf{3.1.2. Data-collection}

In line with the ontological premises, the author was interested in the sum total of experiences of an audience of experienced project management professionals, and how these experiences related to the subject of this thesis. This knowledge exists only in the heads of potential informants and could only be transferred to the author by means of verbal accounts – in other words “natural language data” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Thus the author set out to interview a number of respondents. As the author was not only interested in disparate pieces of data but also the relationships between these, the interviews aimed for depth (possibly at the expense of breadth). The interviewer’s effort was on enabling an open and confidential discussion, while still holding himself to a checklist to avoid getting lost in the discussion (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). For exploratory studies an unstructured interview is most frequently used.

\textsuperscript{41} The author has previously observed three types of social influence on views: A persons view’s align themselves with those of her/his peers, a person’s views do not react to the views of peers and a person’s views diverge from the views of peers.

\textsuperscript{42} For a summary of said hypothesis, see Chapter 1 "Introduction", and Figure 1.
(Saunders et al., 2009) and can be most suitable (Robson, 2002). Based on this, the author prepared a layered interview roadmap (see chapter 3.3.2).

As noted in the literature review, there are multiple parties and players involved in projects, and it was safe to assume that some if not most of these parties and players had objectives and ambitions for the project, and that these objectives and ambitions were not all congruent, thus creating potential for conflict. The question thus became; how (and whether) this conflict was resolved as decisions on requirements were made? Instead of applying only one theory of decision-making, the author attempted to adapt Allison’s method (see page 22) of using the available models as different lenses on the data being gathered. In contrast to Allison, who used the different lenses to analyse one specific chain of events – namely the Cuban missile crisis – the author did not so much try to analyse any single decision process, but tried instead to ascertain, whether the application of one or more of the models could yield results.

In order for the interviewer to uncover details, which enabled him to map out the interrelations between different aspects, he needed the freedom to redirect the discussion in an attempt “dig deeper” to be able to try to solidify something he perceived worthwhile. Therefore, the interview proceedings and the interview roadmap were structured around the aim of holding a very loosely structured interview/discussion, centred around the topics the interviewee found most salient and areas in which the author deemed it possible to find relevant experiences.

Considering the nature of the information the author desired the respondents to divulge and the stigmas potentially associated to the information (see also chapter 3.4.3), the interviews as well as the data gathered are held strictly confidential (see also: Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). To strengthen the reliability of the accounts gained during interviews, the interviewer tried to make sure that any interviewee was able to refrain from answering any or all questions s/he felt unwilling to or not able to answer. To make this policy clear to interviewees the interviewer stated this rule during the introduction of the interview and reinforced the message, if needed, by reminding the interviewee whenever s/he seemed pained. This decision was based on the research by Dhar and Simonson (2003)\footnote{Although the research by Dhar and Simonson concerns itself predominantly on quantitative surveys and multiple-choice –questionnaires, the underlying hypothesis, that forcing persons to divulge when they can not may lead to them answering in a way which they deem least problematic to the gathered data, is applicable}, who in no uncertain terms state that forcing a subject to answer when the subject is ambiguous may lead an interviewee’s behaviour becoming
accommodating and that subsequently the answers may reflect the interviewee’s opinion to a lesser degree. Considering that some of the questions attempted to unearth facets, which run contrary to what may in some circles be considered good project management practice, there was good reason to embrace a policy of not forcing any answers.

### 3.2. Subject selection

The author’s aim was to reach a wide and representative cross-section of project managers. Sadly, this desire was hampered by some limitations. Firstly, as the author’s resources did not permit him to travel, he needed to limit himself to interview subjects available in the greater Helsinki region. Secondly, as there is no centralized, openly accessible register of Finnish project professionals, he had to use an imperfect sample population. The starting point of approaching potential interview subjects was the list of partner organizations (and their designated contact persons) of PMAF, The Project Management Association Finland. This list contained 196 partner organizations of different types.

Firstly, the author assiduously went through the list of partner organizations, and researched the organizations in question. Based on this research he discarded those organizations, which had no significant activity in the greater Helsinki region. As a result, the list of was reduced to 162 organizations.

Secondly, with the aim of trying to cover different industries and types of projects, the remaining organizations were categorized, based on information on the companies’ web pages. The categories used were (number of organizations assigned in parentheses): Construction of infrastructure or housing (7); Manufacturing, trade, logistics and financial services (47); Information- and communication technology (26); Expert services and consulting (57); Government and municipal agencies (14); and Education (public or private) (11). Thereafter, the order of the organizations within each category was randomized.

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44 The use of the term "greater Helsinki region" differs, but in the author’s case the interpretation has been limited to cities and counties of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen and Sipoo.
45 The author enquired, but the list of members of the PMAF is not available for research purposes.
46 The list is available on PMAF’s webpage at: [http://www.pry.fi/en/node/61](http://www.pry.fi/en/node/61) [accessed 12.3.2013]
47 On the 22nd of March 2013.
48 The author rather included unclear cases than discarded them.
In the next step, the author attempted to contact the designated contact person in the first five organizations in each category, and explained the nature of the research as well as his desire to interview one or two project professionals in the organization. If the designated contact person her/himself was a project professional, the researcher’s invitation to partake was directed primarily at the contact person, if s/he was not a project professional, the author asked whether it would be possible to gain access to other project professionals in the organization49.

3.3. Description of interviews

3.3.1. Development of interview approach

The author approached the task of interview design in several steps. During the first steps (November 2012 to January 2013) the author had a number of informal discussions with project management professionals, without any specific interview guide or even a set of questions. These discussions were conducted between the author and his former colleagues or former clients, without the author revealing that he was doing groundwork for his thesis. The main results of these discussions was that the author became more convinced that the subject of this thesis was not merely a figment of his imagination; that the author noticed that the experiences of project management professionals may diverge strongly; and that project managers felt uncomfortable discussing issues which they deemed conflict-ridden and/or political – even when the discussion was held between acquaintances. No written notes were made and the information gathered in these informal discussions does not as such appear in this thesis.

During the next step (February 2013) the author worked on selecting a set of subtopics to include in the interview roadmap. This was necessitated by the fact that subtopics are more or less related and their interactions are often as valuable as the subtopics themselves. On the other hand, interviews should not take too long a time to conduct. The original long list of potentially related subtopics was pruned to a more manageable set of subtopics. Subsequently these topics were formulated into a draft interview roadmap. Also, during this step the author decided on two interview design aspects, which he felt suitable, but was not sure whether the aspects would be implementable.

49 At this stage the author left it open whether the organization wanted to endorse the research (thus allowing the use of employee time and premises for interviews) or if the company just acted as a matchmaker between the researcher and a potential interviewee.
Firstly, the author dislikes trying to make notes while listening as writing detracts from being responsive, therefore he desired to not take any notes and instead rely solely on recording the interview. Secondly, the author has had dubious experiences with conducting interviews based on lists of preformatted questions as answers to one question may render the next question either partially or entirely irrelevant. Therefore, instead of creating a specific list of questions or interview guide, the author decided to try another approach (see chapter 3.3.2), namely a method he refers to as an interview roadmap, which – while it contains some possible questions to ask on each subtopic – focuses more on the general aim of each subtopic’s discussion.

The third step (February to March 2013) was focused on testing and evaluating the draft roadmap and interview setup. This process was based on conducting two pilot interviews, using interviewees, who were selected out of the author’s professional network. The pilot interviews were conducted as if the interview situation was real and were followed up with a feedback session. The results from the pilot interviews helped the author to have trust in the interview roadmap – both in the included subtopics and in his ability to improvise, fluidly and without displaying bias. Subsequently, the draft roadmap was translated into English.

As the pilot interviewees were both representative of the target sample, and as the research design was not changed after the pilot stage, the pilot interviews were used as if they were normal interviews.

### 3.3.2. Interview roadmap

Interviews are divided into structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Saunders et al. 2009), and an unstructured interview can be defined as a:

> “Loosely structured and informally conducted interview that may commence with one or more themes to explore with participants but without a predetermined list of questions to work through.” (Saunders et al. 2009)

As the roadmap aimed to outline different subtopics, which could be explored during the interview, but defined neither the questions to be asked, nor the actual order of

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50 Naturally, although both parties aimed at simulating a real interview situation, their acquaintance and the reality (knowledge of the pilot nature) may have impacted the situation.

51 The pilot interviews, as well as a majority of all interviews, were conducted in Finnish, using a Finnish language version of the roadmap. When contacting interviewees the author proclaimed his readiness to conduct the interview in Finnish, Swedish or English – based on the interviewee’s preference.
subtopics, the interviews done fit the definition well. That said, the roadmap was based on offering the possibility to cover the related subtopics in an order of precedence, so that it started with discussing the divergent polymorphism of objectives and ambitions (modules 1–3), went on to discuss the different methods which parties can use to influence requirements (module 4), discussed the visibility of objectives and ambitions (module 5) and finished by discussing the manners and methods of conflict resolution (module 6).

Figure 9: Structure of subtopics in interview roadmap

Further it is noteworthy, that module 3 “Parties which influence requirements” catered to two different approaches: The first approach tried to see which actors the interviewee would instinctively mention, while the second approach listed those actors, which based on literature influence project goals, and quickly prompted the interviewee how frequently and how significantly actor X influences requirements. To be able to focus the time available for the interview on where it can produce insights, the responses from module 3 could be utilized in module 4 (so that if in module 3 the respondent has considered a specific party to never influence deliverables, that specific sub-module of module 4 is passed quickly\(^5\)).

Each module of the roadmap was divided under four headings, namely: aim – what discussing the subtopic aimed to achieve, background – a prepared verbal explanation of the central term(s), checklist – a checklist for the central topics to be touched upon during the interview and model questions – a list of prepared questions which the

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\(^5\) In some cases the author – if he felt the interviewee’s original response had been tentative – touched upon such a submodule briefly, e.g. “And you said earlier that in your experience the supplier’s other projects did not influence requirements... <pause>”
interviewer could use to lead the discussion onto a specific topic. The entire interview roadmap is reproduced in appendix 1.

3.4. Reservations and limitations

3.4.1. A pre-existing disposition

The author is aware, that his interest in the interplay between objectives, requirements and ambitions is borne out of the disconnect between his own observations/interpretations as a project professional and mainstream PM literature’s seeming disinterest in the topic. Thus also the author is cognizant of that his personal experience has influenced the basic assumptions behind the thesis and may likewise affect the questions asked during interviews. The author will refer to these affects as his disposition.

In the author’s opinion his disposition may have a detrimental affect on the research in two ways: Firstly he may have incorrectly interpreted his experiences and he may be unable to verify his conjectures by the respondents. Based on his discussions with former colleagues, the author deems this risk to be minor. Secondly, the author’s disposition may be limited and he may thus not be asking all the relevant questions – thus disregarding related information.

In his attempt to alleviate the risks borne out of his disposition, the author has made the following efforts and decisions. Firstly, the author has tried to create a simple conceptual model of his assumption of the interplay between goal planes (the result is depicted in Figure 1). Secondly the author has tried to revisit his recollections of some more memorable projects to see whether and how well they fit the conceptual model. Thirdly, before embarking on the actual interviews, the author has conducted pilot interviews, both to help refine the interview roadmap as well as to try to ascertain whether all the bases are covered. Fourthly, the author tried to make it as easy as possible for respondents to insert (new) topics into the discussion and freely elaborate on whatever they found salient.

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53 The author has worked with project management during 1999–2009, both as a project manager and general manager.
54 The author is aware that this is a somewhat futile exercise, as he would probably not remember details and facets which he has not had the tools to understand at the time.
3.4.2. **Limitations of the method of data-gathering.**

Considering the aims of the study, in an ideal world several alternative approaches to subjects and data gathering would be conceivable. As the author worked under some limitations he could not influence, the decision to select this research approach was relatively easy. Even so, some limitations remained, specifically that the author worked solo and had no possibility to verify his interpretations, as well as that the actual data gathering had to be done within a few months. Considering the nature of the data, the author was not worried by the absence of numerical precision, nor by his dependence on making interpretations based on what he is told. In an explorative study, such limitations are fully acceptable.

From the beginning, it was evident to the author that he needed to gain at least a modicum of trust from his interviewees. Otherwise they would hedge their answers or would be inclined not to report on experiences, which they deemed might display themselves or their organizations in a less-than-favourable light. With the aim to partially address this problem the author decided on a strict confidentiality-policy regarding the data gathered from interviews: The author does not divulge whom he has interviewed; source are cited anonymously and necessary steps are taken to protect the interview's confidentiality. Nevertheless the author acknowledged, that these steps, while soothing interviewees’ potential apprehensions, would merely alleviate distrust – not create trust.

Another limitation stemming from the method of data gathering was related to the lengths of the interview-sessions, as interviews needed to be of modest duration, thus the author’s initial goal was to aim for interview duration between one and two hours.

3.4.3. **The lack of a metaphor and the denial of politics**

Morgan points out that people’s ability to interpret a situation is based on them having a metaphor, which offers them the ability to perceive things, which they otherwise would not. Likewise Morgan goes on to emphasize that while a metaphor is empowering, it may also be constricting, in that people may become fixated on using a “favourite metaphor” and stop seeking other explanations. (Morgan, 2006)

Contemporary project management thought seems to put strong emphasis on presenting the task of formulating project requirements as an inherently rational exercise and deemphasizes potential conflicts as well as the existence of what could be
called political behaviour or political decision making. Also, political behaviour often carries a strong stigma, as mentioned on page 25 and as illustrated by scholars in organizational behaviour and politics, who still have to defend their field of study (see e.g. Pfeffer, 1992). This may lead to respondents being less open having witnessed political gamesmanship and people not disclosing their own political actions.

Thus the author had reservations on two fronts. Firstly, that some respondents would be unable to see the process of formulating requirements as anything else than a coolly rational process, and would thus be cognitively unable to answer the author’s questions. Secondly, considering the reputation of organizational politics, respondents would be unwilling to answer the author’s questions inasmuch as they considered the answers to reflect negatively on them or their organization(s).

The author felt it to be important, that interviewees should not have any preconceptions of the author’s approach or aim. This stance was based on several factors. Firstly, the author wanted to avoid showing bias or something, which would have been construed as a signal of bias, mainly to avoid that this perceived bias influenced the interviewee’s response. Therefore the actual discussion during interviews was based on as neutral terminology as possible. Secondly, the author assumed some interviewee’s might have a negative predisposition towards talking openly about conflicts, power or politics. Therefore, in all communication prior to the actual interview the author tried to avoid mentioning these potentially repelling themes and generally described his research subject in more circumspect terms.

### 3.5. Post data-gathering reflections regarding methods and methodology

As is fitting for a master’s thesis, the process of data gathering was a learning experience for the author. This subchapter intends to detail some of the insights gathered.

Most importantly, the author feels positive about the amount of information and experiences his interviewees were able to share with him – the depth of hands-on knowledge divulged by the 13 interviewees leave the author deeply indebted. The author is quite certain, that a more regimented approach to the interviews would have precluded many of the gratifying exchanges. Also, if the amount of negative experiences
and opinions provided by some of the interviewees offer any guidance, the interviewer seems to have succeeded in gaining his interviewees’ trust.

On the other hand, the loose structuring of the interviews, as well the interviewee’s freedom to decide what was most pertinent, lead to that many responses do not fit within the topic of this thesis. Many of these nuggets of gold will have to remain outside of this thesis, but some of them may work as kernels for further research.

The author originally outlined the assumed need to cover a number of different subtopics, as he assumed they were connected or interrelated. In retrospect, this assumption seems to have held true, as the author’s ability to discuss relationships between factors in different subtopics (such as the interaction between procurement method and project manager influence) allowed the exploration of some interesting interactions. Sadly, the flipside of the medal was that many topics could not get such a rigorous treatment as they might have deserved.

One simple thing, which shows the author’s lack of relevant research experience is, that only after having conducted all scheduled discussions, did the author start considering the processing of the interviews. After doing a test run on 25 minutes of one interview – first writing a verbatim transcript of the interview (in Finnish), then an accurate translation of that transcript (Finnish to English), then analysing the usability of that translation for the purpose of interpreting the interviewee’s main points – the author, after discussing the item with his professor, decided on a different approach (detailed in chapter 3.6).

Another negative facet is, that the author’s idea of using a (literature-derived) list of potential influencing parties as a method of in some way ranking the relative influence of different parties (Area 3-2 in interview roadmap) has to be deemed a failure. While it was moderately successful in the pilot interviews, it was highly problematic in the first four subsequent interviews, the interviewees not being able to respond to the set of questions without leading and prompting – in itself a result. The author considered moving the module to the end of interviews, as a retrospective unit, but decided against, as most interviews would not have offered the time for such retrospection. In stead, the subsequent interviews bypassed the module and this data gathered from the first six interviews will not be referred to in the results.
3.6. Analysis of empirical data

Each interview produced an agreement of informed consent, one A4-paper detailing the demographic details of the interviewee and a digital recording of the interview. The length of the recordings in total is about 20 hours and the recordings form the basis for the findings of this thesis.

In line with the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying this study, the interviews have been processed with the aim to both remain true to the interpretations and assertions of the interviewees as well allowing the author a reasonable level of freedom to himself interpret what his interviewees have said, as well as put the information gathered into context for the reader. Thus, the author has, based on each interview, produced one English-language text-document, which in essence captures what the interviewee has said on the topics.

The actual processing has been such, that the author has listened to the Finnish-language interview to identify coherent parts (typically these parts have been a set of connected sentences, covering a topic or subtopic, ranging in length from ten seconds to two minutes). Thereafter, the author has ascertained the part’s relevance for this thesis. This has been done, as some discussions veered into other areas – such as one interviewee, who elucidated on the business logic of modern communications service providers – which while interesting are of no relevance to this thesis.

The relevant coherent parts have then been listened to repeatedly, until the author has been certain he has a) understood what the interviewee has said b) how it relates to other items the interviewee has mentioned and c) that the author is able to reproduce the contents and context in English. To make the resulting texts more useable for subsequent processing the author has further grouped related points together (so that the resulting text files do not necessarily follow the chronological progress of the interview). In this manner, the author has assiduously processed the interviews, creating 13 documents, one per interview, amounting to 109 single-spaced pages, using on average 12 minutes of work per every minute of digital recording.
4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 General information on interviewees

For purposes of this thesis 30 invitations were sent to contact persons of organization members of the Project management association Finland (PMAF). Many of these invitations received quick negative answers. In a number of cases, the researcher reached contact with the designated contact person, but was not able to agree on an interview during the time available.

In total, 13 interviews were conducted during a period ranging from March to May 2013. All Interviews were recorded. In most cases, the interviewees wanted to continue discussing general matters (matters not directly related to the subject) after the recording device had been shut off. The material used in these findings is based solely on the recorded portions of the discussions. In total, the recordings amount to slightly over 20 hours, the average length of the recording being 94 minutes (ranging from 51 to 143 minutes).

In relation to the original categorization of potential contacts according to parent companies' industries (see chapter 3.2), respondents in different industries were reached as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent company industry</th>
<th>Organizations approached</th>
<th>Subjects interviewed</th>
<th>Pilot interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONSTRUCTION</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRY, TRADE, LOGISTICS and FINANCE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERT SERVICES AND CONSULTING</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT OR MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Division of interviews according to parent organization’s industries.

4.1.1 Age and gender division among informants

Informants were asked to indicate their age on a rough scale (20’s, 30’s, 40’s etc.). The respective frequencies are displayed below.
Of the 13 persons interviewed, three were women, the rest were men.

4.1.2. Informant experience levels

As the discussions/interviews were pertaining to the informants’ entire working experience, getting a picture of the informants’ project management careers (not only their current employment) was relevant. Thus, to reach comprehensive demographic data, informants were given the opportunity to make multiple selections in those categories where this would reveal pertinent information – these categories being Industry – the types of projects they had been working with for a significant time and Organizational seniority – their positions within organizations during their project management careers.

Regarding the duration of their project management career, all informants exceeded the limit the researcher had set. The average length of project management experience among informants was 15 years, all replies falling within a range from 3 to 30 years (For details, see Table 4).

All 13 respondents had experience from the private sector, with two respondents additionally having significant experience from the public sector. Regarding the industries with which the respondents had experience, information and communication technology were strongly represented, 6 respondents citing ICT as their primary industry and a further 5 respondents mentioning it as their secondary industry. In those cases, where ICT was mentioned as a secondary industry, the respondents either had had previous experience within the ICT-industry before transitioning to a new primary industry, e.g. “I worked 5 years in the ICT-industry before transitioning to management consulting...” (Interview 2) or they were working with IT projects within the specific field of another industry, e.g. “We offer software for the construction industry – we need hands on experience in both fields to be able to

![Figure 10: Age division among informants](image)
work.” (Interview 5). Three other industries, expert services, construction and research & development each got two or three mentions. The detailed breakdown of responses is displayed below (responses in random order).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industries</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert services</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert services</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Respondents’ industries

To gauge the level of the respondents’ organizational positions, they were asked if they, during their project management careers, had held positions in management, middle management or on a specialist –level. If the respondent asked for a clarification, a specialist was characterized by not having subordinates (outside of the project realm), a middle manager by having subordinates and a manager by having at least two levels of subordinates or being maximally one level removed from the organization’s top.

Of the 13 respondents, one had spent his/her entire project management career in a (upper) management position, three had managed projects in both management and middle management positions, a further three had worked solely in middle management positions, four having held both specialist and middle management positions and two having held specialist positions for the duration of their entire project management careers. Thus 4 respondents had experience with managing projects from management positions, 10 respondents had managed projects while being middle managers and 6 respondents had experience with managing projects as specialists. The breakdown is again depicted in the table below (order randomized).
4.1.3. Respondents’ side of the table

Literature pointed to the possibility, that a respondent’s experience might be significantly influenced, based on whether s/he has functioned as project manager for the buyer or the supplier. Therefore, respondents were asked, whether their experience has been gathered representing the buyer, the supplier or both in roughly equal amounts. Six respondents noted having worked predominantly on the supplier-side, one having worked predominantly on the buyer’s side of the table and six noted having worked more or less equally for both parties. Further, and not surprisingly, those respondents with the longer experiences more often reported having worked on both sides. These results are displayed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle management</td>
<td>middle management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>middle management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle management</td>
<td>specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td>middle management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Respondents’ positions within their organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project management experience (yrs)</th>
<th>Position towards projects buyer / supplier / both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>* supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>* both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>* buyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>* both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>* both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Respondents’ project management experience

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55 Experience is here expressed in years and position towards projects (buyer, supplier, both). Cases where interviewer acts as intermediary denoted with *.)
Further, there were five special cases, characterized by the interviewee working in an intermediary role (subsequently this role will be referred to as “intermediary”). One project manager described him/herself as representing the supplier, but the discussion subsequently revealed that the respondent’s organisation is a specialist subsidiary of a larger company, and that while they offer projects to other parts of the organizations based solely on their own work, most of their workload is systematically outsourced, and that the respondent then simultaneously functions as project buyer. Another project manager (who initially declared having worked for both parties) worked in an organization, which specializes in functioning as an intermediary, implying a form of expert service in which the respondent’s company is brought in to act on the buyers’ behalf and coordinate work with any number of suppliers. A third project manager, when asked to describe his field of action directly proclaimed being an intermediary – gathering objectives and requirements from the buyer(s) and having suppliers produce a corresponding service. Two more project managers worked in government institutions, whose primary task is to co-ordinate the various principal organizations’ procurements (mostly of IT-related projects), implying that while they primarily function as suppliers to their principals, they also act as buyers to suppliers. Incidentally, the practice of using intermediaries was described as highly typical for the construction industry, especially in cases where the buyer’s activities are not construction-related (Interview 4).

Whereas the role of intermediary between buyer and supplier is not featured strongly in literature (and was thus not included in the original research design), the implications of such a role deserve some inspection.

4.2. Findings

This chapter presents the central findings of the interviews. The structure of the chapter is built up along the lines of the detailed aim of the thesis, namely:

- To survey, in general, the layout of projects’ early stages and those factors which influence decision-making in projects
- To enumerate and evaluate the actors who have objectives for and ambitions toward projects and to study the methods different actors have and use in order to influence project requirements.
- To explore the ways in which differing influences are reconciled in order to formulate final project requirements.
Thus, chapter 4.2.1 will focus on summarizing the empiric data pertaining to surveying project’s early stages and those factors, which influence decision-making in projects (point 1), ranging from the general structure of a project through how objectives influence requirements to the impact of estimation practices. Thereafter chapter 4.2.2 will be devoted to summarizing findings related to the enumerating and evaluating of actors, their objectives and ambitions as well as their methods (point 2). Finally, chapter 4.2.3 will present the empiric findings relevant to exploring ways to reconciling diverging interests (point 3).

Further, to help structure the presentation, to make the long report of findings more legible and to help link discussions to the relevant findings, each subchapter will contain both findings and specific discussions. To help the reader distinguish between empirical findings and interpretations, the subchapters will be structured in three movements – somewhat like a classic symphony. The first, often-short movement will introduce the topic and put it into context; thereafter follows a movement reporting the empiric results; and the final movement will contain the author’s discussion and specific conclusions regarding the specific results. To make the movements distinct, they are Headlined, in bold typeface as Introduction, Findings and Discussion.

4.2.1. The polymorphism of projects, primary parties, objectives, requirements, and ambitions

4.2.1.1. Varying project topographies

Introduction

It is self-evident, that projects come in different forms, and that the forms projects take influence the challenges projects face and how the project is managed. Thus it is relevant to summarize the types of projects covered by the interviewees.

Findings

A simple project is one in which one buyer or client asks a supplier to produce a product or service. During the interviews, some of these simple projects were mentioned, but also a great many perturbations of this simple setup were described. The following paragraphs try to describe some properties of real-world projects, always starting from the stereotypical simple project, and displaying some of the variations discussed.
Supplier(s) – from one to many. Several interviewees reported, that they regularly use more than one supplier on projects (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 11) or that they (as suppliers) often are working together with other suppliers on projects (Interviews 2, 8, 10, 12 and 13). Also contractors may come in a number of tiers – as one interviewee noted, they often use contractors, who regularly subcontract specialist parts (Interview 3). Likewise, in the construction industry, a hierarchy of primary contractors, other contractors and various subcontractors is normal (Interview 4).

Buyer(s) – from one to several. Likewise, there are situations in which a project is aimed at simultaneously serving a number of buyers (Interviews 1, 3, 5, 9 and 11). Based on these cases, the different buyers may be fully independent of each others (Interview 5), they may also not be fully autonomous (although they may be legally separate), such as government institutions (Interviews 9 and 11) or they may be different subsidiaries of a company (Interviews 1 and 3). Whether they typically have the possibility to opt-out varies (Interviews 1, 3, 9 and 11).

Buyers may be independent, co-dependent or highly regulated. That public institutions are highly regulated (Interviews 8, 9 and 11) is no surprise, but the effects of regulation spreads into other sectors as well, such as education (Interview 2), finance (Interviews 7 and 12) and construction (Interview 4), thus always having a significant impact on project objectives. Likewise, some private companies exist in business networks and partnerships, which at times strongly define organizations’ objectives and constraints (Interviews 1 and 5).

The buyer may be able to state his needs – or they may not... In some cases the buyer has the ability to clearly specify the solution to his needs (Interviews 1, 5 and 6), whereas in other cases the buyer may mostly have a clear need, but is unable to define a sufficient solution (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 13). Based on the interviews, the buyer’s need to get help in order to specify a solution is common in construction (Interview 4) and IT/ICT (Interviews 2, 3, 7 and 13).

Buyers may seek suppliers in any way they want – or the matchmaking may be strongly regimented. Whereas private companies may mostly structure their contracts as they wish (Interviews 1, 3, 5 etc.), public institutions are forced to seek a supplier
using a strongly regimented public procurement procedure (subsequently: PPP)\textsuperscript{56}, which strictly defines the process (Interviews 2, 8, 9 and 11).

\textit{Buyers are buyers and suppliers are suppliers – or it may be more complicated...} The interviews evidenced a number of situations where one organization may, within the same project, be both supplier (in that they have a buyer) and buyer (in that they have suppliers) (Interviews 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11). These mediating primary parties may either act as co-ordinators, gathering requirements from multiple end-clients and channelling them to suppliers (Interviews 3, 9 and 11) or their activities may be those of professional intermediaries or consultants (Interviews 2 and 7). In the construction-industry, the use of intermediating parties is even considered a good practice (Interview 4).

\textit{It's a buyer's market – except ...} Most interviewees agreed that the buyer usually is in the stronger position, as the buyer selects the supplier and the buyer’s objectives constitute the basis of the project (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 11). Nevertheless, some exceptions and limitation are worth mentioning, e.g. that a buyer may be bound to source from one supplier (Interview 3), that suppliers systematically aim for achieving a buyer to become locked into their orbit (Interviews 10 and 13), and that supply is sometimes slow to react to a change on demand patterns, temporarily resulting in a seller's market (Interview 12). Also noteworthy is that supplier selection in many organizations is structured around competitive bidding, thus relegating the buyer from actual supplier selection to defining priorities (Interviews 2, 8, 9 and 11). A few interviewees stated, that based on the inherent asymmetry of expertise in a project, the buyer, based on his knowledge of his activities, may define what the project is to achieve, whereas the supplier, based on his project-specific expertise, can define how that is to be achieved (Interviews 12 and 13).

\textbf{Discussion}

The more extensively and diversely projects, as a management methodology, are being used, the more diverse are the circumstances which projects have to be able to cover. As such, it is no surprise, that projects exhibit great variance. What did come as a surprise, is that the somewhat limited sample of interviewees used in the research, exhibited such a vide range of projects, differentiated by a whole range of factors, which directly impinge on how projects are set up, and thus directly influence how requirements are

\textsuperscript{56} See: \url{http://www.tem.fi/en/consumers_and_the_market/public_procurement} (accessed 22.8.2013)
defined and which parties have the potential to influence them up-front. The reported differentiation factors are summarized in Figure 11.

![A spectrum of project differentiation factors](image)

Figure 11: A spectrum of factors differentiating projects.

For instance the question of procurement method – whether buyers go looking for suppliers with a definition of requirements in one hand (and potentially a competitive bidding setup in the other) or whether they start out with building relationships with suppliers, has to have a profound impact on every aspect of the project, not least on how requirements are agreed upon. The question, whether it makes sense to group projects in different industries under one headline, could be replaced with the question whether projects using regimented procurement and open procurement projects should be grouped similarly.

### 4.2.1.2. Inherency of conflict in project-settings

#### Introduction

The question whether a project’s primary parties’ interests are inherently contrary and antagonistic could not be more fundamental in assessing the relationship between buyers and suppliers and their respective objectives. Thus it is of relevance to ascertain whether projects in general are conflict-prone as well as speculate on factors, which influence the level of conflict.

#### Findings

Whether primary parties’ positions are inherently antagonistic divided the interviewees. Some interviewees saw projects to be (and exist within) a generally

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57 See chapter 1.4
amiable and collaborative environment, and that the detailed conflicts were symptoms of differing opinions or dissatisfaction with a counterpart’s contribution (e.g. Interviews 1, 4, 5 etc.). Other interviewees saw projects and professional life in general to be a selfish and competitive environment and that the conflicts in projects were symptoms of those underlying tensions (e.g. Interviews 2, 6, 10 etc.).

One interviewee pointed out, that companies are guided by the basic profit motive, thus producing an underlying conflict of interest in projects between companies (Interview 13). Another noted that transactions, such as exchanging services for currency, happen whenever both parties gain from the transaction, but that a project differs from simply buying goods, in that projects promise only tentative results and are prolonged exchanges, thus allowing projects to turn sour (Interview 8).

Several interviewees noted that one-off exchanges have a higher tendency to display these underlying conflicts (Interviews 2, 8 and 12), whereas prolonged partnerships usually have a stronger spirit of collaboration (Interviews 2, 8, 10, 12 and 13). In a similar vein, it was also noted, that parties which view projects as transactions tend to focus primarily on fulfilling the requirements (Interviews 2, 8 and 13), whereas “partners” have a stronger focus on making sure the project serves the other party’s objectives (Interviews 2, 8, 12 and 13), thus also motivating parties to “go the extra mile” (Interview 2).

Further, a number of interviewees pointed out, that interest conflict between primary parties is not limited to external projects – that interest conflicts may in fact be stronger and more apparent in internal projects, as they may have a more direct impact on people’s careers, employment and salaries (Interviews 6 and 13). An interviewee described the internal project s/he is currently working on, saying: “... if you just look at this program, there are those who will benefit from the company reaching the level of savings planned, and then there are those who will have to go.” (Interview 6)

Likewise, several interviewees noted, that potential underlying conflicts often stay unseen but several things may bring them to the surface, such as when a project hits trouble (Interviews 2, 8 and 12), when primary-party – internal conflict spills over into the project (Interviews 2, 5, 12 and 13) or when significant changes occur during the duration of the project (Interviews 8 and 12). Parties usually attempt to hide internal conflict, as they fear the counterpart may try to take advantage of the situation (Interviews 2 and 8), and one interviewee noted, that one advantage of using an
intermediary is, that intermediaries help cover up internal dispute and ambiguity (Interview 11).

One interviewee remarked, regarding projects with one buyer using multiple suppliers, that conflicts may even appear between different suppliers, for instance if some suppliers approach the project as a partnership and others approach it as a transaction (Interview 8). Other interviewees, whose projects usually affect multiple buyers, noted that projects which aim at centralization or homogenization can create intra-buyer conflicts as buyers wrangle about which buyer’s operational needs should be treated preferentially (Interviews 1, 3 and 11).

Some interviewees ventured, that projects show telltales of rising tension, before degenerating into open conflict (Interviews 2, 8, 12 and 13). Among these telltales were: sudden rigid adherence to written contracts (Interviews 2 and 13), an increase in hedging and back-covering behaviour (Interview 12), quibbling on inconsequential details (Interview 13) and focusing on tasks which produce an visible result in the short-term (Interviews 8 and 13).

While internal conflict may spill over into projects, one interviewee remarked, that: “[...] interestingly it often happens, that the point of interface between the two primary organizations – the project – is the most calm and conflict-free area. The main frictions exist between the departments within the organizations [...]” (Interview 12) Another interviewee felt largely the same way, noting that although intra-party conflict exists and is difficult to hide, organizations are very good at hiding their internal dirty laundry from counterparts (Interview 13).

**Discussion**

In summary, projects may exist in an atmosphere of mutual trust, or they may be strongly adversarial from the get-go. In light of what Blake et al. refer to as a situation where interdependence outweighs the craving for independence (see chapter 2.3.4) – the main differentiating factors are the strength of the need for interdependence and the urge for independence – still creating a situation where the participating primary parties partake voluntarily. On the other hand, a number of interviewees pointed to projects, which can be interpreted as existing in a situation of forced participation – a situation described by Blake et al. as combining co-operation and conflict. This situation and its implications can be conceptualized as in Figure 12.
In either case, that a project’s different parties have different interests, which creates either latent or overt conflict, is a reasonable assumption. Furthermore, it seems quite apparent, that the form of co-operation, the procurement method as well as the number of parties involved, have a distinct impact on a project’s conflict-potential.

4.2.1.3. Limits to objectives’ impact on requirements

Introduction

While it seems self-evident, that primary parties’ objectives constitute the basis for projects as well as project requirements, several interviewees highlighted some limitations and eccentricities in this relationship, which are detailed in this chapter.

Findings

All interviewees agreed, that the buyer’s objectives should constitute the basis of project requirements (Interviews 1, 2, ..., 12 and 13), but the situation is not that simple. On the contrary, there are three specific areas, which beg inspection.

Firstly, several interviewees raised the point, that there is more to defining a project’s objectives than merely stating them. One interviewee noted that his/her buyers usually approach them with a single-paragraph objective, and that they thereafter sit down and start to “flesh out” a more complete definition of objectives (Interview 3), another, that s/he prefers to work together with buyers to “evolve” a rough idea into a definition of objectives (Interview 7), a third, that s/he prefers that buyers start with “fuzzy objectives” so that the objectives can be rigorously discussed (Interview 13), a fourth contended, that most buyers and also many consultants are bad at defining objectives – either making them unnecessarily restrictive or uselessly vague (Interview 2), a sentiment largely shared by a fifth (Interview 9). The fact that four out of these five interviewees professionally work as project intermediaries is to be noted.
Secondly, a number of interviewees noted, that there exists a tendency among buyers to too quickly proceed with detailed specification, without sufficient studying the objectives and making sure that the implications are understood as well as that the objectives are completely defined (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 7 and 9). When asked to speculate on the reasons for this behaviour some alternative explanations were unearthed. Some of the interviewees pointed out, that buyers usually do not merely need a tool (system), but that they also need to adopt that tool, and that adoption of a new (and assumedly better) tool also necessitates further changes in the organization (Interviews 1, 5, 7 and 9). In the words of one interviewee:

"Incongruously, clients may expect the mere adoption of a system to improve their processes. [...] On the contrary, and in my opinion quite apparently, the adoption of any new system or the change in any existing system also necessitates changes in processes and people, thus also creating an entire new set of goals for the project." (Interview 5).

Thus a number of interviewees agreed, that buyers may tend to overlook some objectives (Interviews 1, 5 and 7), or that organizations while starting projects aiming at wide-ranging organizational change, get tunnel-vision once they start working with external parties and start disregarding those objectives, which they do not need external parties for (Interviews 9 and 11). In a similar vein, projects may aim for changing the organization and the implementation of a new system may be intended as a change catalyst (Interviews 7 and 9), but it sometimes happens that the tool (new system) and purpose (change) get mixed up (Interview 9). Conversely, one interviewee speculated, that some organizations or people are uncomfortable with handling abstract concepts such as objectives, and thus gravitate towards starting to nail down self-evident details, such as deciding on which fields a specific user interface needs (Interview 2).

Thirdly, although all interviewees thought the buyer's objectives should be central to the project, the question on to what extent the supplier may have objectives and how these might impact the project and its requirements was less than simple. When asked, how the supplier's objectives might impact project requirements, those interviewees who had primarily represented buyer interests (buyer or intermediary) did by and large not consider the supplier's objectives to have a generally visible impact (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 11). On the other hand those who had worked primarily representing supplier interests mostly noted that, unless they are included in the project only once requirements are defined (such as in most PPP-based projects) their party's objectives may impact actual requirements, especially if and when they are approached by buyers seeking them to help define one or more alternative solutions (Interviews 6, 10, 12 and
and that even though requirements were cast in concrete, the supplier had extensive influence on how the requirements are implemented (Interviews 6, 8, 10, 12 and 13).

**Discussion**

While the interviewees agreed broadly, that the buyer’s objectives need to form the basis of the project’s requirements, the discussions exhibited a number of noteworthy details – firstly, that there might be some inherent difficulties in actually creating a useable set of objectives to act as basis for the project and secondly, that buyers tend to take the clarity of objectives for granted or be uncomfortable in dealing with abstracts and progress too quickly toward fashioning detailed requirements.

Interestingly the interviewees were divided on the extent of suppliers’ objectives’ influence – suppliers rating the influence far higher than buyers and intermediaries. Whether this implies that suppliers regularly delude themselves into thinking that their objectives matter, or if this signals that supplier’s influence is of a significantly less visible sort, the author is unable to ascertain.

4.2.1.4. *The supplier’s relation to buyer objectives*

**Introduction**

The discussion regarding whether project buyers should openly state their objectives and not merely the requirements, relates to the question how buyers hope or expect suppliers to utilize this information. Conversely suppliers were asked to ruminate on the usefulness of being supplied both requirements and buyer objectives.

**Findings**

A clear majority of interviewees representing buyers and intermediaries felt, that suppliers should know and understand the objectives the buyer has for the project and care for them, without regard to whether the supplier has a role in the process resulting in a definition of requirements, (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11). Mostly the reasons for this perceived need were given as the supplier’s ability to understand the bigger picture (Interviews 2, 4, 7, 9 and 11), to understand the gravity of the situation (Interviews 1, 6 and 8), to engender a willingness to “go an extra mile” if the objectives necessitate stepping beyond the requirements (Interviews 1, 4 and 7) and to be able to convey ambitions and wishes, which were difficult to express in quantitative terms (Interviews 2, 4 and 9). Some of these interviewees also speculated that suppliers
knowing, understanding and caring for the buyer's objectives could allow for a less detailed definition of requirements and more supplier initiative (Interviews 2 and 5). While most of these interviewees saw it to be the supplier's responsibility to get informed about overall objectives (Interviews 1, 2, 7, 9 and 11), others stressed the buyer's role in proactively communicating objectives (Interviews 4 and 5). Some interviewees felt strongly, that suppliers do not sufficiently care for buyers' objectives (Interviews 2 and 4).

In regards to the supplier's role in defining the requirements, some buyer-side interviewees noted, that if buyer and supplier collectively fashion the requirements then the supplier's level of adoption of the buyer's objectives is high, whereas if suppliers are contacted with a ready-made definition of requirements, they may prioritize the requirements above the objectives (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9), a viewpoint unanimously shared by interviewees solely representing supplier-side interests (Interviews 8, 10, 12 and 13).

Some interviewees representing supplier-side interests noted, that mere definitions of requirements, such as often is the case in both PPP-based and private competitive bidding scenarios leave something to be desired (Interviews 8 and 12), such as that the requirements may leave open whether the project is intended to enable expansion or contraction and that suppliers thus may make wrong assumptions (Interview 8). On the other hand, some of these interviewees also pointed out that when they are approached with both requirements and objectives, the two might seem not to match, thus creating confusion (Interviews 8 and 12), a situation which might reveal that the buyer has not had the expertise to fashion matching requirements (Interview 12).

Discussion

Most interviewees found it important, that the supplier be aware of the buyer’s objectives for the project – among others to facilitate an understanding of the big picture as well as to engender an atmosphere of shared fates (See Figure 13). On a related note, all supplier-side interviewees as well as some buyer-side interviewees felt, that the supplier actively participating in the formulation of requirements would aid the supplier's adoption of the buyer's objectives.
4.2.1.5. From objectives to fashioning requirements

Introduction

One basic assumption of the entire thesis is that the process of fashioning requirements to match objectives is not a straightforward task – that multiple sets of requirements may fulfil the same objective and that objectives and requirements exist on different planes of tangibility. This assumption needed to be validated. Simultaneously also, the author wanted to hear from his interviewees how, and using which heuristics, they proceed in the process of fashioning requirements out of objectives.

Findings

Several interviewees noted, that the relationship between objectives and requirements is a one-to-many relationship – that most high-level objectives may be fulfilled by widely diverging solutions, whereas when the objectives are detailed, the variation between alternative solutions are minor (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 11 and 13). In a similar vein, some also noted, that they are regularly asked to offer several different alternatives (Interviews 3 and 13) or that offering alternative solutions is considered to be good practice in their industry (Interview 4).

Likewise, a number of interviewees emphasized that objectives and deliverables and requirements exist on different levels of abstraction (Interviews 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 12) and that there is no way to be certain, that satisfying a set of requirements will lead to the fulfilment of an objective (Interviews 2 and 13).

While most interviewees who were aware of the difficulties produced by the different levels of abstraction either could not explain how they bridge the gap or used terms such as “assessment” or “judgment”, one interviewee detailed how his organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buyers expect suppliers to:</th>
<th>Suppliers feel they:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• understand the bigger picture</td>
<td>• understand the bigger picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understand the gravity of a situation</td>
<td>• are able to spot incongruities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engender sacrifice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• receive tacit knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Effects of communicating objectives to suppliers.
uses a variant of a S-W-O-T analysis, analyzing each requirement against the objectives (Interview 5).

Some interviewees also reported, that they typically structure the process of defining requirements as a pre-study -project (Interviews 3, 7, 9 and 11), often using external help to bring viewpoints or expertise (Interviews 7, 9 and 11). While not offering any heuristics for fashioning requirements, a majority of the interviewees noted, that starting with a tabula rasa is difficult and/or wasteful (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11). In stead, they may select an existing solution and adapt that solution to the organization (or adapt the organization to the solution) and the objective (Interviews 1, 2, 7 and 10), select an earlier solution as baseline (Interview 8), start out with a standard model (Interview 4) or use a project template as starting point (Interviews 3, 7, 9, 10 and 11). In contrast, some interviewees felt, that although starting out with a clean slate is more work-intensive, it is also sometimes necessary, to avoid sub-optimization and to allow for innovation (Interviews 4, 5, 12 and 13). Furthermore, some interviewees stated, that they commonly hold small seminars or workshops to openly discuss objectives among project personnel, with the aim to make all involved parties understand the relevant objectives (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5 and 13) and/or make big posters of project objectives in order for them to be constantly visible (Interviews 2 and 13) or create project motto's or slogans to crystallize a central tenet of the project (Interview 1).

Relatedly, some interviewees made a point of mentioning, that any definition of requirements made at the beginning of a project will not be able to match the objectives as precisely as a definition of requirements, which is continually revised as the project progresses (Interviews 5, 12 and 13). Thus some of these interviewees also pointed out that requirement fulfilment should not be seen as central to any project as requirement fulfilment would not equal fulfilment of objectives (Interviews 12 and 13).

**Discussion**

The interviewees largely agreed that objectives and requirements exist on different planes of tangibility (author’s term) and that there is a clear one-to-many -relationship between them. While they also felt that these properties resulted in that the process of fashioning requirements is difficult, only one interviewee was prepared to detail a heuristic, whereas many others described using facilitating instruments, such as adapting existing solutions, standard models or templates. It may be that the author’s
meagre results are due to the thesis having a too high-level focus and that case-studies of individual projects would reveal more detail.

4.2.1.6. The expertise gaps and bridges.

Introduction

The central reason for a buyer and a supplier to co-operate on a project is that the buyer alone may be unable to create the deliverable or that the supplier is a lot better suited towards accomplishing the task. In either case, the buyer needs something, the supplier is better suited to accomplish. The supplier’s relatively better suitability may be based at least partially on the supplier having some expertise the buyer lacks. The author set out to investigate the implications of this information asymmetry on the relationship between the primary parties.

Findings

A number of interviewees made a point out of noting that in buyer-supplier – relationships the buyer has their field(s) of expertise, whereas the supplier has other expertise(s), and that although these may overlap in some areas, the focal project is usually not one of them (Interviews 2, 12 and 13). Whereas organizations may select to use an external supplier for something they would themselves have the know-how for, this is largely seen as an exception (Interviews 2, 8, 9, 11 and 12). The exception is largely constituted by organizations, which decide to outsource a service they have previously handled themselves (Interviews 5, 7 and 10). Thus the rule is, that a project involves the use of expertise, which neither the buyer alone nor the supplier alone has. This relates to two specific areas discussed during the interviews:

Firstly, if buyers do not have the expertise to do the project by themselves, you can assume they are also not able to see which steps need to be taken to achieve the objective(s), nor how to take these steps (Interviews 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13). Thus the buyer’s ability to define sensible requirements by themselves needs to be questioned (Interviews 2, 4, 7, 12 and 13). Naturally there are several ways to address this problem, some of which are: starting co-operation with a trusted/trustworthy supplier and collectively fashioning requirements to match the objectives (Interviews 3, 8, 12 and 13), using intermediaries or consultants to help define the requirements (Interviews 2, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13), or doing your best with minimal external help, while maybe learning something in the process (Interviews 1, 6, 9, 11 and 12) and maybe go as far as taking
part in the supplier’s work in order to develop capabilities (Interview 12). In any case,
the project-related expertise of the buyer has a strong impact on the manner in which
the project is set up, whether consultants are involved, what the division of labour and
responsibility is etc. (Interviews 2, 9, 11 and 12).

Secondly, the use of intermediaries in projects seems to be more than a fringe
occurrence. According to one interviewee, the construction industry widely utilizes
construction consultants both as advisors as well as outright intermediaries and the
practice is widely seen as recommendable whenever the buyer is not construction-savvy
(Interview 4). Both the interviewees representing buyers bound to use the PPP noted
that they regularly use consultants to bridge the gap between buyer expertise and
supplier expertise (Interviews 9 and 11), likewise they note that the public sector utilizes
several internal sub-organizations to work as intermediaries between the end-clients
(such as government institutions or ministries) and private sector suppliers (Interviews
9 and 11), a set-up used also within some private sector organizations (Interview 3).
One interviewee described that his company, employing tens of people works solely as
project consultants and intermediaries, and is regularly contracted by public and
private buyers to handle projects with suppliers (Interview 7), a situation shared in
essence by another interviewee (Interview 2).

Based on the interviews with people experienced as intermediaries, the three central
roles for intermediaries in projects (in chronological order) are: Helping to finalize
objectives (Interviews 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11), production of a definition of requirements
(Interviews 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11) and acting as buyer towards the supplier(s) (in lieu of the
buyer) (Interviews 3, 7, 9 and 11) or helping the buyer by overseeing the co-operation
with the supplier (Interview 2).

Based on the discussions with interviewees representing intermediary-type
organizations, they see that the advantage they offer the buyer are based on several
factors, among them: The intermediary’s knowledge of both the buyer’s and supplier’s
activities (bridging the expertise-gap) (Interviews 2, 3 and 7), the intermediary’s ability
to mediate between several buyer-organization’s interests (Interviews 9 and 11), the
intermediary’s ability to utilize its network of trustworthy suppliers (Interviews 2, 3 and
7), the intermediary’s ability to gather project management-relevant expertise and offer
that expertise to buyers (Interviews 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11), the intermediary’s ability to
protect the buyer from the pressure of working with (multiple) suppliers (Interviews 3
and 7) as well as the intermediary’s expertise in organizing procurement (Interviews 9
and 11). Even so, some intermediaries noted that there are some potential tensions inherent to their position, based on their simultaneous role as supplier (to the buyer) and buyer (to the supplier) (Interviews 2, 3 and 7) as well as inherent insecurity on whose responsibility it is to act in case of surprising occurrences (Interview 7) and a general tendency to “shoot the messenger”, which often results in parties blaming the intermediary (Interviews 2 and 7).

Contrarily, some of the elements which intermediaries see as advantageous to the buyer were less liked by interviewees representing supplier viewpoints, such as that the intermediary precludes the supplier from building a relationship with the buyer (Interviews 8, 10, 12 and 13), that communication between supplier and end-buyer becomes slower (Interviews 10 and 12) and that suppliers are relegated to mass-producers of menial tasks, thus lessening the amount of problem-solving activities (Interviews 12 and 13). Some also questioned the intermediary’s ability to correctly represent the buyer’s interests, as some emotional content is inevitably lost (Interview 13). Further, some interviewees noted, that intermediaries might also have their own interests, while seeming to act purely on the buyer’s behalf (Interviews 12 and 13).

Discussion

The expertise gap seems to be a central concern. A project’s primary parties may take three stances towards bridging the gap: they may leave the gap unaddressed; they may collaborate and exchange knowledge in order to be able to build a solution; or the buyer may approach a consultant or intermediary who has a grasp on both relevant sets of expertise. Whereas the interviewees felt an unaddressed gap to be highly detrimental, most supplier-side interviewees preferred the collaboration-approach, whereas interviewees representing consultants/intermediaries preferred the use of intermediaries. Buyer-side interviewees were divided, with those interviewees representing buyers obliged to use regimented procurement preferring intermediaries.

Interestingly, whereas intermediaries are largely absent from mainstream PM literature, the empiric material of this thesis points to that intermediaries are a rather common occurrence, with five out of 13 interviewees predominantly working as intermediaries. Although the thesis uses a relatively minor and potentially skewed sample, and the phenomenon might not be as common as the share of interviewees could lead to believe, the thesis also unearthed other factors which promote the use of intermediaries, such as recommendations to use intermediaries in some industries and
the widespread use of regimented procurement. At the same time, the use of intermediaries in projects leads to several characteristics, which (especially in conjunction with regimented procurement) substantially influence the nature of a project.

4.2.1.7. The Public procurement procedure

Introduction

While the author initially did not plan on including methods of procurement in the scope of the thesis, the public procurement process was a central item of discussion in several interviews and was conceived by many interviewees as a central factor in defining a project’s nature. Thus it deserves a subchapter.

This thesis does not aim at detailing all aspects of the PPP, and will base itself mainly on interviewee experiences. Nevertheless a short introduction in the topic is necessary: The public procurement process is based on a EU-wide practice detailing how public institutions should conduct their procurement activities. It details that public institutions as well as public-private partnerships with majority public ownership or majority public financing are to use a regulated procurement procedure whenever the value of the procurement exceeds set (and regularly updated) limits. The rationale for the PPP is based on transparent and efficient tendering and equal and non-discriminatory treatment of tenderers and decrees that contracts be awarded based on either being economically most advantageous or simply being cheapest (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013).

Findings

Although there are limits regarding when a PPP is needed, many buyers feel themselves to be in a gray area, thus erring on the side of caution (Interview 2). As a result, a significant portion of all projects in Finland is conducted in a setting defined by the

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58 The process is based on EU Directives 2004/17/EC, 2004/18/EC and 2009/81/EC and subsequent regulations.
60 One interviewee noted, that especially the criteria of "majority publicly funded" is troublesome, as the share of public funding can often not be ascertained in advance, as funding is uncertain, and the share hinges as well on the organization’s success in gaining private as well as public funding, and the criteria may be seen to apply to any fiscal year within the duration of the project. Thus as the risk of litigation is imminent, buyers play safe. (Interview 2)
PPP. While the PPP allows for several alternative methods of procurement, one of these alternatives seems to dominate the experiences of the interviewees61 (Interviews 2, 4, 8, 9, 11 and 12): a method where buyers select suppliers based on competitive bids, made to answer the requirements defined by the buyer, thus necessitating that buyers define requirements before selecting a supplier.

Several interviewees noted, that the PPP has clear effects on projects, both regarding how suppliers approach potential projects as well as how the actual projects are subsequently conducted (Interviews 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12). Firstly, as bids are given in answer to detailed definitions of requirements, suppliers feel that they do not have the ability to imprint the project with their expertise in creating solutions (Interviews 8, 12 and 13), and they often find the detailed lists of requirements tedious and constricting (Interview 12). This latter may refer to the use preformatted requirement templates, in the words of one interviewee:

"Usually we try to start out with some requirement templates – partially to ease the workload and partially to make sure that we don’t forget anything, so for instance regarding information security we have a number of security levels – basic, heightened and high – and for each of these levels we have a requirement template. So for the high-level the security related template contains some 450 requirements, which all are “must have”, meaning that the solution a contender offers must fulfill all 450 requirements to be able to partake in the competition” (Interview 11)

Secondly, as bids are competitive, and thus by definition all but one of the contenders will never get compensated for the effort they put into formulating their bids, contenders tend to attempt to minimize the work they spend on the bidding (Interviews 2, 4 and 8). Often this leads to that planning is held to a minimum (Interview 4). Also, once a contract is reached, and substantive discussions can be held, the final plan is often quite different from what is envisioned in the bid (Interview 8).

Thirdly, the PPP is rigid, which also means that the buyer needs to make sure that every requirement is stated, thus leading to RfQ’s with literally hundreds, if not thousands, of separate requirements (Interviews 9 and 11). This tends to narrow down the amount of alternative bidders, sometimes even resulting in that only the biggest vendors can bid (Interview 11). Also, a PPP has to be conducted even though only one party can reasonably be expected to put in a bid (e.g. due to proprietary legacy systems) (Interview 12).

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61 Alternatively another method would allow for tenderers to submit their credentials as well as a price per work-hour, a method set up to allow agile projects within the PPP, but it is seldom used (Interviews 9 and 11).
Fourthly, by focusing either purely on price or “economic advantageousness”, many feel the PPP tends to favour short-sighted propositions and easily quantifiable metrics (Interviews 4, 8, 10, 12 and 13). Some interviewees noted, that buyers would be able to include qualitative criteria, such as innovativeness or quality, but seldom do so (Interviews 2 and 4), often because they are more open to different interpretations and heighten the risk of litigation (Interview 2). Some interviewees put forth, that as requirements and schedule are defined, and budget is the object of competition, quality is what the buyer is least likely to get (Interviews 8 and 12).

One interviewee described the PPP as a decision-making paradigm in its own right, which while focusing on regimentation, equal treatment and transparency, pays mere lip service to economic rationality (Interview 8). On the other hand, some interviewees also praised the PPP, based on that it does not allow favouritism (Interviews 9 and 11). Through necessitating consideration and transparency (Interview 11), it forces a more measured pace (Interview 9) and motivates the buyer to conduct thorough planning, both regarding objectives and requirements (Interviews 9 and 11).

In summary, a number of interviewees were critical towards the PPP, one noting, that the incentives built in to the process lead to a systematic sub-optimization of the entire project (Interview 4), another noting that winning PPP contracts has evolved into an art form, which has little to do with being able to do a project which meets buyer objectives (Interview 8) while a third noted, that the PPP focuses on the formalities to such an extent that any kind of mutually supportive partnership becomes impossible62 (Interview 12). Interestingly, interviewees from both the IT/ICT and construction industries felt that the process might be suitable for other industries, but not for their industry (Interviews 4, 8 and 12)

Discussion

The EU-wide practice of obliging public institutions and organizations using majority public financing to conduct their procurement based on a regulated and unified procedure, showed itself to have a significant impact on how such projects are being conducted. In the case of nearly half of the interviewees, the PPP constitutes the basis

62 The interviewee went on to note: "[...] in most cases in the private sector, the real willingness of any supplier to achieve, to do his best for the buyer or even take a hit on the project is based on the hope and expectation of a continued relationship. As the PPP denies this alternative, the result harms the taxpayer in two ways: First, the supplier does the bare minimum as required by contract, secondly, the supplier will do his damndest to achieve buyer lock-in through technological means, such as basing the solution on a technology which reduces competition.” (Interview 12)
for most projects, and thus defines the roles of different parties within projects as well as the process of working from objectives towards requirements. While some interviewees had good things to say about the PPP, most interviewees focused on noting the different mechanisms through which the PPP detrimentally affects projects: from necessitating up-front definition of detailed requirements, through its potential to skew the competitive landscape and creating waste, to favouring short-term solutions and disregarding elements such as innovativeness. As such, the PPP was described as constituting a decision-making paradigm, thus leading to a potential disconnect between PPP-competition success and more general success and the qualities necessitated for both.

4.2.1.8. The relationship between requirements, schedule and cost (and quality)

Introduction

As noted in chapter 2.1.1, the concept of a triple constraint, or some variant of it, still exists strongly in traditional project management literature. One of the subordinate purposes of the interviews was to ascertain, how widely the concept is actually used in practical project management and in relation to objectives. Not surprisingly, the question was somewhat divisive.

Findings

Although none of the 13 interviewees stated that they systematically utilize the triple constraint (or some variant of it) in order to structure their projects, the idea of the “central three metrics” (Interview 8) still remains influential. On one side, an interviewee described, his/her organization’s project methodology by stating:

"[...] according to the [organization’s] guidelines, one of the earliest tasks [for the project manager] is to, together with the project owner, divide up the priority percentages between the different elements of the quadruple constraint – except that we omit scope here, so we divide them between cost, time and quality. [...] project owners tend to divide the percentages quite evenly – maybe as a way of not having to prioritize." (Interview 9)

At the other end of the spectrum, one interviewee described the concept of the triple constraint in derogatory language not suitable for repetition here (Interview 12). Of those interviewees whose organizations tend to utilize the three metrics in some way (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) a significant number also stated that they regularly use “quality” as a fourth metric (Interviews 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) (see also chapter 4.2.1.11).
Interestingly, on closer inspection neither scope, cost or time are simple, linear metrics. For instance some interviewees pointed to that most projects also have a life after the project is finished and that these costs also should be factored into the equation (Interviews 3, 4 and 10), whereas one interviewee detailed a case in which an internal project was deemed so critical for the organization, that the project’s actual costs were not tallied (Interview 6). Likewise several interviewees noted that their organizations regularly stratify requirements into several priority-categories (Interviews 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11), in some cases going as far as assigning specific amount of plus-points for specific non-critical requirements (in competitive bidding scenarios) (Interviews 9 and 11), thus also making scope a metric which has depth. Time has traditionally been a flexible metric, as a project’s readiness can be divided up on several levels, thus for instance construction regularly aims for getting the building into use (and thus creating revenue) long before the machines leave and the entire project is finished (Interview 4) – a process not far distant from a common practice in software: taking a project into use and fixing the last bugs during the warranty-period (Interview 12).

As a majority of the interviewees were either primarily or secondarily involved with IT/ICT-projects, several pointed out, that whereas compensating for a tight schedule with added resources may work in other industries, it usually does not work in IT/ICT –projects (Interviews 5, 8, 12 and 13). To quote one interviewee:

"There's this idiotic assumption [in project management], that duration would be in any inverse linear or exponential way related to the amount of money available – a notion which was thoroughly debunked by Brooks in “the mythical man-month”. [...] In some businesses there may be more to the idea of an inverse relationship, but in ICT cost is dependent on the amount of work-hours, and surprisingly, so is the schedule. You can automate manual labor to some extent, but you cannot automate the creation of automation, which basically is what computer programming is about.” (Interview 12)

**Discussion**

While the concept of a triple/quadruple constraint received wide-ranging criticism, the idea of a project being intended to meet three or four central metrics was widely supported. Even so, interviewees wanted to note, that the different metrics are not simple, linear or one-dimensional. Further, a majority felt that the different metrics should not be seen as elements in an equation – that their interrelations are both tenuous and highly complex.
4.2.1.9. Goals and constraints – a question of precedence

Introduction

The discussion of project’s constraints/metrics pointed to that the different metrics are mostly not of equal importance – that in most projects one metric has an overriding significance. In these cases, the overriding metric could be seen as a goal, constrained by the other metrics63.

Findings

The interviewees agreed, that projects often have a driver of overriding importance (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13), which subsequently defines the internal order of planning. As such, some of the examples given were: Firstly, creating a new product or service in order to enhance productivity (Interviews 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) or create savings (Interviews 1, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13) or both (Interviews 1, 9, 10, 11 and 12). Projects may also be started in order to generate new sales (Interviews 4 and 5) or in order to build new facilities for a buyer (Interview 4). In all these given cases the primary impetus is given by a need to create something (scope), which allows an objective to be fulfilled. Secondly, projects may be started based purely on economic rationales, such as needing to invest money lucratively, therefore seeking new ventures (Interview 4), the need to enhance profitability by shedding less profitable activities (Interview 6) or to find something worthwhile for underutilized personnel (Interview 4). In these cases the monetary aspect (cost) is defining. Thirdly, projects may be started based on imminent events, such as an upcoming legal change (Interviews 7, 8, 9 and 11), an upcoming trade show (Interview 5) or even the imminent end of a management’s term (Interview 2) or of a government’s term (Interview 11).

All interviewees had experience with projects in which one constraint would be defining, and in their experience the overriding constraint was typically one and the same – some experienced scope to mostly be defining, some felt cost to have more impact and some felt time to have the greatest impact. The answers were so evenly divided, that no general conclusions could be drawn. Also there were no apparent trends within different industries except that those interviewees with regular experience of public sector projects all considered imminent legal change (time) to be a typical defining constraint (Interviews 7, 8, 9 and 11).

63 See Herbert Simon’s notion regarding goals and constraints on page 4.
It is worthwhile to notice, that interviewees had diverging opinions on the blessings of such overriding constraints: Whereas some noted that having one aspect fixed lessened the amount of fluid factors and thus made the subsequent planning easier (Interviews 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11), others noted that every fixed aspect lessened the “degrees of freedom” planners had and thus detrimentally affected a project’s ability to reach a balanced plan (Interviews 4 and 12). Somewhat in line with this, some interviewees noted, that although buyers may try to nail down several constraints in order to enhance their negotiating position vis-à-vis the supplier, this might lead either to the creation of untenable or unrealistic plans or to early-stage abandonment (Interviews 10, 12 and 13).

Several interviewees from the supplier-side noted, that it regularly happens that buyers approach them with project proposals, where all three constraints are cast in concrete (or scope and timetable cast in concrete and price defined by a race to the bottom), thus reducing their party’s options to either passing on the proposal or accepting it as such (Interviews 8, 10, 12 and 13). In these cases a supplier’s decision to go ahead with the project may be based on a genuine belief that not only the constraints defined by the buyer can be held, but that also the “converse constraint”64 – the supplier’s need for a profit – can be met (Interviews 8, 12 and 13). On the other hand, suppliers may hope to be able to renegotiate the contract (Interview 12) or hope to be able to create additional billing to compensate (Interviews 2 and 12). Suppliers may also feel forced to accede to economically unsound proposals in order to safeguard their customer relationship (Interview 8). What a number of interviewees found problematic regarding project run under PPP-rules was, that as the PPP in a competitive setting automatically assigns cost the highest impact, while the real driving factor for the project may be other (such as scope or timetable), thus creating a mismatch (Interviews 4 and 8).

Finally, two interviewees speculated on that “other suppliers” may systematically drive down prices on projects because they achieve a technological lock-in, thus enabling them to milk the buyer in the long-run (Interviews 12 and 13), a speculation vindicated by one interviewee who stated that this is exactly how his company works (Interview 10)65.

64 A term used by interviewee 13.
65 Interviewee 10 reported, that his/her company’s core business is to offer clients permanent services, which are billed based both on a monthly fee as well as separately billed extra work. As the company works in an industry, which offers significant economies of scale, there exists a strong impetus to gain more clients. Once clients are acquired, they are in a situation where leaving would generate significant costs to
Discussion

While projects may have three balanced metrics, they may also exist in situations where one of the three metrics has an overriding importance, thus creating a situation where one element can be conceived of as a goal, constrained by the other elements. Whereas such inflexible elements may help buyers in the conceptualization and planning of the project, suppliers usually disliked any fixed (input or output) goals, as they may be a part of the buyer’s negotiation tactic, and as they invariably constrain the supplier’s freedom to seek alternative solutions. Several supplier-side interviewees noted that competitive bidding-based projects (which regularly offer the supplier a fixed iron triangle) are reduced to an accept/decline decision, while automatically assigning cost the highest priority. Also, some interviewees pointed out that projects and decisions regarding projects and their requirements, timetable and budget could be so intimately linked to interests outside of the project (such as a maintenance plan or an SLA), that the decision-making within the project has to be seen as part of a longer chain of decisions.

4.2.1.10. Estimation

Introduction

As noted on page 13, literature mostly displays project estimation as a process starting from requirements and producing a schedule and a budget. The interviews exhibited two interesting related areas, which are worth exploring. Firstly, based on the interview findings, it can be taken as an implicit fact that projects exist, in which budget and schedule are not estimated or calculated based on scope, but are instead pre-set by the buyer alone or by the buyer and competing offers (see chapter 4.2.1.7). Secondly, based on the situation where the primary driver of a project is something else than scope, the question of what can only be called “reverse estimation” – how to based on budget or schedule estimate the remaining constraints – becomes interesting. This chapter aims to explore these topics.

them. As the adoption of a new client necessitates some technical work, every new client constitutes a project. Further the organization offers its clientele the possibility to adopt proprietary services, which strengthen the supplier’s hold over the clients. In these cases s/he has standing orders to, when necessary, disregard project profitability as any profitability-shortfall in the project can be compensated later. Interviewee 10 noted, that in cases such as these, the project-internal decision-making would not seem to make sense when viewed in isolation. (Interview 10)
Findings

In cases where the buyer defines more than one constraint (such as scope and schedule), the secondary constraint is therefore not defined based on estimation, but is instead defined based on the buyer's wish. Thus the actual process of estimation conducted by suppliers (and prospective suppliers) is not done in the form of “How long does it take us to build this house”, but is instead more akin to “How can we build this house in the given time”, “Do we think the buyer’s demands regarding schedule can flex?” or even “Can we believably offer to get this house finished on time?” (Interviews 2, 4, 10, 12 and 13)

In these cases some interviewees suspect that optimistic estimation occurs regularly, either by minimizing risk-buffers (Interview 13), automatic fast tracking (Interview 13) or by outright falsification (Interviews 4 and 12). Also, especially in big projects and PPP-based projects, some interviewees speculate that the supplier may view getting the project to be the main hurdle, and that subsequent failures can be seen as acceptable costs of doing business (Interviews 2, 4, 8 and 13).

The interviewees who were prepared to detail their methods for reverse estimation described two alternative approaches with minor differences:

One approach is most easily described as cyclic: (assuming that the hard limit set by the buyer is time) starting with a (hypothetical) set of mutually supporting requirements which would support reaching objectives and a rough work breakdown structure, the project’s cost and timetable are estimated. If (or when) the timetable does not meet the set deadline, the requirements are pruned, and cost and duration are estimated again, continuing the cycle until estimated duration and deadline match. Thereafter the plan is made more detailed and presented to the buyer for comment. (Interview 12)

Another approach can be called “back-and-forth”, which differs from the cyclical only in that the estimating-steps go back and forth between scope and the fixed constraint (Interview 10).

Also, although the constraints are usually seen as defining the boundaries for a project’s success, some provisions are often made for when fulfilling all three constraints/goals seems impossible. Thus a project’s primary parties may in advance agree on which corners to cut if it becomes evidently necessary (Interviews 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13). Conversely hard limits, such as rigid deadlines, especially when contractually
reinforced through late-penalty –clauses are often seen as signals to “cut anywhere else” (Interviews 8 and 10) and fixed-price projects are often seen by suppliers as a signals to minimize all risk, as they carry the risk alone (Interview 8). Whether requirements should initially be stratified is an interesting discussion, because although some pointed out, that it helps the supplier prioritize (Interviews 5 and 11), it might also lead to that supplier’s disregard the “nice-to-have” –requirements altogether (Interview 11).

Discussion

The existence of an overriding goal other than scope (such as one based on schedule or cost), creates a situation, where the actual estimation of the other elements needs to progress in another way than from scope to schedule and budget. As in most cases schedule and budget still remain dependent on scope, some form of cyclic- or back-and-forth estimation becomes necessary. More importantly though, a majority of interviewees conceded that real estimation often does not happen – at least not in the sense that the supplier could comment on how long a process will take or how much it will cost – instead scope, budget and schedule are often defined by the buyer, possibly together with intermediaries. Interestingly, the interviewees felt that such projects nevertheless often signal the parties which elements are flexible – e.g. a late penalty clause signalling to cut corners everywhere else if needed. Thus also the decision-making on the supplier’s side changes from “how long will it take” to “what do we need to do, to have it finished by X”. Many interviewees felt, that such situations promote optimism, falsification and promises, which are not intended to hold.

4.2.1.11. Other "constraints"

Introduction

The discussion in PM literature on the merits of different formats of the triple constraint and the quadruple constraint raises the possibility that other metrics beside scope, time and cost could be relevant. The question was quickly explored.

Findings

Quality seems to, like other constraints (see page 72), have multiple dimensions. Quality can be understood as a process (such as quality-oriented activities conducted during the project) or as a measure of the end-result (how many bugs were found in 6 months after adoption; does the ceiling hold water) or an extension of the scope (how
well a functionality works or how many users can be served simultaneously) (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 12 and 13). Noteworthy also, while buyers tend to view quality primarily as something existing in an end-result, suppliers tend to view quality as a process (Interview 13) or at least the product of hard work (Interview 12).

Interestingly, the interviewees were of somewhat differing opinions regarding whether project agreements (whether explicitly or tacitly) should concern themselves with quality, in other words, whether quality should constitute a contractual metric and thus make it an subject for haggling. One viewpoint was that including quality among constraints is unnecessary as a deliverable of substandard quality is not fulfilled, and thus needs to be fixed (Interview 4), implying that quality is a subset of scope. Another viewpoint was that adding quality as a discussion-point (alongside scope, cost and duration) would mainly lead to buyers trying to fine-tune quality in order to seek cost (or time) –savings (Interview 8). A third viewpoint emphasized that while cost and duration are quantitative metrics, and scope is a qualitative metric usually expressed in bullet-point statements, reducing quality – being qualitative and somewhat subjective – to a quantifiable metric is nonsensical and can not be done properly, thus it should not be done (Interview 12). Further another viewpoint was that quality should not be reduced to a constraint, as the aspired-to quality-level needs to be set before any of the goals/constraints can be specified or estimated (Interview 13), thus making quality a meta-level metric. On the other hand, some interviewees whose organizations used quality as a constraint-level metric found it a useful tool (Interviews 9 and 11).

Likewise, the interviewees differed on why quality often seems to be lacking. One noted that quality is like spare time – the more other things you are asked to do, or the quicker you are asked to do them, the less time you have for quality, and that quality is lacking because it is simply not valued enough (Interview 12). Another speculated that quality often falls victim to supplier’s attempts to raise profits, in the hope that the buyer will not notice the failings until after the warranty is over (Interview 4). Conversely, a public sector representative noted, that quality is generally very high, but that quality failures in the public sector inevitably become publicized, whereas the private sector is good at hiding its dirty laundry (Interview 11).

Based on the notion, that constraints are global factors affecting projects, and that they affect each other, some interviewees advanced the idea that a project’s risk-level acts like a constraint (Interviews 7 and 8), and that risk should be made visible so that
parties can guard themselves (Interview 7) as well as that risk should be openly
discussed in order to make risk and risk-management socially acceptable (Interview 8).

Finally, some interviews raised the notion of innovativeness or originality as a potential
higher-order factor. One interviewee (from the viewpoint of the construction-industry)
noted, that the normal view of an optimal project is one where cost and duration are
minimized and scope (“product”) is maximized – something which can be attained only
by serial production – and thus inimical to originality, which is nevertheless generally
valued in construction (Interview 4). Therefore originality should be made a visible
factor in order to highlight that optimal projects do not produce original constructs
(Interview 4). Another interviewee (a supplier representative) put forth, that at least
internally suppliers should view innovativeness as a value, in order to make it more
acceptable to step off the trodden paths and risk sacrificing a project’s economic
performance (Interview 12).

Discussion

Besides the classic three constraints of scope, money and time, some interviewees felt
that quality should be considered as a fourth constraint, in order to make decisions
regarding quality to be taken more seriously, while other interviewees felt, that this
would lead to haggling on quality. While not directly advocating for status as full
constraints, some interviewees felt that risk and uniqueness/innovativeness need to be
addressed as part of the discussion in order to make decision-makers aware of them.

4.2.2. Actors’ influence on project requirements

Harkening back to the delineation provided by Mayes and Allen, Pfeffer as well as
Salancik and Brindle regarding that influencing is to be seen as political when it does
not adhere to those methods and objectives sanctioned by the organization (see page
25). Problematically, in some cases, it seems somewhat difficult to delineate whether an
actor’s influence fulfils the abovementioned criteria. Thus a department attempting to
influence the project aiming at adopting a new enterprise resource management system
may be seen as political if the department’s ambition is based on interests such as
power mongering, whereas it is non-political if the department attempts to influence
the project in order to make it benefit their valid interests. As the representatives of the
department probably will present their case as being unselfish in either case, it is
exceedingly difficult to, with any degree of certainty, delineate actions of influence as either “sanctioned” or “political”.

Thus the structure of this chapter will be based on, firstly, presenting the empirical findings as they pertain to each type of actor (project owner, project manager, top management, solution team, etc.) and secondly presenting the politics-based cases of influence (political influence and players). Finally this chapter will also cover the phenomenon of hidden goals, partially based on that goal-hiding may relate to political activity.

4.2.2.1. Project owner

Introduction

As noted, literature portrays the project owner as a central actor in defining a project as well as its requirements. This chapter summarizes the interviewees’ views on the extent and antecedents of project owner influence.

Findings

"Naturally, the buyer has most influence on the general direction of the project..." (Interview 4)

Based on the interviews, project owners regularly use their influence to impact requirements (Interviews 5, 8, 10, 12 and 13), possibly by utilizing their subject matter expertise (Interview 8), by translating the buyer’s or affected organization’s objectives, strategy or visions (Interview 5, 10 and 11), and simply by dictating requirements (Interviews 10 and 13). In some cases this influence may be limited to prioritizing requirements or adding new requirements (Interviews 5 and 13).

Several interviewees noted, that the project owner’s relative influence on requirements is higher at the beginning of a project when requirements are defined (Interviews 5, 12 and 13), reaching its peak at the moment of signing the contract (Interviews 8 and 13), whereas the project owner’s ability to affect changes in later stages of the project is curtailed both by the project’s inertia (Interviews 12 and 13) and by the steering group (Interviews 7 and 10). One interviewee pointed out that the informal influence of the project owner is heightened once the formal agreement is made, because the project owner still controls the means of production (money and problem team) (Interview 8).
Regarding the project owner’s position within the steering group, once the project is well underway, it was noted, that the project owner’s position outweighs that of the supplier’s representatives (Interview 12), but may be curtailed by the other buyer’s representatives (Interviews 8, 10 and 13). Conversely, some interviewees noted, that no falloff of the project owner’s influence happens in agile projects (Interviews 11 and 12).

A number of interviewees considered the project owner’s influence to be based on the project owner’s grasp of the objectives and his/her ability to suggest or define the set of requirements, which will be deemed to fulfil the objectives (Interviews 5, 8 and 11).

“[the project owner] is the person who should best be able to link the project’s end-product together with the actual businesses demands […]” (Interview 11)

While basically all interviewees were in agreement, that project owners have influence on project goals (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13), they saw this influence to be based on different aspects and taking different forms. Some interviewees emphasized the importance of the project owner agency regarding the buyer (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 8 and 12) and that of the project owners’ customary position of chairman of the project’s steering committee (Interviews 8 and 10), thus seeing the influence being (at least partially) based on the project owner’s formal position.

Other interviewees emphasized the importance of the project owner’s personal commitment and that the project owner often has a strong personal interest in the object of the project (Interviews 1, 5 and 13), for instance based on the project owner also being the person who receives the result of the project and has to live with it. Thus also, the project owner’s common fate with the project might conceivably lead to decisions, which on the entire organization’s level may be suboptimal (Interview 5). In a similar vein, in projects aiming to produce products or services for third parties such as consumers or partners, the project owner also often represents the interests of the end-users (Interviews 5 and 12), thus sometimes leading to a situation within which his/her judgments may be beyond reproach (Interview 5).

Some interviewees noted, that the project owner’s ability to influence is related to his/her position in the buyer-organization – that a highly placed project owner has more ability to influence (Interviews 8 and 12), and that even a project owner with a lower position may have a lot of influence if there is a power vacuum directly “above” him/her (Interview 8). Conversely another interviewee mentioned, that highly positioned project owners often have too much on their plate, and that their attention-
span may be insufficient – that they lose motivation and start to lose grasp of the project – and that project owners should be selected based on capacity more than formal authority (Interview 3).

Further some interviewee’s noted other aspects, which might affect the project owner’s influence, such as: that the project owner's influence is dependent on the reach of the project (whether the project affects only the project owner’s department) (Interview 8), that the project owner’s influence be heightened by that his involvement be a well-known success factor (Interview 11), that the project owner should have good intrapersonal skills and be both able and willing to reach out, instead of resorting to “management-by-memo” (Interviews 1 and 12), that the project owner’s influence is affected by the project owner’s principal organization’s size and reference value as well as the project owner’s ability to imply or promise return business (Interview 12), that project owners need to have charisma, be level-headed and seem sincere (Interview 12) and also that if the project is of direct interest to the buyer’s top management, the project owner has less personal leeway (Interview 13).

Interestingly, the interviewees were divided regarding whether the existence of a separate buyer-side project manager would enhance or limit the project owner’s influence. Some saw the existence of both project owner and buyer-side project manager to lessen the project owner’s influence and curtail the project owner’s freedom of movement (Interviews 10 and 13), whereas others considered the project owner and buyer-side project manager to be perfectly able to share both influence and responsibility (Interviews 8 and 11) and that they at best can be able to form a mutually supporting relationship (Interview 8).

Somewhat surprisingly, only a few interviewees noted that the project owner’s influence be based partially on his/her ability to make monetary decisions (Interviews 12 and 13), but this may be based on that others felt the point to be too obvious to mention66.

**Discussion**

The interviewees were unanimous in deeming the project owner to have a direct and central influence on project requirements. This influence was seen as primarily based on the project owner’s position as representing the interest and influence of the buyer, in some cases strengthened by the project owner’s subsequent position as primary user

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66 See also chapter 4.2.2.11 for a related discussion.
of the end-result of the project. On the other hand, several interviewees also emphasized influence-factors, both positive and negative, which were not related to the project owner’s agency for the buyer, but were related to factors such as the project owner’s position in the buyer organization, the amount of time and attention the project owner can spare, the project’s impact on the entire buyer organization, personal characteristics etc. A summary of antecedents and inhibitors of project owner influence is displayed in Table 5. Further, the empiric material points to that the progression of project owner influence depends on the project methodology: in traditional/waterfall projects, the project owner’s influence is high at the beginning of the project and during the definition of requirements, peaking at the signing of the project contract and wanes thereafter, while in agile projects, the project owner’s influence remains high throughout the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Inhibitors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency for buyer organization</td>
<td>Project on top management’s radar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal interest and shared fate with project</td>
<td>Project impacts other parts of buyer organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-matter expertise</td>
<td>Lack of &quot;technical&quot; expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position as user of project end-result or</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to represent interests of end-users</td>
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<tr>
<td>High position within buyer organization</td>
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<td>Charisma and intrapersonal skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to decide on monetary issues</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 5: Factors impacting project owner influence

4.2.2.2. Project manager

Introduction

As with the project owner, literature presents the project manager as a central and influential actor in projects. This chapter details the empiric findings inasmuch as they pertain to the extent of project managers’ influence as well as detailing antecedents and inhibitors of project managers’ influence.

In general, interviewees felt, that project managers have a strong influence on many aspects of projects – sometimes including the definition of a project’s requirements. Given that all interviewees had experience of project management and most were still primarily project managers, there is a level of bias to be expected. As the account given
here focuses more on details than general appraisals, this potential bias can be mostly circumvented.

Furthermore, the reader needs to note, that while some buyer-side representatives in external projects are officially designated as “project managers”, they and their influence is not discussed in this chapter, as according to the classification used, they are either project owners or buyer-side project managers subordinate to the project owner (see chapter 4.2.2.1).

Findings

The interviewees’ experiences regarding the extent of project managers’ influence on project requirements varied widely. While only some interviewees experienced the project management to have direct input into project requirements, most admitted that project managers always have informal and indirect ways of influencing projects – both their actual requirements as well as how the requirements are reached.

Those interviewees who felt, that project managers have direct influence on requirements reported that this formal impact is based on that the project manager is usually among the first supplier representatives who start discussing alternative solutions to offer a buyer (Interviews 10, 12 and 13). That said, the project manager need not be the first person to offer a solution, as sales has often already done that (Interview 10), and s/he need not be alone in fashioning the solution, as sales and specialist consultants often play a part (Interview 13), but the project manager is often seen as the person who has most relevant knowledge (Interview 13) and who is expected to prepare a package which not only fulfils buyer objectives, but also makes economic sense to the supplier (Interviews 10, 12 and 13). Also, whether the project manager has had real influence on the requirements, his/her view on the viability of a project or it’s different parts is usually held in high regard, thus giving the project manager significant say in restructuring ongoing projects (Interviews 1, 3, 7 and 9).

On the informal level, the project manager’s influence seems to be profound. Several interviewees pointed to cases where project managers have been able to influence a project significantly without having any formal or early-stage authority (Interviews 1, 3, 10, 12 and 13). One interviewee noted that s/he as project manager tries to lead by example, to be visibly excited by the project and wait for it to “rub off” on others and that the project manager has a significant role in “selling” the proposition of the project
to the solution team and affected middle managers (Interview 1), something very much akin to what another interviewee referred to as “setting the tone” or building a supportive or inclusive atmosphere for an entire project (Interview 12).

Other interviewees emphasized the project manager’s potential to influence based on leadership and/or politics, such as that project managers’ intrapersonal skills are a central precondition for success and influence (Interview 3), that project managers’ ability to do deals with the process organization and buyer representatives are crucial to being an effective project manager (Interview 10) and that, as project managers have no real basis for overwhelming power, project managers need to embrace politics if they want to have their way (Interview 13). Another viewpoint was that project managers have the ability to play on that

“[...] everyone has an emotional relationship with his or her work [...]. Thus if he [the project manager] is able to align the tasks and objectives with these emotional relationships, the project will benefit and it will benefit those who participate [...]” (Interview 12).

During the interviews, the interviewees identified various aspects, which act as bases of project managers’ influence.

Interviewees agreed most strongly on that the central antecedent of project manager influence is the need for a supplier-side project manager to have access to the bigger picture and thus be informed of and able to relate to the buyer’s overall objectives (Interviews 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 13) – to be able to interpret what each and every specific requirement is aimed at achieving and make informed decisions (Interviews 1 and 4), to avoid project managers optimising their part of the bigger picture, leading to sub-optimization of the whole (Interviews 6, 10 and 12), to make sure project managers are able to frame the discussion correctly (Interview 12) and be able to offer functioning solutions (Interviews 8, 12 and 13). Further, the project manager’s influence is heightened, whenever fulfilling project requirements is accepted to be secondary to fulfilling overall objectives (Interviews 7, 12 and 13), thus giving project managers leeway to suggest alternative solutions (Interviews 12 and 13).

Likewise, interviewees felt, that whereas merely following a good specification may lead to decent results, good or brilliant results necessitate that the solution team and the project manager are able to take initiative (Interviews 3, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13). This process of the supplier taking the initiative may take several forms – ranging from the supplier being able to suggest a new project to fit the buyer’s known needs (Interview 3)
to the supplier being able to adjust pre-set requirements to better fit objectives (Interviews 7, 8 and 13).

There were several other factors, which were identified as heightening project manager influence. Intrapersonal relations were mentioned several times - whether project owner and project manager know each other (Interviews 8 and 12), have previously worked together (Interviews 7 and 8) and trust each other (Interview 8). Several interviewees noted, that the project manager’s grasp of the buyer’s activities has a strong impact (Interviews 7 and 12), whereas others noted that the project manager’s ability to quickly react to surprises and offer proactive solutions is critical to building the project manager’s influence (Interviews 10 and 13). One interviewee put forth, that a project manager’s visible dedication to and identification with a project lends his/her words more weight (Interview 1), another noted, that while the buyer may know his activities and the solution team might know the technologies, the project manager has experience of that intersection and knows projects, thus giving the project manager a significant share of expert power (Interview 13). Further, some interviewees noted, that for the project manager’s opinions to have any weight, the team has to visibly support the project manager and vice versa (Interviews 8, 12 and 13). Finally, one interviewee opined, that whenever the subject matter of the project is such, that the buyer has limited know-how of the subject (whenever the knowledge asymmetry benefits the supplier), the project manager should be a force to be reckoned with (Interview 13).

The results of the interviews regarding which kinds of factors limit or inhibit project management’s influence on project requirements can be roughly divided into two categories: global factors, meaning factors which relate primarily to the set-up of the project and the buyer-supplier relationship and personal factors, which relate primarily with the person of the project manager.

Among the global factors, those that were mentioned most repeatedly were projects, which are set-up and specified in detail before a supplier enters the picture, such as competitive bidding-based projects as well as internal projects which are strongly driven by top-management interests (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). All these can collectively be referred to as “lack of early-stage inclusion”. Several interviewees noted, that these types of projects are becoming increasingly common, partially based on the pervasiveness of PPP-projects (Interviews 4, 8, 9 and 11) and partially based on the increasing use of intermediaries in helping to define requirements (Interviews 2, 7 and 12) as well as projects becoming so complex, that
suppliers are increasingly dependent upon co-suppliers (Interviews 4 and 8). On the other hand, some interviewees noted, that the increasing use of agile methods in project management offsets this trend (Interviews 5, 11, 12 and 13). In summary, it can be said, that the method of procurement as well as the number of parties involved have a strong impact on a project manager’s potential to influence.

Some interviewees noted also, that project managers’ potential to influence projects at early stages (independently of procurement method) is curtailed by the organization’s unwillingness to have them spend significant amounts of time in preparing for projects which have not yet been secured (Interviews 8 and 10), thus also giving more influence to the sales-department (Interviews 8, 10 and 13).

Another global factor was the relationship between the project organization and the process organization (line organization), especially in those cases where the process organization is intended to take over once the project is finished, or where the project organization needs to loan its resources from the process organization (Interviews 6, 10 and 13). Besides the process organization generally restricting the project organization’s freedom of movement (Interviews 6 and 10) or weakening the project manager’s grasp over his/her team (Interviews 10 and 13), the project organization may also be interested in tailoring the project to hand over the result at the earliest conceivable moment (Interviews 10 and 13). Finally, one interviewee made a point of noting that project management in general suffers from project management being conceived as a taken-for-granted service, which is misconceived as mere bookkeeping, and not seen as a service, which could offer added value (Interview 10).

Among the personal factors, the interviewees noted that a project manager’s lack of knowledge and experience can inhibit the project manager’s ability to influence (Interviews 6, 7, 10 and 13). This lack of knowledge and experience can either be related to a potential lack of expertise of project management in general, as less experienced project managers have less ability to influence the project owners (Interview 6) or be less trusted by their management (Interview 10), or it can be related to project subject matters, as the buyer would hope project managers have a grasp of the buyer’s activities (Interview 7), while project managers with technical backgrounds may incur advantages when dealing with the team (Interview 13). On the other hand, project managers’ potential to influence projects may also be hampered by their common lack of formal position, either in relation to the counterpart (the project owner), who often might have organizational seniority compared to the supplier’s project manager.
(Interview 8), or in relation to other supplier-internal managers\textsuperscript{67} (Interviews 1, 8, 10 and 13).

**Discussion**

The project managers interviewed agreed, that while the manner in which the project is set up, defines the extent of project managers’ influence on project up-front requirements, project managers nevertheless have significant influence on how the day-to-day operations of the project and the solution team are structured. Thus projects that reach the supplier organization only once the buyer has defined the requirements, strongly curtail project managers’ influence. Likewise, although to a milder degree, the project manager’s influence is limited if the supplier’s management or sales comes to an agreement with the buyer before the project manager is included in the project.

On the other hand, most interviewees noted, that few projects cope without some renegotiation or realignment during the project, and that the project manager has significant influence in these steps. In general, the central antecedent of project manager influence, whether at early or later stages of a project was seen to be the project manager’s ability to (ideally) combine expertise of the buyer’s activities, with the subject matter of the project and of project management. Further, considering the project manager’s customary low formal position and lack of formal authority over team members, project manager influence was seen to be dependent on charisma, intrapersonal skills and political adeptness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors impacting project manager influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antecedents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agency for supplier organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to offer solutions, especially to offer more than buyer requires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding of both buyer’s objectives as well as technical solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding of buyer’s activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong identification with project, ability to set a tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expertise in project management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Charisma and intrapersonal skills, even political skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal knowledge of buyer or project owner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{67} See also chapters 4.2.2.6 and 4.2.2.7
4.2.2.3. Solution team

Introduction

The term solution team was originally used by an interviewee to refer to “[…] those people at the supplier’s end whose task it usually is to make the project happen.” (Interview 12). This chapter presents the interviewees’ views on the solution team’s (without project manager) role in defining a project’s requirements. Besides studying the extent of solution team influence, this chapter also studies the significance of intra-team dynamics on solution team influence as well as project management’s reaction toward solution team influence.

Findings

Projects seem to vary greatly, both in terms of subject matter as well as regarding how the project is set up. Just as with project managers, solution team members may or may not be included in a project’s early stages. In some projects most decisions, such as on detailed requirements, are made before the solution team members have first contact with the project (Interviews 2, 6, 7, 9 and 11), whereas other setups allow for some solution team input before the detailed plan is finalized (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12 and 13), while there are cases where the project owner or problem team create the detailed specifications in concert with the solution team (Interviews 5, 10, 12 and 13).

Likewise, as noted by some interviewees (Interviews 3, 4, 8, 10, 12 and 13), it makes sense to distinguish between a solution team’s formal influence, based upon procedures such as involving the solution team in the solution process, and informal influence in which the solution team makes its influence felt in other ways. Likewise, some interviewees distinguished between a solution team’s up-front influence, implying the ability to affect the formal requirements, and “downstream” influence, meaning the ability to change up-front requirements (Interviews 8, 12 and 13).

Based on the interviews it was clear, that all those projects, in which a solution is specified before a supplier (and a solution team) is selected, lead to lower formal and up-front influence by the solution team (Interviews 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11), although even there interviewees’ experiences varied somewhat, some noting that suppliers and solution teams have an ability to discuss the restructuring of a project once the selection of supplier has been made (Interviews 2, 7 and 8), but that a supplier’s ability

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68 See also chapter 1.3 Definitions.
to modify the project are detrimentally affected if the project has multiple suppliers (Interviews 7 and 8). Likewise, some interviewees noted that buyers are recommended to not constrain technical solutions, such as choice of method or technology, in order to leave the solution team some leeway in optimising the solution (Interviews 2 and 8).

At the other extreme, a number of interviewees representing suppliers noted that when buyers approach their organization with a problem to solve, or a list of objectives, the actual drafting of the suggested solution could be handled by everything from a lone salesman to a multidisciplinary workgroup (Interviews 5, 8, 10, 12 and 13). In general, interviewees had the experience, that whenever the solution team is formally involved with defining the requirements the solution team has vast influence on the final requirements69 (Interviews 2, 5, 10, 12 and 13). The central explanation given by interviewees for the extent of solution team influence was based on the team’s superior expertise in project subject matter (Interviews 10, 12 and 13). While a number of interviewees noted, that solution team members “who have to live with the project on a 9-to-5 basis” (Interview 13) have a strong interest to influence the project (Interviews 8, 12 and 13), they may often disguise their influencing, either by imposing technical constraints (Interview 8) or, in the words of one interviewee: “

“It’s quite common, that the team will profess that they are not exercising influence, that they are just doing their job, but that is the most active form of using influence – to be able to set standards and define what usage of power is and what is not.” (Interview 13)

On the other hand, several interviewees pointed out, that even when the solution team enters a project only once requirements are defined, the solution team is able to influence the resulting solution, in some cases by urging for a formal re-evaluation of requirements (Interviews 5, 8 and 10) or sometimes also by plainly disregarding those requirements which are seen as nonsensical or sub-optimal (Interviews 10, 12 and 13). Some interviewees went on to note, that even while solution teams may not be able to force an open discussion on re-evaluating requirements, changes during the project open a door to a discussion aiming at re-evaluation (Interviews 8 and 13). In a similar vein, some interviewees noted, that projects in which requirements are finalized without consultation with the solution team often suffer significant amounts of tension between the solution team and the defined requirements (Interviews 8, 12 and 13), and that this tension, if left unaddressed, can lead to detrimental results for the project,

69 Although it can be considered obvious, that solution teams in agile projects have both more and prolonged influence, most of those interviewees who rated team influence as significant were not referring specifically to agile projects.
ranging from low solution team morale (Interviews 10 and 12) to suboptimal solutions (Interviews 12 and 13) and to outright project failure (Interview 13).

Whereas interviewees considered the solution team’s influence to be mostly defined by factors extraneous to the solution team, they also saw that team-internal factors have a significant impact on the solution team’s willingness and ability to influence the project (Interviews 4, 8, 10, 12 and 13).

Solution teams vary in many ways. One interviewee described the stability of teams in his last two employer-organizations by noting that the project set-up with his current employer usually features highly temporary teams, with very little skill-overlap (no two individuals with the same expertise) and strong geographic dispersal, leading to teleconferencing being the norm, further leading to the lack of any team-spirit, lack of emotional attachment to the project, low motivation and no internal discussion or attempt to improve the project. In contrast, the interviewee’s previous employment featured long-standing, close-knit teams with significant skill-overlap, leading to a strong, mutually supportive team environment where everyone knew and respected each other and could support each other. (Interview 10)

One interviewee pointed out, that for a team to be able to perform as an autonomous entity, without needing constant supervision, the team needs an internal power-structure, whether formal or informal, thus giving some team members more influence (Interview 8). In a similar vein, another interviewee pointed out, that teams always include some people who just want to work and other people who want to influence (Interview 12). The interviewee went on to note, that most (supplier-side) project managers value the existence of a “senior”, a seasoned solution team member who is able to channel information and influence (Interview 12). The solution team’s ability to be self-directing was seen as being of high importance in larger teams (Interview 8).

Regarding solution team coherence and its impact, the interviewees’ views diverged. Whereas some were concerned that a non-coherent team would lead to internal squabbling and strife (Interview 4), others noted that disagreements and discussions are necessary to enable teams to explore more than just one alternative solution (Interview 12). Some interviewees also noted, that solution team disagreements often take on a form of ritual – such as programmers disagreeing on platforms or
technologies (Interviews 8 and 13). One interviewee summarized the topic of intra-
team dynamics by invoking Conway’s law\textsuperscript{70}:

"In IT, there’s a thing called Conway’s law […], which says, that a system will resemble the
organization which created it […], so, if the team is quarreling, the software will be ridden with
internal conflict – it may even go as far as being unstable. Or if the intra-team quarrel is latent,
the end-product may evidence strong silos." (Interview 13)

The discussions on the topic of team influence during the interviews evoked a number
of comments regarding what stance project managers should take towards solution
teams. Interestingly the comments diverged somewhat: some interviewees were
unhappy with how hard it is for project managers to discipline teams (and team
members), whereas others were focusing on methods how project management could
(or should) embrace the teams.

A number of interviewees grieved over the project manager’s (typical) lack of direct
authority over solution team members (Interviews 1, 8, 10). Some interviewees noted
that project managers have to put up with substandard contribution, because they
neither have direct authority over the team member, nor are they allowed to formally
evaluate team member performance (Interviews 1 and 10), with one going on to note,
that the situation is often exacerbated by that the team member is on part-time loan to
the project from his “home department”, thus creating a situation where the formal
power structure incentivises the team member to disregard the project (Interview 10).
Another felt that the project manager’s lack of formal power is not so big a problem as
long as project managers are able to put in a candid word regarding a team member’s
contribution (Interview 8). One interviewee focused more on the lack of respect
programmers have for project managers, whom they often consider to be “failed
programmers” or “people from the dark side”, depending on whether the project
manager’s background is technical or business-based (Interview 13).

On the other hand, a number of interviewees emphasized the importance of project
managers reaching out to the solution team, either trying to involve them at every
conceivable stage (Interview 4), emphasizing the significance of their work both
individually and as a team (Interview 1), generally treating the solution team “as adults”
who, once given all relevant information can organize themselves (Interview 12) or
acknowledging that the solution team is of utmost importance and has significant
influence and start treating them, at least, as equals (Interview 13).

\textsuperscript{70}See \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conway%27s_law} (accessed 2.9.2013)
**Discussion**

Again, much in line with project manager influence, the central criteria for solution teams having formal influence is early-stage inclusion. Thus not all factors need to be repeated here, but a summary is available in Table 7. As the solution team is not a unitary actor (such as the project owner or project manager), the aspect of intra-team dynamics was seen as significant both to the internal workings of the team and to how willing and comfortable a solution team would be to assert its influence. As the methods solution teams have for informally influencing projects is less than straightforward, the question was also explored (results in Table 8). Thus also it seems quite clear, that whereas a solution team’s potential for formal influence is based on early-stage inclusion, the solution team’s “downstream” influence is more informal and based upon specific expertise (i.e. expert power) and actions, which could be deemed to political (such as defining constraints, defining what is technically sound or forcing a re-evaluation). Considering, that interviewees were selected for their background in project management, it is no surprise, that the topic of project management’s relations with the solution team was raised. Here the discourse was divided, some grieving over the project manager’s lack of authority over the solution team, some focusing on how project managers should reach out to the solution team and embrace its involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors impacting solution team influence</th>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Inhibitors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Early stage inclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Temporary teams, low level of teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expertise on project substance</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of team coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional pride, willingness to influence</td>
<td></td>
<td>• No special expertise requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Team stability and skill overlap</td>
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Table 7: Factors impacting solution team influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of solution team influence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Application of subject matter expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to define &quot;technical&quot; constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to disguise influence as &quot;doing one's job&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to force re-evaluation of requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Forms of solution team influence

4.2.2.4. **Top management**

**Introduction**

Considering, that this thesis has already covered the project owner’s influence, this chapter has to be seen in the context of covering top management’s influence, if and
when top management is not also project owner. Also in this context, top management is not specified as a single actor or executive body, but in stead reflects abstractly on those upper levels of management, which do not as such partake in the project.

Top management’s influence has herein been divided into two categories: long term-influence, such as through formal policies, visions and strategies and short-term influence, such as a top management’s reaction to a specific, unforeseen issue.

Findings

“In my opinion, most projects may be traced right back to some paragraph in the client’s strategy. Or even if the objective is not strategy-based, then always the strategy has some impact on how the project is done.” (Interview 7)

For linguistic convenience, all different occurrences of top management’s long-term ambitions – strategies, policies, operating procedures, visions etc. – will be collectively referred to as strategies within this chapter.

The interviewees were unanimous in their opinion, that strategies, in all their different forms, regularly influence project goals, either by actually defining objectives (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) or by influencing how projects should be conducted (Interviews 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). These two manners of influence will be inspected separately.

Firstly, strategies define objectives, which in turn necessitate projects. One respondent described a project which he/she is currently involved with, which is based on a paragraph in the government programme of the (current) Finnish government, which covers a specific electronic service to be created for Finnish citizens (Interview 11). Another detailed a programme he/she is currently managing, which has its origins in a strategy-derived board decision to administer radical cutbacks in the organization (Interview 6). A third interviewee described a project, which had started because the buyer had decided to expand into a new branch – a strategic decision (Interview 8).

Secondly, although the main driver of the project may not be borne out of a strategic decision, strategy may influence projects by guiding or constraining projects. Projects and project plans may be evaluated against long-term plans and visions (Interviews 3 and 5). Likewise projects may be affected by organizations having a multitude of strategies, including “no-hiring” – policies (Interview 6), migrating a product offering to SaaS – solutions (Interview 5), adopting standard IT – solutions (Interview 2), centralizing ERP-systems (Interview 1), cutting down on ICT-costs (Interview 9),
preferring open source –based solutions (Interview 13) – all of which decidedly impinge on project requirements. One interviewee expressed his/her view as:

“There is a law of nature in organizations – there’s always movement on two fronts: Firstly, organizations are always in the midst of either centralization or a de-centralization. Secondly, organizations are either actively growing or aiming for heightened efficiency. And basically all development projects, whether IT or other types, have objectives, which can be linked back to these.” (Interview 11)

Simultaneously a number of interviewees noted, that the effect strategy has on a project is not always predictable – even when the relevant strategies are publicly known – partially because strategies might be “mere pieces of paper” (Interview 12), be more akin to pipe dreams than real commitments (Interview 2) and depending on how rigorously organizations inspect plans for a match with strategy (Interviews 3, 5 and 12). Further, some interviewees noted, that matching projects with strategies is inherently a comparison of two sets of written objectives (Interview 13) and that most sets of objectives can be seen as matching if there is enough will to do so (Interview 2).

“Projects are basically a manifestation of the buyer’s top management’s ambition.” (Interview 13)

Considering the position of top-management in general and especially that of the buyer’s top management, there are few limits to the extent of top management’s theoretical influence (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13). This said, many respondents wanted to point out that top management does not regularly involve itself with directing projects (Interviews 1, 2, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 13), except in rare cases, such as micromanaging top-managers intruding on meetings and handing out “monosyllabic verdicts” (Interview 13). When asked to detail the types of cases in which top management makes its influence felt in projects, interviewees noted the following types of cases: Firstly, top management actively participates in projects if the project is on the management’s agenda or “radar” (Interviews 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13). This participation may take several forms, such as top management’s participation in a project’s steering committee (Interviews 1, 7, 8 and 12), or arranging for regular internal briefings on the state of a project (Interviews 6 and 13). In high-profile projects, top management support, whether overt or hidden, was generally seen as critical to success (Interviews 1, 5, 7, 8 and 13). Secondly, top management may involve itself if and when a project is seen as needing a helping hand, or when the project requests help – either in the form of conflict resolution, directives, resources or motivation (Interviews 2, 5, 10 and 13). Finally, a change in management may lead to the new management rearranging projects (Interviews 1 and 2),
Top management involvement in projects was not generally seen as either positive or negative by most interviewees, except that one interviewee noted having experienced projects having been reframed in order to keep them “off management’s radar” (Interview 12). Another noted that top management involvement makes the scheduling of meetings excessively difficult, but lessens the need to wait for decisions (Interview 13). Management involvement may exist but be invisible to the other party (Interviews 2, 6 and 13). Not surprisingly, the visible involvement of the buyer’s top management often leads to a similar level involvement by the supplier, as suppliers do not want to show disrespect and may consider their project manager to need backing up (Interview 8). Notwithstanding accounts of micromanaging top managers (Interview 13) and radical management change (Interview 1), the interviewees found that top management involvement generally does not aim at directly influence ongoing project’s goals.

Discussion

Top management may influence projects directly, by direct and specific involvement in the project, or indirectly, through long-term ambitions, policies, operating procedures, strategies, etc. While strategies may define needs, which are satisfied through (new) projects, they may also define needs, which otherwise independent projects need to take into consideration. Conversely as strategies still need to be implemented and interpreted, a strategy need not affect a project even though you would think it should. On the other hand, top management may involve itself with projects after a management shakeup, when the project is seen as critical for the organization or when the project seems to need help. A summary of forms of top management influence is given in Table 9.

Mostly, top management was not seen as trying to meddle in projects, at least not to such an extent that they would influence an ongoing project’s requirements. On the other hand, management involvement may be invisible to the counterparty or even to a majority of the own party’s actors as top management deals with assigned representatives (project owners and project managers). Thus, the project owner and, to a lesser degree, the project manager can be seen as agents of their respective principals – their organizations’ top managements who define their organizations’ objectives. Not surprisingly, top management’s influence is solidly based upon top management’s position at the top of the hierarchy (reward power, coercive power and legitimate power).
### 4.2.2.5. Project sponsor

**Introduction**

As the concept of a project sponsor is well rooted in literature (see page 17), the author set out to study the extent and antecedents of project sponsor influence. The empirical results were thus somewhat surprising.

**Findings**

"It’s usually hard to say what happens within the client’s organization, in the background, [...] but no, I cannot say that I’ve ever encountered a project, which would have had an apparent sponsor working for it." (Interview 8)

"[...] the most obvious incarnation of sponsorship is the pet project-situation – you encounter these regularly. You suddenly notice that there is someone in the steering group meetings, who does not fit in with the rest – he might be the head of marketing, and the only thing he shows interest for is that one feature-set [...]" (Interview 13)

The interviewees were quite divided in regards to whether they have experienced sponsors in projects. While some interviewees quite clearly indicated that they have experienced actors, who fit the profile of sponsorship (Interviews 1, 5, 9, 12 and 13) most noted that they have no experiences of individuals they would see as sponsors. One interviewee noted, that supplier-side actors are often not privy to what happens within the buyer-organization (Interview 8) – something, which may partially explain the differing experiences.

Among behaviour patterns of sponsors, it was noted that they might function as “protectors” (Interview 9) or support troupes (Interview 12). In the words of one interviewee:

"Sponsors function slightly like the artillery – they support the project (the infantry): clearing the way by mauling the opposition." (Interview 13)
Also, some interviewees noted that whether someone is a sponsor is sometimes far from easy to ascertain (Interviews 8, 9, 12 and 13), and that “external sponsorship” and stakeholdership often overlap (Interview 5).

Interestingly, some interviewees noted that sponsorship might also function contrarily to the project – either by design or happenstance – “sponsors might mean well, but they may just get carried away or be incompetent” (Interview 12) or hierarchically high-up individuals who uninvited enter the fray and try to make sure the project is not started, or that the project is changed substantially (Interviews 1 and 13). Especially in the form of “anti-sponsorship”, sponsorship is also akin to political behaviour and players, as anti-sponsors can occur even without the player having hierarchical power (Interview 1).

**Discussion**

The concept of sponsorship, even though regularly used in literature seems problematic as it, in the context of this thesis overlaps both with playership and political behaviour. Maybe as a result of this overlap, the empiric material gained on project sponsors was quite thin, not allowing a substantive analysis. Within that material, it is noteworthy, that the concept of sponsorship strongly elicited the notion of an anti-sponsor – a person who fits the description of a sponsor, except that s/he works to the detriment of the project.

*4.2.2.6. Other parts of the organization*

**Introduction**

Not surprisingly, projects do not exist in a vacuum. In stead the environment in which projects exist can be conceptualized in relationship to the continuous processes of the primary parties as well as towards other ongoing projects. This chapter focuses on studying the influences of the process organization on projects and project requirements, while chapter 4.2.2.7 will focus on interactions between projects.
Findings

"Considering that some of our project managers’ projects are basically aimed at destroying the lifetime achievement of some department heads, you can expect that it will not be easy going, and we have some people here who are on great medication <chuckle>.” (Interview 6)

"On the client’s and buyer’s side, there are often also some “significant others”, in the sense that there are those departments, which see it as within their purview to take part in all other parts’ activities.” (Interview 13)

In general, the interviewees were proactive to point out, that primary parties were heterogeneous in and of themselves – that all but the smallest primary party organizations have significant subdivisions, which often have widely diverging interests (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13). Simultaneously a number of interviewees openly proclaimed, that they are often more aware of the subdivisions affecting their organizations, as the other party’s internal divisions often remain quite opaque to them (Interviews 2, 3, 8 and 13).

At the same time some projects are intended to have a wide-ranging affect on the organization in which the project is conducted. In the words of one interviewee:

" [...]management information systems [...] do by their very nature affect more than one part of the organization, thus creating a situation where there are a number of parties within the organization, which have a strong interest in how the system works and whether it benefits the division’s long term goals. Also these systems impact the day-to-day work of organizations, creating new processes and tasks, creating new human resource needs in one part of the organization, while enabling layoffs in another.” (Interview 2)

The interactions between process organization and project organization may vary widely, to give some examples: One interviewee mentioned, that their buyer organization is primarily subdivided according to function and secondarily based on geography and that these divisions are pitted into competing against each other – while his organizations should offer them centralized systems (Interview 3). Another remarked about his/her current project which is aimed at offering a common ERP-system for roughly a dozen country organizations – each of which have recently been acquired and still retain quite different cultures and values (Interview 1). Another noted, that organizations may be forced to adopt new systems based on external pressures (such as reporting demands or legislation) and that projects may thus exist in situations, where the entire buyer organization is averse to the project (Interview 2).

A number of interviewees noted that the process organization is a significant party in the types of projects their organization currently does (Interviews 6, 10, 12 and 13). The relationship between project and process may, based on these interviews, take one of two forms – either so that the process organization is the target of the project
organizations' work (Interview 6) or through that the process organization (or a specific part of it) will take over from the project organization once the project is finished (Interviews 10, 12 and 13). Whilst, based on these interviews, nothing generalizeable can be said about the former situation, the later situation exhibits some specific tensions.

One interviewee told that in his organization, projects concern themselves with initial implementations in new customer relationships, as well as some development activities for existing clients, and that the resulting service is always handed over to maintenance thereafter. Conversely, the actual workforce of the project is likewise on loan from the maintenance department – a competition for resources, which the interviewee found unavoidable but highly detrimental to both departments. Simultaneously, projects are started by sales, worked on by the project organization and the results are taken over by maintenance, without maintenance having any formal influence in the project – thus often leading to the project's result being difficult to handle by maintenance. (Interview 10)

Another interviewee voiced mainly the same issues, but went further by saying that the differing interests between development (projects) and maintenance (process) and ensuing potential conflicts are often overlooked, thus sometimes resulting in detrimental results. The interviewee went on to note, that the conflict between development and maintenance is surprising, considering that both often are technically oriented and “speak the same language” – the difference being that development is run as projects and focuses on effectiveness whilst maintenance is run as a process and focuses on efficiency. (Interview 12)

A number of interviewees noted the intended users (of systems) or targets (of change) to be a significant party in projects (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 8 and 9). One situation, which was described as fairly typical, is that a part of the organization acts as buyer to the IT/ICT-department (supplier) in order to produce an information system for an internal target audience (the users), and that the primary interests of these actors differ widely (Interviews 1, 8 and 9). Specifically, a change may lead to that some employees are let go (Interviews 6, 7 and 9), or that some employees lose their status, as their status may be based on their mastery of the old system (Interview 1). Also, the system may be designed specifically in order to serve the organization’s higher goals, thus also necessitating disregarding the wishes of the user base (Interviews 1 and 9), which in turn may lead to significant change resistance (Interview 1). On the other hand, some
projects base many of its requirements on the wishes of existing and intended users –
either so that the wishes of existing users form a significant basis for project plans
(Interviews 5 and 8) or so that assumptions and market research regarding potential
users define the project setup (Interviews 5 and 13). Some interviewees also noted that
in some projects a level of secrecy has to be maintained, so that user interests need to
be assumed instead of ascertained (Interviews 6 and 9). Further some interviewees
noted that it is sometimes hard to determine, whether users need to be conceptualized
as a party or as a stakeholder (Interview 9), and that one primary party may deem users
to be a party, while another might see them as stakeholders (Interview 2).

“[…] salesmen are intruders of divine providence – their job is to convince and to influence and
they, once they get it in their head, that they should be part of a decision-making process, are
very hard to keep outside.” (Interview 13)

A number of interviewees highlighted the fact that within their (supplier)
organizations, there often are some departments (besides maintenance) who have
direct interests in projects, and that these interests sometimes lead to conflicts. Based
on the interviews, some of the departments, which might typically interject their
interests into projects and thus influence or constrain the projects are: sales and
consultants (Interviews 10, 12 and 13), accounting or controller (Interviews 10 and 13),
supplier top management (Interview 12), the quality function (Interview 12) and
human resources (Interview 13).

Generally, one interviewee noted, that other department’s ability to influence is often
partially based upon that the (supplier’s) project organization takes it’s goals too
directly from the buyer, instead of building up a clear vision of what the project
organization wants out of the project for themselves (Interview 10). Another
interviewee noted, that parties, which during a project interject with relevant notions,
signify that not all relevant parties have been included into the project from the start
(Interview 12).

Specifically it was noted, that sales regularly define the project’s actual constraints and
that these constraints sometimes create problems for the project organization –
whether out of sales’ inherent interest in pleasing the buyer (Interviews 10, 12 and 13)
or out of sales’ lack of understanding of technology (Interview 10). To help clarify, in
the words of the interviewees:

“When sales sells a product development project believing it is a simple implementation project,
the result is a product development project, which is sold for a seriously too low price and on too
tight a schedule.” (Interview 10)
“[…] salesmen like to keep their clients happy, so instead of listening to a client complaint, getting an estimate from the technologists and disappointing the client, they rather promise the client something, which they know the client will be happy with, then raise hell until management gets the technologists to drop everything else and get the thing done, pronto.” (Interview 13)

One interviewee noted, that he regularly attempts to make salesmen part of the project’s steering committee, partially in order to add sales’ level of responsibility (Interview 10). Another function, which the interviewees found problematic, was the accounting function (Interviews 10, 12 and 13), partially because of the demands they set on internal reporting (Interview 13), and partially based on that their focus and attention span differs from projects (Interview 10). When asked to elucidate on the basis’ of these parties’ influence, one interviewee noted, that some of an organization’ functions, especially sales, finance and accounting, are usually better equipped to communicate with management, thus heightening their influence on all aspects of the organization (Interview 13).

In a similar vein, there were two further personnel groupings whose relative affect on projects was mentioned during the interviews, which are not directly mentioned in project management literature: middle managers (Interviews 1, 2, 6 and 7) and management assistants (Interview 13). The potential influence of middle management was exhibited in several examples and anecdotes. One interviewee emphasized, that many projects involving internal change may have to go contrary to what middle management has worked for (Interview 6). Simultaneously, some interviewees pointed out that while top management might have a strategic vision, they rarely have all the facts and details about the organizations actual operations, thus necessitating that projects actively communicate with middle management to get a clear and correct view of the details involved (Interviews 2, 6 and 7).

One interviewee pointed out, that all projects, which aim to rearrange the inner workings of a company affect the middle management’s position and tasks directly and that although the change-instigator may be on the topmost level, the middle management must actively participate in implementing changes. Thus the project has to be actively “sold” to middle management. (Interview 1)

In a similar vein, one interviewee raised the issue of management assistants, saying he had comprehensive experience of assistants having significantly influenced projects. When asked to go into details the respondent pointed out that assistants work closely with their principal and may often have the manager’s ear, while they also hold a
primary information-channelling function – on one hand bypassing ordinary channels to offer an information highway straight to management, while on the other hand filtering the information, which reaches the manager. (Interview 13)

**Discussion**

Although the relationship between project and process has long been known to be troublesome (see Gaddis, 1959), the empiric material also pointed toward that even the process organization, meaning all the other parts of the organization, needs to be understood as a heterogeneous actor and that just as projects may affect the other parts, the other parts of the organization may influence projects (the other parts mentioned in the empiric material are summarized in Table 10).

The interrelations between projects and process organizations become especially obvious, if and when the purpose of the project is to affect the rest of the organization in any significant manner, as the affected parties also have a strong and direct interest in influencing the project. Another interesting situation relates to projects, whose end-result is intended to be taken over by a maintenance-function upon closure of the project – thus potentially creating a direct conflict of interest, the project organization aiming at the earliest possible handover while maintenance would hope the project organization would take its desires into account. Likewise many interviewees reported that other organizational functions have direct interests in projects and that these interests at times create conflicts. Among the more frequently mentioned other functions were sales- and accounting-functions and middle managers in general. Some of the interviewed project managers were openly venomous in their descriptions of “meddling” by sales and accounting. On the other hand, if and when the project is targeted at a specific group of internal “targets” or users, these may also form a specific and coherent party, which needs to be taken into consideration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant other parts of the organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Target organization, users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Middle management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sales, consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accounting, controller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management assistants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Relevant other parts of the organization
4.2.2.7. **Other projects**

**Introduction**

The literature review pointed to interactions between projects, but without going into too much detail. The study intended to rectify this.

**Findings**

"I think that no project exists in isolation – every project exists in an environment, and it’s limitations and constraints are either defined by the process organization, or by other projects.” (Interview 11)

"...things do not just happen – everything, whether at the supplier’s or buyer’s end of the project, necessitates that a resource’s attention is gained – either for writing some code, digging up some facts or just making a decision.” (Interview 12)

In the short to medium term, all organizations’ resources are limited (Interviews 5, 8, 9, 12 and 13). Likewise, there are a multiple types of resources, which might affect projects. Among these types the following were identified: Firstly, on an aggregate level, manpower and hardware (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) and money, as defined by development budgets (Interviews 3, 5, 9 and 11) may affect projects both in regards to their timing as well as more generally, that the utilization of resources may have an affect on what level of performance is expected from projects (Interviews 3, 5, 8 and 13) – a low utilization of personnel resources may lower expectations set for new projects (Interview 8), whereas a higher utilization may heighten the threshold of starting projects (Interviews 3, 5, 9 and 11). In some cases organizations may even decide to limit their relevant resources in order to force heightened per-project efficiency (Interviews 3 and 9), whereas other organizations may take measures tailored to lessen the impact of limited resources, such as building up a base of trusted contractors and subcontractors (Interviews 4 and 5).

Secondly, on a detailed level a number of different types of resources were identified, with the actual workforce and/or planning capabilities being mentioned in almost all interviews (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 12). Besides these, also the following were mentioned: bottleneck technical resources (scarce, highly specialized individuals) (Interviews 1, 4, 5, 8 and 12), teams specialized on the preferred technology (Interviews 2, 5, 8 and 13), projects competing for management attention (Interviews 12 and 13) and management support (Interview 1).
The need for projects to share resources with other projects\textsuperscript{71} can affect projects and their goals in many ways. In the words of one interviewee:

"...every offer we send out has inspected the prospective project’s interactions with other ongoing projects, partially with regard to what workforces will be available, and also looking at what we have or will have already learned to do." (Interview 8)

Firstly, unrelated projects may affect a project’s scheduling, either so that a project’s start is delayed to wait for a period of lighter aggregate workload (Interview 8), so that a project is delayed because it won’t fit into the development budget (Interviews 3, 5 and 9), so that a project needs to wait for a bottleneck resource to become available (Interview 5) or through that it is sensible to postpone a project’s phase to wait for results from another related or similar project (Interviews 5, 8 and 12). Likewise, all of these factors may affect either the scheduling of the project as a whole, or may impinge on the internal ordering of tasks within a project (Interviews 5, 6 and 12).

Secondly, the available resources may affect the details of the solution, which is offered to the buyer. Especially interviewees active within IT noted that an uneven distribution of workloads between teams specializing in different technologies might guide, even dictate, the solution, which is offered to the buyer (Interviews 8 and 13). Further, although the premises which organizations base their project selection practices on are mostly defined along strategic lines, resource availability may on a case-by case –basis have an impact on project selection (Interviews 3, 5 and 8). A related notion put forth during the interviews is that the effect other unrelated projects can have on a project is exacerbated when the focal project’s timetable is tight (Interviews 5 and 7), whereas projects with longer durations are more flexible as needed additional resources can feasibly be brought on-line to help (Interviews 7, 8 and 9).

Besides the competition for real and tangible resources, such as money and personnel, some interviewees noted that projects do also compete for more intangible resources such as status and the attention of management and/or the buyer(s) (Interviews 1, 2, 12 and 13). Likewise it was noted that some organizations tolerate outright competition between projects and may even encourage it (Interviews 12 and 13). In some cases the competition may become vicious, to quote one interviewee:

\textsuperscript{71} Projects’ need to share resources with other parts of the organization is covered in chapter 4.2.2.6.
eliminate their competition... Make no mistake, if the competition is really real, such as a battle for survival of employments, it gets ugly pretty quickly and no holds are barred. But even when a competition has started out purely as a sport, they may turn quite serious if management does not intervene...” (Interview 13)

Nevertheless, competition between projects, whether for resources or intangibles, was generally not seen as a major problem, more as a fact of life in organizations partaking in projects. One interviewee expressed, that although other unrelated projects do constrain a focal project, the other projects also offer support and that on balance the support outweighs the constriction, and that a merely a bad resource situation would never turn an organization away from an otherwise attractive project (Interview 8). Another noted that management routinely makes sure that project’s personnel support each other and share experiences (Interview 12). Also, it was noted that some level of sportive competition between projects is unavoidable, and may carry positive affects, such as heightening performance and increasing intra-team learning (Interview 13). Importantly, effects of other projects on a focal project are routinely assessed as part of project planning and adjustments are made (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13). In summary, based on information gained from interviewees, it would seem that other unrelated projects affect a focal projects in several ways, and that both the gravity of that effect as well as the effect’s benevolence may vary somewhat.

Besides projects competing for resources, projects may also be linked, or part of “multi-project structures”, a term, which is intended to reflect all those projects72, which are formally or informally but intentionally dependent upon other projects.

Informal but nevertheless intentional multi-project structures have no formal relationship; instead they have a commonality, which produces significant dependence (either one-way or both ways), such as for example separate software titles in a software-suite using common modules (Interview 5), or a productization –project running alongside a development project (Interview 10).

Formal multi-project structures are based on the interaction of two factors: Projects may be or grow too large to be managed by a single person (Interviews 3, 7 and 8), projects may involve such a high number of disparate expertises that subdivision becomes necessary (Interviews 9, 10,11) or they may be focused on a series of buyers or end-users who need to be treated separately and locally (Interviews 3, 9 and 11). On the

72 As a side note, the sheer multitude of different formal multi-project structures and implementations discussed during the interviews came as somewhat of a surprise to the author.
other hand, while subdivision allows for more control, the different subprojects still need coordination (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11).

All these factors coincide to produce a wide variety of structurally and nominally different (they may be referred to as portfolios, programs or ventures) formal structures. Interestingly some multi-project structures were organized based on specialization and subject matter (Interviews 9 and 10), whereas some were divided by buyer/end-user (Interviews 3 and 9) and some were based on geography (Interview 3), while some can be said to have actually had internal matrix-structures (Interview 7) as well as project-internal support functions, such as a project-internal information management –function and a separate HR-department (Interview 7). What was emphasized by some interviewees, was that whereas ten years ago large projects would have been conducted by one project manager and a number of project coordinators or project assistants, it is becoming more common to formally divide up the project, assigning each subproject a project manager and maybe even a budget (Interviews 3, 6, 7 and 9).

What both informal and formal multi-project structures have in common is that either their input is at least partially defined by another project or their output helps defines another project, or both. All interviewees considered it self-evident that interdependent projects affect each other’s goals (Interviews: All), while some went on to say that the coordination between dependent projects is more often too lax, creating situations where numerous subprojects are partaking in something akin to reinventing the wheel (Interviews 3, 10 and 13). The occurrence of problems such as these was seen as linked to subproject managers not having a sufficient grasp of the overall objectives (Interviews 3 and 13).

Nevertheless, some interesting facets were unearthed. Firstly, when dealing with long-duration multi-project structures, some organizations start and end all subprojects simultaneously (Interview 9), whereas other organizations tend to start subprojects only when necessary and end them as soon as they are finished (Interview 13). Both alternatives were seen as having their pros and cons. In the first variant, that it allows the separate sub-project managers to stay abreast and voice opinions throughout the duration of the multi-project structure although they often find it to add to their workload and they become active only once their subproject draws nearer (Interview 9). In the second variant, the approach is based on economic reasoning, although it may lead to that the subproject manager is merely handed a list of requirements,
without having any way to assess their suitability in view of the overall objectives (Interview 13). Secondly, what was seen as problematic was that although a subproject may inherit its inputs from another (chronologically earlier) subproject, it is still given a timetable and budget from the higher level, and that these often do not match, at times leading to unwise solutions having to be adopted (Interview 10).

In summary, projects, which are dependent on other projects – whether they are part of a formal or informal multi-project structure – are in many ways far from independent. Even if the relevant project manager is free to arrange the inner workings of his/her subproject, the project manager is strongly constrained by the related projects.

"In my experience, organizations which mostly organize their actions as projects, usually have some form of project office." (Interview 10)

"[Our project office] offers quite detailed project templates and to-do-lists for almost any eventuality and type of project." (Interview 9)

In contrast to the above quote from interview 10, not all of the interviewee’s organizations had a formalized project office, but those which did not, were smaller organizations (under 100 employees) and nevertheless had one or more strongly ingrained organization-specific project methodologies. Likewise, the interviews depicted a significant variance in the formal tasks of the project office – from running and managing all the organization’s projects (Interview 3), through advocating the project organizations’ case to the process organization (Interview 10), to mere support- and competence centres (Interviews 6, 9 and 11). What may be seen as significant is that all discussions pertaining to the organizations’ formal project offices exhibited some dissatisfaction – either pertaining to that the project office supports only some types of projects (Interview 6), that the project office is under-resourced (Interview 9), that the project office lacks top management support (Interview 10), that the project office is too heavily involved in running projects to be able to develop project processes (Interview 3) or that project office’s approach is too theoretical (Interview 4).

Even disregarding cases in which project offices actually manage the organizations’ projects and are in charge of hiring and firing project managers (Interview 3), project offices nevertheless influence projects in many ways. Formally the most concrete way of a project office influencing projects is through offering organization-specific project templates (Interviews 3, 4, 9 and 10). Again, the affect of these templates on projects may vary, but they may range from offering ideas and to-do –lists (Interview 9), to also offering ready-made frameworks (Interview 4) or fill-in-the-blanks –documents
Regarding the focus of this thesis, it is noteworthy that some of the templates and to-do lists discussed during the interviews explicitly suggested mapping out primary party objectives and requirements and recommends mapping out stakeholder ambitions (Interview 9). Also, most project offices touched upon in this interview also demand regular interaction between ongoing projects and the project office, for instance so that the project office is to receive copies of project documentation (Interviews 3, 9 and 10), and might even track that documentation corresponds to the organizations standards (Interview 3). Further, some organizations make a habit out of demanding project managers to produce “after-action reports” or “lessons learned” –documents (Interviews 3, 5, 9 and 10), which are subsequently distributed to other project managers. Further, some project offices target a specific subset of their services at “less experienced” project managers. Thus project offices may offer or promote education and courses (Interviews 3, 6 and 9), certifications and targeted education (Interviews 3 and 9) and mentorships (Interviews 3 and 9).

In summary, it seems that project offices exist in order to influence how projects are conducted and how the project manager understands his professional mission, and as such they may have an impact not only on how the project is implemented, but also on how it is set up.

**Discussion**

Other projects constitute the other aspect of a project’s environment. Other projects may affect and influence a project directly through intra-project dependencies and/or indirectly through competing for the organization’s scarce resources. Further many organizations have formalized procedures for how to conduct projects, often overseen by a project office. Intra-project dependencies may be formal, implying that a number or projects are run under the umbrella of a program, portfolio or venture, thus being quite clearly related or informal, two projects sharing a commonality creating a dependency. Whether the dependency is formal or informal, it is quite obvious that in such a situation projects directly and unavoidably influence each other. In fact the empiric material pointed to that interviewees perceived it more problematic that dependent projects do not affect each other sufficiently – that co-ordination is rather too lax than too restrictive. On the other hand, projects influence each other indirectly in multiple ways, enumerated in Table 11. The extent of the influence of various project offices in the empiric material varied significantly, thus Table 12 summarizes reported project office tasks, which can influence projects and thus also impact the manner in
which requirement specification proceeds. Thus it is safe to conclude that any project office (whether the project office exists formally or whether the organization has a senior project manager every junior project manager turns to) influences ongoing projects in several ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects indirectly influence other projects requirements by ...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Competing for scarce resources, such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manpower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Money, development budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specific bottleneck resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management attention and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delaying other projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• By limiting other projects' freedom of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Within a potentially competitive atmosphere</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: How projects indirectly influence other projects requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project offices influence projects by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Offering support, and guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organizing education and courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subsidizing or paying for certifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formalizing best practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating project templates and to-do-lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demanding specific reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advocating project management to rest of organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hiring and firing project managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assigning project managers to projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: How project offices influence projects

### 4.2.2.8. Stakeholders

**Introduction**

Based on the discussions with interviewees, the impact and influence of stakeholders on projects in general and specifically project requirements varies widely. While some interviewees felt, that they usually had very few external stakeholders and that their respective impacts were few and far between (e.g. Interviews 10, 12 and 13), other interviewees noted that the importance of stakeholders could be quite significant. This chapter is devoted to detailing the views of those interviewees who reported stakeholder influence.
Findings

A number of interviewees noted, that the central reason for stakeholders having a significant impact on their projects are based on projects having linkages to public institutions and/or government regulation. One interviewee detailed how his/her recent projects have been significantly influenced through demands on reporting placed on the buyer as the buyer is usually either a public-private partnership or private organization receiving government subvention (Interview 2). Other interviewees noted, that the extensive regulation placed on the construction industry largely defines the industry’s practices (Interview 4) as well as the service-offering of companies serving the construction industry (Interviews 3 and 5). Finally, a number of interviewees noted that different public sector institutions exist in a network of organizations, leading to that any project done for any single public institution usually needs to consider a multitude of other public institutions (Interviews 8, 9 and 11).

Conversely, tight-knit networks are not limited to public sector organizations: One interviewee noted that as a majority of the activities his organization handles comes through different partners, who thus also place significant demands on how his organization handles its activities (Interview 1), while another noted more generally, that very few private companies are able to act with impunity towards partners and competitors (Interview 7). One interviewee was able to elucidate, noting that on top of formal and intentional partnerships, organizations often utilize standards, systems and services (open interfaces), such as for example the interviewee’s software company making sure that the data produced by the software suite is exportable into a format readable by other systems, thus creating both a clear requirement as well as unilateral dependency (Interview 5).

While some interviewees noted that they (or their organization) usually act proactively regarding stakeholders, such as making stakeholder assessments at a project’s early stage (Interviews 1, 7, 9 and 11), others noted that they may be less early in this respect (Interviews 2, 6, 8 and 12), noting that it seems that stakeholders keep popping up, who could not have been anticipated early on (Interviews 8 and 12). Some interviewees noted, that stakeholders are able to take an active role only once they become aware of the project (Interviews 6 and 12). Although some stakeholders may be concrete and beyond any doubt, some stakeholders’ legitimacy was seen as more dubious – one interviewee referred to the later as “imaginary stakeholders” (Interview 12), while
another pointed to the regular involvement of “concerned citizens” in construction projects, saying:

“Other parties, for instance neighbours or district associations, may render their opinions and they are duly noted, but they are not legally binding in any way. [...] On the other hand as city planning is a political process, the politicians may take up on these concerns, and thus the issues gain legitimacy. So the process is inherently unpredictable.” (Interview 4).

Most of those interviewees noted, that stakeholders usually affect projects by either creating an impetus for a project (being part of the objective) (Interviews 2 and 5) or by creating new potential constraints and limitations (Interviews 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11), and that these limitations may either be positioned to act counter to the project’s initial objective (Interviews 4, 9 and 11) or may merely constrain the space of potential solutions (Interviews 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11).

A number of interviewees noted issues regarding the ability of parties to assess stakeholder impacts, which are worthwhile to repeat. Firstly, while primary parties are well positioned to assess their own stakeholders and their potential for impact, they often are dependent on their counterpart in assessing stakeholder potential at that end (Interviews 4 and 8), while at the same time being unable to demand that those counterparts exhibit diligence (Interview 3). In situations including intermediary parties, the situation may become convoluted, as the intermediary may have the best skills for assessing potential for stakeholder impact, while being least well positioned to do the assessment (Interviews 3 and 7), a situation exacerbated by unclear divisions of responsibility and the intermediary not wanting to step on anyone’s toes (Interview 7). Secondly, in the private sector, the primary parties’ general interest to keep “business secrets” (Interviews 6 and 10), as well as in some projects the specific need for extensive secrecy may preclude any discussions which could reveal too much (Interview 6).

**Discussion**

The relative potential impact of stakeholders on project requirements would seem to vary greatly, but it would seem that well-positioned stakeholders have the potential to accelerate, divert or hinder projects. Reading between the lines of the interviews, it is possible to conclude that the following characteristics increase the relative importance of stakeholders: Buyer is from the public sector or project relates to public sector tasks; industry is governed by specific legislation or necessitates public sector decisions (e.g. construction), buyer or supplier functions in a network of close-knit partners; or the project’s deliverable needs to work together with third parties’ offerings. Thus also it is
conceivable that while some projects need not seriously consider stakeholder positions, for other projects stakeholders’ views may be absolutely critical. On the whole, it would also seem that the stakeholders who primarily influence projects are the buyer’s stakeholders, whereas a supplier’s stakeholders seriously impacting project requirements is less common. On the other hand project-wide stakeholder assessment may be problematic, as each primary player has their own set of stakeholders, and every party is able to ascertain only their own stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders influence requirements by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creating/adding impetus (by being part of the objective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating constraints and limitations in order to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• block the initial objective, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• steer the project into a direction considered less harmful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Stakeholder influence on requirements

4.2.2.9. **Players**

**Introduction**

This chapter covers the empiric findings regarding players. While the chapter starts by ascertaining whether (and to what extent) players influence projects and project requirements, it continues by summarizing motives individuals may have for playing as well as the interviewees’ views on how project managers can react to the occurrence of players.

The accounts reflected in this chapter are mainly based on what the interviewees understood to be "players", and the author has not had the opportunity to ascertain, whether the interviewees’ definition exactly match the definition(s) in literature.

**Findings**

About half of all interviewees had stories (some interviewees had a great many) to tell, about how they have encountered players in projects, and how these players have affected everything from requirements to the general atmosphere of the project. Interestingly, the other half of the interviewees had no experiences of players to share. Also, the interviewees’ differing backgrounds offer no clear explanation as to why some had experienced player-activity while others had not.
A number of interviewees felt somewhat insecure while discussing the topic, some going as far as stating that they were not sure whether some behaviour they had witnessed should be classed as “legitimate” or as an incidence of gamesmanship (e.g. Interviews 4, 7 and 10). On the other hand, one interviewee speculated that players usually do their utmost to cover their tracks – to make it look like their position would be based on acceptable premises (Interview 11), while another interviewee ventured, that the interviewee’s different views on the frequency of playing would mostly be based on the observer:

“Well, firstly, my main expertise is in coaching, so I’m the player of players – not that I get to play a lot these days, but I know all the tricks and see them used all the time. I also am, and I know this is a tough boast to make, quite a judge of character, and I think I can spot a player quite successfully – I may have a miss rate of one in ten, but not more than that.” (Interview 13)

Some interviewees described, what they conceived of as the first level of playing – to try to make sure to be included in or precluded from a specific project based on that project’s assumed prestige and successfulness, and how such behaviour typically leads to that it might be difficult to recruit people for projects perceived as negative, while in prestige-laden projects you need to “use a stick to keep people from forcefully inserting themselves” (Interviews 1 and 6). One interviewee partially rationalized such behaviour by noting that participation in certain projects affects people’s future careers (Interview 12).

Those interviewees who noted having had experience with players affecting projects had quite different views on the frequency of the occurrence, ranging from “a few times in a career” (Interview 8) to “in 2 out of 5 projects” (Interview 13). Most of the accounts detailing player activity described situations in which players were hindering, slowing down or obstructing a project (Interviews 1, 8, 9, 12 and 13). Often the resistance seems to be called forth by changes, such as new policies or systems (Interviews 1, 9 and 12). One graphic example of obstructive behaviour was given as:

“[A] project where a new system was rolled out to a number of country organizations, and one country organization just did not adopt the system. So naturally we sent delegations to find out what was wrong, and we did not find any tangible problems, just a lot of resistance. In the end, after one old-timer was convinced to try to use the new system, it took two weeks and the whole organization had adopted the new system.” (Interview 1)

On the other hand, a number of interviewees also noted incidences of player behaviour, which was not aimed against a project, but instead was aimed at redirecting the project, such as trying to direct a project towards a solution, which the player believed to be more all-round beneficial (Interview 11), or which brought long-term benefits to the player (Interview 13), or was based on personal values (Interview 8). In some cases,
playing may also be intended to support a project, especially if the project seems to be in trouble (Interview 9). While most interviewees considered players’ influence on projects and requirements to be of limited extent, some interviewees told anecdotes of projects where players’ activity had resulted in project abandonment (Interview 12) or a major change in course for the project (Interviews 11 and 13).

Several interviewees noted, that the probability of gamesmanship occurring varies from organization to organization (Interviews 1, 3, 8 and 12), potentially related to that organizational cultures have different levels of tolerance for playing (Interview 12) or because different organizations exhibit different levels of power-vacuums (Interviews 3 and 13). Also, a number of interviewees noted, that different industries exhibit different levels of playing (Interviews 3, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13), while some went as far as saying that playing is more common in the IT/ICT –industry (Interviews 8 and 13), possibly based on that individuals have relatively high levels of expertise-derived power (Interview 8). On the other hand, a number of interviewees ventured that gamesmanship is less common in the public sector (Interviews 9 and 11), either due to a higher demand for transparency (Interview 11) or because organizations are more rigid and hierarchical (Interview 9).

While interviewees were somewhat reluctant to share experiences of actual playing, they were less reluctant to speculate on motives for playing. Based on the interviews, the motives for playing can be roughly divided into two main categories: object-specific and politically motivated. Firstly, people play, because playing produces desired affects on the project. They start identifying with projects (Interview 9), they feel that the direction of the project is other than they would like to see (Interviews 8, 11 and 13) and feel that they have a power base, which they can use to influence the project (Interviews 8 and 13). One interviewee speculated that (in IT-projects) players usually are successful in influencing projects (Interview 13). Secondly, playing may also be self-serving, so that the purpose of playing is not primarily related to the object of play, but that the player is playing to heighten her/his importance (Interviews 1, 3 and 13) or gather political capital (Interview 13). On the other hand, the player may just try to gain attention or avoid being sidelined (Interviews 12 and 13). Besides these main categories, other reasons were also aired: the player’s motives may be irrational and selfish (Interview 11), outright sociopathic (Interview 13) or be based on extensive pressure from peers or schools of thought (Interview 13).
Several interviewees noted, that playing needs not be a negative occurrence, as players may offer useful initiatives (Interviews 3 and 8) and players may also be well-meaning and offer the project some bonuses (Interviews 12 and 13). One interviewee even went as far as noting that s/he sometimes tries to “play for the greater good” (Interview 12). Even so, no interviewee thought of gamesmanship as an on-balance positive occurrence.

One interviewee ventured, that project managers should proactively reach out to players and try to enlist them to help the project (Interview 1). Other interviewees focused more strongly on ways to curtail playing, their suggestions ranging from having tighter control over people (Interview 9) to making sure the organizational culture does not promote gamesmanship (Interview 13) as well as removing the rewards which players might aim for, such as discretionary perks (Interview 12). One interviewee noted that keeping the lower echelons from playing is hard as long as top management is seen as playing (Interview 13).

Discussion

Based on the interviews, it does occur that players manage to influence project requirements. While some interviewees considered the phenomenon reasonably frequent, others shared few or no experiences of players. Based on the empirical material, some players are motivated by the object of their influence (the project), thus they either try to resist the project, redirect the project toward a preferred outcome and in rare cases they might even support a project. On the other hand players may play in order to enhance their political capital or to get noticed. The frequency of playing was deemed to vary from organization to organization and the organization’s overall tolerance for playing was seen as a critical factor, although some also thought that playing is in general less common in the hierarchical and strongly regimented public sector, and some ventured that playing is more common in IT/ICT and (presumably) other knowledge-based industries.

Interestingly, the interviewees take on what stance project managers should take towards players varied, even though all thought playing to on balance be a negative phenomenon: some proposed tighter control or a removal of potential rewards as well as a less playing-tolerant culture, whereas one interviewee opined that project managers should try to enlist players to help projects. As very few interviewees admitted to themselves playing or having played, their views are based mostly on
observation. Thus two obvious questions need to be raised: Firstly, whether successful gamesmanship could remain hidden to the casual observer and secondly, whether an observer could misinterpret a person’s actions as playing? As the author is unable to provide an answer, estimating the real frequency of playing is impossible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of player influence on projects:</th>
<th>Motives for playing:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Players injecting themselves into high profile projects (and vice-versa)</td>
<td>• Players have little formal power, but a great will to influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Players hindering, obstructing or slowing down projects</td>
<td>• Players play to grow their political power or to be noticed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Players redirecting projects toward a preferred solution</td>
<td>• If organization has tolerance for playing, or if management is seen as playing, the threshold to play is low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Players supporting a flailing project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Motives for playing and forms of player influence

4.2.2.10. Organizational Politics

Introduction

This chapter summarizes interviewees’ experiences of organizational politics’ role in defining project requirements. The findings cover both the occurrence of politics influencing project requirements as well as interviewees’ views on motives for organizational politics.

Again, the author did not want to introduce any definition on organizational politics and interviewees were allowed to use whatever definition they felt inclined to. Interestingly this lead to some interviewees ruminating on the concept of politics:

“I personally do not think, that there is one optimal way of managing all operations within any larger organization, even less between different organizations in different industries. Planning a public health system is quite different from planning maintenance regimens for air defense systems and it’s reasonable to assume, that the manner adopted in working with the primary task does pervade other operations as well. So assuming that a company sees two different decision-making procedures as suitable for two specific areas, any non-routine decision first needs to be assigned to either one of the existent procedures, or a new decision-making procedure has to be created. Here politics cannot be avoided.” (Interview 8)

“Organizations often are organized along a single principle – hierarchy, culture, the know-it-all entrepreneur or even politics – and every time someone starts using another principle to try to achieve something it creates a minor disruption, and can, in my opinion, by rights be seen as political. But the fact remains, that the highest level arena in politics is the one which decides what is to be deemed political <chuckle>. I know it sounds funny, but I’m serious – the discussion regarding what is to be deemed political – and thus of dubious virtue – is the most politically loaded discussion there is.” (Interview 13)
Findings

A majority of interviewees viewed organizational politics as something, which regularly impacts projects (Interviews 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13). Again, the estimates on frequency displayed a broad range, from interviewees recalling “one project where politicking was absent” (Interview 2) to seeing overt politics as something out of the norm (Interviews 5, 9 and 11). As with playing, the level of politics in and around a project was seen as based on multiple factors, such as the overall level of politics or the tolerance for politics in a primary party’s organization (Interviews 2, 7, 8 and 13), whether the project changes the power balance (Interviews 7 and 13) or threatens entrenched interests (Interviews 2, 7 and 8) and whether the project goes as far as threatening the material circumstances of employees (Interview 7). The interviewees did not agree on whether projects are inherently conductive to politics. While some thought politics is pronounced in projects, especially in big projects (Interview 7), others ventured that projects may offer a fresh start in an otherwise thoroughly political environment (Interviews 6 and 13).

Interviewees also saw politics as a mechanism, which is able to enable or even launch projects (instead of merely affecting projects) (Interviews 2, 7 and 13). While one interviewee mentioned a project, which had been necessitated through the resolution of a political battle (Interview 7), other interviewees mentioned that political campaigning can also be necessary to gather sufficient impetus behind a project (Interviews 2 and 13), one interviewee describing in detail the political horse-trading and alliance-building which was needed to gather sufficient resources behind a project (Interview 2). Further, some interviewees ventured that projects, which originally have seemed peaceful may become highly political, if the project lacks management attention and strong guidance as it thus offers a playground for political interests (Interview 13), or through the occurrence of significant change in the project setup (Interview 7).

Most of those interviewees who acknowledged that politics regularly play a role in projects also opined, that project managers need to pay attention to politics in planning and implementing projects (Interviews 1 and 7), should not be totally inept as politicians (Interviews 1, 2 and 13) and need to be critical of overly rational project management regimes (Interviews 1 and 2). On the other hand, some of the same interviewees deplored the occurrence of politics, finding such behaviour abhorrent (Interview 2) or conductive to systematic sub-optimization (Interview 13).
Again, even otherwise reticent interviewees were willing to offer rationales for political behaviour. Importantly, there was widespread agreement that the general level of political activity defines the threshold for taking up the fight (Interviews 2, 7, 13). Also, in organizations which otherwise frown upon politics, political activity may be accepted, if the goal of the campaign is deemed as worthy (Interview 13). While some organizations may be so thoroughly political that getting anything done may necessitate campaigning (Interview 2), other organizations are less used to campaigns and thus create situations where campaigns normally succeed (Interview 13). Likewise, the political landscape may be based on quite stable alliances or on an endlessly shifting topography of single-issue parties (Interview 2). In general, some interviewees saw a link between the scarceness of resources and political activity (Interviews 2, 6 and 13). Also, periods of organizational or management change and upheaval were seen as conductive to political activity (Interviews 2 and 7).

While politics may have an agenda or focus on an issue (Interviews 1 and 7), politics may also be waged for the sake of itself, in order to gain political power for the party (Interviews 2 and 13). In the later cases, people may utilize existing power vacuums as power bases:

“Almost all organizations suffer from power vacuums. Anytime these vacuums exist, they offer someone thinking of activating himself a springboard, because he can help himself to that vacuum and the power it implies. Say for instance the company does not have anyone in charge of security (or the person formally in charge of security could not be interested less), or quality or strategic planning or anything non-salient and abstract. Anyone reasonably suited can take up that banner and start driving the issue, and suddenly he/she has a power base, which can be extended into that and near-lying fields and lent to other causes.” (Interview 13)

One interviewee also ventured, that when parties feel earlier decisions have gone against them or their interests, they may seek restitution in the political arena (Interview 11), while another speculated whether people may become politicized, because they feel they are not taken sufficiently into account as individuals (Interview 1).

While some interviewees felt that politics was not desirable in any situation (Interviews 2, 7 and 11) one interviewee stated that while politics leads to sub-optimization, there might be good and acceptable reasons for political activity (Interview 13). One interviewee opined, that projects are more about people, their feelings and their agendas than about systems and documents, and that the project manager should primarily make sure that he has the people on board (Interview 1)
Discussion

Besides single players influencing project requirements, organizational politics also was identified as an influencing factor. As with players, interviewees’ experiences on the relative frequency of politics varied from a politicized project being out of the norm to a non-politicized project being exceptional. While the interviewees broadly thought that the organizations’ industries had some affect on the relative occurrence of politics, the strongest impact was seen to be the nature of the organization(s) – organizations having greater or lesser tolerance for politics and politics being more or less the organizations’ normal modus operandi. Further, interviewees noted, that the nature of the project may have an affect on the probability of politics occurring, namely that if projects threaten positions, entrenched interests or the material well being of involved personnel the tendency for politics is raised.

Except in thoroughly politicized organisations, where politics is a precondition for getting things done, taking up political campaigns may be motivated by the relative effectiveness as well as offering a way to settle scores or make sure parties are not sidelined. Again, politics may also be used for its own sake. Based on the empiric material, politics may affect projects and project requirements in several ways, from influencing the atmosphere of the project, through creating new sets of objectives or constraints to actually being necessary for getting the project started. While some interviewees deplored the occurrence of politics, other saw politics to be an integral part of life in organizations. Regardless of the interviewees’ stance towards politics, it was generally felt, that project managers should not be inept at politics. Further, some interviewees pointed out that politics occurs whenever different decision-making paradigms clash over which paradigm is to be seen as most suitable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics influence requirements by...</th>
<th>Motives for politics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• launching projects, or enabling projects to go ahead</td>
<td>• In thoroughly political organizations, nothing gets done without politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• adding new sets of objectives</td>
<td>• Politics may be very affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• steering project objectives toward a consensus</td>
<td>• Parties may seek restitution in political arena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• affecting the project atmosphere</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 15: Motives for politics and forms of political influence
4.2.2.11. The visibility of ambitions and objectives

Introduction

As noted in the literature review, while some sources mention the concept of hidden goals, others do not. Further, as those sources, which mention hidden goals offer only tentative rationales for the existence of hidden goals, the author could not resist taking an exploratory foray into the topic. This chapter thus summarizes the interviewees’ experiences and rationales as well as speculations on motives for hidden goals.

Findings

"It’s amazing how many people either cannot or do not want to believe that people in organizations have personal interests or hidden agendas. [...] It’s extremely important to ascertain where people stand – what team they’re playing in.” (Interview 1)

Somewhat in line with the previous two subchapters, a majority of interviewees identified the concept of hidden objectives and ambitions (subsequently “hidden goals”) as something they have experience of or something they can relate to (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13), while a number of interviewees had no experience of having encountered hidden goals (Interviews 4 and 6). While some interviewees pointed to reasons, which they suspected would make hidden goals less potent or less common in their industry, such as an interviewee with extensive experience in construction stating that the tangibility of the project’s focus necessitates overt, practical objectives (Interview 4), some others stated that they suspected hidden goals were occurring, but could not point to any single incident where they would have been sure (Interviews 5 and 11).

While some of the anecdotes given pointed to hidden ambitions (individual-level hidden goals) (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 13) some also pointed to hidden objectives (Interviews 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13). The discussion on hidden ambitions relates closely to the concept of players, as players may either play to increase their influence or their playing may be targeted on furthering a goal, which may be held hidden (Interview 13), players may have hidden ambitions regarding their career, which affect projects (Interview 2), people may try to cover themselves from negative repercussions (following project failure), or may overtly support a project in order to gain from the glory (Interview 1). On the other hand, ambitions may be kept hidden because they are too difficult to communicate (Interview 12), or their communication may render their achievement less likely (Interview 12 and 13).
The organization-level hidden objectives described were likewise multiple. While some interviewees reminisced on a buyer’s desire to set up a new supply chain system in order to one day be able to outsource the whole production (Interview 7), others pointed to that suppliers do not always communicate their own project-related objectives, such as the desire to get a reference-buyer (Interview 12), the desire to utilize a project for personnel development (Interview 10), or product-development (Interviews 8 and 10). One interviewee even went as far as noting that the supplier’s insufficient internal communication regarding the own objectives often lead to project personnel making suboptimal decisions (Interview 10), while another thought it fair, that suppliers should inform the buyer of all the supplier’s objectives (Interview 2).

Literature identified (see page 18) a number of speculative rationales for hidden goals, specifically: goals may be seen as so self-evident that they are left unmentioned, goals may be too complex to communicate or left unmentioned because disclosure may be detrimental to goal-holder or to achievement of goal. The discussions during the interviews revealed several occurrences of each of these rationales:

- People can not think of everything (Interview 4). An objective or constraint may be seen as so self-evident, that it need not be mentioned: ”I’ve been building software for decades, and I’ve yet to encounter a specification which would say the software actualy needs to work.” (Interview 12). But if the understanding of what is self-evident is industry-specific or organization-specific, then it might be that it is self-evident only to one party (Interview 13).

- Often, things are very complex or convoluted and necessitate specific knowledge to understand – the supplier may not be able to communicate with the buyer, he may even be unable to communicate with his team (Interview 12). People may also be unable to formulate in words what is instinctively clear to them (Interviews 1 and 12). Communicating information does not convey knowledge, thus the recipient never gets the entire message unless he is able to thoroughly explore the issue together with the originator (Interview 13).

- People may seek to damage a project or a part of it, in order to serve personal interests or help shield a personal position (Interview 1). People may concoct ‘acceptable’ rationales to shield questionable or problematic rationales (Interview 13). Organizations may try to give communication a spin, either to reframe issues or use one discussion to cover up for another (Interview 3). ”You do not tell the accounting department ‘Help us with implementing this ERP, so that we can let most of you go.’ ” (Interview 7). Suppliers will not admit, that they are seeking lock-in (Interview 13).

Besides these indices of hidden ambitions and objectives, which fit the tentative classification given by literature, a number of “hidden goal” –scenarios were detailed, which fit none of the existing categories. One interviewee described what s/he felt was
the most typical that ambitions, objectives and detailed requirements get “lost and, sometimes, found”. At it’s most basic form this occurs when one (or more) objectives or requirements are lost in transfer, but may also be the result of nefarious action:

“A supplier may wish an especially complicated detail to go away. [...] But when the project is nearing completion, and the buyer suddenly asks about that requirement, which they are sure they communicated in the beginning of the project ... How can you be sure?” (Interview 12).

The discussion of hidden goals also evoked some comments regarding “advertent optimism” and “outright falsification” (Interviews 7 and 9). One interviewee noted, that only about half of all projects can be seen as either clear successes or failures, thus leaving a large grey zone, and that people may deem it acceptable to start a project on false and selfish premises, if they can be reasonably sure the result will end up in that grey zone, because those projects usually do not lead to negative personal consequences (Interview 7). Another interviewee speculated, that the increased pressure on calculating project’s profitability leads to doctoring the numbers:

“... we as a culture are far from strict in following up on expected benefits. Today everyone is expected to be able to estimate project costs reasonably well, and we will see it right away if that estimate was badly off, but at the same time, we do not expect benefit-estimates to be as precise – in fact we do not even follow up on them at all. It’s as if we were saying it’s okay to inflate expected benefits. So if you want to get a project started, it’s very tempting to start inflating the benefits. [...] And interestingly, although we might have very little reason to trust the numbers, we do not seriously doubt them – I’ve never seen anyone double-check any figures in a project plan, not even as rudimentarily as checking whether the calculations are correct.” (Interview 9)

This interviewee was not alone with this line of thought, also some other interviewees suspected, that the simplest and frequently used manner to radically influence projects was to inflate expected gains (Interviews 4, 7, 12 and 13).

When asked, what could be done to alleviate the potential problems stemming from hidden objectives and ambitions, some interviewees speculated that experience from “the other side of the table” would help (Interviews 2 and 11), as “...you know the usual tricks suppliers use, you also know what to ask because there are always things, which the supplier will try to hide[...].” (Interview 11). Further, one interviewee suggested:

“I really try to motivate people to value fuzzy goals, because fuzziness begs clarification, and clarification through socialization is a mutually rewarding process. Also, face to face communication helps eradicate the signal-to-noise problem you always have in asynchronous communication such as swapping e-mails or memos. So by emphasizing face-to-face communication, you minimize the risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding and create a natural tendency towards parties’ perceptions converging. Also, in the process [fuzzy goals and socialization] all but eliminates the two first categories of hidden goals (obviousness and inability) and makes the safekeeping of self-seeking hidden goals a lot harder.” (Interview 13)

Besides the selfish rationales, the interviewees also pointed out, that there were situations in which goal hiding was more or less necessary. Several interviewees
discussed non-disclosure, one giving the example, that “projects may have direct negative consequences for some of the people involved, and we don’t want their motivation to suffer prematurely.” (Interview 3), a second interviewee detailed a very similar situation (Interview 6). Another interviewee reminded of the common occurrence of “business secrets” and that these are often not revealed to suppliers (Interview 12). One interviewee noted that the commonly used practice of parties having their internal preparatory meetings before actual steering group meetings can be used as a method for hiding, especially if rehearsing statements or deciding what to tell or how to express things is included on the agenda (Interview 11). Finally, one interviewee quoted the legislation regulating publicly listed companies’ information disclosure, and how this legislation may actually force buyers and suppliers to not disclose the actual objectives, maybe even leading to the invention of surrogate objectives (Interview 13).

Finally, one interviewee admitted, that while his organization regularly practices “throw-in –pricing” in projects, and expects to make up for the revenue shortfall in service fees, he did not consider it to be a hidden agenda, but a business model, because “…I’m reasonably certain our clients are aware of it.” (Interview 10) Interestingly, another interviewee felt differently:

"There are also those cases, in which there is an element of nefariousness, such as the IT suppliers not wanting to state that they are aiming for lock-in, or companies selling transition project cheaply to be able to fleece the client through maintenance fees...” (Interview 13)

**Discussion**

While not necessarily related to politics and gamesmanship, the existence of hidden ambitions and objectives may be one incidence of playing or politics. As with players and politics, not all interviewees reported having had experience of hidden goals, but a clear majority identified the phenomenon in one or several forms. Also, it is clearly possible to identify hidden goals both on the personal level (hidden ambitions), as well as hidden goals on organizational levels (hidden objectives). It is important to note, that hidden goals need not be a symptom of gamesmanship or politics, in fact interviewees identified reasons ranging from cognitive inability through troubled communications and problematic information exchange to more selfish or nefarious rationales. Some interviewees also wanted to point out, what they felt to be related and problematic, namely the falsification of premises, meaning that ambitions or objectives are openly stated, but the stated rationale for the goal is either false (and covering for a
unpopular rationale), based on optimism or wilfully inflated. While some interviewees felt that having experience from “the other side of the table” helps project managers spot “tricks”, one strongly suggested using socialization (deep face-to-face discussions and workshops) as a method of alleviating hidden goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of hidden ambitions/objectives</th>
<th>Reason(s) or rationale(s) behind hidden ambition/objective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Too obvious to state</td>
<td>• Cognitive inability to remember everything, assumption that obvious also to counterpart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Too complex to communicate</td>
<td>• Inability to externalize/internalize, counterpart may lack relevant know-how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unsaid, because disclosure detrimental</td>
<td>• Gamesmanship/politics, not wanting to look bad, falsified premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lost (and sometimes found)</td>
<td>• Loss in transfer, signal-to-noise ratio, asynchronous communication, insufficient internalization, wilful forgetfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inflation of expected benefits</td>
<td>• Wanting to get the project started (hurdle-clearing), general acceptability of optimism</td>
</tr>
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Table 16: Types of hidden ambitions and objectives and rationales/reasons
4.2.3. Methods of reconciliation

Based on the assumptions, that a project’s primary parties as well as other parties and players may have different objectives and ambitions, the author set out to ask interviewees to describe the decision-processes involved in organizations progressing from conflicting objectives and ambitions towards a set of project requirements.

A number of interviewees did not directly understand the question or understood the object of the question differently. In some other cases, the interviewer felt it seemed as if interviewees needed a lot of time to think about the topic. Further, some interviewees were unable (or unwilling) to offer a generalization or abstraction of the process of making decisions and resolving conflicts, instead going into describing examples superficially. In contrast, some interviewees supplied sweeping statements, such as “[... numbers, numbers, numbers [...]]” (Interview 6), which can hardly be seen as an analytical representation (while probably containing a kernel of truth).

All in all, only three interviewees were prepared to offer anything resembling a holistic description of the process, and although the three interviewees in question were reasonably congruent in their views, the author feels very uncomfortable with producing an analysis based on merely three opinions. Nevertheless, the author wants to share some of these somewhat disjointed kernels.

One interviewee felt, that conflict resolution tries to work towards a compromise, which would satisfy all central parties, while still bringing operational benefits – in that order (Interview 2), while another proposed that conflict resolution should proceed by first expressing every key metric as a number, preferably with a monetary value attached, and that once the numbers are provided, decision-making is not only possible – the result becomes evident (Interview 6). In a similar vein, one interviewee described his organization as making decisions based purely on calculations of economic advantage (Interview 3).

In contrast, one interviewee stated that numbers do not produce good decisions, because numbers are easily doctored, and numbers tend to be produced in order to justify decisions already made (Interview 5). In a similar vein, some interviewees felt that numbers are only as valuable as the method of their calculation (Interviews 5 and
9) and that different parts of the same organization may use quite different formulae for calculating the same metric (Interview 5). One interviewee felt, that the decision is usually made by the person who has formally the highest position, and that is his/her prerogative to decide whose interests s/he wants to take into account (Interview 9).

One interviewee felt leadership played a role in the process (Interview 5), while another felt it was all about leadership and that leadership always emerges sooner or later (Interview 13). As leadership is influence and not based on position, it can emerge either from the top or bottom of the organization (ibid.). The interviewee went on to note that the worst thing management could do, is to deny emergent leadership when it emerges “in the wrong place” (ibid.).

Finally, some interviewees felt, that conflict resolutions usually are both emergent (Interview 12) and obvious in hindsight (Interview 5). In a similar vein, one interviewee questioned whether it makes sense to “massage” projects in order to getting them ready to start: “…would it not be better to let troubled projects wither early, instead of having to live with a doomed project?” (Interview 12).

Instead of trying to interpret these somewhat meagre results as such, the author will instead return to the topic in the conclusions.
5 CONCLUSIONS

The thesis started with the aim(s):

- To survey, in general, the layout of projects’ early stages and those factors which influence decision-making in projects
- To enumerate and evaluate the actors who have objectives for and ambitions toward projects and to study the methods different actors have and use in order to influence project requirements.
- To explore the ways in which differing influences are reconciled in order to formulate final project requirements.

Quickly going through these aims, point-by-point, the author can note, that the thesis has succeeded in exploring “the layout of projects’ early stages” (chapter 4.2.1) and has been able to identify a number of factors, which influence decision-making in projects. Likewise, the thesis has, in detail, enumerated and evaluated actors who have ambitions and objectives as well as the methods and bases of power these actors use in order to influence project requirements (chapter 4.2.2). The general conclusions regarding these aims are presented in chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

Sadly, the mere specific findings regarding the third point, “…ways in which differing influences are reconciled…” cannot be said to present any solid results (see chapter 4.2.3). There might be several reasons for this: Firstly, the relevant discussion was usually held towards the end of the interviews, thus resulting in that some interviewees did not have time or energy to devote to the issue. Secondly, some of the interviewees may have been wrongly positioned to be able to elucidate on the decision-making processes involved. Finally, the research design (interview-based) may simply be unsuitable to study a multi-party phenomenon. Whatever the reason, the author will return to the topic of reconciling diverging interests in chapter 5.3.

5.1. The layout of projects’ early stages

Whereas some authors posit, that the industry and type of the project has a defining influence on the setup of the project (see e.g. Lock, 2003), based on the empiric research in this thesis, the method of procurement – such as PPP, competitive bidding, unregimented – as well as the number of buyers and the number of supplier involved,

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73 Whether all potentially relevant factors have been identified is impossible to say, but the author deems it improbable.
seem to exert a strong influence both on which party or parties define project requirements as well the level of adversarial tension and conflict. Thus, the author is forced to conclude, that the supplier-side’s ability to influence project requirements at the project’s early stage is defined primarily by the procurement method and secondarily by the number of co-suppliers. Considering that there mostly is an expertise-derived reason for the supplier’s participation in a project, the author needs to question whether it is healthy to disregard the suppliers’ expertise in formulating project requirements.

Conversely, the supplier’s low level of influence on requirements need not imply, that the buyer would have more influence in PPP or competitive bidding -projects. Keeping in mind, that the buyer most probably is not an expert in the supplier’s field, the buyer needs to involve a third party in order to prepare for the tendering, thus transferring a significant influence to said third party.

The relatively high frequency of project consultants and intermediaries among the interviewees may naturally be a freak occurrence, but in light of the number of organizations conducting regimented procurements, the author fields it is more likely, that the frequency and utilization of project consultants/intermediaries is significantly higher than a reading of project management literature would lead you to assume. This produces two noteworthy aspects: Firstly, the predominant two-party model in project management literature needs to be revised. Secondly, the position of the consultant/intermediary is by no means unproblematic: while there is some potential for friction between the intermediary and the buyer (his principal), there seems to be a tendency toward animosity between supplier and intermediaries. Similarly, as a purely personal reflection, the author finds it somewhat problematic, that intermediaries in projects have extensive influence, without having to carry the burden or concrete responsibility.

On the other hand, besides formal, up-front –influence, project management scholars need also inspect the concept of later stage influence. In the words of one interviewee:

"[The work which has gone into producing a bid for a PPP-project is] partially wasted even for the winner, because even though you need to supply a complete plan to take part in the competition, that plan is seriously adjusted, based on the free discussions you can have with the client, before actual work begins." (Interview 8)

The point the interviewee makes, which was echoed in a number of other interviews, relates to that even though a strongly regimented procurement may be centred on
finding a supplier who can take the project and run with it, the supplier may still have 
significant influence on the project, even before the actual work begins. Further, as 
shown by a number of interviews, suppliers who have not had their chance to inject 
their views at early stages may utilize any subsequent changes and reorientations in 
order to get their point across.

Another area the author wants to emphasize is related to the relationship between 
objectives and projects’ different metrics – scope, cost and timetable (and quality) as 
well as the methods of estimation used. While the interviewees were aware of the 
challenges inherent in transforming objectives into requirements, their collective lack 
(with one exception) of any heuristics for accomplishing this complex task is striking 
(see chapter 4.2.1.5). Although the author does not here desire to take sides in the 
debate between traditional and agile project methodologies, one apparent disadvantage 
with the traditional methodologies lies in that requirements – once fashioned (and 
however badly) – tend to supplant the project objective as the real purpose of 
subsequent actions.

Mainstream project management literature portrays (successful) project management 
as partially based on rational management and calculation/estimation of the 
relationship between scope, cost and timetable. Considering the findings of this thesis, 
this claim must be seen as suspect. Instead, common practice seems to be that 
timetable and budget are not calculated/estimated, at least not by the party which 
would be best suited, but are in stead the result of buyer diktat (sometimes in 
conjunction with market forces.

5.2. Project actors and methods of influence

Project management literature enumerated a number of actors and 
instances (See chapter 2.1.3.1) potentially influencing the formation of project 
requirements, which are summarized in Table 17. The empirical findings have been able 
to show, that all these actors and instances indeed influence projects and project 
requirements regularly, with the minor exception, that sponsors were not seen to be a 
common occurrence. Further the empirical findings have been able to elucidate on 
antecedents and inhibitors of the potential to influence the various parties have.
While different actors utilized different predominant bases of power, for example top management's influence being mostly based on the power to reward, coerce and legitimize and the project manager's and project teams' influence being based on (different forms of) expert power, the bases of power also varied from project to project and organization to organization.

Projects, while being used in many types of ventures are also often seen as the management method-of-choice in knowledge-intensive industries. Those interviewees who had a specialist's backgrounds (Interviews 8, 10, 12 and 13) all eulogized the specialists' and experts' insurmountable significance for getting a project defined correctly. While their views may be based on an understandable bias, their views also point to a basic conflict between the need to pay heed to the expertise of project team members and the practice of traditional project management, which is an inherently top-down –form of management – a conflict which seemed to be well-understood by a number of interviewees.

Nevertheless, what the author found most remarkable was the overriding impact of the procurement method on the relative influence of the different actors and instances. Situations in which supplier-side actors and instances can't have any up-front influence on projects, due to the manner in which projects are procured, quite clearly lead to three significant affects: Firstly, the resulting projects are on average less to the supplier's liking than if the supplier would have been able to contribute from the start. Secondly, the supplier's actors need to make their influence felt in later stages, resulting in that their influence is lesser. Finally, as the supplier's interests are de-legitimized, the remaining methods of influence are by necessity more dependent on expert power and the utilization of methods of influence, which are generally deemed political\textsuperscript{74}. The

\textsuperscript{74} See page 25.
final point is largely in line with what the empiric material showed: that some of the central motives for playing and political action included parties’ need to seek restitution in the political arena and players’ lack of formal influence.

Finally, the relatively broad and detailed accounts on the topic of hidden goals (especially compared to the relative scarcity of indices in PM literature) point to that the topic needs further study. While the empirical data did unearth one cause for goal-hiding, which is not in conflict with management orthodoxy (business secrets), the other unearthed causes (political interests and information transfer) could cause concern. Firstly, harkening back to the very beginning of the thesis, hidden goals based on political interests are likely linked to frustrated ambitions and objectives of players and non-primary parties (see page 6) and thus potential indicators of execution failure. Secondly, the number of reported cases of goals remaining non-communicated should be seen as an indicator of potentially grave problems in information transfer and processing. The author has to agree with interviewee 13, who proposed the extensive use of fuzzy objectives and socialization-based discussion in projects.

5.3. Methods of reconciliation

As noted in chapter 4.2.3, very few interviewees were able to offer any details on how they or their organization resolves the divergent interests of the actors and their interests. In stead, some interviewees offered (for the lack of a better word) “guiding principles” used in decision-making, such as quantification (reducing all inputs to numbers) (Interview 6) or outright monetarization (evaluating only inputs which can be assigned a net present monetary value) (Interview 3), consensus-seeking (Interview 2), autocracy (the boss decides) (Interview 9) or leadership (Interviews 1 and 5) or emergent leadership (Interview 13).

Most of these guiding principles roughly correspond to some of the different superordinate motives described in the review of decision-making literature (See chapter 2.2), namely quantification and monetarization both are akin to the “rational choice” motive, with the built-in assumption that numbers are most rational. Conversely, the autocratic model is to be seen in conjunction to the interviewee’s working environment, namely that of government service and rigid and steep hierarchies, and might be descriptive of an instance of bureaucratic decision-making – a “substitution of procedural rationality for substantive rationality” (Pfeffer, 1981) and thus also a subset of the rational choice-model. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume
that the autocratic model necessitates that all parties holding diverging interests be dependent upon the autocrat.

In contrast, the model of consensus-seeking is (considering the interviewee’s description of the wider situation) clearly a decision-making model tailored to match a highly politicized environment and can thus be seen as a form of the political model. In contrast to both quantification and monetarization, consensus-seeking assumes that the diverging interests are like apples and oranges, and cannot be compared. Also the seeking of a consensus might be based on the need to get all parties “on board” by offering each of them something – by contrast, the interviewees describing quantification- and monetarization-based decision-making paradigms were describing inherently internal projects, where each party answered to the same top management.

Leadership, as described by interviewees 1 and 5 imply that all decisions and decision-making methods are inevitably suboptimal, and that inclusive and transformational leadership (Interview 1) or quick and decisive leadership (Interview 5) are practices which enable compensating for suboptimal decisions with effective implementation. While interviewee 13 shared these views, s/he also felt that leadership always emerges – if not at the top of the organization, then somewhere else and that this emergent leadership needs to be embraced. Thus again, leadership as described by these interviewees is not so much a decision-making model, but exists more on a meta-level.

While none of the interviewees describing final decision-making indicated use of either the justification-model or the rule-based model in the actual decision-making, the interviews abounded with examples of both superordinate motives. While not trying to enumerate each and every incidence, some examples will be given: One interviewee noted, that his/her employer’s decision-making regarding project profitability makes sense only when seen against the background, that every project leads to a lucrative long-term customer relationship (Interview 10). A number of interviewees discussed the phenomenon of how difficult it is to pull the plug on projects – that admitting failure is hard (Interview 1), that so much energy and passion has been invested (Interview 9), and that every project which is in danger of failing is a project waiting to be rescued (Interview 3). Relatedly, some interviewees commented on how people have a strong tendency to trust numbers (Interviews 2, 5, 7 and 9) even though they know how easy it is to doctor calculations (Interviews 5 and 9). Strategies are decisions intended to affect subsequent decisions, and the interviewees were unanimous in feeling that strategies do influence projects – either by creating new objectives or by
influencing requirements (Interviews 1, 2, …, 12 and 13). The empiric material also contains strong evidence of rules affecting project management and decisions regarding the definition of requirements: While the entire PPP can easily be seen as a rule governing the relationship between parties, it also explicitly defines the acceptable criteria for selecting the winning bid. Also, the interviews evidenced that all subject organizations either had a project office or one or more well established project methodologies as well as project templates. Thus, even though none of the descriptions of final decision-making can be linked directly to either the rule-based or justification motive, there is good reason to believe, that these motives are not absent from deciding on project requirements.

Keeping in mind what Blake, Shepard and Mouton noted on (see page 33): Firstly, when both primary parties have a common superior (or one party can otherwise be forced to accept a detrimental situation), the decisions can be made either in a win-lose –setting or by splitting the difference. Secondly, when the parties are independent (and have choices), splitting the difference becomes a precondition for starting the project. Whereas those interviewees who mainly worked in external situations detailed different types of splitting the difference (Interviews 2, 5 and 13), of the interviewees who worked in internal settings, most detailed brute force decision settings (Interviews 3, 6 and 9), with only one exception (Interview 1).

### 5.4. Further research

As this thesis is an exploratory study, it was intended to help identify areas of interest for further research effort. Primarily there are some topics, where this thesis and the research design showed itself to be less than suitable.

One specific area is the question of methods used in translating objectives into (qualitative) requirements. Whereas most interviewees were hard put to render any details regarding the processes their organization uses in order to fashion matching requirements, one interviewee detailed a (for the author) very interesting methodology. Thus the author hopes that an ethnographic multi-case study would unearth and be able to detail some of the used methods/heuristics.

Another area, in which this thesis’ research design seems to have been lacking is the question regarding reconciling diverging interests in deciding on final requirements.
Again, the author suspects an embedded multi-case study would able to display more detail and help build understanding on a critical question.

Likewise, in the process of this thesis, the author brushed upon a number of areas, which piqued the author’s interest: Firstly, the EU’s public procurement process seems to be a critical element in a large number of projects, and a more detailed study of a number of projects would be useful for mapping out the PPP’s impact on project management practice.

Secondly, even though the interview subjects of this study were all seasoned veterans, many of them told stories of adjustment and having to re-learn the trade after having changed employer, side of the table, industry or even sector. Thus the question of project managers’ learning and education remains topical. Whereas some of this learning may be of a more general nature, some is organization-specific, thus pointing the spotlight on organizations’ project offices and the services they offer. A detailed study of project manager learning and project offices’ roles in aiding and directing learning would be interesting.

Thirdly, the empirical material showed a surprisingly high number of project intermediaries. As PM literature does mostly not cover the concept of intermediaries, there is a clear research gap, made all the more interesting by the apparently controversial position of intermediaries. As the topic is novel, a targeted exploratory study would be suitable.

Fourthly, the empiric data points to an interesting dichotomy in regards to projects and political behaviour. On one hand projects may become the battleground for political ambitions and agendas, either so that parties have ambitions toward the project through that a project falls victim to parties’ long-standing quarrels. On the other hand, even in quarrelsome parent organizations, the project may offer the one calm area, where all parties try to keep the lid on their long-standing animosities.

Finally, although the description of hidden goals in this thesis is the most detailed the author has encountered, there is no question, that the author has merely scraped the surface of the phenomenon, it’s different causes and potential solutions. Further exploration of the subject would be needed.
SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Introduktion

Har du medverkat på projekt, har du antagligen påträffat så kallade “projektmålsättningar”. Fastän målsättningarna kan ha olika former, från ritningar till Excel-tabeller och verbala beskrivningar, är två element gemensamma: summan av målsättningarna beskriver vad projektet ska åstadkomma, och varje enstaka målsättning ska ge projektets medarbetare möjlighet att agera utan kontroll. Dessa målsättningar uppstår inte av sig självt – i stället är de resultat av ofta långa och komplexa förhandlingar mellan projektets huvudparter, och fastän köparens ändamål vanligast är utslagsgivande för projektmålsättningarna kan andra parter, så som leverantören, personalgrupperingar, enstaka individer och intressenter, också ha ett inflytande på de slutliga målsättningarna.

Även om ett projekt har målsättningar, existerar projektet för att fylla specifika ändamål. Dessa ändamål kan vara enkla, så som att ”reducera kostnader inom kundbetjänningen”, varvid projektet som påbörjas för att tjäna detta ändamål kan vara byggd på ett informationssystem som understöder kundbetjäningsarbetet. Å andra sidan kan leverantörens ändamål vara så enkelt som att ”göra ett lönsamt projekt”. Detta vill säga, att fastän det finns en relation mellan ändamålet och projektmålsättningarna, behöver relationen inte vara entydig. Däremed har vi redan presenterat tre nivåer av mål i projekt: huvudparternas (köpare, leverantörer) konceptuella ändamål, parters och individers subjektiva ambitioner och projektets interna konkreta målsättningar. Det är nyttigt att notera, att detta tyder på tre aspekter som gör det intressant att studera projekts målsättningsprocess: olika nivåer av konkreti, inbyggd konflikt och beslutsfattande.

Olika nivåer av konkreti tyder på att ambitioner, ändamål och projektmålsättningar är olikt konkreta: varvid projektmålsättningarna är mest konkreta, kan huvudparternas ändamål vara mer konceptuella och relationen till projektmålsättningarna behöver inte vara entydig. Vidare är parternas ambitioner högst subjektiva. Varvid huvudparterna har sina egna ändamål, och varje part har sina egna ambitioner, behöver dessa inte vara jämlöpande. I de flesta projekt existerar ett läge av ständig latent konflikt, när köparen skulle vilja maximaera sin måluppfyllning, så snabbt och billigt som möjligt, varvid leverantörens preferens skulle vara den motsatta (Turner, 1993), eller, så som Simon säger, den ena partens mål kan vara den andra partens begränsning (Simon,
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Sammanfattningsvis: det finns goda orsaker att studera samverkan mellan ändamål, ambitioner och målsättningar i projekt. Detta för till att avhandlingens syfte är att

- på en allmän nivå kartlägga tidiga steg i projekt och studera de faktorer som inverkar på beslutsfattandet.
- att räkna upp och bedöma de aktörer som har ändamål och ambitioner gentemot ett projekt samt studera de metoder dessa aktörer har för att påverka projektmålsättningar.
- studera metoder hur olika ändamål och ambitioner kan förlikas i formulerandet av slutliga projektmålsättningar.

Eftersom avhandlingen upp fattar samverkan mellan ändamål och ambitioner som konfliktutsatt och ser projektmålsättningar som resultatet av mänskligt beslutsfattande, studerar avhandlingen målsättningsprocessen utgående från organisationslärans synpunkter.

Så som för ofta, kan samma ord ha flera betydelser och flera ord betyda samma saker. Därför har denna avhandling en egen definierad terminologi. Mest central i terminologin, är tredelningen inom ”mål” – uppdelat i huvudparternas ändamål för projektet, aktörers ambitioner för projektet och projektets interna projektmålsättningar. Eftersom dessa ofta existerar på olika organisationsnivåer, hänvisas till dessa kollektivt som målnivåer.

Projektledning sammanfattar både projektadministration (management) och projektledning (leadership). Den litterära disciplinen, som ägnar sig projektledning kallas projektläran. Likaså kallas den litterära disciplin som behandlar mänskligt beteende (och beslutsfattande) inom organisationer för organisationsläran (organizational behaviour). Projektorganisationen hänvisar till projektets interna organisation(er), varvid processorganisationen hänvisar till den delen av organisationen som handhar organisationens process.


Tidigare forskning
Den tidigare forskning som är relevant för denna avhandling delar sig på två litterära fält. Den första litteraturen – projektläran – täcker den kontextuelle dimensionen av

Frågan om målnivåer i projekt är både grundläggande och komplex. Därför har jag utvidgat litteraturgenomgången till att täcka även icke-akademisk litteratur.

Det härskar ingen tvekan om att projekt är orierterade emot mål (Frame, 1995; Choudhury, 1988; Harrison, 1981; m.fl.). Vidare sker denna orientering på två nivåer: internt (projektmålsättningar) och externt (ändamål). Internt är denna orientering lättast att beskriva som att projekt bör åstadkomma vad som definierats i projektmålsättningarna, inom ramen av budgeten, och tidtabellen – en enkel modell som kallas projekttriaden (Berggren, 2001; Frame, 1995; Meredith and Mantel, 2010; Bryde och Robinson, 2005; m.fl.). Projekttriaden antar att projekt grundas för att åstadkomma ett resultat och att kostnad och tidsbehov kalkyleras på basis av resultatet (se t.ex. Kerzner, 2009).

Vissa anser att projekt får ha endast ett ändamål (Wysocki och McGary, 2003), varvid andra anser, att projekt måst ha minst ett ändamål, men kan ha flera (Futrell, Shafer och Shafer, 2002), eller att projekt vanligtvis har mellan två och fem huvudändamål (Andersen, Grude och Haug, 2004). Om projekt har flera ändamål, kan dessa vara beroende eller oberoende av varandra (Futrell et al., 2002) eller också härledda från varandra (Andersen et al. 2004).

Projekt karakteriseras av förändring, antingen inom själva projektet (Choudhury, 1983; Meredith och Mantel, 2010) eller i reaktion till omgivningen (Kotsalo-Mustonen, 1996; Turner, 1993; Artto, Kujala och Martinsuo, 2006; m.fl.). Detta antyder att både projekt och projektmålsättningar kan behöva anpassas under projektets lopp.

Projektmålsättningars kvalitet kan uppskattas på två olika sätt, antingen med syn på hur väl projektmålsättningar motsvarar ändamål (och ambitioner), eller hur starkt styrande de är (Williams och Samset, 2010). Målsättningar har en stark styrningsverkan om de är entydiga och icke-entydiga målsättningar anses utgöra en stor risk för projekt (Turner och Cochrane, 1993), men forskare är inte ense om hur entydighet uppnås. En del efterlyser specifika, mätbara och icke-komplexa målsättningar (Kerzner, 2009), mätbara och uppföljbara (Krishna, 2006), specifika,
mätbara, uppnåbara, relevanta och konkreta (Futrell et al., 2002; Kerzner, 2009). Andra propagerar för välkommunicerade, förstådda och allmänt godkända (Hong, Nahm och Doll, 2004) och att team ska förses med simpla, otvetydiga anvisningar (McComb och Green, 1999).


Det verkar entydigt att köparen har ändamål för projektet och att både projektägaren (Krishna, 2006; PMI, 2008; m.fl.) och köparens hösta ledning (PMI, 2008; Young och Jordan, 2008) har inflytande på formuleringen av målsättningar. Likaså sägs projekt kunna ha sponsorer som har en inverkan på projektmålsättningar (Artto et al., 2006; Kloppenborg, Tesch, Manolis och Heitkamp, 2006; Kerzner, 2009; Meredith och Mantel, 2010; Miller och Hobbs, 2005).

Vidare kan enligt vissa, både projektledaren och lösningsteamet ha ambitioner samt förmågan att påverka projektmålsättningar (PMI, 2008; Turner, 1993; Andersen et al., 2004; m.fl.). Även intressenter har ambitioner för projekt (Turner, 1993; PMI, 2008; m.fl.) och kan både påverka målsättningar (Turner, 1993; Englund, 2006; Sahlin-Andersson, 1986) och motverka projekt om deras ambitioner inte tas hänsyn till (Kirby, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1986; Cleland, 1994). Också enstaka spelare har ambitioner och kan påverka projekt och deras målsättningar (Nandhakumar, Rossi och Talvinen, 2005; Frame, 1995).

Andersen et al. samt Turner utvidgar synsättet genom att konstatera, att tekniska projekt ofta förutsätter förändringar även i andra delar (t.ex. personalväsendet och organisationen) av köparens organisation, och därmed åstadkommer nya målsättningar (Andersen et al., 2004; Turner, 1993). Projektmålsättningar påverkas också av huvudparternas strategier, antingen genom att projekt startas för att uppnå strategiska målsättningar (Artto et al., 2006; PMI, 2008; Turner, 1993; Cleland, 1994;

Vidare påverkas projekt också av andra projekt. Detta kan hända på olika sätt: projekt behöver anpassas till lediga resurser, som i sin tur påverkas av andra projekt (Cleland, 1994; Schwalbe, 2006); projekt kan vara delar av program och portföljer (Cleland, 1994; Schwalbe, 2006; PMI, 2008; Cadle och Yeates, 2004); och organisationer kan ha projektkontor (project office) som existerar för att styra och samordna projekt (Turner, 1993; Bloch och Frame, 2000; Frame, 2002). De interna krav som andra projekt ställer på projekts målsättningar kan leda till att projektägare och sponsorer försöker anpassa projektet för att få det igång, vilket som även kan leda till överoptimistiska beräkningar och rentav fusk (Cadle och Yeates, 2004; Gilbreath, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2009; Graham och Englund, 1997; Schwalbe, 2006).


Det finns otaliga sätt att fatta beslut, från att kasta tärning till matematiska beräkningar. Avhandlingen ämnar inte presentera alla sätt att fatta beslut, i stället presenteras fyra modeller för beslutsfattande. March noterar, att studier i beslutsfattande kan delas i två grupper: sådana som försöker ange hur beslut bör fattas och sådana som beskriver hur beslut fattas (2010). Denna avhandling tillhör entydigt de deskriptiva studierna.
Simon beskriver beslutsfattande som en process med, som enklast, tre steg: 1) sökning efter situationer som förutsätter beslutsfattande; 2) identifiering och uppfinnande av alternativa lösningar; 3) val av den bästa alternativa lösningen (Simon, 1977).


Staw och Ross har studerat eskalationsfenomenet i projekt och har dragit slutsatsen, att fenomenet är tämligen vanligt (1987). Flyvbjerger noterar, att det finns en tendens att underuppskatta kostnader och överuppskatta resultat för att få igång projekt (2009),

I fall av intern konflikt blir beslutsfattandet politiskt. Fastän spänningar inte nödvändigtvis innebär öppen konflikt, finns ett samband. Därför är det värdefullt att studera hurdana spänningar projekt kan åstadkomma. För det första är det vanligt, att projekt siktar på förändring (Artto et al., 2006; Berggren, 2001; Cleland, 1994; Turner, 1993), och att projekt stör processorganisationen (Andersen et al., 2004; Graham och Englund, 1997), även att processorganisation inte litar på projekt (Gilbreath, 1986; Meredith och Mantel, 2010). För det andra bryter projekt mot den dominanta organisationsprincipen och medför att personalen kan vara tvungen att tjäna både process- och projektorganisationen (Cleland, 1994; Meredith och Mantel, 2010; Andresen et al., 2004; Turner, 1993; Graham och Englund, 1997). För det tredje är projekt temporära, vilket som medför att personalen behöver särskildt sin ställning efter att projektet slutat (Gaddis, 1959). För det fjärde, är projektets centrala resurser ofta lånade, och projektledare har svårigheter att åstadkomma disciplin och tillhörighetskänsla (Meredith och Mantel, 2010; Gaddis, 1959; Cleland, 1994; Pinto och Kharbanda, 1995). Därmed finns det skäl att anta att projekt existerar i en spänningsfull situation.


Projektliteratur har en tendens att specificera en rad förhandsstudier före beslutsfattandet (Schwalbe, 2006; Meredith och Mantel, 2010; Frame, 2002; Lock, 2003; m.fl.). Vidare kan PMBOK-guiden samt projektlärans mer normativa delar ses som ett regelverk i sig själva (Hodgson 2002; Lenfle och Loch 2010). Vissa författare förespråkar användningen av projektkontor (Bloch och Frame, 1998; Frame, 2002;
Turner, 1993), som sedan skulle hjälpa formulera organisationens egna regelverk för projekt. Vidare har forskare i projekt en tendens att bilda tumregler för ledandet av projekt (se Belassi och Tukel, 1996; Grønhaug och Falkenberg, 1990; Kotsalo-Mustonen, 1996; Pinto och Prescott, 1988; Pinto och Slevin, 1989; Prabhakar, 2008; Saravirta, 2001; m.fl.)

Fastän projektläran långtgående antar en avsaknad av icke-rationella beslutsmotiv, verkar det finnas lite orsak till det. I stället tycks det finnas all orsak att anta, att ett flertal aktörer har ambitioner och ändamål för projekt, och att projekt existerar under sannolikt spänningsfulla omständigheter. Vidare kan vi anta, att beslutsfattare kan ha varierande beslutsmotiv.

Vad vår litteraturgenomgång inte ännu har diskuterat är vad som händer när flera parter har olika beslutspreferenser samt möjlighet att påverka resultatet. Blake, Shepard och Mouton definierar tre potentiella resultat: att parterna inte kan fatta ett beslut för att de inte har tillräckligt behov för att vilja ge efter, att parterna kan nå ett beslut för att deras behov på samarbete överskrider deras självstendighetsvilja och att ett resultat nås tack vare en tredje instans som har makt över båda parter och kan tvinga dem till ett beslut. (Blake, Shepard och Mouton, 1964)

**Forskningsmetoder**

Detta kapitel beskriver den empiriska forskningens antaganden och tillvägagångssätt.


På grund av avhandlingens ontologiska premisser, är jag intresserad av erfarna aktörers erfarenheter – vetskap som existerade endast i dessa persons huvuden, och som kan överföras enbart i form av ”naturligt språkdata” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Därför valde jag att intervjua erfarna aktörer i form av en ostrukturerad djupintervju – en metod som anses vara både allmän och lämplig i dessa sammanhang (Saunders et al., 2009; Robson, 2002). Med tanke på att respondenters erfarenheter kunde innehålla stigmatiserande berättelser, var det nödvändigt att erbjuder respondent stark anonymitet (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) och för att stärka responsens validitet erbjudde jag respondenten möjligheten att inte diskutera ärenden som respondenten uppfattade som svåra (Dhar och Simonson, 2003)

Fastän jag hoppades kunna nå ett brett tvärsnitt av finska projektproffs begränsades min ambition av vissa realiteter. Slutligen var jag av tvungenhet att utgå från Projektföreningens lista på samarbetsorganisationer och deras kontaktpersoner. Den ursprungliga listan på 196 samarbetsorganisationer (i mars 2013) begränsades till organisationer med verksamhet i huvudstadsregionen (162 organisationer), klassificerades enligt bransch, och randomiserade. Som resultat skickade jag en inbjudan att delta i forskningen till fem kontaktpersoner var ur sex branscher.

diskussion som ändå skulle någorlunda hålla sig till valda teman, utvecklade jag en löst strukturerad intervjuguide (denna kallar jag för "intervjuvägkartan" och den finns i bilaga 1), som skulle hjälpa mig behandla de valda teman, och skulle påminna om varför de valda temana skulle behandlas, men inte skulle definiera specifika frågor.

Mitt intresse i avhandlingens frågeställning bygger till en stor del på skillnaden mellan mina professionella erfarenheter som projektledare och projektlärarens syn på temat. Detta vill säga, att jag är medveten om att jag har ett existerande antagande, en predisposition, och att jag behövde gardera mig mot att predispositionen påverka datainsamling och tolkning.

Den centrala begränsningen för denna forskning var att göra den inom ramen fören pro gradu, specifikt, att datainsamlingen inte kunde vara longitudinell och att jag var tvungen att arbeta solo, utan att kunna validera sina tolkningar. Vidare var det från början en tydlig kvalitet på respondenters svar skulle definieras av tillitsnivån jag kunde uppnå. Morgan poängterar, att mänskor interpreterar situationer på basis av mentala modeller (metaphors), och att sådana modeller både möjliggör tolkning samt begränsar tolkningsförmågan till existerande modeller (Morgan, 2006). Jag var därför oerligen att respondenters mentala modeller angående projekt var sådana, att de kunde uppfatta de frågeställningar som jag skulle komma med, och om de skulle vara villiga att diskutera stigmatiserande frågeställningar så som konflikt och politiskt beteende.

Genomförandet av datainsamlingen var en process under vilken jag lärde mig en hel del, något som kan anses vara lämpligt för en pro gradu. Å ena sidan är jag glad och ytterst tacksam för det empiriska materialet mina 13 respondenter kunde erbjuda. Vidare är jag övertygad av att en striktare intervjuguide skulle ha medfört smalare resultat. Å andra sidan medförde den friheten respondenten hade till en hel del intressanta tankläggningar som med bästa viljan inte hittar plats inom avhandlingen. En enkel detalj som bevisar min oerfarenhet är att jag började fundera på analyserandet av materialet endast efter att alla intervjuer var genomförda. Efter ett antal experiment och diskussioner med handledaren kunde jag komma fram till en fungerande (och inte för arbetsdryg) analysmetod.

Analysens utgångspunkt har varit digitala inspelningarna som gjorts under intervjuerna, av vilka det finns ca 20 timmar. Analysen har framskridit så att jag bit för bit har lyssnat på inspelningarna, vid behov flera gånger, tills jag har varit säker på att jag a) förstår vad respondenten säger; b) kan ställa det i relation till annat
respondenten säger och c) kan reproducerera respondentens syn på engelska (i ton, innehåll och kontext). I dessa steg har jag konverterat 20 timmar intervjuer till 109 sidor diskussion (enkel radavstånd).

**Resultat och diskussion**

De 30 inbjudningar till intervju som skickades ut till kontaktpersoner ledde till elva intervjuer (+ två pilotintervjuer) som gjordes under mars–maj 2013. Alla intervjuer bandades, och inspelningarnas genomsnitslängd är 94 minuter (minimum: 51 minuter; maximum: 143 minuter). Alla ursprungliga sex branscher kunde täckas och fördelningen av intervjuer per branscher var någorlunda jämn.

Respondenter angav sin ålder på en grov skala (börjar med två; börjar med tre; osv.): en respondents ålder började på två, varvid fyras ålder började på tre, fyras på fyra och fyras på fem. Tre av respondenterna var kvinnor, resten var män.

Respondenterna erfarenheter ansågs vara möjligtvis utslagsgivande för svaren. Därför studerades erfarenheterna både med tanke på vilka branscher de hade jobbat med samt på vilken hierarkisk nivå de hade arbetat. Respondenterna hade i genomsnitt 15 års erfarenhet av projektledning (min: 3 år; max: 30 år). Av 13 respondenter hade sex jobbat primärt med projekt relaterade till informationsteknologi, två med byggnadsbranschen, tre med konsulttjänster och två med forskning och produktutveckling. Tre respondenter hade arbetat primärt på specialistnivå, sju i ledningspositioner och ytterligare tre i chefspositioner. Sex respondenter hade som projektledare huvudsakligen representerat leverantören, en hade huvudsakligen representerat köparen och sex ansåg sig ha lika mycket erfarenhet från båda sidor av bordet. Vidare visade sig fem respondenter fungera regelbundet som "mellanhänder", dvs. att de agerade som leverantör åt köparen, men själv köpte egentliga arbetet från en slutlig leverantör (eller flera).

Följande avsnitt försöker, i mycket kort form, återspeglar forskningens empiriska resultat. Indelningen i följande tre kapitel baserar sig på indelningen i forskningsfrågan, dvs.

- på en allmän nivå kartlägga projekts tidiga steg och studera de faktorer som inverkar på beslutsfattandet.

Empiriska resultaten presenterade en bred skala av olika faktorer som varierar i projekt, vars variationer kan ha entydiga inverkningar på själva projektet, och på de
olika huvudparternas ställningar. De identifierade variablerna och variationsbredden återspeglas i bilden nedan.

Av enastående hög betydelse visade sig vara frågan om hur upphandlingen struktureras – om köparen först söker en partner och sedan tillsammans med partnern definierar målsättningarna, eller om köparen först definierar projektets målsättningar för att sedan konkurrenсutsätta upphandlingen.

Angående huruvida konflikt råder i projekt var det empiriska resultatet något tadelat, en del av respondenter poängterade projekt som samarbete baserat på ömsesidigt förtroende, varvid andra poängterade spänningar. Dessa båda kan ses som medaljens olika sidor – att dolda intressekonflikter alltid existerar, och (oftast) överbryggas av förtroende. Å andra sidan framhävde vissa respondenter projektuppsättningar som baserar sig på ofrivilligt samarbete och att i sådana fall konflikten ofta blir mycket synlig.

Fastän alla respondenter ansåg att köparens ändamål borde utgöra grunden till målsättningarna, noterade en del respondenter att köpare ofta har svårigheter i att själv formulera sina egentliga ändamål och att de ofta för snabbt övergår till att slå fast detaljerade målsättningar. Å andra sidan var respondenterna oense om huruvida leverantörens ändamål inverkar på målsättningarna: respondenter som representerade leverantören såg på leverantörens påverkan mycket mer optimistiskt än respondenter som representerade köparen.

Nästan alla respondenterna ansåg det vara betydelsefullt att leverantören kände till köparens ändamål (inte bara målsättningarna), dels för att leverantören skulle ha en helhetsbild och för att leverantören skulle känna sammanhörighet med köparen. Vidare ansåg de flesta respondenter att leverantörens aktiva deltagande i formuleringen av målsättningarna skulle understöda leverantörens identifikation med köparens ändamål.
Respondenterna var långtgående ense om att ändamål och målsättningar existerar på olika nivåer av konkreti, att relationen mellan ändamål och målsättningar är allt annat en enkel och att själva arbetet att formulera målsättningar utav ändamål är komplicerat och svårt. Oftast resulterar detta i att utformandet av målsättningar utgår ifrån användningen av en mall, en tidigare lösning eller ”patentlösningar”. Bara en respondent kunde detaljera sin organisations metod för omformulerandet av ändamål till målsättningar.


Fastän jag inte ursprungligen tänkt studera upphandlingsprocesser, kom den offentliga upphandlingsprocessen (OUP) så regelbundet och i så pass stark roll fram under intervjuerna, att ett kort kapitel är nödvändigt. Vid nästan hälften av respondenterna utgör OUP grunden till projektet och definierar därmed både samarbetsprincipen mellan huvudpartern och hur målsättningar definieras. Några respondenten hade goda saker att säga om OUP, men majoriteten av respondenterna illustrerade olika mekanismer genom vilka OUP negativt påverkar projekt: att den förutsätter definiering av målsättningar före leverantörsvalet, att den förvränger konkurrensen, att den förorsakar spill, att den gynnar kortsiktiga lösningar och att den förbiser värden som kvalitet och innovation.

Fastän projekttriadens koncept kritiserades yvigt, understödde respondenterna idén att ett projekt borde uppfylla tre eller fyra centrala mått. Vidare poängterade respondenterna att dessa mått inte är enkla, linjära och att de olika måtten inte borde ses som element i en enkel ekvation – att deras förhållanden är mycket mer komplexa. Fast det kan hända, att de olika måtten i projekt är välbalanserade, händer det också regelbundet att ett av måtten är utslagsgivande och av avgörande betydelse. Fast köparna ofta ansåg sådana avgörande mått vara till hjälp i planerandet av projekt,
tyckte leverantörerna inte om dem, för att leverantörerna ofta uppfattade dem som förhandlingstaktiska verktyg. Vidare konstaterades, att konkurrensbaserade upphandlingar ofta leder till att alla mått slås fast i förväg.

Respondenterna noterade att projekt vars planering utgår från ett utslagsgivande mått som inte är kvalitativa målsättningarna, för till behovet av en form av ”baklänges” estimering. Eftersom estimering av tidsbehov och kostnader ändå kan beräknas enbart på grund av kvalitativa målsättningar, innebär baklänges estimering egentligen cyklisk estimering. Vidare konstaterades, att projekt vars olika mått är bestämda utan leverantörens deltagande medför att ingen riktig estimering har skett, och att leverantörer ofta då baserar sina beslut på optimism och förfalskning.

Utom projekttriadens klassiska tre mått (målsättningar, kostnad, tidtabell), tyckte en del av respondenterna att kvalitet borde behandlas som likvärdigt mått. Å andra sidan tyckte en del respondent, att detta bara skulle föra till att parterna skulle försöka pruta på kvalitet. Vidare framfördes, att mått så som risk och unikhet också bör diskuteras.

- atträkna upp och bedöma de aktörer som har ändamål och ambitioner gentemot projekt samt studera de metoder dessa aktörer har för att påverka projektmålsättningar.

Respondenterna var ense om att projektagaren har ett direkt och centralt inflytande på målsättningar, men var oense om grunderna till inflytandet. Vissa respondenternopoängter projektagarens position som köparens agent, varvid andra lyfte fram projektagarens position som främsta användaren av projektets resultat.

De intervjuade projektledarna identifierade projektledaren som central och inflytelserik aktör (sic!), speciellt om projektledaren har möjlighet att delta i projektet redan före målsättningarna bestämts. Vidare noterade respondenterna också, att de flesta projekt behöver justeras i senare stadier, och att projektledarens inflytande då är stort. Som central faktor för projektledarens inflytande identifierades att projektledaren (i idealfall) kombinerar tre expertisområden: köparens, leverantörens och projektkompetens.

Precis som hos projektledaren, ansågs lösningsteamets inflytande definieras av i vilket stadium lösningsteamet påbörjar i projektet. Lösningsteamets potentiella inflytande ansågs basera sig på lösningsteamets expertis, och på att deras arbete är projektets
egentliga substans. Vidare ansågs dynamiken inom lösningsteamet vara av central betydelse för teamets förmåga att vara enigt och inflytelserikt.

Respondenterna ansåg att högsta ledningen kan påverka projekt på två sätt: på kort sikt genom direkt intervention eller på längre sikt genom strategier, procedurer osv. Högsta ledningens strategiska beslut kan påverka projekts målsättningar antingen genom att ge upphov till nya projekt, eller påverka projekts lösningsalternativ. På kortare sikt ansågs högsta ledningen inte regelbundet blanda sig i projekts målsättningar, men att hösta ledningens har en central betydelse i att understöda pågående projekt.

Fastän projektsponsorn är väldokumenterad i projektliteraturen, fann denna avhandlings empiri så få indicier, att en detaljerad analys inte är möjlig. Endast anmärkningsvärt var att vissa respondenter direkt började tala om anti-sponsorer.

Organisationens andra delar ansågs intressanta. För det första pekade empiriska resultaten på att också organisationens andra delar bör ses som heterogen aktör. För det andra antydde empiriska resultaten att det oftast handlar om en växelverkan: Om projektet är riktade på att påverka andra delar av organisationen, så kommer dessa andra delar att försöka påverka projektet. Likaså, om ett projekts resultat ska till slut tas över av driftsavdelningen så har driftsavdelningen intresse att påverka projektet. Utom dessa påpekade en del respondenter också, att organisationer ofta har funktioner som tenderar att blanda in sig i allt, speciellt identifierades försäljnings-, bokförings- och kvalitetsfunktionerna.

Enligt respondenterna påverkar projekt andra projekt på tre olika sätt. För det första kan Projekt påverka andra projekts målsättningar direkt, genom beroenderelationer mellan projekt. Dessa beroenderelationer kan antingen vara formella, så att flera projekt struktureras samman i program eller portföljer, eller informellt, så att projekt är formellt oberoende men att projektet ändå behöver reagera på andra projekt. För det andra behöver projekt konkurrera om organisationens begränsade resurser, vilket som kan leda till direkt tävlande mellan projekt. För det tredje påverkas alla projekt i en organisation av projektkontoret och projektkoordineringen.

Enligt respondenterna varierar intressenters förmåga att påverka projekts målsättningar starkt. De empiriska resultaten tyder på att följande faktorer höjer intressenters inflytande: Köparen är i offentliga sektorn eller projektet berör offentliga
sektorns uppgifter; branschen regleras av lagstiftning; verksamheten förutsätter offentligt godkännande (t.ex. byggnävendet); organisationen fungerar i ett tajt nätverk av organisationer. Vidare verkar köparens intressenter allmänt mer inflytelserika än leverantörens intressenter. Inflytelserika intressenter ansågs ha en stark förmåga att accelerera, styra och hindra projekt samt påverka projekts målsättningar.

Respondenternas erfarenheter varierade, angående hur allmänna spelare i projekt är. Spelare kan enligt respondenterna motiveras antingen av själva projektet (så att spelaren vill påverka projektet), eller av att spela för att öka på spelarens inflytande. Frekvensen av spelare ansågs variera från bransch till bransch och från organisation till organisation, och som mest avgörande faktor identifierades organisationens tolerans för spelande. Spelarens förmåga att påverka målsättningar ansågs vara i invers proportion till vanligheten av spelande – organisationer som inte är vana med spelare har inte lärt att gardera sig.Respondenter såg spelande som huvudsakligen negativt, och föreslog olika sätt att sätt stopp på spelandet

Så som med spelare, varierade respondenternas syn på hur vanligt politiskt beteende är, från att politiskt beteende ansågs ovanligt till respondenter som berättade om det exceptionella projektet som inte var politiskt. Allmänt sågs politiskt beteende som kapabelt att påverka målsättningar. Precis som med spelare ansågs vanligheten av politiskt beteende bero på sektorn och branschen men främst på organisationen. Vidare ansågs projektets natur ha en påverkan på uppkommandet av politiskt beteende: att projekt som hotar maktfördelningen, etablerade intressen eller anställningar ger upphov till politiskt beteende. Vissa respondenter beskrev också genompolitiserade organisationer i vilka politiskt beteende och alliansbyggande är förutsättningen för att åstadkomma någonting som helst. Respondenterna var oense om politiskt beteende bör uppfattas som problematiskt eller som en del av mänskligt beteende i organisationer, men var eniga över att projektledare borde vara ”politiskt kapabla”.

Igen var respondenterna oense om vanligheten av dolda ändamål och ambitioner, men en entydig majoritet kände till fenomenet. Vidare identifierade respondenten både dolda ändamål och dolda ambitioner. Det är viktigt att notera, att fast dolda mål kan vara ett symptom på spelande eller politiskt beteende, så identifierades också andra orsaker, så som kognitiva problem, kommunikationsproblem och sekretessbehov.

- studera metoder hur olika ändamål och ambitioner kan förlitas i formulerandet av slutliga projektmålsättningar.
Tyvärr är jag tvungen att medge, att respondenterna hade mycket lite att erbjuda angående hur de eller deras organisationer försiggår i förläckningen av diverse intressen. En del respondenter missuppfattade hela tematiken, andra behövde fundera länge, och de flesta var okunniga (eller ovilliga) att ge generella beskrivningar. Vidare gav vissa respondenter simpла svar, som fastän de kan innehålla ett korn sanning, knappast kan uppfattas som analytiska beskrivningar. Å andra sidan gav en del respondenter svar som, fastän de inte var detaljerade beskrivningar, representerade allmänna beslutsvärderingar. Dessa återkommer jag till i slutsatserna.

**Slutsatser**

Avhandling började med att ställa tre forskningsfrågor. Dessa frågors slutsatser behandlas separat.

- på en allmän nivå kartlägga projekts tidiga steg och studera de faktorer som inverkar på beslutsfattandet.

Fastän vissa författare anser, att projekt borde delas upp enligt bransch (se t.ex. Lock, 2003), pekar denna avhandlings empiri på att faktorer så som upphandlingsmetoden och mängden köpare och leverantörer har ett centralt inflytande på projektets upplägg samt på medverkan av mellanhänder och allmänt på samarbete i projektet.

Det förvånansvärt höga antalet mellanhänder i empiriska materialet leder till att den klassiska två-huvudparter-modellen i projektlitteraturen behöver utökas eller revideras. Vidare är mellanhändernas position allt annat än oproblematisk: Dels finns det friktioner mellan köparen och mellanhanden, dels finns det direkt antipati mellan leverantören och mellanhanden. Vidare anser jag det vara problematiskt, att mellanhänder har mycket inflytande i projekt, utan att deras ansvar kan nå motsvarande nivå.

Vidare var jag förvånad över att fastän respondenterna var medvetna om att utformandet av målsättningar på basis av ändamål är både komplicerat och komplet, så kunde de (med ett undantag) inte beskriva sina eller sin organisations tillvägagångssätt. Om länken mellan ändamål och målsättningar som resultat är svag, och länken mellan målsättningar och budget/tidtabell är lika svag (så som avsnittet om estimering tyder på) kan detta medföra problem.

- att räkna upp och bedöma de aktörer som har ändamål och ambitioner gentemot projekt samt studera de metoder dessa aktörer har för att påverka projektmålsättningar.
Projektliteraturen identifierade en rad aktörer som kan påverka projektmålsättningar. Med undantaget av sponsorn, stöder avhandlingens empiriska resultat projektliteraturens lista. Vidare identifierade avhandlingen att olika sorters aktörer använder sig av olika sorters makt, och identifierade faktorer som ökar på eller begränsar aktörens makt.

Fastän projekt har etablerat sig inom kunskapsintensiva branscher finns det där också en inbyggd konflikt: ju mera kunskap problemteamets och lösningsteamets medlemmar har, ju mera har de också expertisbaserad makt – något som inte passar ihop med ett organisationssätt som är så uppifrån ner -orienterat som projektledning.

Igen visade sig upphandlingsmetoden ha en central påverkan på de olika aktörernas möjligheter att påverka projekt och projektmålsättningar. Samtidigt tyder flera indicier på att aktörer som inte har haft chansen att påverka på projekts tidiga stadier nog kan kompensera detta vid senare stadier.

- studera metoder hur olika ändamål och ambitioner kan förlikas i formulerandet av slutliga projektmålsättningar.

Som noterat kunde respondenterna inte beskriva detaljerade tillvägagångssätt för att förlika olika intressen, men de presenterade allmänna principer för beslut: Vissa respondenter nämnde kvantifikation (reducera alla mått till siffror) eller monetarisering (omvandla alla mått till pengavärden), en respondent nämnde konsensus-sökande, några respondenter beskrev autokrati (högsta chefen besluter) och tre respondenter beskrev ledarskap. De flesta av dessa principer kan ses som näraliggande till någon av de presenterade modellerna för beslutsfattande.

Kvantifikation och monetarisering är extremexempel av den rationella modellen, varvid inbyggda antagandet är, att siffror, speciellt om de uttrycker pengar, är mest rationella. Den autokratiska modellen är, med tanke på respondenternas arbetsplats, ett fall av byråkratiskt beslutsfattande, som Pfeffer beskriver som ersättandet av substansrationalitet med procedurens rationalitet (Pfeffer, 1981). Konsensus-sökande beslutsfattandet är ett entydigt exempel på den politiska modellen i en genompolitisierad organisation. Ledarskap som styrande beslutsprincip beskrevs som utgående från att alla beslut (oberoende av hur de fattas) nödvändigtvis är suboptimala och att organisation kan uppnå bättre resultat endast med att se till att beslut fattas och genomförs energiskt.
Fastän ingen av respondenterna direkt beskrev användningen av berättigande eller regelbaserade beslutsmotiv i beslutsfattandet om målsättningar, fanns det rikligt med indicier om båda beslutsmotivs användning i projekt.

Som explorativ forskning siktade avhandlingen på att kunna hitta intressanta detaljerade frågeställningar för fortsatt forskning. Detta syfte uppnåddes.
REFERENCES


Appendix 1: Interview Roadmap

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

• First name & Surname?

• Your age...
  • begins with a 1
  • begins with a 2
  • begins with a 3
  • begins with a 4
  • begins with a 5
  • begins with a 6
  • begins with a 7

• Your gender.
  • Female
  • Male

The following questions refer to your entire professional career managing projects:

• How many years of experience do you have working with managing projects?

• During your project management career, have you worked predominantly in the private sector, the public sector or in what is referred to as the “third sector” (NGO’s, foundations, associations)?

• The projects you have worked with have been primarily related to ...
  • Housing and Infrastructure construction
  • Information technology
  • Expert services & consulting
  • Research and/or development
  • Other, which?

• During your project management career, has your position been predominantly
  • Upper management (director, executive),
  • Middle management (manager, except project manager) or
  • Expert / specialist?

• When working with projects, have you predominantly
  • Represented the buyer,
  • represented the supplier or
  • represented both parties?
• Reminder:
  • The interviewee is asked for his experiences, based on his entire project management experience, not merely in light of his current position.
  • All information divulged during the interview is kept strictly confidential, but the interviewee must her/himself consider confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements.
  • The interviewee may decline to answer any question, without having to state any reason.
  • The interviewee may at any time end the interview.

• Present the terminology:

Parties (organisations):
• Primary parties, main parties (parties contractually bound to the project)
• Third parties

Parties (political)

Players

The goals:
• deliverables refer to those metrics the primary parties have agreed the project should fulfil.
• objectives refer to those overarching goals the participating primary parties have, which they hope the project will fulfil or further.
• ambitions refer to things, which a participant would want the project to produce and which s/he is prepared to work for.

Also, in the case of this research, the term “deliverable” refers mainly to the qualitative goals (scope, quality) and not to cost and time-expenses.
AREA 1:  About a project’s primary parties:

AIM:  To discuss the relationships between projects’ primary parties as well as some potential regularities (based on the interviewee’s experience).

BACKGROUND:  
According to established project management terminology, an external project refers to a project, in which at least one of the primary parties is independent of the other parties (such as the Gibsons and Conrad’s Construction or Gary’s Grocery and Impact Advertising), whereas an internal project refers to a project wherein all primary parties are within the same organization (a company or conglomerate).

CHECKLIST:  
☐ The objectives of the project’s primary parties may differ.  
☐ Different objectives may lead to tensions and conflicts.  
☐ Enquire on how these tensions display and what symptoms may appear.  
☐ Is it common for a primary party (or it’s objectives) to regularly have more influence/impact on the deliverables?

MODEL QUESTIONS:  

• What do you think about the division into internal and external projects?

• Do you think that although the primary parties are involved in a shared undertaking, they at the same time suffer a conflict of interest?

[As an example, you could mention that the Gibsons want a good house quickly and cheaply, whereas Conrad’s Construction is mainly concerned with profit…]

• What kind of experiences do you have as to how this conflict of interest displays itself during a project? How bout when one party desires some changes?

• Is it common for one party to regularly be more influential in defining the deliverables? If so, what is this influence based on? Is it the money? Size? Reference value?

[ We’ll soon return to these primary parties…]
AREA 2: About project deliverables:

AIM: To discuss the project deliverables/constraints, especially in view of the triple / quadruple constraint, to explore the temporal order of these (scope, money, cost, quality) as well as their relative importance.

BACKGROUND: [Project management literature repeatedly uses the model of a triple or quadruple constraint (Scope, Cost, Time, Quality), which defines the things a project should achieve, the project's budget, timetable as well as a target quality level. I will call these 3/4 “goal type”]

CHECKLIST:
- The different deliverables/constraints are familiar.
- The temporal order of these is discussed.
- The order of importance of these is discussed.

MODEL QUESTIONS:
- Are you familiar with the concept of a triple or quadruple constraint?
- Which type of goal comes first? Is the scope always the goal type, which comes first? Is it typical for one type of goal type to define the other types?
- Can it be said that it’s always the scope, which is first defined, and cost and time are then calculated based on scope?
- Have you ever encountered a project where time/cost would have defined the others?
- (If it’s predominantly the same) Do you have experiences of any deviations/exceptions from the rule? Could you try to generalize, which factors may contribute to that an exception is made?
- (If the defining goal type varies) Can you generalize or speculate on which factors impact which project goal type becomes dominant and is allowed to define the others?
- Can you give any examples?
AREA 3-1: Influencing the scope-deliverable of a project:

AIM: To practice using the objective-deliverable-ambition –framework and to map out those parties which the interviewee instinctively recognizes to influence the deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [Now we'll focus on the scope-aspect of project deliverables (i.e. What the project is set to achieve). I'll again use the terminology of objectives, deliverables and ambitions.

• deliverables refer to those metrics the primary parties have agreed the project should fulfil.
• objectives refer to those overarching goals the participating primary parties have, which they hope the project will fulfil or further.
• ambitions refer to things, which a participant would want the project to produce and which s/he is prepared to work for.

[For example, a consultancy’s project to renovate its offices. The consultancy’s objective is to enhance its presentability and heighten comfort. The deliverables are the changes listed in the contract (for instance colour planning, pot plants, indirect lighting, new furniture). The employees may have ambitions concerning what should be done so that the changes should suit them and their tastes and needs.]

CHECKLIST: ☐ to map those actors, which the interviewee instinctively recognizes.

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• Based on your entire project management experience, could you list all those players and parties (primary or not) who might influence a project’s deliverables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Was recognized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project owner (buyer's PM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer’s upper management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplier’s upper management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either party’s strategy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project sponsor</td>
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<td>Either project team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplier’s PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single players</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buyer’s organization</td>
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<td>Supplier’s organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Either party’s other projects (portfolios, programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either party’s stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**AREA 3-2: Influencing the scope-deliverable of a project:**

**AIM:** To map out the relative commonness of parties’ influence as well as the relative impact of these influences.

**BACKGROUND:**

[Now, I will list those parties and players, which according to literature may influence project deliverables. I ask you to please, for each mentioned party or player quickly comment on how regularly the instance influences deliverables and (when they do so) how large an impact their influencing actions have. You can save detailed comments for later, we’ll go through these in detail later.

**CHECKLIST:**
- [ ] To ascertain how regularly different parties/players influence deliverables.
- [ ] To ascertain the relative impact of different parties/players influencing.

**MODEL QUESTIONS:**
- How common is it for [X] to influence project deliverables?
- If [X] influences project deliverables, how much impact does [X’s] influence have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Regularity (2, 1, 0)</th>
<th>Impact (2, 1, 0)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project owner (buyer’s PM)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
AREA 4  Background: bases and restrictors of influence (power)

AIM:  To lay the groundwork for discussing bases of influence.

BACKGROUND:  [ Power/Influence is commonly described as the ability of a party or player to influence another party or player’s actions. This power may be based on different “power bases”. The power bases most regularly mentioned in literature are:
  • reward power (carrot)
  • coercive power (stick)
  • legitimate power (to define what’s right/wrong)
  • referent power (creates a desire to follow)
  • expert power (based on information asymmetry)
  • others...
  Naturally these may limit another party’s power ]

CHECKLIST:

☐ To introduce the interviewee into thinking about power and power bases...

MODEL QUESTIONS:
  • Do you understand what we’re talking about?
    [potential example: specialist vs. manager]
  • Using on this way of thinking, what is your power to influence project deliverables based on?
  • Which things limit your ability to influence project deliverables?
AREA 4-1: Project owner
AIM: To, in detail, discuss the project owner’s influence (enablers, limiters) on deliverables

BACKGROUND: [The project owner is usually the buyer’s person or party, which has initiated the project and who pays for the project. Literature uses the term widely, but the definitions vary.]

CHECKLIST:  
☐ Enablers of project owner’s influence on deliverables  
☐ Limiters of project owner’s influence on deliverables

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• What is the project owner’s ability to influence deliverables based on?

• Could the buyer-organizations size, wealth, reference value impact the project owner’s influence?

• What kinds of factors could work to limit the project owner’s influence?

• How could the project owner’s personal characteristics affect his influence?
AREA 4-2: Supplier's project manager:

AIM: To discuss the (supplier’s) project manager’s influence (enablers, limiters) on project deliverables.

BACKGROUND: The (supplier’s) project manager is the person co-ordinating the project team (scrum master if otherwise not applicable)

CHECKLIST:  
☐ Enablers of project manager’s influence on deliverables  
☐ Limiters of project manager’s influence on deliverables

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• What factors is the project manager’s influence based on?
  
• Is the PM a central node in the information flow? Does this affect things?
  
• How does the project manager’s position in his organization’s hierarchy affect his influence?
  
• Does the PM have the authority to reward/punish?
  
• Could the PM’s background (engineer, technician, MBA) impact his influence?
  
• Does the PM partake in setting up the project? How does this impact his influence?
  
• Does the PM have the ability to modify deliverables (during project work)? How does this impact his influence?
AREA 4-3: Project team(s)

AIM: To discuss the project team’s influence on deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [The project team is the group of people who are more or less permanently assigned to the project and whose work is needed to fulfil the project deliverables.]

CHECKLIST:
- Enablers of project team’s influence
- Limiters of project team’s influence

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• Does the project team have the ability to influence project deliverables? Does it have impact on how/whether these deliverables are fulfilled?
  - What factors is the team’s influence based on??
  - Does the project team partake in setting up the project and its deliverables? Should it? Could it?
  - Does the project team’s size impact it’s ability to influence?
  - Do teams resort to using subterfuge to impact project deliverables (e.g. “Italian strike” or just doing as they wish?)?
  - If the team is divided or geographically dispersed, does this impact it’s influence?
  - In your experience, how often do teams try to influence deliverables?
  - If or when a project team attempts to influence deliverables, is it really the entire team, or merely a part of the team which is active?
  - Do you have any examples of teams influencing deliverables?
AREA 4-4: Buyer’s upper management

AIM: To discuss how the buyer’s upper management partakes in setting deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [The buyer’s upper management refers to those who are hierarchically above the project owner (if applicable).]

CHECKLIST:
- Enablers of buyer’s upper management’s influence
- Limiters of buyer’s upper management’s influence
- Aspects, which impact the buyer’s upper management’s interest to influence deliverables.

MODEL QUESTIONS:

- What kinds of factors is the buyer’s upper management’s influence based on (strategy, operating procedures, powerful position, other)?

- What kinds of factors can limit the influence of the buyer’s upper management’s influence?

- Does the buyer’s upper management influence deliverables predominantly through indirect paths (using its own hierarchy) or through direct participation?

- What kinds of factors affect the willingness of the buyer’s upper management to interfere in setting deliverables?
  - Can the project’s size or significance be a factor?
  - Could the significance of the supplier be a factor?

- *Do you have any examples you’d like to mention?*
AREA 4-5: Supplier’s upper management

AIM: To discuss how the supplier’s upper management influences project deliverables.

BACKGROUND:
[ The supplier’s upper management refers to who are hierarchically above the supplier’s project manager (if applicable).]

CHECKLIST:
- Enablers of supplier’s upper management’s influence
- Limiters of supplier’s upper management’s influence
- Aspects, which impact the supplier’s upper management’s interest to influence deliverables.

MODEL QUESTIONS:

- What kinds of factors is the supplier’s upper management’s influence based on (strategy, operating procedures, powerful position, other)?

- What kinds of factors can limit the influence of the supplier’s upper management’s influence?

- Does the supplier’s upper management influence deliverables predominantly through indirect paths (using its own hierarchy) or through direct participation?

- What kinds of factors affect the willingness of the supplier’s upper management to interfere in setting deliverables?
  - Can the project’s size or significance be a factor?
  - Could the significance of the supplier be a factor?

- Do you have any examples you’d like to mention?
AREA 4-6: Single players

AIM: To discuss ways in which single players can influence project deliverables, to ascertain which factors enable or limit the influence of single players as well as to discuss the desirability of playing.

BACKGROUND:
[ Player refers to a person who may or may not be part of the project and who has both the will and ability to influence project deliverables.]

CHECKLIST:
- Factors, which enable the player to influence deliverables
- Factors, which limit a player’s ability to influence deliverables.
- Factors, which influence whether a player might want to influence deliverables (except the nature of the deliverables).

MODEL QUESTIONS:
- What kinds of factors is a player’s ability to influence based on? (key position, other power bases, a culture which entices to play)?
- What kinds of factors may limit a player’s ability to influence?
- In general (not related purely to project deliverables), how common an occurrence is “playing”?  
- In your experience, is playing somehow linked to a specific hierarchical level?
- When players influence deliverables, are they doing it predominantly for selfish reasons?
- On aggregate, do you view playing as negative? What kinds of situations can you envision in which playing would have a positive impact?
- In the longer term, what kinds of changes could an organization make to curtail playing, or to try to steer it into less harmful avenues?
- Could you give an example on players’ influence?
AREA 4-7: The project sponsor

AIM: To discuss how project sponsors participate in setting deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [Literature describes a sponsor as a person holding a significant position, who tries to advance a project even though the project would not be part of the organisation under him.]

CHECKLIST:

☐ Factors, which enable a sponsor’s influence
☐ Factors, which limit a sponsor’s influence
☐ Factors, which impact a sponsor’s willingness to influence deliverables

MODEL QUESTIONS:

• What kinds of factors enable a sponsor’s influence?

• What kinds of factors limit a sponsor’s influence?

• Considering your entire experience, what is a typical position for a sponsor to hold in her/his own organization?

• Is a sponsor usually motivated by self-interest or the greater good?

• Could you assess, which kinds of factors could impact a sponsor’s willingness to sponsor a project?

• In your experience, are sponsors more common in internal or external projects?

• Can you give an example of a sponsor influencing a project’s deliverables?
AREA 4-8: Other parts of the buyer’s organization

AIM: To discuss how other parts of the buyer’s organization influence the setting of deliverables.

BACKGROUND:
[“Other parts” refer herein widely to those parts of the organization (excluding upper management), which are not directly involved in the project (e.g. the finance department or the IT-department)]

CHECKLIST:
☐ Which kinds of factors enable the influence of the other parts of the buyer’s organization?
☐ Which kinds of factors limit the influence of the other parts of the buyer’s organization?
☐ Which kinds of factors impact the willingness of the other parts of the buyer’s organization to influence deliverables?

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• What have you experienced; how do other parts of the buyer’s organization influence deliverables (e.g. withholding resources, setting of standards, creation of constraints etc.)?

• What kinds of factors may limit the influence of the other parts of the buyer’s organization?

• Could it be said that the other parts of the organization influence deliverables mainly through creating new constraints?

• Could you give an example of this??
AREA 4-9: Other parts of the supplier’s organization

AIM: To discuss how other parts of the supplier’s organization influence the setting of deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [“Other parts” refer herein widely to those parts of the organization (excluding upper management), which are not directly involved in the project (e.g. the finance department or the IT-department)]

CHECKLIST:
☐ Which kinds of factors enable the influence of the other parts of the supplier’s organization?
☐ Which kinds of factors limit the influence of the other parts of the supplier’s organization?
☐ Which kinds of factors impact the willingness of the other parts of the supplier’s organization to influence deliverables?

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• What have you experienced; how do other parts of the supplier’s organization influence deliverables (e.g. withholding resources, setting of standards, creation of constraints etc.)?

• What kinds of factors may limit the influence of the other parts of the supplier’s organization?

• Could it be said that the other parts of the organization influence deliverables mainly through creating new constraints?

• Could you give an example of this?
AREA 4-10: Primary parties’ other projects (portfolios and programs)

AIM: Discuss the interviewee’s experiences on how other projects can influence the setting of deliverables.

BACKGROUND: [Other projects refers herein widely to the active projects (and portfolios & programs) either primary party has....]

CHECKLIST:  
- Why do other projects influence project deliverables?  
- How do other project influence project deliverables?

MODEL QUESTIONS:
- What factors is the influence of other project based on (denying resources, competition for favour/visibility/creation of standards etc.)?
- Are there any environmental factors, which affect how strongly projects influence each other (resource scarcity, general competitiveness, resource utilization, competition for identical resources etc.)?
- Do other projects predominantly create new limitations or constraints? Are there exceptions?
- Can you give an example?
AREA 4-11: Stakeholders

AIM: To discuss the factors which limit or enable stakeholders to influence deliverables.

BACKGROUND:
[A stakeholder is any private individual or group of such, who while not being legally linked to the project are or feel themselves to be affected by the project...]

CHECKLIST:
☐ How can/do stakeholders influence project deliverables
☐ Why can/do stakeholders influence project deliverables

MODEL QUESTIONS:
• How common is it for stakeholders to influence project deliverables?
• Is it more common for stakeholders to influence deliverables or for stakeholders to influence whether deliverables can be reached?
• Which factors enable stakeholders to influence deliverables?
• What kinds of factors can limit the potential influence of stakeholders?
• Can you give an example of a case in which stakeholders have influenced a project’s deliverables?
AREA 5: **About the visibility of objectives and ambitions**

AIM: To discuss the phenomenon of hidden or tacit objectives/ambitions...

BACKGROUND:

[The concept of hidden or tacit goals is briefly discussed in project management literature. The definition is that a hidden/tacit goal is an objective or ambition, which a party holds, but does not communicate. Literature speculates that a hidden goal could be:

a) So self evident, that it is not pronounced
b) So difficult to communicate (/explicate), that it is not communicated
c) Such that communicating it might either negatively impact the communicator’s position or negatively impact the potential for reaching the desired goal...

More widely, hidden goals may either support or subvert the main stream. They can also reflect an organization’s culture or be based on individuals’ desire to draw personal gain from the project.]

CHECKLIST:

- Present the concept of a hidden goal.
- Discuss, whether the interviewee has experiences of hidden goals?
- Discuss the frequency of hidden goals, and to speculate on their rationale (why keep goals hidden).

MODEL QUESTIONS:

- Have you, during your career, encountered a phenomenon, which could be called a hidden goal?
  - Could you describe the situation?
**AREA 6: From conflicting objectives and ambitions to deliverables:**

**AIM:**
To discuss different ways of forging deliverables out of conflicting inputs.
To discuss the effects of unresolved conflicts.

**BACKGROUND:**
[Assuming that different parties have different objectives and ambitions for a project. How are these conflicts resolved – what methods are used and how is the process conducted?]

**CHECKLIST:**
☑️ How are conflicts linked to project failure and non-starting
☐ Discuss methods of rectifying conflict

**MODEL QUESTIONS:**
- How well are these conflicts usually resolved before starting to work on the project?
- If conflicts are left unsolved, why are they left unsolved (conflict not seen, conflict downplayed, unwillingness to yield???)
- If conflicts are left unsolved, what can this lead to?
  - in case of major conflicts?
  - in case of intermediate conflicts?
  - in case of minor conflicts?
- Could you, in general terms, outline different methodologies for solving these conflicts and for creating a set of commonly accepted deliverables?
  - “enlightened dictatorship?”
  - ”leadership”?
  - “wheeling-dealing”?
  - “technocratic appraisal” (e.g. balanced scorecard?).
- does the process of resolving conflicts usually encompass a great number of parties?
- If all interested parties are not included in resolving the conflicts, how is the group of participants selected?

**AREA 7: Related topics?**

Is there something you’d like to add?