ON THE POLITICS OF CHANGE IN ACADEMIA: PROJECTS AS NEGOTIATED, CONTESTED SPACES

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Candidate Declaration

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Abstract

There has been a significant growth in the use of projects as a method to implement organizational change. As a project management practitioner, senior leader in a Higher Education Institution and a researcher, I have experienced significant tensions between the traditional assumptions of project management – linearity, predictability and controllability – with the complexity of organizational change. This issue was investigated within this programme of research through asking, 'What tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects?'

Fieldwork consisted of a single-case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018), following an inductive logic, and pertaining to a large-scale project within a UK Higher Education Institution. It builds empirically grounded theoretical insights that aligned with the knowledge constituting assumptions of neo-positivism. Data sources included 14 semi-structured interviews, which were triangulated with observations and transcripts of 21 project-related meetings and 134 project documents. Two phases of data analysis were conducted. First, the data was analysed to delineate discernible perspectives of the nature and boundaries of "the project". The second phase identified and examined the socio-political complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project.

The findings demonstrate project management to be more than organising tasks and resources in a neutral, apolitical way. The implication is that change projects call for a shift away from assumptions of a bounded rationality towards the project as a negotiated and contested space. To be involved in project work relating to organizational change is inevitably to be involved in power and politics.

It is thus time to reimagine the project management orthodoxy and this research is a step toward that goal. In doing so, the study expands the debate on the social and institutional context of projects in the nascent literature on 'Project Studies'

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Finally, I would like dedicate this thesis to my parents.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that there has been a significant growth in the use of projects as a method to implement organizational change, thus shifting project management from its engineering and operations roots to a management paradigm (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Hall, 2012; Hornstein, 2015; Morris, 2013). As an experienced senior project practitioner and leader within a Higher Education Institution in the UK, I have observed a rapid and significant growth in such projects. It is noticeable that these projects have substantially different characteristics such as the socio-political dynamics of the project environment. In my experience, a key aspect of this issue is that a project manager is often allocated to projects post scoping where the focus in on governance and execution, with little understanding of the real problem statement and the socio-political dynamics of the project environment are not explored and considered during this phase. My sense was that the current project management orthodoxy renders traditional assumptions and techniques problematic for organizational change projects, due to the neglect of project context and the human complexities involved. I was therefore interested in whether incorporating and acknowledging the complexity of the organizational environment provided a better foundation on which to understand the future needs and demands of organizational change projects for the project management discipline. I took this practitioner puzzle to the project management and project studies stream of literature, yet did not find a satisfactory answer for change projects.

Against this backdrop, this thesis is the outcome of a case study of a large-scale change project in a UK Higher Education Institute that aimed to unpack the black box of socio-political complexities from the lived experience of project actors. It was guided by the question: *What tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects?* In response to this question, the study met the following objectives: a) identify the socio-political complexities within the change project under consideration (i.e. "the case"), b) examine how they manifest, and c) discuss the implications for the discipline and practice of project management of organizational change projects.

There are five sections to this chapter, which takes the practitioner problematic stated above and: introduces the research context and rationale for the study; explicates what remains unanswered within the extant literature; outlines the key terms and definitions used in the thesis; provides an overview of the research methodology employed; and finally, outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research context and rationale

The higher education sector in the UK makes a significant contribution to the economy. It generates over £95 billions of gross economic output and supports over 940,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the UK (Universities UK, 2020), £10.7 billion of export earnings and contributes 2.9% of UK GDP (Logan, 2017). The UK higher education sector is nevertheless in the middle of an unprecedented step change in its environment and continues to face significant uncertainty, specifically relating to political and policy changes (Universities UK, 2017), with significant impacts on areas such as income generation, stakeholder expectations and increased world-wide competition. Add to this, the challenges and ongoing uncertainties presented by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which have yet to fully play out.

The fifteen-year period since 2006 has seen significant change for Higher Education in the UK, with a shift towards a greater commercial outlook in terms of its income model and increased focus on efficiency, effectiveness and value for money (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Kelly et al., 2014; Muller-Camen & Salzgeber, 2005; Universities UK, 2017). It saw a transition to a new funding system in England and Wales with a significant reduction on the reliance of direct funding from government with the removal of block funding to a greater reliance on metrics, such as student fees and research outputs which is less predictable and carries higher risk due to the global context in which universities now need to compete (Kelly et al., 2014; Universities UK, 2017; Universities UK, 2019). In total, just under a quarter of total income received by UK universities in 2015–16 came from government sources, compared with a figure of around 45% for income from government sources in 2006–07 (Berggren & Söderlund, 2008; Kelly et al., 2014; Universities UK, 2017).

This has caused a greater level of uncertainty and risk for higher education institutions (HEIs) which has created the need to revisit and significantly change their operating models. This has been augmented with a period of financially austere times, the

uncertainty of the impact of UK's exit from the European Union and the need for investment to maintain excellence in both education and research to meet the demands of an increasingly global competitive market (Kelly et al., 2014; UK, 2019; Universities UK, 2015, 2017). Thus, HEIs have been required to innovate whilst driving efficiencies and value for money. In England alone, universities have achieved efficiency and cost savings estimated at £2.4 billion between 2004 - 2014 (Kelly et al., 2014).

This shift to increased marketization and competition in the market for resources and commercialisation has required universities to revisit how they operate, leading to significant organizational change which focuses on improving organizational performance. This shift of focus on performance management and competition for resources in a free market has seen the neoliberalisation of universities intensively debated with an interrelated shift towards managerialism which is offered referred to as the New Public Management movement within the sector (Cano et al., 2020; Collini, 2015; McCarthy & Dragouni, 2020; Petro et al., 2020; Pitcher, 2013; Shepherd, 2018). The characteristics of this movement include the rise in the use of metrics such as league tables and benchmarking to measure performance and a shifting paradigm to a more managerialist culture of performance management (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Cano et al., 2020; Erickson et al., 2020; Kallio et al., 2016; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). This has resulted in changes to the internal organization and processes within universities; with recent debates presenting threats to academic identity associated with the shift to an increasingly commercialised mode of operation (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Nordbäck et al., 2021). The sector has seen collective resistance during 2019/20 via UCU (University and college Union) strikes over issues such as work conditions, pay and casualisation of jobs. To mitigate these challenges, the literature on neoliberalism and managerialism in Higher Education has called for the rebalancing of the approach taken to drive change, with a refocus on people; and investment into creating collegiate and engaged work environments that have open conversations about the challenges and constraints facing universities within this new world (Cano et al., 2020; Collini, 2015; Nordbäck et al., 2021).

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the sectors capacity to deliver these benefits in the future; and contribute to economic and social recovery. Whilst universities played, and continue to play, a critical role in research to fight the pandemic, the fragility of this significant contribution is a reality because research is

cross-subsidised from student fees and associated income such as accommodation and catering. Income from international student fees are a significant risk, which equates to £6.9 billion for the sector in 2020-21. The potential financial consequences are significant, with some universities at risk of financial failure at the extreme end of the spectrum. It is generally accepted that without additional governmental support, the sectors contribution to the economic, health and social recovery will be diminished (Ahlburg, 2020; Logan, 2017)

Concurrently, and perhaps relatedly, to these challenges there has been a rapid and significant growth in the use of projects as a method to drive and deliver organizational change within HEIs (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Wierschem & Johnston, 2005). It is acknowledged that universities are particularly resistant to change (S. Brown, 2013; Marshall, 2010) and there is scant literature on projects within academia with a focus on people and change (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Cano et al., 2020a; Wierschem & Johnston, 2005), which creates a challenging work environment for project managers within UK HEIs.

This growth in the use of projects in the HEI context is set against a general backdrop of significant growth in the use of projects as a method to implement organizational change, shifting project management from its engineering and operations roots to a management paradigm (Hall, 2012; Hornstein, 2015; Morris, 2013). With its foundations from the engineering and operations disciplines, project management has traditionally been seen as a discipline focused on planning and organising resources to deliver project outputs against a given project scope within the accepted Barnes Iron Project Management Triangle of time, budget and scope, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Ahlemann et al., 2013; Albert et al., 2017; Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Atkinson, 1999; Granot & Zuckerman, 1991; Jaafari, 2003; S. B. Johnson, 1997; McLeod et al., 2012; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Serrador & Turner, 2015; T. M. Williams, 1999). It is the premise of this research that it is problematic to apply orthodox project management assumptions and techniques in complex organizational settings due to the unresolved contradiction between the complexity of individual and group sensemaking; and resultant responses within change projects versus rationale controllability enshrined within project management.

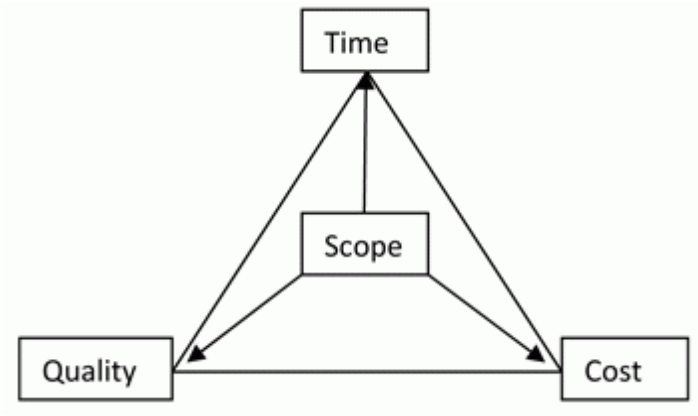

Figure 1-1: Barnes' Iron Triangle of Project Management

Projects with substantially different characteristics are inherent in organizational change efforts, where socio-political dynamics of the project environment are key (Hall, 2012). This study was designed to examine socio-political complexities during the preinitiation phase of a project because the literature had identified this as the point where there is most uncertainty due to limited information; high levels of complexity due to the influence of project participants (hereon actors) whose positions were not necessarily understood or uncovered during the front-end phase; a need for better defined project requirements and mission that contribute to organizational strategic priorities (Lind & Culler, 2011; Pinto & Slevin, 1987; Whittaker, 1999). In practice, a project manager is often allocated to projects post scoping where the focus is on governance and execution with little or no time on requirement setting, often jumping straight to solutions without understanding the real problem statement and the dynamics of the socio-political dynamics of the project environment (Geraldi et al., 2011; Morris, 2013). Whilst, the importance of the pre-initiation phase is understood, the work in this area has been much slower than the development of tools for the execution stage (Morris, 2013; Terry Williams & Samset, 2010). The importance of improving practice during the pre-initiation phase is noted by many, with poor discipline resulting in 'fire-fighting' in project execution (Flyvbjerg, 2009; Merrow, 2011; Miller & Lessard, 2018; Morris, 2013; Stephen Wearne, 2014). It was in this shifting domain that Morris'(2013) seminal work, 'Reconstructing Project Management' calls for the traditional boundaries of project management to be extended to include the pre-initiation phase of projects (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018). It is acknowledged that this phase is where real value can be injected or destroyed (Samset & Volden, 2016; Shea, 2003).

Furthermore, with these changing characteristics of projects, there is an acceptance of projects becoming increasingly complex (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Padalkar & Gopinath, 2016). Furthermore, the importance of complexity and its impact on project success or failure is commonly acknowledged (Hall, 2012; Henrie & Sousa-Poza, 2005; Pitsis et al., 2014). However, whilst it is acknowledged in the literature that socio-political complexities are key to success, there is a need to understand better their dynamic nature and how organizations and individuals respond to such complexities (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Hall, 2012; Söderlund, 2011; Thomas & Mengel, 2008). This requires unpacking the intersection of the informal and formal spheres of the project to gain a greater understanding of actors sensemaking and behaviours towards and within the project. The discipline has called for the discussion to shift from a mechanical one size fits all approach to a contingency perspective (Geraldi et al., 2011; Hall, 2012).

The examination of increased project complexities with the traditional project management practice orthodoxy of controllability informed the guiding research question. The associated challenges were accepted in current scholarship (Bresnen, 2016; Morris, 2013). The literature on complexity within the project management discipline has made progress in extending the debate on defining and the measurement of complexity (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Kermanshachi et al., 2016; Padalkar & Gopinath, 2016) with the aim of understanding how complexity can be actively managed by the Project Manager - for the better outcome of the project deliverables (Geraldi & Williams, 2011; Kermanshachi et al., 2016; Lenfle & Loch, 2010). Thus, scholarship to date remains located in the dominant deterministic foundations of project management.

The imperative of these changing characteristics has implications for the discipline's future research and development of practitioner accepted norms, such as the professional bodies books of knowledge and training, that need to go beyond the deterministic approaches prevalent in the discipline (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Winter & Szczepanek, 2008). Koskela K & H. (2008) claim that the rational project management foundation is obsolete and went as far to question if project management has a future as a discipline, claiming the need for a wider theoretical contribution. The acceptance of the limitations of the conventional assumptions of project management has seen the recent emergence of Project Studies, which calls for an inclusive approach to alternative perspectives and debate (Geraldi and Söderlund, 2018; Picciotto, 2019). Morris (2013), for example, highlighted the need to leverage the promise and insight of institution theory.

The tensions and contradictions of this debate, within the tradition of controllability of project management, can inhibit attempts to promote alternative discourse within the discipline (Bresnen, 2016; Lundin et al., 2015). However, as a Senior Project Practitioner, who is tasked with leading a portfolio of organizational change projects within a university, I feel the alternative discourse is long overdue. This study aimed to add learning and develop the maturity of project management practice within HEIs.

1.2 What remains unanswered: Research questions and contribution

The pre-initiation phase of projects is arguably the time when particular decisions will have the biggest impact, during a time when there is limited knowledge and high socio-political complexity. This calls for a dynamic view of the interrelations between various stakeholders, the uncertainty implicit in change projects and the wider social and political dynamics of the project context (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Hjortsø & Meilby, 2013; Morris, 2013; Wearne, 2014; Terry Williams et al., 2019; Terry Williams & Samset, 2010). Yet, traditional project management tools and their underlying assumptions are premised on delivering projects in a managed and controlled way, rather than exploring a deeper understanding of the negotiated and contested nature of change project development and initiation. To serve this task, a better understanding of the neglected human dynamics of projects is needed (Baccarini et al., 2016; Curran et al., 2009; Padalkar & Gopinath, 2016). In short, whilst the nascent research stream that takes socio-political dynamics in projects seriously, the deterministic approach of measuring complexity with the aim of control is limiting the unpacking of the black box of social-political complexities. This study aims to address this issue through asking the question; *What tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects?* To achieve this, the study identified the socio-political complexities within the case study and examined how they manifested.

The study collected data in real-time which provided an invaluable opportunity to examine socio-political complexities as they played out in the case-study and as actors understandings of the project evolved. A number of key authors within project management claim that it suffers from low adoption rates (Ahlemann et al., 2013; Pitsis et al., 2014) which raises a fundamental question around the impact of project management research. The literature cites a combination of the lack of consideration of the usage environment or project context (Besner & Hobbs, 2006; Smyth & Morris, 2007;

Winter, Smith, Morris, et al., 2006), too much of a distance between the relationships of researchers and practitioners and the lack of theory underpinning project management research as key factors.

This study makes a contribution to knowledge through building upon the seminal work of Morris (2013), by expanding the boundaries of the project by focusing on the pre-initiation phase of projects; by expanding the debate on the social and institutional context of projects that is seen in the emerging literature on 'Project Studies' (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Morris, 2013; Picciotto, 2019); and by extending Maylor & Turner's (2017) concept of duality of project complexity and response by adding a new stakeholder perspective.

This study argues that developing a better understanding of the socio-political dynamics of the project context would contribute to exploring the tension between the prevalent project management tradition of control and the complexity of change projects. This research agenda will aid future thinking on the fundamental boundaries of the project management discipline and the role of project management practitioners by constituting projects as a contested and negotiated space.

1.3 Key terms and definitions

This section introduces key terms and definitions used in this thesis.

1.3.1 What is a project?

As with many fields of management, there is not a single agreed definition of a project. For the purpose of this research, the following definition of a project is selected 'a project is the whole of a group of activities limited in time and space, inserted in, and integration with a political, social and economic environment, towards a goal progressively refined by the dialectic between the thought (the project plan) and the reality' (Bredillet, 2010, p23.). This is some distance from the traditional definition of project management as a unique temporary endeavour to achieve planned objectives (APM, 2019; Packendorff, 1995). The chosen definition incorporates the political and social dynamics which puts the context of the environment at the core of the definition, along with its interaction with the more traditional views on project execution. This is important, given the question at hand.

1.3.2 What is the pre-initiation phase of projects?

The pre-initiation phase of projects relates to the point when the project exists conceptually and before it is planned and implemented, from the time the idea is conceived until the decision is made to go ahead with the project, at which point the project artefact of a project scope is present (Terry Williams & Samset, 2010). This is against a backdrop of a lack of an agreed definition or clear principles within the discipline. The pre-initiation phase is interchangeable with front-end phase within the literature (Morris, 2016; Terry Williams et al., 2019b).

1.3.3 What is complexity?

Again, complexity does not have a single unified definition within the project management or project studies literatures, but there is a general acceptance that it is more than a big, complicated or mega project (Browning, 2014; Morel & Ramanujam, 1999; Ramasesh & Browning, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015; Vidal et al., 2011; Williams, 1999).

The definition of complexity adopted for this study is one which is concerned with nonlinear, dynamic properties (Devaney & Gleick, 1989; Geraldi et al., 2011), where there is an absence of simple cause and effect assumptions. This aligns with the generally accepted conditions of project complexity relating to ambiguity and uncertainty, unique context with emergent behaviours and responses, non-linearity and permeable project boundaries (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Boyatzis, 2011; Geraldi et al., 2011)

It is important not to confuse complexity with complicated (Baccarini et al., 2016; Geraldi et al., 2011; Poksinska, 2010; Remington & Pollack, 2016; Williams, 1999). A commonly used definition of complicated is characterized by the level of difficulty but doesn't identify non-linearity as a core aspect (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Boyatzis, 2011; Glouberman & Zimmerman, 2016; Remington & Pollack, 2016; Williams, 1999). Thus, the combination of several linear systems may lead to a large linear system, not a complex system, unless there are elements of non-linearity

1.3.4 What is project governance?

There is not one generally accepted definition of project governance. Scholarship on this subject has only really gained momentum over the past 15 years. Its concepts and foundations remain ambiguous and its multifaceted nature does not align to a single

theoretical lens within project management scholarship (Ahola et al., 2014; Bekker, 2014; Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Samset & Volden, 2016).

For the purpose of this study project governance is understood as the formal project management system that provides control and accountability whilst minimising risk. This aligns with the traditional definitions of corporate governance and the project management practitioner literature (APM, 2019; Axelos Limited, 2017; PMBOK, 2017). The selected definition is illustrated further by the following definition '[project] governance refers to the set of policies, regulations, functions, processes, procedures and responsibilities that define the establishment, management and control of projects, programmes and portfolios' (APM, 2012, pg. 8).

1.4 Overview of research methodology

This thesis is underpinned by a case study approach, situated in a UK HEI. It adopts a primarily inductive logic to unpack the black box of socio-political complexities inherent in an organizational change project to address the overarching research question from the perspective of those involved in the everyday realities of the project. Fieldwork included collection of different types of qualitative data from multiple sources pertaining to a single, large-scale project including 14 semi-structured interviews, observation of 21 project-related meetings and review of 134 project documents.

The project was chosen based on its potential to shed light on the area of theoretical interest. Essentially, the project involved the design and development of a new interdisciplinary Faculty building and thus, at face value would seem well suited to the linear, rational approach underpinning the current project management orthodoxy. It was a significant institutional project that was cross-boundary (i.e. involving multiple academic departments, a Faculty made up of 13 separate academic departments into a collective group, central professional services) with a significant number of project actors and a high level of potential disagreement. Due to the high number of stakeholders and the project being in the pre-initiation phase, there was a high level of uncertainty. The project would ultimately bring together a number of departments within one building and is expected to impact on the day-to-day activities of employees and the student experience, and thus constitutes a 'change project' rather than a simple capital build project.

At the point of starting the fieldwork, architects had just been appointed and an initial budget and resources had been committed for the pre-initiation phase only. The pre-initiation phase included the building design, in its entirety, inclusive of the costing up of the budget required to completion and the submission of the planning application. The planning application represented the project scope in traditional project management terms. Engagement with the nascent literature on socio-political complexity within project management took place with data collection through recursive cycling between data, emerging theory and extant literature.

The findings of this study are time-bound and context specific, but are nevertheless capable of providing general insights into the socio-political complexities of projects within HEI's specifically and organizational change projects more broadly.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** synthesises the relevant project literature and presents two relevant gaps for this study. First that the application of current project management orthodoxy assumptions to organizational change projects is problematic, with the need to shift from a dependence on planning and control to a more organic management model. Second, whilst project complexity scholarship seeks to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and how to manage it, the deterministic assumptions of control prevail.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology of the study. It was a single-case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018) with an inductive logic that aligns with the knowledge constituting assumptions of a neo-positivism. Qualitative data was collected and analysed with a commitment to researcher objectivity and rigor to build empirically grounded theoretical insights. Data sources include semi-structured interviews, alongside observational and document analysis. Two phases of analysis were conducted and are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 provides the findings of the first phase of analysis that frames the project as a case of evolving pluralistic relationalities. It delineates two fluid discernible perspectives of the project and accompanying assumptions. First, the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism – a simple build project. Second, the project as a site of contestation over culture, identify and work practices – a complex change project. These

pluralistic perspectives, sets of accompanying assumptions and fluidity of sense-making generated complexities and tensions at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project which are subsequently discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 presents the second phase of analysis on the evolution of understanding and the related socio-political complexities present at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project. These findings are presented in two interrelated themes: symbolism and sense-making; language and rhetoric.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in light of extant literature, presenting new insights at the intersection of processes, relationships and rhetoric as they become entangled in a negotiated order. The discussion is structured around three strands that emerged from the recursive cycling between data, findings and existing theoretical perspectives: pluralistic rationalities; the significance of project governance and legitimacy; the dynamic relationship between response and complexity. In sum, the thesis recasts organizational change projects as negotiated and contested spaces.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with the contribution to practice and knowledge, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

I took the practitioner problem stated in Chapter 1 to the project literature to seek a better understanding of the current academic debate. This chapter synthesises the relevant project literature and presents two gaps for this study. First that the application of current project management orthodoxy assumptions to organizational change projects is problematic, with the need to shift from a dependence on planning and control to a more organic management model. Second, whilst project complexity scholarship seeks to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, the deterministic assumptions of control prevail. In other words, there remains a tension between traditional orthodox assumptions and complexity.

The chapter proceeds in three sections. First, I explore the orthodoxy of project management, critically examining its disciplinary foundations and assumptions in 2.1. Second, I examine the extent to which this orthodoxy has been transformed by the developing stream of project literature on socio-political complexities in 2.2. During the empirical fieldwork phase of the research, there was a significant emerging theme relating to decision making and project governance. Thus, the third section critically engages with project governance literature and how it related to the two perspectives presented in sections 2,1 and 2.2.

2.1 Disciplinary assumptions: The orthodoxy of project management

The historic foundations of project management as a discipline rooted in engineering, operations and organization theory (as introduced in the preceding chapter), explains both the existence of the dominant rational, linear approach to practice and preference for prescriptive research (Ahlemann et al., 2013; Albert et al., 2017; Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Atkinson, 1999; Granot & Zuckerman, 1991; Jaafari, 2003;. Johnson, 1997; McLeod et al., 2012; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Williams, 1999). Literature initially focused on scheduling and control within projects characterised by high certainty during the 1960s, followed by a decade of work emphasising teamwork and bringing temporary teams together effectively (Biedenbach & Müller, 2011). In addition, management scholarship saw a shift from governance and structures to process during this period. The 1980s then saw an emergence of attention to complex projects and the literature sought

to reduce uncertainty with the use of boundaries to exclude or 'manage out' complexity. The discipline has now shifted towards looking at dynamism, uncertainty and the changing characteristics of projects (Cicmil et al., 2006; Winter et al., 2006), but it is acknowledged that there is still a need for this to go beyond attempting to simply measure complexity (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Sense & Owen, 2011).

A number of authors have presented the view that the lack of theory underpinning project management practice and research is a key issue for the future of the discipline (Cicmil et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2018; Floricel et al., 2014; Killen et al., 2012; Koskela & Howell, 2008; Shenhar et al., 2001; Smyth & Morris, 2007,Williams, 1999). Indeed, Kloppenborg and Opfer (2002) reviewed 40 years of project management research and concluded that there was nothing notable to report on theory, while Ahlemann, et al. (2013) claim that the lack of theoretical and empirical foundations causes a lack of acceptance in practice and therefore project management research to date has a lack of impact in the real world.

The key practitioner associations, such as the Project Management Institute (PMI), International Project management Association (IPMA), Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) and the Association of Project Management (APM), seem to be lagging in such debates, focusing on delivering projects in a managed and controlled way rather than exploring a deeper understanding of the complexity of projects (Leybourne, 2007). Books of Knowledge (BoK) (APM, 2019; Axelos Limited, 2017; PMI Global Standard, 2017) act as a platform of global standard guidelines, rules and characteristics for practitioners. They are underpinned by hard systems thinking and assume that projects can be managed in a rational, linear and mechanistic way (Baccarini et al., 2016; Svejvig & Andersen, 2015). Hard systems thinking takes parts of the world to be 'systems' which can be engineered, in contrast to soft systems thinking which concentrates on making sense of inquiry into complexity as a system of learning (Checkland, 1994).

Popular, globally recognised practitioner qualifications and accreditations such as Prince2 (**P**rojects **IN C**ontrolled **E**nvironment) and Six Sigma are based on hard system thinking assumptions. Prince2 is used extensively in UK Government and was created in 1989 by the Office of Government Commerce which moved into the Cabinet Office in 2010 and was subsequently launched as a project management methodology, outside UK

Civil Service, in 1996 (Office of Government, 2009). Six Sigma was developed by Motorola in 1986 and is used extensively in industries such as aerospace and automotive today, but is also embedded in continuous improvement in companies such as Coca-Cola and General Electric. Thus, despite the shift toward acknowledging complexity and the importance of socio-political dynamics to project success within scholarly communities, practitioner methodologies, such as Prince2 and Six Sigma, tools and training retain the discipline's historical emphasis on the rational control and management of projects. This demonstrates the ongoing assumption that rational control of complexity is both possible and desirable (Stacey, 2003; Wood, 2002).

A project can be delivered on time, within scope and in budget, as per the project management triangle which remains the core of practitioner training (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Atkinson, 1999; Granot & Zuckerman, 1991), but if the project scope was not sufficiently developed then the benefits the project delivers are open to question (Hornstein, 2015; Samset & Volden, 2016). Best practice relating to the pre-initiation stage is very deterministic and covers elements such as setting objectives, defining the resource frame, defining the activity portfolio, deciding on structures, defining implantation methodologies and establishing rules and processes for information procedures and systems (APM, 2019; PMI Global Standard, 2017). This deterministic approach is criticised due to its lack of connection to the project context and there are calls for a wider view to be taken (Geraldi et al., 2011; Samset & Volden, 2016). This is the phase where the consequences of decisions will be high whilst information available will be at its lowest (Williams & Samset, 2010).

In sum, project management is transforming from traditional infrastructure-based sectors to a management paradigm as its use in driving and delivering organizational change increases (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006; De Rezende et al., 2018; Williams, 2005). Recent scholarship suggests that there is a need to shift from a dependence on planning and control to a more organic managerial mode (Bredillet, 2004; Crawford et al., 2006; Kolltveit et al., 2007; Pollack, 2007). Styhre & Borjesson, (2011) in particular identify the opportunity project management could take to enable creativity outside the norms of organizational structures, which is key to change projects. Whilst organizations may be using discrete projects to encourage innovation and change (C.S. Curran et al., 2009) the reach and impact of such projects is far from discrete, with many aspects of the organization and its stakeholders being touched. Projects with substantially different

characteristics are therefore emerging and are inherent in organizational change projects where socio-political dynamics are key to success (Hall, 2012; Hornstein, 2015; Pitsis et al., 2014). This has potential implications for the discipline's future research agenda and development of practitioner training that goes beyond the linear and often deterministic approaches thus far adopted (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Winter & Szczepanek, 2008). In addition, project management experience and skills are seen increasingly as a growing expectation of the modern manger (Leybourne & Sainter, 2012).

It is perhaps unsurprising then that some authors have argued for better integration of theories from multiple management disciplines (Kwak & Anbari, 2009) and a pluralistic approach to project research and practice (Kwak & Anbari, 2009; Morris, 2013; Söderlund, 2011; Winter et al., 2006). A pluralistic approach is adopted within this thesis through developing essential linkages to wider management and organizational literatures (Pitsis et al., 2014; Söderlund, 2011) relating to organizational theory and the pervasive issues of decision-making, power and control. Söderlund (2011) paper, which supported the notion of pluralism for the discipline, was a response to Koskela & Howell, (2008) controversial paper entitled 'The underlying theory of project management is obsolete', which made a bold statement that described project management as a discipline that was in crisis and long overdue a paradigm change.

In this section I have outlined the traditional orthodoxy and its assumptions and constraints. I elucidate that the application of the traditional tools and assumptions prove problematic to organizational change projects, in particular during the pre-initiation phase, due to the differing characteristics than the traditional engineering projects. Thus, shifting towards a management domain where projects involve more than organising tasks in natural and apolitical way is central to the development of project work. The next section explores the literature that takes the socio-political complexities of the project seriously, and assesses the extent to which it provides an alternative perspective.

2.2 Transforming the orthodoxy: Socio-political complexities of projects

It is generally accepted that projects are becoming more complex, not least due to the increased bidirectional interaction between social and technical aspects (Baloi & Price, 2003; Henrie & Sousa-Poza, 2005). Engwall & Svensson's (2004) suggestion that no project is an island implies that complexity is an inherent feature (see Chapter 1, section

1.3, for a definition of project complexity, and its differentiation from the term complicated). This section explores the project complexity literature and considers the implications for the project manager.

There are two key streams of literature on complexity within project management. The first stream examines complexity of projects by focusing on complexity theories to aid identification and measurement of complexity (Cicmil et al., 2006; Cooke-Davies et al., 2007; Geraldi et al., 2011; Vidal & Marle, 2008). The second stream, expands this work further by highlighting the need to move beyond measuring complexity to a further understanding of managing complexity for better outcomes and deliverables that are aligned to strategic intent, and linked to critical success factors studies (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Brady & Davies, 2014; Cicmil et al., 2009; Geraldi et al., 2011; Maylor et al., 2008; Rolstadås & Schiefloe, 2017). This perspective nevertheless demonstrates an assumption that rational control of complexity remains possible and desirable (Stacey, 2003; Wood, 2002).

Whilst, there has been a significant amount of work on the dimensions of project complexity since 1996, scholarship has not added any substantive new concepts since 2007/2008 thus, seemingly reaching saturation (Maylor & Turner, 2017). Geraladi (2011) conducted a comprehensive literature review on the complexity of projects which identified five key categories of complexity, including: uncertainty, dynamic, pace, structural, socio-political. Maylor & Turner (2017) extended this work and whilst they concluded that no new concepts had been developed in the field, they recategorized the five concepts into three to improve comprehensibility, now termed: structural complexity, socio-political complexity and emergent complexity. Pace was integrated with structural complexity; dynamic and uncertainty factors were combined into a new category of emergent complexity. Structural complexity relates to the size and shape of the project, with complexity increasing with the amount of transactions between people, locations, variety of work and financial scale. Socio-political complexities are characterised by politicking, power dynamics, hidden agendas, lack of shared understanding. Emergent complexity is influenced by lack of maturity in the systems, lack of experience of people involved, lack of clear objectives or with changes introduced to the project (Maylor & Turner, 2017). The timeline of the developing scholarship on project complexity is presented in Fig 2-1.

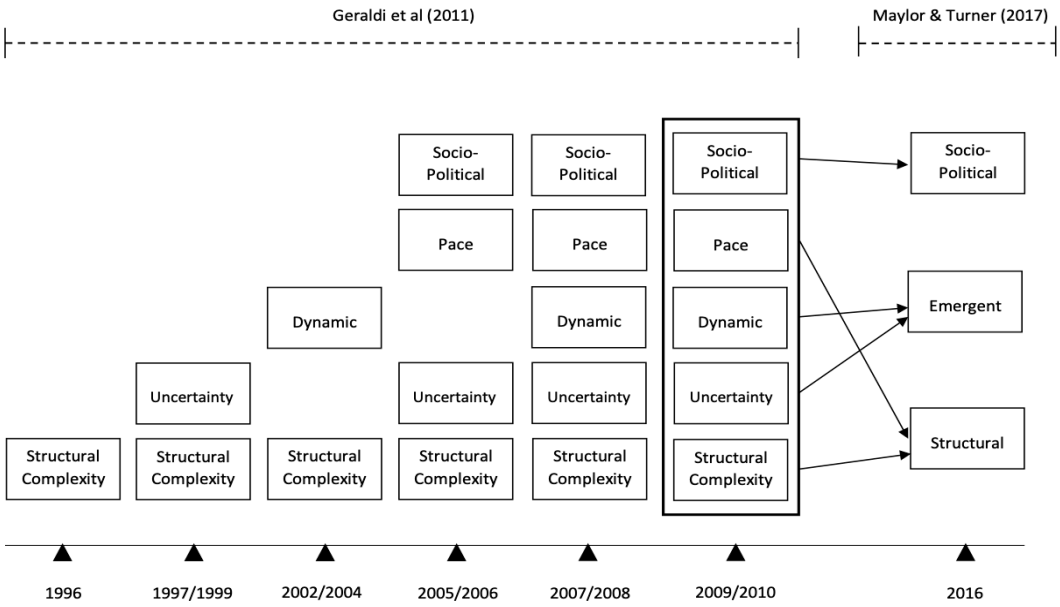

Figure 2-1: Project complexity: Timeline of bodies of work (adapted from Geraldi et al (2011), Maylor & Turner (2017))

The nature of complexity within projects, in particular the emerging use of projects to deliver change within organizations, has not been explored fully within the current project management literature and is limited in terms of considering organizational imperatives and responses (Maylor & Turner, 2017; Pitsis et al., 2014; Winter, et al., 2006). There is a need to understand better the dynamism of projects and how individuals and/or organizations respond to complexity (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Austin et al., 2002; Brown & Eisenhardt, 2003; Maylor & Turner, 2017; Pitsis et al., 2014; Söderlund, 2011; Thomas & Mengel, 2008). The growing trend of project management being used as a mechanism to deliver change is generally accepted (Pitsis et al., 2014; Williams, 1999) and there is an acknowledgement of a shift away from the traditional, structured project management approach (Brown, 2013; Cicmil et al., 2006; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Packendorff, 1995; Winter, et al., 2006).

The implications of the increased use of projects to deliver change can be problematic due to the tension between the recognised project management paradigm of plan and execute in a controlled manner (Leybourne, 2007) which would sit within the 'simple' section of Stacey's (1996) complexity model as presented in Fig. 2-2. Whilst Stacey is not a project studies scholar, his complexity model helps appreciate this tension and has

been generally used as a foundation of scholarship into project complexity. He argues that the increased levels of uncertainty and disagreement between those involved will increase complexity.

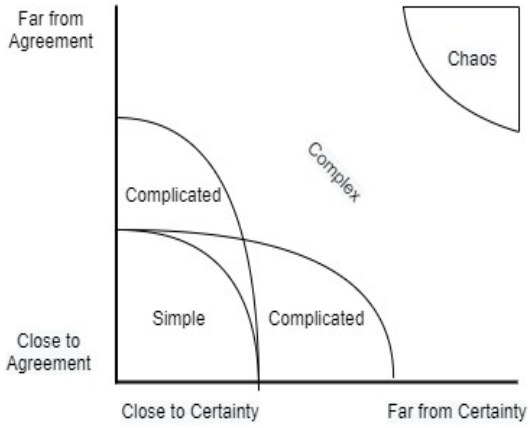

Figure 2-2: Adapted complexity matrix (Stacey R, 1996)

Whilst there is a body of thought that identifies uncertainty and complexity as two separate concepts (Baccarini et al., 2016), there is also a strong view from other authors that uncertainty is a key element of complexity (Pitsis et al., 2014; Williams, 1999). The literature within project management on ambiguity provides a similar definition as uncertainty, where ambiguity occurs when there is a lack of clarity, high complexity and more than one plausible alternative (Hagen & Park, 2013). It has been suggested that for projects with higher levels of uncertainty, greater soft skills are required by the project manager than what the traditional project management frameworks and methodologies currently provide (Hagen & Park, 2013; Pich et al., 2002).

It has been suggested that the socio-political dynamics within change projects are significant influences of project outcomes (Leybourne, 2006). Subsequently, the emergent nature of responses to such dynamics from individuals and organizations has received focus in the literature (Cicmil et al., 2009; Geraldi et al., 2011; Geraldi & Adlbrecht, 2008; Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018). Human actors within projects bring potentially conflicting interests, differing behaviours and 'complex responsive processes of relating' (Cicmil et al., 2009; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Cooke-Davies et al., 2007;

J Geraldi et al., 2011; Stacey, 2003). Socio-political complexity has received recent attention in project management scholarship and has emphasised the study of stakeholder dynamics and the study of the uncertainty of agreement between stakeholders (Geraldi & Adlbrecht, 2008; Maylor et al., 2008; Remington & Pollack, 2016), with implications that a project manager needs to add skills in operating in complex and possibly turbulent contexts, as well as the traditional technical skills (Pich et al., 2002; Pitsis et al., 2014). Thus, projects become constituted as a series of processes whereby technical and social arrangements, understandings, interactions and actions are shaped and managed to achieve complex tasks and meet a divergent range of goals and purposes of a multiplicity of stakeholder groups.

Whilst there has been a subsequent shift in focus in the literature from the tradition of planning in the prescriptive mode to a more behavioural, human focused approach, there remains a contested space between this and practitioner practice to date (Leybourne & Sainter, 2012). Managing this shift in focus on human and behavioural aspects over tasks is a new challenge for the project manager (Leybourne, 2006). The traditional orthodox focuses firmly on control through formal procedures, limiting the role boundaries and responsibilities of the project manager to one of implementation within the golden triangle of cost, time and quality, whilst the emerging view discussed in this section (2.2) considers the need to resolve uncertainty caused by 'turbulence' in the project environment. It is suggested that the shift towards the behavioural premise will increase as a more sophisticated understanding of project dynamics is developed (Cooke-Davies et al., 2007).

Morris (2013) develops this idea further by recognising the need to understand and influence the projects environment to enable the alignment of the project outputs to strategic intent. Morris (2013) talks about shaping the context or environment, and the importance of understanding the context to improve the understanding of the organizational and individual responses to complex projects is further supported by (Austin et al., 2002; Brown & Eisenhardt, 2003; Geraldi et al., 2011; Thomas & Mengel, 2008. Geraldi (2011) explicitly identifies this as a critical success factor of delivering successful complex projects.

Whilst scholarship that examines the complexity of project work seeks to gain a better understanding with the aim of managing it to deliver the technical aspects of the project,

the scholarship to date assumes a liner relationship between the complexities and the actions taken in response. The characteristics of the definition of project complexity talks to varied and numerous interrelated dynamics. Therefore, there appears to be a tension between the traditional orthodoxy of project management and the saturation and nature of complexity concepts. If the management of complexity is undertaken through established project management instruments, such as risk management, project managers must be equipped to understand and identify complexity within change projects. This demand on project managers is further compounded by the relationship between complexity factors and responses (Bakhshi et al., 2016; Maylor & Turner, 2017). Maylor & Turner (2017) argued the recursive nature of the relationship between project complexity and responses. They claimed the impact of response on complexity involves actions taken and, just as significant, actions not taken as illustrated in Fig. 2-3.

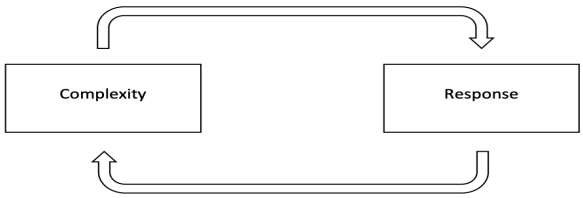

Figure 2-3: Duality of complexity & response (Maylor & Turner, 2017)

Perhaps the one thing that is certain in change projects, is that project relations and decision-making processes will be 'messy'. To be involved in project work is inevitably to be involved in power and politics. As such, the next section critically engages with project governance literature and, importantly, relates it to the orthodox and emergent perspectives outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 respectively.

2.3 Project governance in the context of orthodox and emergent perspectives

Whilst it is generally agreed that project governance is critical for successful project delivery (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Macheridis, 2017) the dominant focus of governance in the project literature is focused on the allocation of tasks, decision making, management and control of relationships, processes and interactions between the organization and contactors/suppliers in a structured way to achieve the objectives or

scope of the project (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Littau et al., 2010; Macheridis, 2017; Müller et al., 2017; Samset & Volden, 2016). Furthermore, the project governance literature argues the need for project governance to connect with organizational or corporate governance. It is acknowledged that organizational governance will likely influence the design of project governance and, in some instances, the organizational governance system will impose specific project governance requirements with the purpose of delivering project success. (Ahola et al., 2014; Bekker, 2015; Joslin & Müller, 2015).

Principal-agent theory is widely applied as the foundation for project governance within the literature, where goal and interest conflicts are managed by the separation of the project owner ("the principal") and the project manager ("the agent"). This optimal form of contract between the two will, it is believed, produce desired behaviours and results with accountability at its core - where the project manager acts in accordance with the owner's interests via controls and incentives (Ahern et al., 2014; Ahola et al., 2014; Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Garland, 2009; Pinto & Winch, 2016; Toivonen & Toivonen, 2014; S Wearne, 2014; Winch, 2001). The core assumptions are of managerial control and accountability which sits comfortably with the project management orthodoxy of controllability. This can be seen in generally accepted project management practices such as the allocation of work packages; the monitoring of progress; and the use of rewards and punitive conditions within contractual relationships.

Whilst there is acceptance of the critical role of accountability in project governance, the prevailing assumptions of principal-agent theory have recently been challenged due to them being considered outdated in the shifting domain of projects towards a management domain where strategic benefits become increasingly important which is located in the benefits realisation project literature (Abednego & Ogunlana, 2006; Cooke-Davies, 2002; Lechler & Cohen, 2009; Musawir et al., 2017; Scott-Young & Samson, 2008; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). Whilst this literature identifies project governance primarily as a transparent and accountable decision-making framework to facilitate efficient and effective decision making that will have impact on performance and improved possibility of project success (Bernardo, 2014; Garland, 2009; Joslin & Müller, 2016; Tadege Shiferaw et al., 2012), there are a number of challenges recognised in the analytical and political processes of projects such as hidden agendas, unrealistic and inconsistent assumptions (Samset & Volden, 2016). Yet these challenges are discussed in terms of

managing political processes via instruments of incentives and disincentives such as contracts, authority levels, information sharing to construct an optimal mix of instruments within the governance system to manage political complexities (Samset & Volden, 2016). This responds to the work of Morris (2013) who presents the need to move beyond the narrow, technical life cycle of the project around the project management triangle of cost, time and specification, to encompass the pre-initiation phase and the broader concept of a project (Morris, 2013; Samset & Volden, 2016). The future key challenge to governance of projects is how the strategic and tactical aspects of the project are included.

A different school of thought is one where project governance is concerned with alignment of project objectives with delivery of strategic intent in a socially orientated perspective based on stakeholder theory (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Derakhshan et al., 2019b; Garland, 2009; Hjelmbrekke et al., 2014). This aligns more closely with the emerging scholarship on project work and taking project socio-political complexities seriously which was critically examined in section 2.2. The underpinning assumption is that tensions between divergent stakeholder views and claims, require balancing which in turn creates complexity in the project (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Kochan & Rubinstein, 2000). Whilst, there is a generally accepted requirement within established project management practices to engage with stakeholders with the aim to understand and respond to differing and complex stakeholders' groups (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014), this view generally leads to the focus on stakeholders who have power and influence that can affect the project (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Freeman, 2015; Littau et al., 2010). This can potentially lead to the neglect of stakeholders who are not seen to have (formal) power within the project, yet are still significantly affected - such as those affected by downstream changes to work practices resulting from the project.

A further challenge to the dormant principal-agent approach is that whilst it promotes acceptance of the separation of project owner and project manager, this poses a challenge to complex organizations such as the university where there is a complex set of context-specific 'principals' and 'agents' with different agendas such as the University Executive Board, Faculty clients, Capital Finance Board. For example, the "principal" may change within complex organizations, depending on the specific governance meeting and its purpose, membership and its position in the hierarchy of governance structures. The issue of the same individuals sitting in different roles within the governance system is considered acceptable, in fact expected, if it is designed on the principles of stewardship

theory (Macheridis, 2017). Stewardship theory considers of the relationships between management and the board with the aim of harmony driven by trust, responsibility and strategic alignment in contrast to monitoring and control (Macheridis, 2017). Recently there has been a call for the strategic complexity of project governance to be the concern of all involved in organising the project and not solely the concern of the project manager (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Pitsis et al., 2014). This assumes that generally the project manager is taking on this issue and is doing so in isolation. Thus, the relational and role aspects of stewardship as outlined here, provides a further complexity for the Project Manager to consider within project governance of increasing complex projects.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the complexity of change projects, will make project relations and decision-making messy due to the accompanying power and politics as outlined in section 2.2, the current orthodoxy of project governance remains aligned to the premise of control and management which often neglects social and political aspects (Derakhshan et al., 2019). Nascent literature argues that project governance is a significant part of the social life of the organization and has a role in co-ordination between those involved (Macheridis, 2017; Toivonen & Toivonen, 2014). There is an acknowledged weakness in the literature relating to the interplay of governance and project context, with a call for further work that will extend standard project practices and the resulting impact (Alvarez-Dionisi & Turner, 2012; Maylor & Turner, 2017; Müller & Turner, 2010; Samset & Volden, 2016; Söderlund, 2011). Bekker (2015) takes this a step further and challenges the traditional orthodoxy of project management by auguring that project governance should be focused on guiding the project rather than being focused on its management and control. The project management orthodoxy to date has interpreted and developed this into a set of assumptions with a focus on processes and sets of rules to govern over a project which is in contrast to the suggested shift towards a leadership-based approach. Addressing this gap has the potential for project governance to develop a role as an enabler - bringing the importance of accountable decision making and the project context closer (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Samset & Volden, 2016).

There is a call to explore the tensions, challenges and opportunities inherent in project governance that would contribute towards a common understanding of how it impacts on processes, people and organizations. (Ahola et al., 2014; Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Pitsis et al., 2014; Simard et al., 2018).

2.4 Summary

The application of current orthodox project management assumptions to organizational change projects is problematic, with the need to shift from a dependence on planning and control to a more organic managerial model. There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the characteristics of project complexity. However, this has been focused on the perspectives of project practitioners with the aim of management and control. The nature of socio-political dynamics within the project environment has not been explored fully within the current project management literature and there is a need to understand better the dynamic nature of complexity and how an individual and organization responds to it (Antonacopoulou & Michaelides, 2014; Austin et al., 2002; Brown & Eisenhardt, 2003; Sense & Owen, 2011; Thomas & Mengel, 2008). The literature on complexity within the project management discipline identifies the need to move beyond identifying the characteristics of complexity and how complexity can be actively managed for the better outcome of deliverables (Geraldi et al., 2011a). This demonstrated an assumption that rational control of complexity is possible and desirable (Stacey, 2003; Wood, 2002).

Alternative arguments called for a shift from controllability to adaptability where soft intelligence is valued and project managers are skilled to guide, rather than control, projects (Cicmil et al., 2006; De Rezende et al., 2018; Williams, 1999). This shift assumes that it is people rather than processes that deliver complex projects (Cooke-Davies, 2002). If we accept this assertion, it suggests that further work is needed at the dynamic intersection of the formal and informal life of the project.

The guiding research question of this inductive study is '*What tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects?'* To achieve this, the study identified the socio-political complexities within the case study and examined how they manifested.

3. Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore what tensions may exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management orthodoxy of controllability. To achieve this, socio-political complexities within the case study were identified and how they manifested was examined.

Over a period of ten months a critical single-case study (Yin, 2018) was undertaken, with a primarily inductive logic informed by Eisenhardt's (1989) methodological framework to build theoretical insights that aligned with the knowledge constituting assumptions of neo-positivism. Qualitative data was collected and analysed with a commitment to researcher objectivity and rigor, to build empirically grounded theoretical insights. Data sources include 14 semi-structured interviews, observations and transcripts of 21 project-related meetings and review of 134 project documents.

This chapter is structured in two sections. First, the knowledge constituting assumptions and the quality criteria framework adopted to underpin the empirical work are presented and justified. Second, the rationale for and details of the research methodology and methods are explained, including the case study methodology, the case-project selection process, and the data collection and analysis processes.

3.1 Knowledge constituting assumptions & quality criteria

This research was underpinned by an objective epistemology and realist ontological view of social reality. A traditional positivist approach was unsuitable for this study due to the combination of three inter-related factors. First, the guiding research question did not easily lend itself to positivistic inquiry, because the aim of the research was to analyse actors' subjective experiences within their organization (Johnson et al., 2006). I was dismissive of a hypothetic deductive approach due to my commitment to verstehen, where falsification is rejected for an inductive approach (Deetz, 1996; Phil Johnson & Duberley, 2013). The reasoning for this is that there would be a tension with the research question and deductive approaches that strive to separate the matter being tested from its context in a controlled way. This is the basis of the critique presented in chapter 2 in relation to the project management orthodoxy. Second, the boundaries of what I take to be 'the

project' put the project context and its dynamics at the heart of the research, making a case study approach particularly appropriate (as defined in chapter 1, section 1.3). To extend the extensive work on the characteristics of project complexity to date, as presented in the Literature Review - chapter 2, this study examined the socio-political complexities in situ of its context via an in-depth case study.

Thus, the empirical work was conducted with a neo-positivist perspective to understand human behaviours and sense-making by gaining access to actors' subjective interpretations of reality, with the assumption that unbiased collection and analysis of data is still achievable through robust methodological protocols (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011; Phil Johnson et al., 2006; Phil Johnson & Duberley, 2013; Prasad et al., 2002; Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2018). Thus, this study shared the same epistemological and ontological root assumptions as positivism, as illustrated below in Figure 3, whilst accepting qualitative approaches as legitimate due to the subjectivity of experience and sense-making amongst research participants. I acknowledge that there is arguably an inherent contradiction in accepting people (research participants) have an internal subjective logic and therefore subject interpretations of their experience whilst not applying this view to myself as the researcher; instead claiming that I can collect actors' subjective experience in an objective way. This privileged knowledge of the researcher is underpinned by the premise that the truth can be explore and discovered with critical distance (Eisenhardt, 1989; Johnson et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2006; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I address this contradiction with a commitment to methodological reflexivity involving transparent methodological processes and audit trails against a framework of quality criteria that demonstrate hard won objectivity (Eisenhardt, 1989; Johnson et al., 2006; Yin, 2018), to which I now turn attention to outlining.

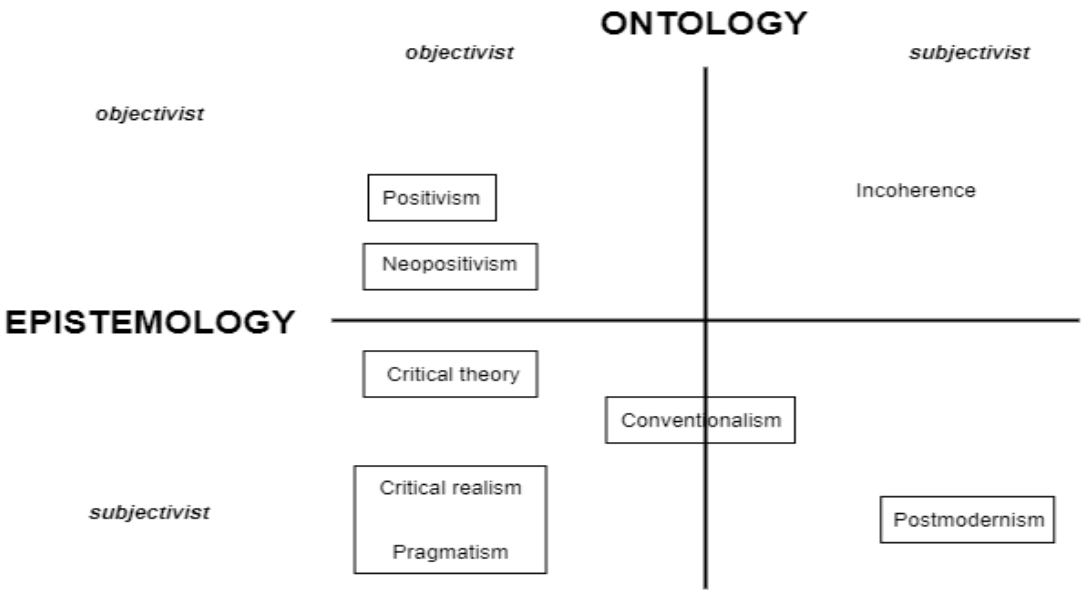

Figure 3-1: Ontology & epistemology (Source: Johnson & Duberley, 2013 pg. 180)

Firstly, based on these assumptions and established scholarship, I developed a modified methodological framework of quality criteria for this study that draws together the traditional assumptions of positivist internal and external validity with methodological aims of objectivity and scientific rigour to establish a hard worn objectivity, which is presented in Table 1 below (Johnson et al., 2006; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). It is based on three quality constructs that I employed to support my commitment to critical distance and academic rigour that is appropriate to my neo-positivist position, whilst I investigated human actions, behaviours and sense making in their natural setting, in real time. Thus, striving for ecological validity (Gill & Johnson, 2010; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Second, I extend the quality constructs table to summarise the key tactics used in this study to facilitate methodological reflexivity in Table 2. These will be explored in further detail throughout this chapter, with the *extent of applicability* also being addressed in the Conclusion of this thesis – chapter 7.

Table 1 - Research methodology quality constructs (adapted from (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Johnson et al., 2006; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018)

(Yin, 2018)	(Symon et al., 2018)	(Johnson et al., 2006)	(Guba & Lincoln, 1994)	Quality construct for this study	Descriptor of quality construct
Internal validity	Credibility	Authentic representations	Credibility	Authentic representation	Utilisation of appropriate & acceptable operational tools for data collection & analysis (academic rigour)
External validity	Transferability	Extent of applicability	Transferability	Extent of applicability	Demonstrating the extent of applicability of the findings
Reliability	Dependability	Minimisation of researcher idiosyncrasies	Dependability	Reliability	The study could be repeated (following the research methods employed), with the same outcomes.

Table 2 - Case study quality construct case tactics (adapted from Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin 2018)

Quality Construct	***Point of Address***	***Tactics***
Authentic representation	Data collection & analysis	• Triangulation of data sources • Pattern matching • Explanation building • Explore rival explanations • Recursive process with existing scholarship • Grounded in the data
Extent of applicability	Research design & Conclusion Chapter	• Sensitizing concept • Guiding research question • Recursive between data and existing scholarship
Reliability	Methodology & data collection	• Case study protocol • Sense-checking findings with sample of participants • Research and field diaries for audit trail

One important aspect of methodological reflexivity was the evaluation of the relationship between myself as the researcher and the phenomena being researched (Johnson et al., 2003). I strove for neutrality within the role of researcher and assumed a separation between the knower (researcher) and the known, (actors' subjective experiences), (Johnson et al., 2006). In other words, I had a strong commitment to minimising contamination via methodological reflexivity. Field and research diaries were utilised for reflexivity and to provide audit trails for decisions made and the development of theoretical insights (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Locke, 1996; Saldana, 2013). The key elements of the field diary were made up of observations, reflections on the data and its relationship with the literature and reflections by the researcher on my role within the research. The research diary recorded decisions taken, and the underpinning rationale for them, to maintain rigour in the research and ensure high quality analysis by reducing the potential contamination by continually reflecting on my role as the researcher, which is also known as internal reflexivity (Hammersley, 1989; Johnson et al., 2006a; Saldana, 2013).

I consistently reflected on my role as researcher with the aim of minimising contamination. Critically, avoiding over rapport with the actors which Pettigrew (1985) refers to as going native. Thus, striving to create a social and intellectual distance whilst maintaining analytical space to minimise contamination of the data and theoretical insight building. This was a critical element of my methodological reflexivity which was compounded due to me holding a senior role, with a visible and established project management identity within the case study organization. Whilst my role within the employer organization provided me with open access to data, I did have to continually check myself and on occasion with project actors/research participants during the data collection process. This was a challenge during the early stages of the study as the actors had to shift their understanding of my identity and role to one of passive researcher. For example, I reminded participants at the start of each project meeting that I was there in the limited capacity of researcher and observer; and when my opinion was sought on an issue being discussed during project meetings. I had to push back on the Chair of one project group within the governance structure who wanted me to join the group as a member as they felt they could gain from my extensive experience. Whilst these challenges demonstrated openness and trust towards me, which I believe contributed to the richness of the data collected, I did work hard to minimise contamination and maintain ecological validly.

The next section, builds upon these assumptions and presents the research methodology by discussing the selected case study framework and describes the research methods employed.

3.2 Research methodology and methods

A grounded, interpretive approach based on a single case analysis was adopted to address the guiding research question. Whilst there are a number of different established case study frameworks, the methodology is accepted as a means to understand and investigate a particular phenomenon within a naturally occurring setting and using multiple sources of data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gill & Johnson, 2010; Johnson et al., 2003; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, case studies are taken as a valid methodology for the critical examination of complexity as it occurs in real-life contexts – enabling an in-depth examination. Thus, the case study methodology provides a container for the objective study of the particularity and complexity of real-life circumstances (Yin, 2018).

I was influenced by Yin's 2018 and Eisenhardt 1989 approaches to case methodology, due to the fit with neo-positivists knowledge constituting assumptions of objectivity (as outlined in section 3.1) and a commitment to building empirically grounded theoretical insights to exploratory research question(s). I incorporated the guiding research question into a case study protocol to add focus to the study. Whilst I did not use the research question directly in the interviews, I did ask the question of the data collected in a recursive approach with existing scholarship, which situates itself in the Strauss and Corbin camp of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Locke, 1996) where new or unanticipated insights still emerge but within a boundary of focus to my original stated practitioner problematic outlined in Chapter one.

The aim of the research was to objectively collect thick descriptions of actors' subjective interpretations and experiences (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989; Johnson et al., 2006; Schwandt, 1996) which were corroborated with project documentation, transcripts and observations of project governance meetings to explore how categories of behaviour relate to one another and to develop understandings of variations in behaviour and sense-making (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). The goal was to develop new insights into the understanding of the social political dynamics emerging from the case study context inductively without a pre-determined theoretical framework that directs the data collection.

The proceeding sections, describe and justify the research methods used.

3.2.1 Set-up and case study selection

This section describes the process of setting up the study including the stages of data access, the development of the guiding research question and the selection of the case study - the container of the study as referenced earlier, being at project level. This is outlined in Figure 3-2 below, which I describe in further detail within this section.

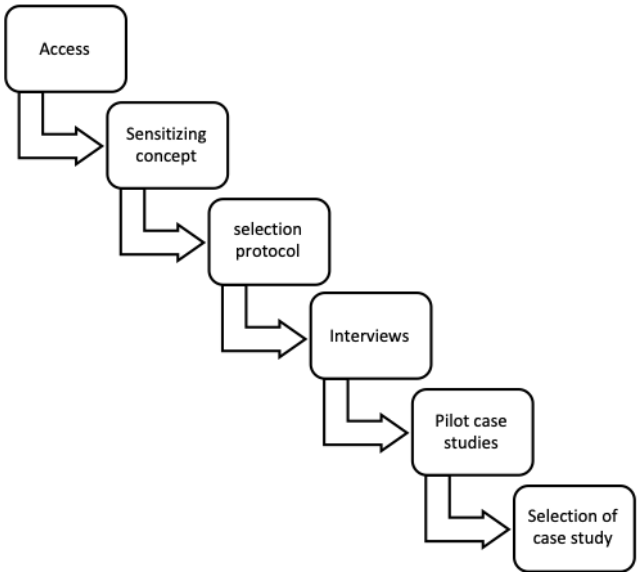

Figure 3-2: Case study project selection process, (adapted Eisenhardt 1989)

First, I introduce the UK Higher Education Institution which was the site of the case study and how access was gained. The University, is a member of the Russell Group of leading UK research universities. The University was originally founded in the late 1800s as a college and was subsequently established as a University by Royal Charter in the early 1900s. The institution considers itself as a full-service university with over 50 academic departments, structured into several Faculties. In terms of size and shape of the University, its student population of approximately 30,000 students are serviced by approx. 3,500 academic staff and 5,000 professional staff. It has an established tradition of high-quality research and research informed teaching and is within the top ten in the Russell Group for research outputs, has won prizes on five occasions in recognition of its social and economic impact and is proud of its multiple Nobel Prize winners. The total University annual income stands at over £600 million.

The boundary of the case study is at project level, and was selected from the 2016 pipeline of institutional level projects. I had full access approval from the University Executive Board for this study and was granted the right of selection from the pipeline of sixteen strategic institutional projects. Whilst I had privileged access to possible case studies within the organization, I developed a case-study protocol to aid the identification of appropriate case studies and to gain access from the University Executive Board. A copy

of the case study protocol which was critical to gaining access is provided in Appendix 1. A key element of this, was the development of the characteristics the study required in a project which I now turn my attention to.

Although this was an inductive study, I included the use of a sensitizing concept (Bulmer, 1954) to inform the project selection in order to constrain extraneous variation and sharpen external validity (Eisenhardt, 1989; Johnson, 2015; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018) whist retaining theoretical flexibility. I identified a theoretical framework that fitted the key aspects of project complexity from the literature that connected with my chosen definitions of a project and complexity; and would help answer the research questions. Thus, grounding the exploration of socio-political complexities within the project environment. For this purpose, I chose Ralph Stacey's (1996) complexity model, which I introduced within section 2.2 of the Literature Review, as a sensitizing concept (Bulmer, 1954). It incorporates the project environment by appreciating the dynamics of uncertainty and stakeholder agreement which are generally accepted as key characteristics of socio-political complexities of projects discussed in the Literature Review Chapter (section 2.2). Stacey's (1996) model has been used extensively within leadership education within public sector bodies, such as the National Health Service (NHS) and universities, and used extensively within the case institution in the context of a leadership programme aimed at understanding 'wicked' problems. Therefore, the selected sensitizing concept was not an alien concept within the case study organization and among senior project stakeholders. The uncertainty axis was relevant to perceived outputs of the project and the level of agreement was focused on stakeholder agreement. This provided a strong link between the chosen definitions of complexity and project which incorporates the project's environment[1]. The sensitizing concept was used to provide directions in which to examine the socio-political complexities within the case-study based on pre-understandings (Bulmer, 1954). It is important to highlight that this is not a basis for providing a hypothesis for testing, but it is an attempt to acknowledge

[1] a project is the whole of a group of activities limited in time and space, inserted in, and integration with a political, social and economic environment, towards a goal progressively refined by the dialectic between the thought (the project plan) and the reality' (Bredillet 2010, p23).

the role of a priori theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gill & Johnson, 2010). The sensitizing concept made a significance contribution in navigating the difference between complicated and complex projects (as discussed in section 1.3.3) during access negotiations and the selection of an appropriate case-study with members of the University Executive Board.

With the support of the leadership of the institution, I circulated a case study protocol where I introduced the research and outlined the initial framework relating to the research questions, research methods, data sources and analysis (Appendix 1). The aim of this document was to identify institutional level projects which could possibly meet the criteria in the case study protocol, and thus facilitate the assessment and selection of the most appropriate case study for this research. I had the support of a member of the University Executive Board, who also part-funded my DBA, who was prepared to circulate it to the leadership teams of the academic faculties and to members of the University Professional Services Executive Board whose membership includes the Heads of Professional Services, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Human Resources and Corporate Officer, University Secretary. Following the circulation, seven members contacted me with eleven potential projects that could be potential case studies.

Subsequently, I met individually with the lead member for each project for a selection interview to gather further information and I completed a short project pre-selection questionnaire during these interviews, a sample can be found in Appendix 2. Key features that had to be present for selection were that it had to be an organizational change project where the pre-initiation phase had not commenced; it had to be a project that was cross-boundary, to include departmental, faculty and central professional services; institutional level project; projects due to commence during the first six months of 2016; uncertainty of the outcome had to be present; different opinions and low levels of agreement between stakeholders. After analysis of the project selection interviews against the case study protocol, only two projects met the required criteria: 1) project B - widening participation & BTEC entry requirements; 2) project D - a new interdisciplinary Faculty building as summarised in Table 2.

Table 3 - Overview of match to case study protocol selection criteria

Project Factors	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Cross-boundary											
Pre-initiation phase											
Timeline											
Uncertainty											
Organizational change											
Mix of stakeholders											
Disagreement											

Only projects B and D met all the preferred selection criteria. A detailed summary table of the assessment of suitability of each project against the case study protocol can be found in Table 4. Project B and D were selected as pilot case-studies with the aim of starting the research process on both projects so that the data collection process could confirm the suitability of the projects. The aim was to identify an appropriate single case-study that best fit the case-study protocol.

Table 4 - Case-study selection assessment

Project	Institutional project?	Phase of Project	Timeline	Level of uncertainty	Change project?	Mix of stakeholders?	Level of disagreement	Total of requirements met
A	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	3
	Project not selected. Did not meet the case criteria: more of a system, coding project and therefore there was no uncertainty around what was needed. It was not an institutional or an organizational change project. It had very few stakeholders and the level of disagreement was linked to the amount of time it would need to physically recode within the IT system and future reporting versus the perceived value.							
B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7

	This project met the selection criteria and was selected as a pilot case study. This was a cross-boundary, institutional project. The interviewee and initial project description documentation stated it was in the pre-initiation phase. It was scheduled to be discussed at the University Executive Board to seek approval to progress as a strategic project. No project Manager had been appointed, to date. The pre-initiation phase was expected to finish by Summer 2016 so it fitted with the research timeline. This would be a new type of business for the University and had high levels of uncertainty and, wide range of stakeholders (both internal and external) and high levels of disagreement within and across stakeholder groups. This would involve significant organizational change as it is not something the University would consider as their type of student.							
C	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	1
	Project not selected. This project did not meet any of the criteria, apart from it potentially having a lot of disagreement between the stakeholders. No time-line could be given regarding the start of the pre-initiation phase of this project.							
D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
	This project met the selection criteria and was selected as a case study It was a significant institutional project that was cross-boundary, with a significant number of stakeholder groups with a high level of potential disagreement. Due to the high number of stakeholders and the project being in the pre-initiation phase there was a high							

	level of uncertainty. The project would bring together a number of academic departments within one building and it is expected to impact on the day to day activities of employees and the student experience. The pre-initiation phase is expected to conclude by the Summer of 2016 and therefore meets the research timeline.							
E	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	3
	Project not selected. This project was about implementation and therefore had passed the pre-initiation phase.							
F	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	unknown	4
	Project not selected. This was not an organizational change project and did not have any uncertainty dynamics to it. It was about identifying and providing improved Muslim prayer provision on campus. It was an implementation project.							
G	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	5

	Project not selected. This project had high levels of agreement and certainty.							
H	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	2
	Project not selected. This was not an institutional level project and it did not meet the requirements of the research timetable. There were low levels of uncertainty with potential high levels of disagreement between stakeholders.							
I	X	✓	✓	unknown	X	X	unknown	2
	Project not selected. This was not an institutional level or an organizational change project. It had a small number of stakeholders and the level of uncertainty and disagreement was unknown. It did meet the research timetable. It was in the pre-initiation phase.							
J	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	unknown	4

	This project was not selected. This was a significant institutional and organizational change project, but the timeline was not expected within the next year. In addition, the level of uncertainty and disagreement was unknown. The project was in the very earliest stage of pre-initiation phase, but there was no expected momentum within the next year.							
K	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	2
	Project not selected. This was a pre-initiation phase institutional project, but it did not meet any of the other selection criteria. It was an implementation project which did not contain any uncertainty or disagreement dynamics. It was not an organizational change project. I would loosely question if it was a project, by my selected project definition.							
Total	6	8	6	2	6	5	6	

The most challenging selection requirements were to identify projects with the appropriate level of uncertainty and a project that was truly in the pre-initiation phase. An interesting finding arose from the case study selection around the common understanding of the boundaries of a project. Often a project is not identified as a project or labelled so until the project scope is clearly defined, even if it is not yet documented. Thus, identifying a project in the early stages of pre-initiation was challenging.

This was demonstrated during the third phase of project selection where the two short-listed projects were taken forwards as pilot case studies to test them against the case study protocol for selection (Yin, 2018). At the selection interview it was clearly stated by the interviewee, Sponsor Lead, that project B was in the pre-initiation phase and that the only work completed to date was the positioning paper which was submitted to the University Executive Board with the aim of seeking approval for it to become an official institutional project. Within three weeks of field work on this case study it became clear that the project did not meet the case protocol criteria and would not help the study to answer the research question. The project was not in the pre-initiation phase, but was an implementation project. It was post scoping, even though the lead person on this project did not recognize this because of the absence of a project scope document. They did not believe it was post scoping, but it became clear that the intellectual work had been completed and the Project Board Term of Reference documentation was focused on implementation.

This highlighted the strength of the symbolic nature of the project scoping document. In addition, a member of the University Executive Board (the Project Sponsor) did share with me that in their view the pre-initiation work on this project had been carried out 12 months prior at the University Executive Board level. This informal conversation followed the initial case study selection interview and occurred during my pilot field work. I decided to speak to the Project Lead for this project on a one-to-one basis for a second time. It was a very interesting discussion as it opened up into a detailed conversation in terms of how the interviewee defined what project pre-initiation phase meant for him and his underlying assumptions. It was agreed during this meeting that this case study would not help me answer the research questions due to it being not in the pre-initiation phase as defined for this research as detailed in chapter 1, section 1.3.2.

I disbanded the pilot phase of the project case selection process after three weeks as the case study protocol framework has been tested and I selected Project D as the case study to progress with.

The project was chosen based on its potential to shed light on my area of theoretical interest; it was pre-initiation, had a dedicated project manager in the pre-initiation phase, was complex and was intended to drive organizational change. Essentially, the project involved the design and development of a new interdisciplinary Faculty building and thus at face value would seem well suited to the linear, rational approach underpinning the current project management orthodoxy. It was a significant institutional project that was cross-boundary (i.e. involving academic departments, a Faculty (being a collection of academic departments), central professional services and external stakeholders with a significant number of stakeholder groups and a high level of potential disagreement. Due to the high number of stakeholders and the project being in the pre-initiation phase there was a high level of uncertainty. The project would ultimately bring together a number of academic departments within one building and was expected to impact on the day-to-day work practices and activities of employees; and the student experience.

As the fieldwork commenced, architects had just been appointed and an initial budget and resources had been committed for the pre-initiation phase only. The pre-initiation phase included the building design, in its entirety, the costing of the required budget required to completion and the submission of the planning application. The planning application represented the project scope in traditional project management terms.

3.2.2 Data collection

I selected three principles for data collection and analysis based on the work of Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2018). Firstly, I made a commitment to triangulation where patterns, explanation building and visiting rival explanations arose from more than one data source. Thus, contributing to an authentic representation. Fieldwork took place over ten-months, with data collected from three main sources: interviews, observations and transcripts of project meetings and project documentation. Secondly, I committed to a structured depository of data and analysis with a transparent chain of evidence including a fieldwork diary documenting my research process decisions and accompanying reasons. Third, robust analysis via coding and development of rich pictures using a research diary for methodological reflexivity with the intention of systematic enquiry and theory building.

Each of these principles contributed to elements of my quality criteria (as presented in Tables 1 & 2, section 3.1) and are detailed further in the following data sources and data analysis sections.

Data sources

Data collection was in real time over a ten-month period, rather than retrospectively, to address the research aims of objectively exploring actors subjective lived experience of socio-political complexity. This decision was made to capture the challenge of exploring socio-political dynamics of the project environment which potentially had the risk of changing forms over time as research participants sense-making evolved. Data collection overlapped with analysis in an inductive approach. This provided flexible and opportunistic data collection to allow timely adjustments as analysis and thinking developed; and allowed the opportunity to take advantage of emergent themes within the case study and literature sources. Data sources included semi-structured interviews (n=14), observations and transcripts of project-related meetings (n=21) and project documents (n=134).

Interviews

There were two phases of semi-structured interviews with a cross sample of project stakeholders within the University. The interviews were held face to face in the interviewee's private office or breakout room near their office. The appropriate research ethics protocols, as described later in this chapter (section 3.2.4), were observed. All interviewees granted permission for the recording of the interviews which where transcribed and observations were recorded in a research dairy for analysis. The interviews were held during normal working hours and were arranged using standard local work place protocols.

Nine stage one interviews were conducted over four weeks during the start of the pre-initiation phase of the project totalling 249 mins. of audio recording. The interviews commenced with the researcher explaining the boundaries of the research to establish a common understanding of what constitutes the pre-initiation phase of the project. Participants were then invited to share their expectations, objectives, critical aspects and perceived challenges of the pre-initiation phase.

The interviews were carried out with a sample of participants from the faculty, central services and academic departments as summarised in Table 5. The sample was selected to include the Project Manager and project professional support, the Faculty Sponsors - who also held the posts of the Senior Leadership team of the Faculty, a Faculty Sponsors Professional Services Officer, and a sample of departmental representative from academic departments affected by the project.

Table 5 –Stage one interviewees

Ref.	**Category of participant**	**Organizational home of participant**	**Length of interview (mins. /secs.)**
Faculty1	Faculty Sponsor	Faculty of Social Sciences	33:55
Faculty 2	Faculty Sponsor	Faculty of Social Sciences	30:53
Faculty 3	Faculty Sponsor	Faculty of Social Sciences	15:58
Faculty Admin	Faculty Project Administrator	Faculty of Social Sciences	32:55
Department 1	Departmental Management	Academic Department	18:21
Department 2	Departmental Management	Academic Department	19:19
Department 3	Departmental Management	Academic Department	32:36
PM	Project Manager	Estates & Facilities Management	31:24
Project Admin	Project support	Estates & Facilities Management	36:19

It is acknowledged that best practice skills relating to research interviews are critical (Holstein, 1997) but just as important for the empirical work is the ability for the author to be able to respond and amend data collection methods and approaches as necessary due to the inductive approach taken, which should respond to the research context and encounter (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Cassell, et al., 2009). It was planned that stage two interviews would be held to capture lived experiences of the pre-initiation phase of actors, so a comparison analysis could be carried out against expectations captured during phase one. I reformulated the stage two interviews with the aim of examining the key themes emerging from the data analysis with a sample of stage one interviewees with the aim of capturing individual responses to the findings, thus adding further depth to the data on project complexities whilst also capturing interviewees reflections on the findings and their professional practice within the project. As a DBA project, this aspect was useful in encouraging reflection and learning about the practice of change project work within the institution. Furthermore, this work contributed to the operational tactics of the case study quality criterion 'reliability' by sharing the key thematic findings with stage two interviewees (as presented in Table 2, in section 3.1 of this chapter).

Five stage two semi-structure interviews were conducted at the end of the pre-initiation phase of the project, totalling 139 minutes of audio. During these interviews project governance and decision-making was probed in much more depth due to the outcomes of the phase 1 analysis. Due to the foci of the stage two interviews, the emerging themes from the data and the recursive analysis - I purposely selected the stage two interviewees, being: project sponsors, sponsors professional support and an academic departmental representative from stage 1 interviewees, as summarised in Table 6, below. These findings are presented in 'stage 2 Interview' text boxes throughout the two findings chapters (4 and 5), so the retrospective reflection interviews can be identified clearly, from stage 1 interviews.

Table 6 –Stage two interviewees

Ref.	Category of participant	Organizational home of participant	Length of interview (mins/seconds)
Faculty1	Faculty Sponsor	Faculty of Social Sciences	39:01
Faculty2	Faculty Sponsor	Faculty of Social Sciences	29:27
Faculty 3	Faculty Sponsors	Faculty of Social Sciences	32:53
Faculty Administrator	Faculty Project Administrator	Faculty of Social Sciences	26:40
Departmental 2	Departmental Management	Academic Department	11:41

Documents, transcripts and observations

Three categories of 134 documents totalling 630 pages were analysed: project documents such as the business case; project governance documentation e.g. Terms of References, agendas and minutes of meetings; transcripts from a sample of twenty-one project meetings attended and observed. Three different categories of governance meetings were attended, recorded and observed, as presented in Fig. 3-3: Project governance below.

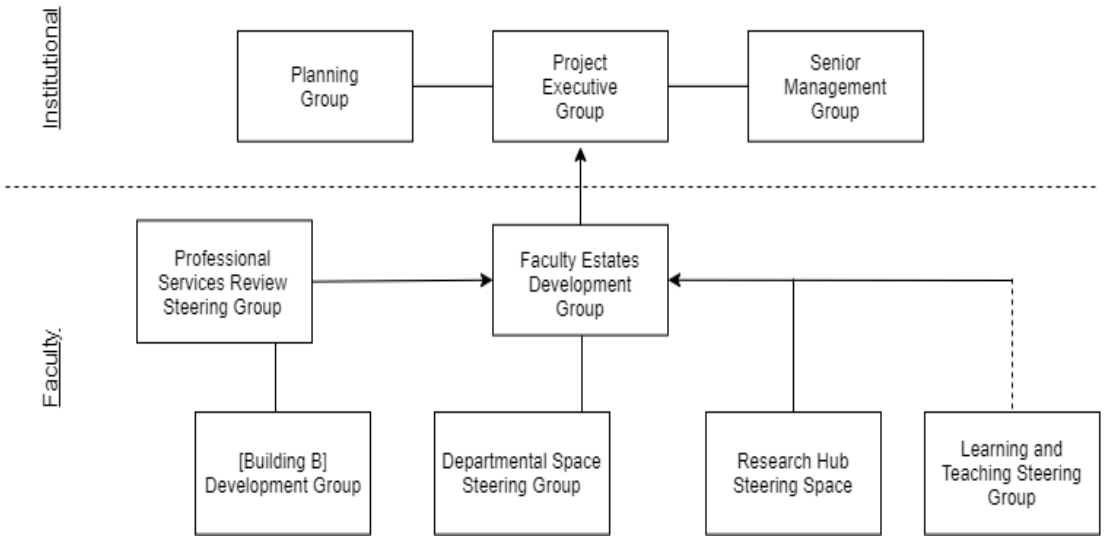

Figure 3-3: Project governance

The three categories were based on organizational levels of project governance structure. First there was institutional level which was located within Central Services, second was situation at faculty level and finally the Project Executive Group was the interface between the institutional and faculty governance. A cross-sample of 21of the 46 governance meetings were observed, recorded and transcribed, as summarised in table 7. In addition, a one-day staff consultation event was observed and field notes taken. This facilitated corroboration and comparison of interview material with formal text and triangulation of data sources.

Data sources: Documents and observations

Group	No. of meetings held	No. of meetings observed	No. of Docs	No. of pages
Institutional A	5	2	12	169
Institutional B	3	3	3	136
Institutional C	6	6	10	34
Faculty A	10	3	35	84
Faculty B	2	1	4 docs	7
Faculty C	8	2	27 docs	53
Faculty D	5	1	14 docs	23
Faculty E	7	3	29 docs	124
Total	**46**	**21**	**134**	**630**

3.2.3 Field role and research diaries

I am a long-term employee in the HEI in which the case-study was located. During the research period I held a number of roles with accompanying identities. I held three sequential senior leadership roles at School level, since 2014. I am recognised as an established senior project management practitioner at an institutional level through my status as a certified Lean Practitioner, PRINCE2 Practitioner and certified Six Sigma Black Belt, in addition to my experience leading a cross-cutting Faculty (made up of 13 academic departments) and School Project Team delivering a portfolio of approx. 40 continuous improvement and change projects over a 3-year period. I am a teacher of

project studies for management and engineering students and consultant (on behalf of the Institution) focused on Project Management, and a doctoral research candidate at another HEI. My "home" School was not one of the academic departments affected by or part of the of project case-study that was researched for this study. This was intentional on my part in order to provide distinction and achieve critical distance between my multiple roles as senior employee and researcher.

For five years prior to joining the School, I held senior administration roles within central professional services. Having experience of working within Institutional Central Professional Services, at Faculty level and at academic departmental level since 2005 provided me with a wide professional network and strong social capital at each level. This brought benefits of access and appreciation of the context in which the case-study project was located. Due to my position and social capital within the organization I was fortunate to have the full support of the senior leadership of the organization which provided me with access to potential projects, access to data and the frank openness of organizational learning that is presented in the findings chapters. Furthermore, my presence at governance meetings and holding conversations (albeit for research purposes) was a usual or natural engagement with my colleagues in the workplace.

On request, I was granted full access to the pipeline of University Executive Board strategic projects to select appropriate project(s). I had full access to the project leads for pre-selection interviews, project initial documentation and freedom of choice. I had worked closely with the Faculty Sponsors for approx. 5 years prior to the empirical field work phase. I think the pre-existence of respectful professional relationships facilitated openness and access to personal reflections/ learning that were reciprocally shared with me as a researcher on me sharing the key findings as I made sense of them. On one occasion, a Faculty Sponsor member started reflecting on the stage two interview we had just concluded as he was walking out of the building with me. At this point, I asked him if we could return to his office and restart the recording for research purposes. He acknowledged the shift of my role between researcher and professional colleague and agreed to re-commence the stage 2 interview.

That is not to say that my professional and research roles were always clearly and neatly demarcated at all times, for everyone, and presented no challenges. Due to my established (work) identity within the institution, I did need to make the boundaries of my role as

researcher clear on an ongoing basis, actively managing this with participants. For example, on one occasion I was asked for my view on a challenging issue that was being debated during a project governance meeting that I was observing as a researcher. I had to make it clear that I was present as an observer, for research purposes only not as a contributor to the meeting or the project. Another example arose when I was contacting the Chair of a particular Project Governance Board to request access for research purposes. He replied, stating that he would welcome my attendance for the purposes of my research, but also due to the contribution I could make based on my significant practitioner experience. The Terms of Reference was updated to add me as 'member' of the Board. I responded to the Chair to make my role clear - that I sought approval to join the meetings purely as an observer and to record the meeting (with members permission as per the research ethics approval) in the role of researcher only.

This was crucial in minimising the contamination of data through my own biases as much as possible, which was also achieved via my commitment to methodological reflexivity as discussed in section 3.1. The use of field and research diaries was key to this process from the start of the study process i.e. from the identification of the problem statement presented in Chapter 1. A field work diary was maintained with the key elements being made up of: observations; reflections on the data and its relationship with the literature; reflections on my role as a researcher with the aim of minimising contamination and striving for ecological validity. This act is often seen as providing a stream of consciousness commentary during the recursive cycling between data collection, analysis and developing theoretical insights (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Yin, 2018). I recorded immediate reactions, hunches, observations and reflections rather than trying to decide what was important in the moment with the intent to minimize the risk of losing important data that could be useful in the future. A research diary was also maintained to record decisions taken and the rationale to maintain rigor in the research and ensure high quality analysis and reflexivity. For example, I was reflexivity aware of potential tensions between my researcher role and my established leadership role within the University such as interviewees potential to provide cautious responses when I was seeking an authentic deeper understanding of their lived experiences. I reflected on them continuously during data collection, minimising any potential researcher influence and any other potential bias (Symon & Cassell, 2013) with the aim of capturing the actors' subjective experiences in an objective way as discussed in section 3.1 A concrete example of this was where the behaviour, response and views of one interviewee changed

dramatically once the recording was switched on. This was a significant notable observation. Once the interview recording commenced, a very corporate line was delivered that was significantly different from non-recorded conversations which highlighted contradictions in their expressed views. While the professional expertise of the participant could explain the 'shift' in expression - due to their expertise in organizational communications - I had to consider the limitations and strengths of this data source in term of ecological validity. I thus used the content of this data only where I could directly triangulate it with data from other sources such as meeting observations, project documentation and transcripts. This was the only interview that I observed this type of behaviour. It is for these reasons that the research and field diaries are classed as primary data collection and contributors to the analysis process which is described in the next section.

3.2.4 Data analysis

Engagement with the nascent literature on socio-political complexity within project management took place with data collection through recursive cycling between data, emerging theory and extant literature. The analysis was challenging due to the 'messiness' of the multi-facetted interrelated complexities and the aim of developing structured empirically grounded theoretical insights. During the recursive cycling between the data and the literature, I decided to introduce the use of Maylor and Turner (2017) concept of the duality of complexity and response (introduced and discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2) to provide a framework to examine the dynamic nature of project complexities. This provided the study with a productive way forward.

The analysis followed established processes for a grounded approach to qualitative data involving case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Gill & Johnson, 2010). The data was sensitized with the literature on a recursive basis. The established process of overlapping data collection with data analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989), allowed freedom to make informed adjustments to the data collection in relation to the emerging themes to add richness to data collection and analysis cycle in addressing the guiding research question. For example, the saturated emerging themes from stage 1 interviews were on the role of the project governance and decision-making. Thus, the project documentation, observations and transcripts of governance meetings were analysed further, with this emerging focus in a recursive way. A further example, is the reformulation of stage 2 interviews as discussed earlier in this section.

Two phases of data analysis were conducted, with the second building upon the first. The first phase (presented in Chapter 5) involved the identification of how "the project" was variably constituted by interviewees. This resulted in two perspectives on the project, one which sees the project as a site of rationality, management and control and one that frames the project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices. The second phase (reported in Chapter 6) identified and examined the complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project. The analysis process for both phases consisted of a series of steps which are outlined below, utilising an example from the first phase analysis as an illustration.

The first step involved the coding of transcripts, observation notes and documents across data sources and interview phases. These codes comprised phrases, terms or descriptions, all revolving around the nature and dynamics of the case project and the management thereof. Such descriptions included, for example, comments on anticipated changes to organising practices, narrations of the project's boundaries, views on the project's goals, accounts about decision-making, attitudes towards the politics and power plays inherent in project work. These formed first level codes, which were constantly compared across the data for possible conceptual patterns.

The second step of the analysis involved looking for codes across the data that could be grouped into higher-level themes. For example, comments on implicated changes to organizational structures or services and the drive for interdisciplinary working would be grouped under "Multiplicity of goals including culture change and transformation of work practices", forming a set of first-order categories. The third step developed links among first-order categories in order to develop theoretically distinct clusters through a recursive process. For example, categories containing instances of actors emphasising (a) the nature of intended project goals (b) the drivers of these goals were collapsed into a second-order theme called "project boundary". The fourth step involved organising these themes into dimensions that eventually provided a basis for theorising. There was number of iterations with a recursive comparative process with the literature, to capture the core relationships between the categories and sub-categories.

The outcome of the first set of analysis is two theoretical dimensions. The first relates to the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism; the second emphasises the project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices. The findings for

this first phase of analysis is presented in Chapter 4. Steps 2, 3 and 4, and the links between them, are depicted in Figure 3-4.

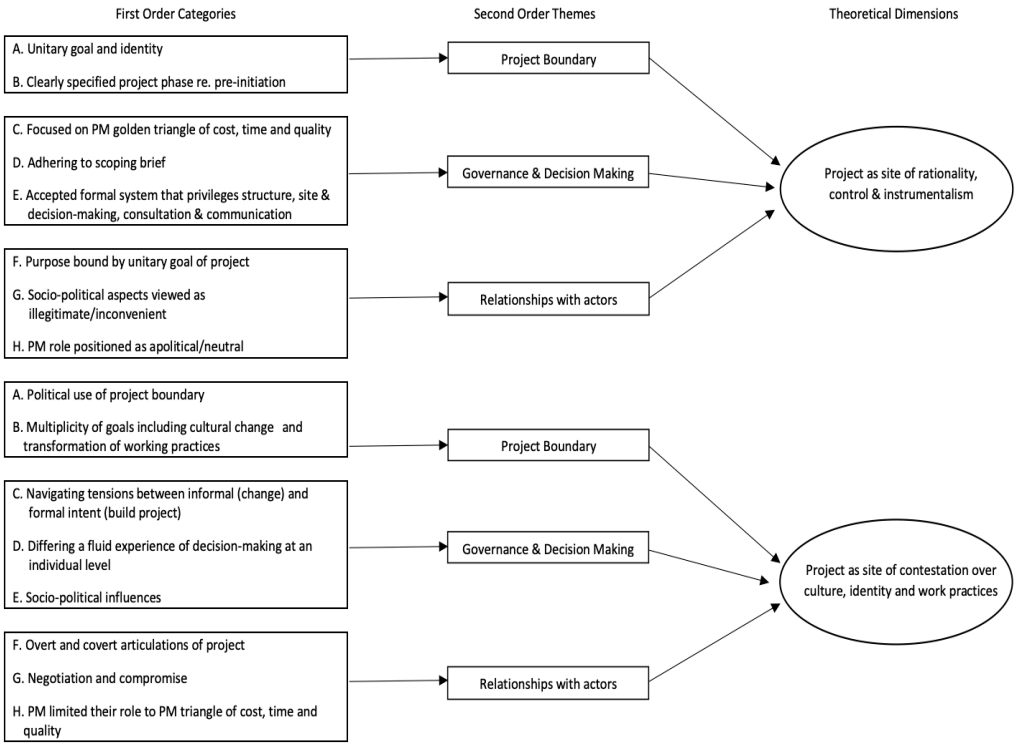

Figure 3-4 Data structure diagram - Constituting the project: Evolution of pluralistic rationalities

Building upon the first phase of analysis the same analytical process was undertaken to unpack complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project. The data mapping structure is presented in Figure 3-5 and form the basis for the presentation of the second findings chapter (chapter 6).

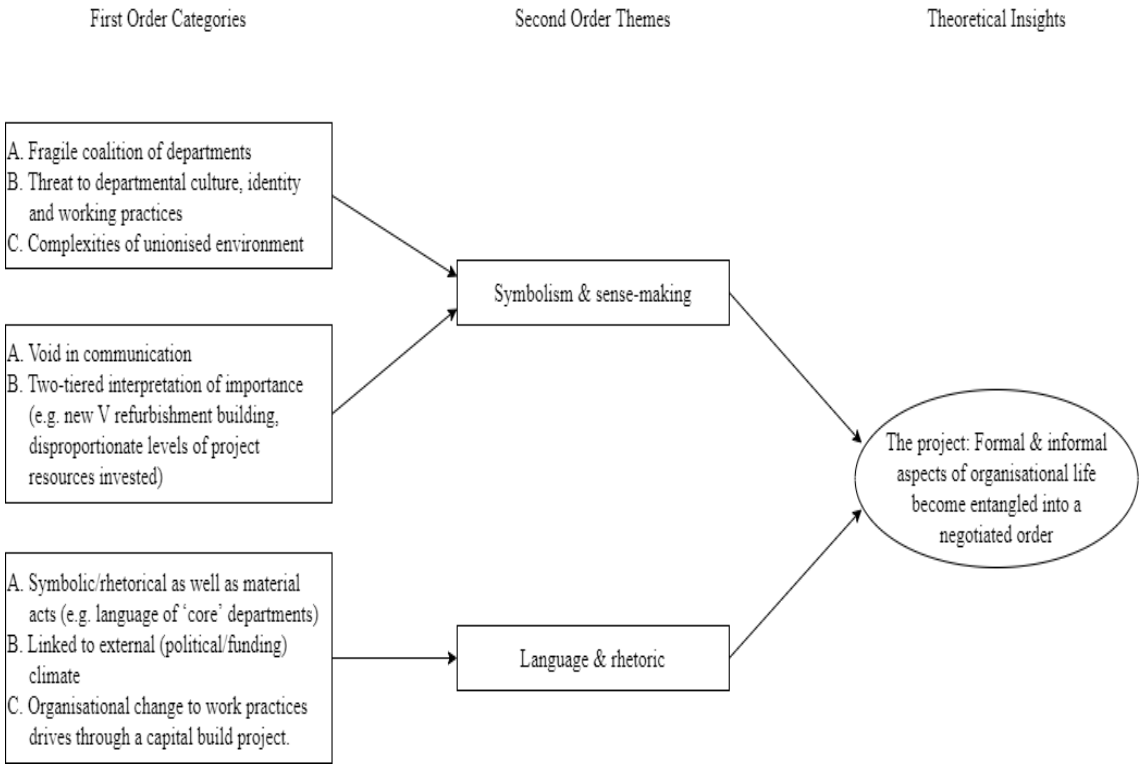

Figure 3-5: Data structure diagram - Socio-political complexities of the project

Research ethics

The study received research ethics approval from Sheffield Hallam University: Faculty Research Ethics Committee and the host case study HEI in January 2016. As part of the research ethics process I also submitted a data management plan, participant information sheet and consent form for approval. All interviewees were provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and consent form (appendix 5) prior to the interview(s) and the researcher ensured the consent form was singed before the interview occurred. For project meeting observations, the participant information sheet and consent form were circulated to all members with the agenda papers two weeks prior to the meeting with the Chair of the meeting inviting any objections to be raised at the start of each meeting. During the first agenda item of each meeting I introduced myself, provided a concise summary for the study and my role as researcher and provided a space for any questions or objections. The Chair asked for confirmation of consent of invited members

which was formally noted in the minutes. I reminded all participants of their right to withdraw from the study, without the need to provide reason(s), at any time during the research.

3.3 Summary

This chapter describes how empirically grounded theoretical insights were built by revisiting the data during analytical process to ensure the theoretical insights could be securely located in the data and the recursive cycle between date, emerging theory and extant literature (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Yin, 2018). It is acknowledged that whilst this is an inductive study, it includes deductive aspects due to the guiding research question and engagement with literature which added focus to the study. This aided development of insights beyond the initial practitioner problematic presented in Chapter 1 (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018).

Academic rigour was attended to by a commitment to methodological reflexivity practice against the presented adapted methodological framework of quality criterion of three quality constructs of authenticity, applicability and reliability which were addressed within this chapter as outlined in tables Table 1 and 2, section 3.1.

Two findings chapters follow. First, Chapter 4 presents the findings of the first analysis that delineates two fluid, yet discernible views of the project which formed a foundation to the study into socio-political complexities. Second, chapter 5 extends this work and presents a second piece of analysis which examines the socio-political complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project.

4. Findings: Constituting the project

This first findings chapter delineates discernible perspectives of the project; one that constitutes the project as a capital build - a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism; and the other which constructs a complex change project characterised by contestation over culture, identify and work practices. The analysis thus frames the project as a case of evolving pluralistic rationalities in relation to project boundaries; governance and decision making; and relationships with actors. These pluralistic rationalities in turn generated complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project, which are subsequently examined in the second findings chapter (5). The understanding of what the project was to individuals, and the accompanying assumptions brought to the project provided the foundation to examine the socio-political complexities present.

The project manager consistently held the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism throughout the research period. In contrast, it is important to note that many actors did not consistently hold one perspective of the project throughout the fieldwork phase. Many exhibited a shifting and fluid understanding of the purpose, nature and boundaries of the project as their lived experience played out during the pre-initiation phase.

The chapter begins with a perspective of the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism. The second section presents the project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices. Data from stage two interviews, which collected insights, responses and reflections to the emerging thematic findings, are presented in text boxes to distinguish them from stage one interviews.

4.1 Project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism

This section explores research participants' assumptions relating to the project boundary, the governance and decision making, and the relationships with actors when constituting the project as a 'capital build'.

4.1.1 Project boundary

From this perspective there is a unitary project identity and a clear functional purpose in relation to a single project objective (Table 7: Assumption 1) during the clearly specified pre-initiation phase, with an end-point artefact of a detailed planning application (Table 7: Assumption 2).

Table 7: Project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism - Project boundary

Assumption	**Illustrative data**
1. Unitary goal & identity: Capital design and build project	The Term of Reference documents of the project governance state the project either as a capital build or as a capital build and a refurbishment project. To elucidate this assumption, the documented Terms of Reference of the Project Executive Group is unpacked in terms of key responsibilities and requirements: > The Project Executive Group is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the Social Sciences Estate Development…… including the [new build development, refurbishment of building …. and other capital works to be identified *(Project documentation)*. Seven out of the nine phase one interviewees saw the project as a capital build and capital refurbishment project, including the Project Manager (PM). > *"I want to make sure the space is all agreed, inside, so a schedule of accommodation*" (Interviewee, Department 1) > *"For me anyway, it's a plot of land and building design" (Interviewee, PM)* During the initial phases of the data collection period a set of project ground rules were developed and documented. These rules focused solely on the principles of allocation and design of space, thus demonstrating a functional purpose (Project

	documentation). This assumption is further illustrated in the Faculty Strategy Group Away Day Report. The Executive Summary states: *"Three potential options for the Faculty development of the [sites A and B] … considering departmental location and how each department can be accommodated in each building based on configuration, age and position of the building."(Project documentation)* The requirement of the project to identify or consider social political dimensions or the impact of the design and allocation of space from a human perspective is absent from the project Terms of Reference documentation *(Project documentation)*.
2. Clearly specified project phase	The aim of the pre-initiation phase was clearly understood to be the preparation of the planning application for the regional planners, which once approved would be used to move the project to the procurement phase. *"So ultimately, it's about… we put a [planning] proposal which, for which, there are no planning reasons to turn it down" (Interviewee, Project Admin).* This is further evidenced by the Terms of Reference documentation for the Departmental Space, Learning and Teaching Space and Research Hub Steering Groups, and the Project Executive Group. Key responsibilities are stated as: *"Consideration of design and space allocation and sign off of a final layout when the RIBA stage 3 is reached prior to a Planning Application."(Project documentation)* The RIBA Plan of work has been the definitive UK model for the building design and construction process. It provides a shared framework for the organization and management of building projects for the architects' profession and the construction industry. The findings presented the pre-initiation phase of the project as the design stage of a capital build and refurbishment project, with the output being the development of a planning application, thus the project scope artefact.

4.1.2 Governance and decision making

From this vantage point, project governance (presented in Fig. 4.1) privileges structure; good governance is about the presence of a formal set of committees and working groups (Table 8: Assumption 1). There is a presumption that having the right governance, as defined by locally accepted standards, will de-facto result in effective, accountable decision making (Table 8: Assumption 1). The presence of the governance system was critical to the recognition of the project's existence by stakeholders (Table 8: Assumption 2). Decision making is limited by project boundaries and occurs within the project governance structure (Table 8: Assumption 2). The key purpose of governance is seen as a decision making, consultative and communication mechanism (Table 8: Assumption 2).

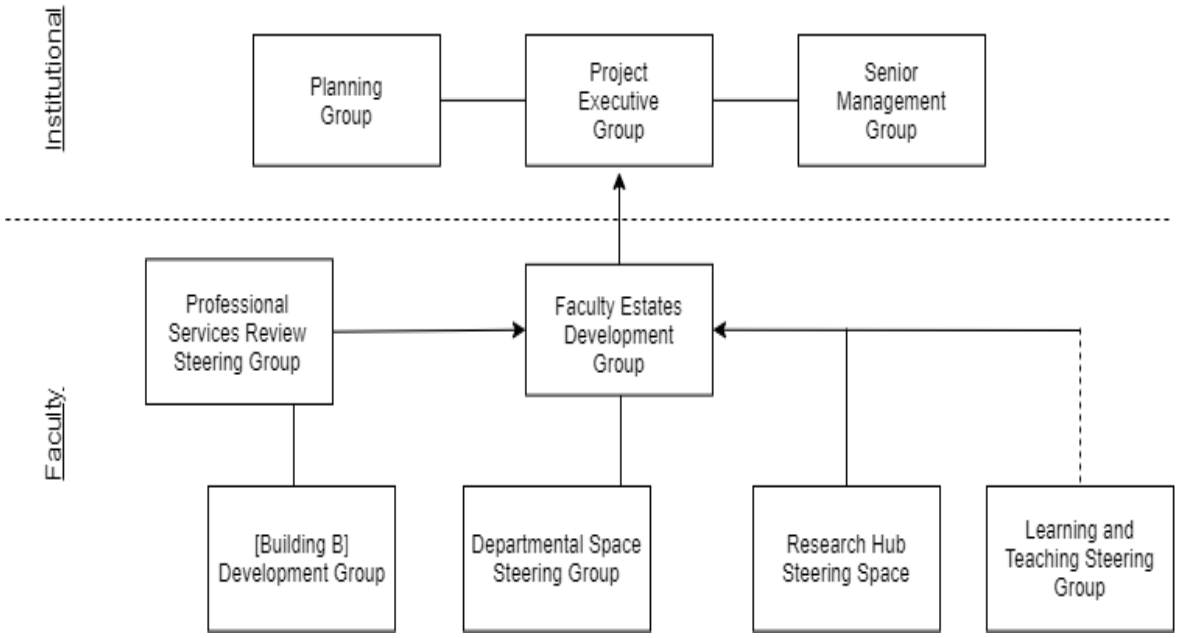

Figure 4-1: Project governance (revisited)

Table 8: Project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism - Governance & decision making

Dimension	Illustrative data
1. Governance as a formal system that privileges a standardised structure	A formal project governance structure was created and included in the project documentation (Figure 4-1) with clear hierarchy and reporting lines *(Project documentation)*. It was generally assumed that having the correct structure, as defined by normal working practice with the University, will de-facto result in effective governance and accountable decision making: *"You've obviously got your governance in place, your [Project Executive Group] and your Senior Management Group, which I think is pretty standard through the University" (Interviewee, PM)* *"I'm pretty sure that the university is very strong on its governance structure and expect things to be run a certain way and that all that's being done in the way it should "(Interviewee, Department 4)* *"there's a governance structure that's imposed on us" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*
2. Decision making is bounded by the project governance system.	The project governance structure held a primary purpose relating to decision making within the boundaries of the project. On interviewing the person responsible for developing the project governance, its purpose was clear: *"I wanted the governance to be set up how it was set up, because it's such a big investment for the University and it can't be the decision can't be made by one person, or one group or one small group of people" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)* This was supported with further evidence from the project documentation such as the Project Executive Group Terms of Reference which stated a significant amount of 'to agree' and 'to approve' in respect of the project *(Project documentation)*.

	When I examined the lived experience of governance during interviews with actors, there was strong reference to decision making and communication: *"So, it does feel a bit like (the project) is led by committee……. It's very much like we've got a committee structure, working groups structure and everything's being done through that and outside of those meetings you don't hear anything" (Interviewee, Department 3)* *"The various working groups that there are – are helpful and means that we have a voice… I think the decisions will be made at the [Project Executive Group]" (Interviewee, Department 1)* *"Final decisions are kind of being made at [Faculty Estates Development Group]" (Interviewee, Department 4)* The absence of a communication plan or observations of communication activity outside of the formal governance system was also noted in my researcher observation diary *(Project documentation & observations)*.

4.1.3 Relationships with stakeholders

Relationships with stakeholders takes a conventional approach within the formal system of governance, with differing approaches to engagement depending on the category of stakeholder (Table 9: Assumption 1). A functional purpose to relationships was demonstrated with a focus on representation of stakeholders within the governance structure, reporting of engagement with stakeholders via formal reports and presentations into the project governance structure, and with a formal consultation process with external stakeholders (Table 9: Assumption 2). There was a single, instrumental purpose to these relationships – to deliver a design and allocation of new space that would be acceptable enough to stakeholders to allow the project to move to the submission of the planning application whilst managing reputational risk (Table 9: Assumption 2). Social-political assumptions are discounted as not being part of the project (Table 9: Assumption 3).

Table 9: Project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism - Relationships with stakeholders

Dimension	Illustrative data
1. Relationships managed via the governance system	The relationship with stakeholders takes a formal approach facilitated by the governance system of the project. Whilst formal project governance is the mechanism for engagement, different routes are taken with different categories of stakeholder *(Observations and project documentation)*. The relationship with staff members and the project is facilitated through the formal system of project governance with representative members on the five Steering Groups as evidenced by the Terms of Reference documentation *(Project documentation)*. A staff and public consultation events were held with outcomes reported into the Project Executive Group and the Faculty Executive Development Group *(Observations, Project documentation of the consultation events, Project documentation of Project Executive Group & Faculty Executive Development Group)*. Relationships with internal central administrative departments, such as IT, were facilitated via the Project Executive Group. Representatives were invited to specific meetings, subject to the agenda *(Observation & project documentation of the Project Executive Group)* Student representatives were selected from Student Associates by the Learning & Teaching Steering Group who were tasked to investigate what students would like the learning and teaching space to look like, which was subsequently reported into the Learning & Teaching Steering Group (*Observations & project documentation of the L & T Steering Group)*.
2. Purpose of relations bound by unitary project objective	The single purpose of stakeholder engagement is focused on the output of having a design that would allow the project to move to the submission of a planning application with no technical planning barriers to obtaining planning approval. With the ultimate aim being the management of the University's reputation locally whilst achieving its functional purpose:

	"So ultimately, it's about trying to minimise reputational damage and ensure that we put in a proposal which, for which, there are no planning reasons to turn it down" (Interviewee, Project Admin) The staff and public consultation included detailed design boards, including visuals of the building, the proposed landscaping, cross-sections of how the building will look in context and how sustainability ambitions would be met. Project representatives were available to answer questions about the proposed capital works only *(Observations)*. Observational data was collected during the planning meetings for the consultation events, the consultation events and the governance meetings where the post consultation events report was considered. At all stages the project focus was on the measurement and mitigation of risks to obtaining building planning approval *(Observations)*.
3. Socio-political aspects are illegitimate/ inconvenient	This is demonstrated by the absence of any acknowledgement of social-political dimensions within the formal project system, with the exception of the public consultation. However, this was bounded by the objective of seeking planning approval. Thus, any socio-political dimension is constructed in relation to "managing it out" to remove any obstacle to achieving technical planning permission *(Observations)*. There are no requirements stated within the Terms of Reference documentation to identify or consider social-political dimensions, potential impact on work practices or the impact of the design and allocation of space from a human perspective *(Project documentation)*.

Notably, the project manager's positioning of the project closely aligned with this first perspective, presented in section 4.1, throughout the fieldwork. Unlike many other project stakeholders, the PM never constituted the project as anything but a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism and so their perspective is worth some further exploration here. The PM consistently articulated the strategic intent of the project as a *"world class Social Science Building"(Interviewee, PM),* which translated for him to *"a plot of land and building design" (Interviewee, PM).* This was despite him being party to the wider strategic discussions with the Sponsors. These views emerged from in-depth interviews

and were triangulated with observations of his behaviour and presentation of project documentation of which he was the author.

When asked about the particular challenges presented by the pre-initiation phase of the project, the PM frequently orientated to the scoping brief and the project management golden triangle of cost, time and quality:

> *"The key challenges… depend [on] how the initial brief's set out. You've got obviously your cost, your quality and your time… it is being termed as a world class Social Sciences Building, so straight away you think quality. This has got to be a quality build… It's also got a cost element to it, which obviously, we'll have to meet… [Time]... we have no set 'you must have this built by then'." (Interviewee, PM)*

As the conversation developed, it became clear that world class, at least for the PM, related to the quality of the building's physical infrastructure, rather than the scholarship and teaching which took place within the building or the experience of staff and students occupying it:

> *"It's pretty obvious it needs to be world class and the quality drives that. …As well as stakeholder engagement, this is where you get your…. specialist engagement from your consultants. How energy efficient is it? I know we've got criteria at the University; and it's to achieve BREEAM excellence, where possible… that's what we try and aim for. EFM [Department of Estates and Facilities Management] they're obviously… really pushing low carbon or zero carbon. And all passive ventilation is being routed on this building, again difficult to get - with the lecture theatres and the amount of individual offices we've got."(Interviewee, PM)*

This framing leads to the prioritisation of particular groups within stakeholder engagement activities – namely those that will have a role in approving the capital build (the local Council's planning officers) and those with subsequent responsibility for *"managing and looking after it"* (i.e. Estates and Facilities Management) in relation to *"health and safety, security, catering…all those facilities management functions"*. The nature of engagement with these stakeholders is frequently referred to with terms such as

"seeking input" or *"a dialogue"*. In contrast, while *"the end users"* (i.e. Departments that would be based in the building) and local residents in the surrounding area were framed as *"politically important"* within stakeholder engagement, the core task here was keeping them "*up to date and up to speed with what's going on":*

> *"We need to get that engagement… And not just steam through and say "Well we're having it" because it doesn't work like that - It just rubs everybody the wrong way."(Interviewee, PM)*

From the PM's perspective, the duty to these stakeholders was limited to the practice of keeping them informed through regular communication. The value of social relations in projects is essentially instrumental and should be geared only toward achieving the brief within the time, cost and quality triangle. Referring to his own position in relation to the politics of project management, he said, *"I don't do politics. I really do…I really struggle [laughing]. It really gets me on the go. It really winds me up" (Interviewee, PM)*. For him, the way to deal with any socio-political tensions that do arise is to have a well-rehearsed rational account that justifies particular decisions and courses of action:

> *"You're not going to please everyone; you can't. But you just need an answer to it… the questions that they ask… By the time…we need to engage with the local residents. We need the master plan sorted out for them… We're looking at engaging with the local neighbours, I think we said June, so having all answers lined up for then to let them know. (Interviewee, PM)*

> *We need 3D images… so we can show people [staff]. 'This is your room, this is your walk down the stairs' and you can actually see the space you're in and I think that is really key. And also, to give them comfort that they know what they're getting and I think that in the past… That has been tough. If you look at a plan, you've got your desk and chair, there's a little table there... But "How tall is it?" "What…[will it] have an opening window?" which is you know, it's things like that that they're… desperate for. (Interviewee, PM)*

> *And when you've got you know, one hundred and fifty individual offices, all these people need to be told where [they're] going to be sitting. So, there's a lot*

of that [activity] that will need this information [feeding through]… and sometimes you've got to say no and if it is a no you need a reason why. You can't just say no and sort of 'No you just can't'." (Interviewee, PM)

Rather than engaging with the socio-political challenges of project work, the PM frames his role in relation to the rational analysis of tasks to achieve the capital build, the resources to complete it and the design and sequencing of work packages to ensure success:

"There's tensions and that's mainly going to affect…I suppose it's the residents because… Psychology - that was coming first. That's slipped. Then Social Sciences. The sports facility is being designed and we don't know when that's going to begin and go ahead. There's [name of site] being thrown in the mix… as a potential refurbishment… the sequence of that is going to be impossible. It's looking at the master planning because there is a lot happening - and we're extending the master plan of the city campus. Again, it's a separate job but they're all blurred. There's a lot of tensions going on. And again, trying to manage that I suppose it comes down to the master planning… programme. Yes, there's chunks going to be assigned to these bits of work but when do you do them? Do you finish one, leave it and start the next one making more mess, or you try and co-ordinate all that? It does need a co-ordinated response, which I think we will get. (Interviewee, PM)

At the minute… there are separate PMs… for Psychology, Social Sciences, me and the sports facility…We've had a couple of meetings - just to co-ordinate diaries - because the consultants who were external project managers for Social Science, are also on Psychology, which really helped. The architects are different on all three - but that generally is not a problem. We've got the same mechanical and electrical… consultants on Social Sciences and the sports… facility - which again is proving really beneficial for looking at the heating solution…what's a sustainable solution we can put in, not just for Social Sciences but for the sports facilities as well. So, trying to get that…crossed over has been really helpful with the same design team. Although there were obviously we went out to tender individually they were both successful on their own merits and it's just a bonus

that they can actually look at both sides… and try and come up with a bit of combined solution for both - if we can get one. (Interviewee, PM)

Half of the time you're babysitting. You're pushing – 'oh, I need you', 'I need you', 'why have you done this?', 'why have you done that?', 'should it be like that?' But also having the construction knowledge, which again, I've got… from my background. It's being able to see 'will that work or won't that work'. You can see what things are going to be…'that's going to cost too much. We can't, we can't have that'. That's just not going to work. But there's so much that you need to co-ordinate and get in place. It is and you're juggling it all the time. And then on the back-side, these guys need paying – so you've gotta work out, their fees, what they need paying and send it…get it through the approval system on our side. It's a lot longer process than what I was used to - so you need to be you know, thinking ahead of the game." (Interviewee, PM)

What is notable in the above extract is the emphasis on organising tasks in a neutral, apolitical way. As such, the value of social relations within the project domain is instrumental and should be geared only towards efficiency and productivity. The chapter now moves on to consider a second perspective on the project.

4.2 Project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices

In this section, meanings and assumptions are surfaced that present an evolving alternative perspective on the project – one of a complex change project that happens to be driven by a capital build. The actor's assumptions are examined in this context against the same three themes examined in the previous section, namely the project boundary, governance and decision making, and relationships with stakeholders.

4.2.1 Project boundary

Within this perspective, the initial boundary of the project was expanded from being the design and allocation of space for a new capital build to include the relocation of three academic departments into a refurbished building. This formalised the Build B refurbishment work into the project system (Table 10: Assumption 1) and provided additional resources and a protective formal boundary around a potentially problematic piece of work relating to socio-political complexities for the Sponsors (Table 10: Assumption 1). The socio-political complexities related to moving three academic

departments from their current locations into a shared building. They considered themselves as three separate departments with different needs, identity, culture and operating norms. The interrelated socio-political complexities relating to identity and rhetoric are explored further in the proceeding chapter (5).

The formal project is instrumental in the delivery of organizational change which is approached in a functional 'machine-like' way. The expansion of the project boundary to include Building B pulled the three affected academic departments into the formal governance system. Whilst the explicit reasoning for this was to utilise the formal project system to aid decision making and allocation of resources (Table 10: Assumption 2), it drew the three academic departments into a wider strategic intent that had implications for future work practices

The extended project boundary was permeable by an additional strategic intent of complex organizational change. The strategic intent of changes to work practices and behaviour of the workforce was present in the data as participants view of the purpose, nature and boundaries of the project evolved. Yet, it was not an explicit part of the project, as formally or officially articulated and documented, during the pre-initiation phase (Table 10: Assumption 2).

Table 10: Project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices - Project boundary

Dimension	**Illustrative data**
1. Instrumental use of project boundary for political reasons.	The project boundary was renegotiated to include the refurbishment and relocation of 3 academic departments into Building B. Data demonstrated the reasoning behind this move was driven by socio-political complexities. The formal project system provided an accepted vehicle to aid decision making by providing a structured, time-bound environment. *"[Building B] – was originally, was just our problem ……we manged to tweak the Project Executive Group Terms of Reference so [Building B) was explicitly mentioned" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*
2. Project boundary is permeable and pluralistic.	Interviews held with the Sponsors surfaced an additional strategic intent of organizational change around work practices and culture. Whilst the data demonstrates a view that the project has reach and impact beyond the physical

	infrastructure, the organization and people within it talked about in a functional, machine-like way: *"so, I'm more bothered about internal configuration and structures and management of people and things that go on within it than I am about the building" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)* *"One of the strategic drivers for the new building behind the business case is to facilitate internal change. So, a big bit of the rationale for the building, is putting our departments closer together in order to build better more effective interdisciplinary teams… and this becomes more and more an imperative as the funding landscape changes" (Interviewee, Faculty 2)* *"But we need to deliver flexibility, pedagogy and think of ways which we can incentivise departments to work together differently" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)* Actors raises local and departmental culture as a critical aspect, as the appreciation of the additional strategic intent evolves: *"Our major priority is on cultural impact … we have a unique and embedded culture in the School……have got huge, not just practical but cultural implications and that is gonna be I think the big issue for us" (Interviewee, Department 3)* *"But the thing that I think is gonna occupy us significantly is that cultural shift" (Interviewee, Department 1)* Whilst this was acknowledged by the Faculty Sponsors, it was linked back to the physical infrastructure *"I personally think space does have an effect on departmental culture…their culture is just being influenced completely by the space that they're in" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)* As the actors' sense-making evolved, the theme of uncertainty emerged from the data:

	"There are some staff who are anxious about 'is it a drive to efficiency' particular professional services staff" (Interviewee, Department 3) *"It's becoming more obvious that the space that we're being offered isn't that appropriate for us" (Interviewee, Department 2)* *"There is only so far you can reassure people – that there's not been any explicit mention of, you know, we're gonna co-locate departments, professional services" (Interviewee, Department 3)*

4.2.2 Governance and decision making

Section 4.1.2 outlined the underlying assumption that governance privileges structure for decision making and consultation within the project boundaries. Yet, this is permeable for a number of reasons, such as: the permeable project boundary discussed in the previous section; actor's sense-making about the implications of decision making; issues discussed and not discussion within the formal project (governance) system.

The Faculty Sponsors shared that they were trying to deal with a complex timing tension of designing new space with the flexibility to facilitate the desired organizational change. The timing tension relates to the three-year period to design and build a new space and the consultation period, negotiated with the campus unions, on organizational change and change to staff numbers which would normally occur over a six-month period (Table 11: Assumption 1).

There was a fluidity to participant's differing views on the purpose and nature of the boundaries of the project as decisions were made. To unpick this assumption further, I explored the lived experience of actors around the development of a set of documented ground rules regarding the size and allocation of space for certain work practices which were drafted and 'agreed' with participants in the governance structure. Information shared during project governance meetings stimulated thought at an individual level on their department's priorities, needs and how this would change work practices locally. This was at an individual level and impacted on decision making processes as they

became increasingly permeable by stimulating thought within individual departments about the project for them outside the project boundaries (Table 11: Assumption 2).

A Professional Services Review Group was listed as part of the Faculty project governance structure (Fig. 4.1). The title of the review group suggests that the evolving understanding of the organizational change strategic aim would be explored within this working group. This group never met during the period of the field work and there was an absence of project documentation. Whilst, it was part of the project governance structure documentation, there was no Terms of Reference to indicate the intent of this group. When I enquired about this, it was confirmed that the group had not been convened and it was not clear whether it would be convened. When I asked if anyone had enquired about the absence of the group, especially with the evolving understanding of changes to work practices linked to the project, I was told that the governance structure circulated to the actors did not include that group so there are no expectations around it.

Table 11: Project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices: Governance & decision making

Dimension	**Illustrative data**
1. Navigating tensions between informal and formal intent.	The Sponsors articulated the challenges between trying to manage the informal strategic intent (complex organizational change) and the formal remit of the project (capital design and build project). In doing so, they demonstrated active attempts to keep the complex organizational change intentions implicit: *"So, I want to make sure that the space is ok – but what's difficult for me as well is ensuring that we've got enough flexibility in the design now because once it's signed off at the end of this phase it then goes out to tender to a contractor, in theory we shouldn't change the design. But it's three years away that the building's going to be finished and things change in that time. So, the space and a change of the Professional Services review, some departments might change" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)* *"If professional service staff are being thrown into a different set up, when we move, then we need to know what our PS staff are gonna look like in order to plan physically how they're gonna be. That works not started yet" (Interviewee, Faculty 2).*

	"The problem is if we were too specific in the design stage you, you then end up with a narrative that goes something like…. 'Well you've created a student experience hub, what sort of things going on in it?.....that support staff will have 7 square meters and we see there are 28 square meters in the student experience hub, according to the plans, that's 4 staff. Which 4 staff are going in there?' 'Don't know yet'. 'What will they be doing in there?' 'Don't know yet.' 'But you know it's big enough for 4 staff? Yeh. So, you must have some idea why 4 and not 6, therefore you must have some idea what 4 do there'…… you know a job is going to be fundamentally changed and or people are at risk then you need to be going to change management processes, uni campus unions then now need to do consultations. You've got 6 months – but this thing is not being built for 2 years" (Interviewee, Faculty 1) This tension is further evidenced in the transcripts of the discussion at the Project Executive Group: *"In building this building and thinking that this building alongside [Building B] as an almost like a unitary building. As one space, in the way it will be managed and run. Gives us opportunities for thinking about Professional Services supporting ways, which hereto have not been very possible for many years. So beyond just things like whether we want to put finance in a hub. But you know, there are just some practical things, like…just because of the nature of geography at the minute, these departments have six student receptions because they have one each. They won't need one each in the building" (Transcripts of Project Executive Group meeting)* *"The problem, in terms of talking about it in too much detail, of course, is that quite rightly, the University's got an agreement with campus unions around significant changes to either people's roles and /or staff numbers. If we do too much detail thinking on that too soon, it will lead to a consultation two years before the flippin' buildings even gone out of the ground. We are trying to basically walk a little bit of a tight rope" (Transcripts of Project Executive Group meeting)*
2. Fluid experience & understanding of decision making	A set of ground rules regarding the size and allocation of space for certain work practices were drafted and agreed within the governance structure. This

	demonstrated a mixed and changing view on the meanings and implications of these decisions being wider than a capital project. Two of the four departmental mangers found the process of developing and agreeing the ground rules useful as it aided their understanding of what was up for discussion and what was not: *"I certainly felt like we had the opportunity to input and have our views – and where there were tweaks needed to be made then they were made. There were certain things that were detailed very much as well actually this is what is happening. But they weren't necessarily things we had any major concerns over….In some ways I think that's helpful because we're all aware of what's going to happen from the start so these things aren't up for debate or discussion later down the track, we're all signed up to it…..It can certainly help us as a department who are going to have to make the transition – and are going to have to bring our staff along. Actually, being able to drip feed some of these rules from an early stage and say no we've got a bit of certainty how this area is gonna look" (Interviewee, Department 1)* *"There were some draft ground rules developed and circulated. I really liked that practice. I think it's really useful because it helps you to have conversations that you probably wouldn't have. Some people on the group hadn't taken it seriously and then when it came to the final, so (the Chair) is saying "so we've agreed these ground rules, haven't we? – "what do you mean agreed them (laughter). This is the stuff we're not going talk about, this is the stuff we're going talk about and this is how we're gonna do it. And there was a light bulb for a few people around the room who I think hadn't really taken it that seriously" (Interviewee, Department 2)* Two of the four departmental managers interviewed felt their contribution to the development of the ground rules, or their influence over them, was limited: *"So, I came quite late to the ground rules although we did put a few things in at the end – but the ground rules were more or less already been drawn up" (Interviewee, Department 4)* *"We were given the opportunity to, sort of, comment on them, but those ground rules were definitely written before we'd even got started. So,*

	I feel a bit like, I don't think we've been able to contribute as much as we would have liked. I think they've had to push back on somethings, you know, things like average sized offices for academics and professional services – that's a University wide metric. I think. But things like PGRs and university teachers and that kind of thing – they were definitely in there and I think it would have been able to push back on any of those. I think, it's quite a clear narrative that: these are the ground rules and this is what we're going forward with" (Interviewee, Department 3) One member of the Sponsor Team shared an instance of feedback on the ground rules from an actor which demonstrates the realisation of the implications of the capital project having wider implications on work practices: *"Basically we had a conversation and they felt that they'd been shafted and when I asked when were you shafted…they said in the ground rules – cause I put together a set of ground rules, just about space location and it had no reference to who was going where and their reason for the ground rules is to - so we have Professors sat in 20sq meter offices, it's not sustainable and it's just got to - we've got to make sure that we do address hierarchy, you know, professors and academic staff do have their own office but not everyone else does. And PGR space as well. Traditionally, PGRs have four and a half square meters and an allocated desk, but they don't use it and it's not sustainable so we've proposed sharing which is fine – and other universities are doing it now" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)*

4.2.3 Relationships with stakeholders

In contrast to the presumption that social-political assumptions are discounted as not being part of the project as outlined earlier, this perspective positions relationships with stakeholders as being influenced by dynamics outside the formal project system. I surface this assumption by exploring communication and consultation with actors.

Socio-political complexities related to effective communication outside the formal project boundary and governance system was surfaced (Table 12: Assumption 1). Firstly, the key route for information sharing was identified as being the governance meetings, along with acknowledgement from the Sponsors of the absence of a

communication plan. Yet, the expectations, understanding and lived experience of consultation with internal stakeholders illustrates a level of complexity that the formal project system, and the first perspective, does not acknowledge. Subsequently, the data demonstrated differing experiences and approaches to communication within academic departments outside project governance structures. Consultation is considered a process of negotiation and compromise by the leadership team yet there is a tension with this assumption (Table 12 - assumption 2) and the attraction to processes and rules of the formal project system that seems to provides protection from a challenging area.

Whilst the data demonstrated a generally accepted view on the importance of staff consultation, there were contrasting expectations and understandings of what this would entail. At a departmental level a localised interest and focus surfaced, in contrast to the wider faculty academic community view held by the Sponsors.

Table 12: Project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices - Relationships with stakeholders

Dimension	**Illustrative data**
1. Overt and covert articulations of the project	Challenges relating to a perceived void in communication emerged from stage 1 interviews with actors which were explored with the Sponsors during stage 2 interviews. The void in communication was subsequently acknowledged by the Faculty Sponsors as an oversight: *"At the moment, the only information you get about the project is when we go to those [governance] meetings" (Interviewee, Department 3)* *"I am not sure we've even thought about the communications plan necessarily" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)* *"I don't know how consistent the messages are being passed through at Departmental level. So that's difficult" (Interviewee, Faculty 2)* At an academic departmental level there was a lack of a consistent approach to sharing information picked up from representation on project governance structures within their home departments:

	"Our going in the building was not widely known, so people who are working in the department, other than the people who are going to the (project) meetings don't know that. And we've made a decision… I don't reckon we, no, we didn't make a decision, we just talked it through and thought yeah okay it's not worth saying anything to anybody else because that's going to create issues. That we can't do anything about" (Interviewee, Department 2) *"So, I want them (staff) to know about it so that they aren't seeing it just through the planning documents" (Interviewee, Department 4)*
2. Negotiation and compromise	The data demonstrated an acknowledgement by the Faculty Sponsors that negotiation and compromise are key to the consultation and decision-making processes. Yet there is a tension with the dominant focus on rational project management processes and rules enacted through the project governance structures that appears to provide a perceived level of comfort and protection to the challenging complexity: *"Recognising that not everyone is universally happy with every aspect, but that via a negotiation and compromise and other things" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)* *"So, the soft consultation stuff, that's quite intangible really and like with any project I think that's got to run through cause there's always stuff that you have to firefight, that kind of thing. But with the - I quite like having deadlines and process to follow, cause… I don't know, I like rules" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)* Whilst a key aim of project governance was to provide a mechanism to consult at departmental level, this was often not the lived experience of actors: *"It's all at what point staff are gonna be consulted? If they're literally being consulted at the moment the planning application being made, then is that really consultation? It's just a …. Here you go – this is what we're going do, like it or lump it, you know" (Interviewee, Department 3)* The data demonstrates a common view on the importance of staff consultation but there were differing expectations and understandings of what this should

	entail. There were contrasting needs with actors seeking a localised/departmental focus compared to the Sponsors focus on a Faculty academic community view. *"I think that the consultation process is important and then at least we've got something to aim to and if we can't achieve it – we can justify why we can't" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)* *"So, the challenge for us is making sure that we are heard so that any changes… benefit us. And that we can sell the move positively in the school around those boundaries……But I am more than happy to just think locally" (Interviewee, Department 4)* *"We would like the staff to be more involved…. But that clearly doesn't relate to the planning application. It will happen afterwards" (Interviewee, Department 3)*

Notably, here the departmental actors' sense-making of the project presented a temporal and fluid understanding of the project throughout the fieldwork. Thus, an evolution of understanding that constituted the project as a site of contestation over culture, identity and work practices. This is in contrast to the project governance system and the project manager's view who constituted the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism as presented in section 4.1.

It is worth some initial exploration into socio-political complexities here, in preparation of a detailed examination within Chapter 5. The lived experiences of the relationship between the governance; and how and where decisions were made, generated socio-political complexities related to power dynamics.

Formal accounts of the project vest decision-making authority within the governance structure, which involves institutional, faculty, departmental and professional services representatives. Yet, the Terms of Reference documentation demonstrated that decision-making rests solely with the Project Executive Group – made up of a Chair from a different faculty, a Secretary from Estates and Facilities Management, representation from the implicated Faculty Sponsors and key role holders from Central Services (e.g.

Project Manager, Head of Estates, Communications Manager). This group's Terms of Reference is the only one containing term such as "to agree" or "to approve", whilst Faculty Steering Groups are restricted to terms such as "to consider", suggesting a lack of authority and influence in decision-making. This was further reinforced in the accounts of governance group representatives who express decisions are made at a combination of the Project Executive Group or outside the formal governance:

> *I think the decisions will be made at the Project Executive Group…* I just got a *sense that some of the conversation had already happened - outside the meeting, and we just… sort of, we saw the tail-end of those discussions, and it was just, sort of, closed…, and I think that was probably [Faculty Sponsor 1], but I don't know. I mean, to be fair to [Faculty Sponsor 1] you know, sometimes you just need somebody to make the decision and everyone to just crack on with it, and obviously he's very good at doing that" (Interviewee, Department 1)*

> *"I think [Faculty Sponsor 1] has probably made a lot of decisions. And I'm sure a lot of those decisions have been, you know, made based on his conversations with people and what he feels is the right thing to do…and… yeah, my sense of the meetings that we've had, certainly… they're just a reporting tool … and I think a lot of the decisions are actually being made outside of the meeting" (Interviewee, Department 3)*

> *"I can see that they [Faculty Sponsors] are the decision-maker" (Interviewee, Department 2)*

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

As a result, the key Faculty individuals developed 'work-arounds' in order to influence the decisions made at the Project Executive Group. The Sponsors Professional Support Officer was on secondment from the Estates Department and due to an oversight remained a member of the Project Executive Group as an Estates and Facilities Management team member. Subsequently, she was invited to the Project Executive Group meetings and the pre-meetings which the Sponsors were excluded from.

> *" so, then you create informal ways of getting into that. Well one way is via [Sponsor Professional Support.] She is on the [Project Executive Group], curiously...she is on it for the wrong reason trying to do the right thing from a client perspective and that's the other reason why she's valuable. But what you won't know is how often me and [other member of the Faculty Executive Team] have collared [the Chair of Project Executive Group] in the corridor or, you know, or I've done the same with [the Head of Estates and Facilities Management]… That wouldn't be necessary if the formal structure was there" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*

The divergence between the assumed decision-making powers across the governance structure, versus power vested in one group (Project Executive Group) and key individuals was accepted and unchallenged within the project governance structure itself. Dissatisfaction was not expressed about not being involved in decisions and behaviour to self-disempower in respect of decision making manifested. In contrast the need for the communication of decisions, answers and reasoning was important to departmental participants.

> "*It's very much like we've got a committee structure, working group structure, and everything's being done through that, and outside of those meetings, you don't hear anything*" (Interviewee, Department 3)

"From the point of view of my role as Departmental Manager … I suppose that, the more meetings I go to, the more questions I've got about how we're going to do it - so it isn't really answering… I'm not getting any answers or any resolution, at the moment" (Interviewee, Department 2)

The data unveiled a departmental focus on local, departmental needs by departmental actors rather than the wider project and academic community of the Faculty of Social Science. This supplements the finding from Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1) that the project boundary is permeable by individual departmental culture.

"I'm pretty sure that the information I need to be told - I'm being told. I'm hoping that there's other stuff that I don't need to know about at all, that someone else can deal with and I don't need to think about it…A move to [Building B] hasn't necessarily been seen positively by the school or by the Head of Department. But… the Head of School and myself have clearly made the decision that we will, have the best interests of the department at heart - so we are feeding into that…. But I also want them to know that we've done the very best for our school and we've got the best end of the deal that we can….When I'm thinking about things and I'm not necessarily considering the bigger picture or where decisions are being made…. I'm more than happy just to think locally with them" (Interviewee, Department 4)

These findings contrast with the assumption and the aim of the governance providing a voice and representation to decision making (section 4.1.2):

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

*"So, I don't think any of the formal governance structures have been where, issues have been debated and decisions have been made. Well, I think it was supposed to be decision making and it ended up information sharing" (*Interviewee, Faculty 2)

Whilst the assumptions of consultation of stakeholder representation within the project governance encouraged participation in decision making and contribution to the designing the future state during the design/pre-initiation phase of the project, the data raises a dilemma relating to the assumed legitimacy of representation. The premise that the departmental actors are acting as a two-way conduit is based on their membership of the project governance. In reality departmental representatives did not feel they were part of the decision and were simply recipients of limited information.

> *"Our going into the new building was not widely known, so people who are working in the Department, other than the people who were going to the meetings, don't know that. And we've made a decision...It's not worth saying anything to anybody else, because that's going to create… issues. That we can't do anything about it. It became clear from the discussions that took place that, there was no movement on it" (Interviewee, Department 2)*

Moreover, the assumed legitimacy of their role of representation was constrained due to them being privy to information that they could not share within their departments due to the political complexity of the influence of local residential community groups, which the leadership team was actively managing by limiting the flow of information until the public consultation stage scheduled for the end of the pre-initiation phase of the project and immediately prior to the submission of the planning application. The planning application is the end point of the pre-initiation phase and defines the project scope for the next project phase of implementation.

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

> *"The other really important context of course is the external political dimension. Such that we weren't able to socialise more widely in the departments as early as we might have wanted to because of the external stuff around [local public community group]. I mean obviously planning and stuff but just that thing about [local public community group], not knowing who in the department was on [local public community group] … and I think that's affected this project in a way that didn't affect the [previous capital build requiring planning approval for the University], it didn't affect, you know… And that's an additional complexity that we'll just have to deal with. And I honestly would have liked to have done it differently but I also don't think we could have" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*

The timing tensions, due to the management of external political complexities, creates a significant constraint on the reality of representation. Thus, the manifestation of a crisis of representation in relation to communication and decision making, contrary to the assumption in the purpose of the project governance as an accepted system. The absence of a meaningful consultation by the occupants of the building was felt consistently across departmental representative which led to incorrect assumptions that there would be consultation on the design post the submission of the planning application. This is a significant misunderstanding because the planning application is the artefact of the end of the pre-initiation phase and defines the scope of the project:

> *"I think it would be good to be able to have some more in-depth conversations with staff before the planning details go out; because they shouldn't feel like they're the last people to know about these kinds of things. We would like the staff to be more involved with that, but that clearly doesn't relate to the planning application. It will happen afterwards." (Interviewee, Department 4)*

> *"The first challenge that certainly [the Head of Department] and I have been tackling is, the level of openness that we're able to, sort of, go with, in terms of sharing information to staff. I think we've now got to a point where we can be a*

little bit more open but, again, it's still very, sort of, contained. Although there was a bit of an issue about the fact that there was gonna be a public consultation, which anybody, members of the public, University staff members, students, whatever; could go to. And I think I raised the point at one of the meetings about: what about staff, surely they should be given an initial, sort of, consultation before it goes out to the public. Because, we're not just a member of the public, we're gonna be inhabitants of that building - surely they deserve some advanced, sort of, consultation. So, I think they have agreed to have a pre-public consultation, for staff only, to go and have a look at the plans, and so on." (Interviewee, Department 3)

4.3 Summary

The outcome of the analysis constituted the project as a case of evolving pluralistic relationalities. It presented two discernible, yet fluid perspectives on the project and the evolution of actors' sense-making and accompanying assumptions. In congruence with project management practitioner training, the Project Manager adopted orthodox ways of thinking about the project and its management by locating it in a modernist work view, thus constituting the project as a site of rationality, control and instrumentalism as a means to bring about progress. This view was consistently held by the Project Manager throughout the period of research.

The evolving pluralistic rationalities and accompanying assumptions, as presented in this chapter contributes to the examination of the project's socio-political complexities at the intersection between the formal and informal 'life' of the project, which interacts with actors' sense-making, attitudes and behaviours towards the project. In the next chapter, these findings are built upon through an analysis of actors lived experience of socio-political complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project.

5. Findings: Socio-political complexities

This chapter presents the findings of the second phase of analysis which builds upon the evolution of pluralistic rationalities and the concept that the formal and informal aspects of project life become entangled into a negotiated order, as begun in Chapter 4. The analysis presented here provides a deeper examination of the evolution of the socio-political complexities of the project.

There was an emerging realisation by departmental actors that there was something larger at stake that was not an explicit part of the project, as formally articulated i.e. a capital build and refurbishment project. As the pre-initiation phase progressed, a perceived threat to departmental identity and local work practices came to the fore. Whilst, the importance of departmental identity was surfaced during interviewees with departmental actors, this was not acknowledged or discussed within the formal life of the project. Furthermore, the rhetoric and language used around 'core-departments' manifested an unintentional and unhelpful meaning of second-classness to departmental actors. This played out in the lived experiences of actors and their resultant sense-making.

The findings are presented in two interrelated and dynamic second-order categories, as presented in Fig. 3-5 in chapter 3, section 3.2.3. First, symbolism and sense-making. Second, language and rhetoric. These were juxtaposed with learning and reflections of the sponsors as explained in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.

5.1 Symbolism and sense making

This section further unpicks what I refer as a crisis of representation, by examining symbolic behaviours and actions among strategic project actors that become unintentionally significant to the sense making of the wider project community due to a void in communication. It surfaces interpretations of the refurbished building [Building B] being marginalised by the new building despite it being a single project. It challenges a strong sense of academic departmental identities and status, through the politics of building allocation and the symbolic 'ownership' and identity of a building to an academic department verses the Faculty of Social Sciences.

I present the strategic importance of [Building B] to the Sponsors, which I contrast with the narratives of [Building B] being considered 'second-class' within the wider project community at departmental-level. In particular, this chapter illustrates how behaviours within the governance structure were interpreted through a significant incident that points to the importance of symbolism to individual actors' sense making in and towards the project.

The rationale for integration of the new building and refurbishment into a single project, as presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1), was two-fold. Firstly, it was stated as being critical to the strategic intent of organizational change through building a coherent interdisciplinary research capability. Secondly, it was physically necessary as part of the estate masterplan regarding space utilisation.

> "*It was confirmed at the Project Executive Group that the [Building B] project would be governed at the same Project Executive Group as the new development. (Project documentation - Minutes: [Building B] Steering Meeting Group, 12 April 2016).*

> *"[Building B] absolutely is part of this [Project Executive Group] and the Chair is signed up to that principle. So, whenever I talk about the building, I don't just mean the new one, I mean both."* (Interviewee, Faculty 1)

> *"It takes three other departments up in [Building B] that are not currently there puts it next to the Management School, which I think is absolutely essential to being able to address the challenges… But actually, I don't think they all need to be in the building, I do think that it needs to be easier for people to be able to come together, and at the moment the distance to the Management School, the distance to Politics, as well as the cultural distance, between us and others is quite a challenge." (Interviewee, Faculty 2)*

Despite the strategic importance of [Building B], the data highlights behaviours within the formal project that are symbolically powerful which were interpreted and informed sense making by actors within the informal life of the project, that created new meanings about Building B. Firstly, there is a noticeable lack of momentum of the [Building B] Development Group, despite being part of the formal project governance structure. The

Terms of Reference was absent for this group and after enquiring about this, I was informed that this group had not really got going by the owner of the Faculty project governance *(Interviewee, Faculty Admin.)*. This is further supported by the fact that this group only met twice, which is a notable difference compared to peer working groups as outlined in Table 13.

Table 13: Summary of the number of Steering Group Meetings

Steering Group	**No. of times met**
Learning & Teaching	11
Departmental Space	10
Research	6
Building B Development Group	2

This lack of momentum compared to the other steering groups was felt by actors and introduced interpretations of Building B being unimportant. A notion of being seen as 'second-class' has a consistent presence among departmental-level actors:

> *"We are… we are, still have a lot of concerns about [Building B]. And, it's the delays that are happening in the [Building B] process, it just feels, again that's another reason why some people have felt like we are being thought of as second, not second class, but a secondary thought at [Building B]. But it just seems, the delays seem to be happening again and again, so [Sponsors Professional Practice Officer] puts in loads of meetings at the beginning and a couple have been cancelled or they've been really short because there's no news or information and nothing seems to be happening or moving forward on that. And I think it just makes the Department feel like…… like that what we're requesting isn't seen as unimportant." (Interviewee, Department 4)*

"The feeling that there might be a slight two-tier system, as in there's some people going into the advanced fancy new building and us going to [Building B], and making sure that staff understand that it isn't about… the Faculty preferring certain Departments and not others, and showing them the bigger picture and why it's useful for us to be in certain places." (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

There was awareness by the leadership team that a second-class status relating to Building B was emerging:

"When we had the first [Building B Development] meeting a long time ago, and we've not really met for a while until the project had kicked off and now so we've had another meeting, but one of the Heads of Department said that they felt like they were like second class citizens." *(Interviewee, Faculty Admin)*

"*All the really exciting opportunities are across the road [in the new building], and its literally across the road, and we've got to think about a back entrance that is not just a back entrance, that is an equal status entrance and its yards away from your door and you need to be over there and using it" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*

"I think everyone's as important. I think the [Building B] project will be really exciting. I think it'll be great. It has still been forgotten about, because we had a Project Executive Board meeting yesterday and I raised it as AOB" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)

Furthermore, decisions made in other Faculty Steering Groups are pulled into the [Building B] Development Group as given assumptions and decisions, without due representation into the discussions and decisions.

"I think that people… like me…, who will be going into [Building B], so I'm not at all involved in the planning for the new building, in the accommodation for the new building, theoretically, involved in the planning for [Building B] at the moment. But then, at a recent meeting that we had… earlier this week with the architects who are looking at the scoping exercise for [Building B], we're told that things have been agreed for the accommodation for the new building, and that those principles will be brought over into [Building B], but I haven't had any input into that." (Interviewee, Departmental 1)

"…but we're learning about those principles at the meeting with the architects… And that's a problem, I think, because there are two projects that are going on at the same time. There's one that has… is taking up the majority of everybody's time, and [Building B] is a bit of a side project, because it hasn't got going yet, and its less money, and… and that's just how it is. But how do you keep people involved, and how do you keep people engaged with something if they're not being part of the main discussion, and the main decisions that have been taking place?" (Interviewee, Departmental 2)

An incident relating to a funding request for a feasibility study for [Building B] was utilised to delve into the emerging notion of 'second-classness'. I describe an incident where there was a communication within the governance of the intention to commit to investing funding for a feasibility study, which was subsequently withdrawn outside the formal governance system and thus takes place within the informal environment beyond the governance structures. I used this incident to examine sense-making and resultant meanings, which actors bring back to the project.

Participants were informed during a [Building B] Development meeting that a paper was to be submitted to the next Executive Capital Steering Group (from which the Project Executive Group requests funding), to approve employment of an architect for the refurbishment of the building [Building B]. The paper was subsequently pulled just prior to the Executive Capital Steering Group meeting by the Chair - who is also the Head of Estates and Facilities Management and has the overall responsibility of delivering the whole project (the new building and the refurbishment of Building B]. Neither the decision to withdraw the paper nor the reasoning behind this decision was formally communicated to the members of the [Building B] Development Group. However, this

decision was picked up by members within the informal environment, which had subsequent implications. The interviews and project documentation suggest that the Executive Capital Steering Group paper was seen to demonstrate a welcomed momentum and active positive interest from those whom it affected. Actors' expectations were established on the assumption that the funding would be approved, thus the commitment implied re-establishing [Building B] as equal in importance to the new building:

> 'It was agreed that fees of £50k would be requested in order to carry out a feasibility study and determine initial costs.' *(Project documentation: Update on [Building B] recorded in the Project Executive Board minutes)*
>
> *"I am aware that a paper is going to the Corporate Capital Sub-group, I think in September that talks about [Building B] and needing some funds available for architectural services and re-design and that sort of thing." (Interviewee, Departmental 1)*
>
> *"Well, basically, I took the staff around [Building B] and there is going to be some refurbishment at [Building B]. I know, fees have been requested for an architect and a QS – so I took the staff round" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)*
>
> *"What's helped [in 'selling' Building B] is the commitment of the feasibility study and [the Chair of the Project Executive Group]. Below our structure, that [Building B] group - originally, was just our problem but what me and [Sponsors Professional Services Officer] have managed to say to [Head of Estates and Facilities Management] is, we can't move those departments into [Building B] as it is, you've got to realise you need to invest…and part of the problem actually is that it just won't fit. So, he's sold on that and he's made a commitment to get a feasibility study ……and before the first [Project Executive Group] actually, we've managed to tweak the Terms of Reference so [Building B] was explicitly mentioned and I saw [the Chair of Project Executive Group] [off-record]… and said you need to back us, he said fine. So, it's fine. And… and although I've not yet got monies released for a feasibility studies for [Building B] - we will have after the next Corporate Capital Sub-Group, in theory, notwithstanding the financial constraints… but whatever happens, it's going to be wrapped up with the new building, so it's fine" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)*

Members subsequently heard through the informal life of the project that the paper requesting funds to appoint an architect was pulled at the last minute by the Chair [Head of Estates and Facilities Management)] without discussion or communication within the governance structure. This resurfaced and intensified the feelings of [Building B] being marginalised in comparison to the new building. The Estates and Facilities Management Department's commitment was questioned and participants developed subsequent meanings around feeling underappreciated and a sense of second-classness. The mixed messages undermined the identity of the project as a single project, with implications of a perceived two-tiered system across the project:

> *"But actually, I heard that he (Head of Estates and Facilities Management) has not signed up to having a feasibility study done of [Building B] yet so, again, I feel a bit: oh, what does that mean then? Cause we're doing this new building, but a core part of the project of that new building is what happens to this building [Building B] … So, if they're not gonna look at that at the same time and it's all gonna fall out of sync… then that's not joined up at all, is it?" (Interviewee, Department 3)*

> *"Well, we're really disappointed… apparently it was pulled, the item was pulled by the Chair of the committee. But when, I had a meeting with [Sponsors Professional Services Officer] earlier this week about the technical store and the kit that we're going to put in it in the new building and she said that she didn't know why it had been pulled still – so it's still that, that's still up in the air. And I suppose that …. Em… it's disheartening and it's at, it causes a bit of anxiety. It certainly feels that [Building B] is second best to the new building" (Interviewee, Department 4)*

> *"So, I've just got a hint that the Director of Estates has not actually bought into what's going on? I might be wrong, you know, I don't know the full story and I'm not involved in the conversations. Just hearing... and the only reason I know about that is because we're configuring a room down in the basement, and we're gonna have to spend Departmental funds on it… So, that's the only reason I know…And then… low and behold, we found out that [Head of Estates and Faculty Management] didn't wanna do it just yet. So yeah, I think there's a lot*

of emphasis around the new building, you know, to a lesser degree this building." (Interviewee, Department 3)

"*It would appear that the [Building B] development is now on hold until September, because the University have decided not to fund the architects fifty grand to, to do the survey on [Building B]. So, we're feeling, kind of, left behind, from that point of view." (Interviewee, Department 2)*

Conversely, the latter participant then went on to share a view that acknowledged that there may be valid reasons for pulling the paper - politics that needed managing - and implied a level in trust in the decision and acceptance that the reasoning behind it may not be appropriate to share. Interestingly, the participant then describes behaviour that shields this experience from their team so as not to deflate their expectations:

"It was withdrawn from the agenda - they were told to withdraw it from the agenda, and it all went very quiet and because I suppose that the people who are working within this group are politically aware, and you recognise that sometimes things become political rather than process driven. And so, we have to accept that there are things that are going to be done… that we don't necessarily need to know, or will never know why things were pulled. [Sponsors Professional Services Officer] said "I don't know, I don't know why it's been pulled… but I'll keep you informed as to what's going on", and she did. That wasn't necessarily formally, I don't think …I suppose we're not telling anybody in the department that that's happened, because we don't want to deflate their expectations at this point and we've got another two or three years before this needs to happen. So, in terms of timescale, it's not the end of the world – but it does send a message that it's unimportant, compared to the new building." (Interviewee, Department 2)

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

> *"This is a genuine problem and a genuine fair cop, but it's one that I've not been aware of, and I am saying to [Head of Estates and Facilities Management]. I accept there might be an issue of phasing and winning the right arguments first in and they ain't moving if [Building B] isn't good enough. So, I need to put my foot on, you know, once we're getting to the point now where I need to turn my attention to that more than the building, because the building will get to the point where we've got governance and it's just resource issues. But then I need to do for [Building B] what I've done for this, which is push it up the hill and get it to the same point. And I need to be as visible….. in that process as I have been on the other one to ensure that they're taken seriously."* (Interviewee, Faculty 1)

As a consequence of the findings presented thus far and the fluidity of participants' sense making of the differing perspectives and resultant sets of assumptions as outlined in chapter 4, a perceived threat to departmental identity emerged from all the departments involved in the project (departments moving into the new and refurbished buildings). This surfaced in two key ways. Firstly, the challenge of the departmental identity as a sub-identity of the University, with the Faculty being more of an internal identity, shifting to the Faculty external identity becoming more prominent. Secondly, the subsequent consequences that threaten the current strong academic discipline identities of the individual academic departments, rather than a collective social science identity and interdisciplinary academic community.

> *"I think there's a sense, that this is gonna become a building owned by the Faculty that we just happen to be located in. Whereas at the minute, there's a sense that we're in a building, which we co-own and share …and there is a sense of ownership of the building; so, you know, you feel a sense of belonging and attachment to this particular building… whereas I think there's a sense that, that's just gonna get murkier and, you know, it's not gonna be as clear in the new building. And that, because Faculty are in there…it's gonna be seen as a Faculty building and less of a one that the Departments, sort of, owns - d'you*

see what I mean?... as much as you want to get away from a Departmental sort of entity that is the way this University operates, it's at Departmental level. I know the Faculty have come along and there's an extra layer now, but when you talk to people about who do they work for, they'll either say, the University of Sheffield, or they'll say the Department, they'll very rarely say the Faculty. Cause the Faculty is an entity that doesn't really...how does that play in undergraduate teaching, you know. But certainly, at the moment, as it stands, you either associate yourself with the department or you associate yourself with the University. So, how that works in the context of this new building? And if its. If it's presented as this is a Faculty of Social Science building - I don't know - if that's gonna help students… get a sense of belonging to the building." (Interviewee, Department 3)

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

"It's very territorial. And actually, people don't get the big picture stuff, but I don't think we've done enough to sell the big picture. I do think that it needs to be easier for people to be able to come together, and at the moment the distance to the Management School, the distance to Politics, as well as the cultural distance, between us and others is quite a challenge. In a way which allows us to do things that no other Social Science Faculty in the UK can do in terms of its inter-disciplinary research approach. And, and actually it's quite difficult to, sort of, start shouting about it when you've got a fragile coalition of departments" (Interviewee, Faculty 2)

Secondly, the data from the academic departments demonstrated a common view of the need to retain the departmental identify and culture. The findings highlight a focus on individual departmental needs, which further collaborates the sense of identity at a departmental level, and a lack of attention to the collective and Faculty vision behind the project. This manifested during interviews with departmental actors, where a range of

factors were seen as important such as social space, office size and cultural hierarchy attached to office size.

> *"It's about being able to retain our cultural and discipline, identity, and ways of working…So [the department] has got quite a, most departments might say this, but it's got a unique culture, I feel… So that would be our main priority really from a strategic point of view. Our major priority is on cultural impact… But the thing that I think is gonna occupy us significantly is that cultural shift… we've always had this space, we're used to… these have got huge, not just practical, but, cultural implications, and that is gonna be I think the big issue" (Interviewee, Department 1)*

> *"I'm very concerned that, there were issues in this Department when we were on a split site, before we moved [to our current location], those issues are still around. But we've been [here] for nearly two years, and… and the conflicts are still there, but the waves that they make in the pool are reducing - it's less of an issue than it was, and people are starting to work together… And creating a space where our teaching is somewhere else, will mean that the majority of our university teachers will be in the new building for the majority of the time, and I'm worried that that is going to recreate that split that we had previously…Because working in the same area helps you to work together…so I am worried about that…If that's what's going to happen, then we have to overcome those issues, and we have to create other opportunities for our colleagues to mix and to talk about things… I suppose, that is going to be the most important thing for that building, for the Department, and we have to find other ways of making sure that our staff work together" (Interviewee, Department 2)*

> *"Social aspects are really quite important for the school. We've got quite a good, we work well together… And on a social level - it works nicely… But we'd be wanting [the new space] to enable us to still have that, be able to have that, that movement around, that cohesiveness. The issues that we find integral to being part of the school here. We need the building to continue to facilitate that" (Interviewee, Department 1)*

"Cause I think we have been quite open about the fact that everyone's gonna have the same size office, there's not gonna be any, sort of, 'well, you're a professor, you get a bigger office. You're a junior member, you get a smaller office'. Nobody's come back yet on that, but I'm fully expecting some difficult conversations, from members of staff about that. Cause they see the size of the office as a bit of a hierarchy thing…Now, I know there's a push for hot-desking [for PGRs], and that sort of thing… I suppose it's thinking about how can we make it work, so we don't, cause a key challenge for the department to make sure that the PGRs are fully integrated into the department, and they're seen as the next generation of academics…" (Interviewee, Department 3)

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

I present Faculty Sponsors' view that the Faculty is a fragile coalition of departments where the location and local cultures defines them.

"I think there's some things that come back to culture, departmental culture…You know, and no amount of being able to have those conversations any earlier would have made any difference to that local culture" (Interviewee, Faculty 1)

"But I think one of the things is culture change - and with some departments, I'm not necessarily as worried as I am about others…But everyone's got their own agenda as well. Their culture is just being influenced completely by the space that they're in" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)

Whilst there is open acknowledgement, within the Faculty Sponsors, that the project is in fact an organizational change project driven by a capital build (as outlined in perspective two of chapter 4, section 4.2), the project governance system does not incorporate this. The fluidity of sense making about the project by actors surfaced the realisation of the

potential impact of the capital projects on work practices and the anxiety experienced due to increasing levels of uncertainty"

> *"'Cause, I think there's a lot of anxiety around, what is this new building gonna mean, in terms of, cause obviously, there are people in the department who have been here a long time, some of them, and they've been in this building a long time, and obviously that change is gonna be quite a challenge to some people. There are some staff who are anxious about: 'is this a drive to efficiency, particularly professional services staff?' So again, I think that is something that I would like to nip in the bud early on, so that we're not, sort of, all the way right up 'til we move in the building: 'oh, what's gonna happen?' And again, there's only so far you can reassure people - that there's not been any explicit mention of, you know, we're gonna co-locate departments, professional services. I mean, there's talk, you know, of whether a functional area should be sitting together, or whether they should be in their departmental, sort of, groupings. But. So yeah, I think that's one particular issue that I would like to have some sort of closure on" (Interviewee, Department 3)*

> ***"…** and things like if professional service staff are being thrown into a different set up, when we move, then, we need to know what our PS staff are gonna look like in order to plan, physically, how they're gonna be. And that works not started yet. So….yeah. I am a bit unsure how timelines are gonna work." (Interviewee, Department 1)*

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

"I'm not becoming nervous but I'm becoming mildly irritated about the fact that I feel like I'm in an impossible position. So…. One of the things it would be nice to do - is to think hard about the internal spaces... now and how they will be used by teams, in them… And what you inevitably come up with as part of that conversation is different levels of willingness to, to engage with the uncertainty, if you like, and people will be seeking assurance that they won't have to change the way they do things in the new world order...So, you know, and I think that's panned out in different ways across departments." (Interviewee, Faculty 1)

This section presented the symbolic behaviours and actions that become unintentionally significant to sense making due to a void of communication. It surfaced the interpretation of the refurbished building [Building B] being marginalised by the new building and introduced the feelings of 'second classness'. The next section augments this premise, by exploring the use of language and rhetoric within the project.

5.2 Language and rhetoric

In this section I explore the use of language, in particular the recurring use of 'core-departments' and the developing rhetoric at the intersection of the informal and formal life of the project. I explore the interpretations of and resultant meanings ascribed to this language by departmental-level project actors. I present a case where actors interpret being described as a core-department as a positive experience, interpreting it as meaning the department is a valued member of the Faculty with a secure future. Conversely, I present interpretations from participants moving into [Building B] that further reinforce their [department's] marginalisation and the realisation of this by the Faculty Project Administrator (Faculty Admin.). In both cases the power of the language used manifested a shared meaning of a two-tiered system that was informally widespread, yet does not fit with the articulated 'formal' reality of the project.

"*I think on the whole people get that it's a good opportunity, you know, we're gonna be in this, sort of, flagship building, it's gonna be world class and it's gonna*

be a gateway into the University campus, and it's gonna be, you know, this amazing facility. So, I think people get that, and I think they see that as a commitment to the department. I think given this Department had a review two years ago, so at that point people, were seriously questioning, 'are we still going to exist as an entity', and so on. I think people have been reassured that because they're one of the three core departments moving into the building, that is a real commitment, the Department is gonna exist for the foreseeable future" (Interviewee, Department 3)

"And I've heard, you know, some phrases of the poor relations being bandied about and I don't know at one point… It was being referred to, as the 'core' disciplines going in the new building - and so those of us left in [Building B], can maybe be thinking, well, what are we then? Personally, I don't, you know, I don't have any feelings over, on that score, but I know some of us have felt like that. And maybe that's a bit about coms and about how things are necessarily presented. And there is a bit, to be said, I mean, I know sometimes decisions have to be made and have to be made, sort of, irrespective of…. people's views. But if you do have an opportunity to feed in the views, then at least you feel a bit like you've been, been heard." (Interviewee, Department 1)

"Well, I don't know where the 'core' thing came from and when I started in the role, I was, like, the brief was that the three core departments would go in the new building, so that's how I've always communicated it to people - and then I slowly started to realise that this wasn't really how I should be talking about it [Laughter] and it was in a [Building B] meeting where somebody said -well, basically, I took the staff round [Building B] and there is going to be some refurbishment in [Building B] …so… [two of the three academic departments] were quite nervous and they describe it as a 'slum'…and basically, we had a conversation and they felt that they'd been 'shafted' and one of them [the third academic department] said, 'when have we been shafted' … 'we were shafted when they, it was decided [which departments] were going into [Building B] and the 'core' departments were going into the new building' and said that, 'referring to the other three departments as core, made them feel like second class citizens in second class departments'. When we had the first [Building B] meeting, one of the Heads of Department said that they felt like they were like

'second-class citizens. I can see why though, I can understand why people would take… exception to it because… I suppose when I started, when I, when I said 'core' I was new to Social Sciences and I don't think I realised what effect it would have on … What offence it would cause" (Interviewee, Faculty Admin)

In contrast, I present an assumption around the definition of 'core departments' from a member of the Faculty Sponsors who mistakably believed this externally derived definition was widely known and accepted:

"…there are core Social Science disciplines. The Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) talked about core Social Science disciplines…so externally there is a working definition of what core Social Science departments are, and the building will serve the ones that the ESRC would describe as 'core', interestingly…by external definitions of what core Social Sciences are which in terms of what's a 'core' Social Sciences building if it doesn't offer any Social Sciences departments in it as recognised by the Research Council that looks after the discipline nationally…so if you don't put your core Social Sciences department in it you've not got a new Social Sciences building, you've just got a new building with some departments that happen to be here administratively clustered in Social Sciences. But that's a semantic argument, but I don't know that that logic has ever been thought through, but it's never been an issue that I've even felt grated, partly because I act as a representative of the entire thirteen departments in that community where Social Sciences has a much narrower definition than we use" (Interviewee, Faculty 2)

Interview data from members of the Faculty Sponsors illustrated the political positioning and developing rhetoric behind the project which situated the project as an organizational change driven by a capital design and build project (as presented in the second perspective outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.2). Whilst, the project boundary was permeable (as presented in section 4.2.1), the project was being used instrumentally to deliver an informal strategic aim of organizational change.

"So, there's a bit of a challenge actually that relates to this phase, which is about getting more 'buy in' internally to what the building can do for us, as a community of researchers. Which is partly about thinking about what our

external narrative's gonna be, once we get planning permission, and how we use that to really elevate our global reputation. Actually, people don't get the big picture stuff, but I don't think we've done enough to sell the big picture. I think [the Sponsors] have done that really effectively at University Executive Board level - to go through the process of getting the go ahead….and I think it's well understood, the benefits, are well understood by the people who are doing the interdisciplinary research, dotted around, but actually the Departments don't get that. But then again, if the Department's got it - there wouldn't be such a big challenge - because we would be in a better place than the one we're already in…" (Interviewee, Faculty 2)

"But of course, part of that, part of that is because we couldn't tell them the real reason… the real reason is in terms of future proofing……Then the other thing is that actually, partly externally driven but partly because of the Faculty priorities, we've got to get economics to work outside discipline to get more grants… and they won't. And we've tried lots of ways to make them and they still won't. And now we've got to …sit them next to people that we'd like them to play with. So, that's what we mean by core, and we can't say any of that. It's how we did sell it to the University behind closed doors. It's about future flexibility, it's about bringing departments that won't work together but should do in research terms, closer to a hub and that was the pitch that University Management actually loved, and they've watered that down and just used words like "core departments", because what lay behind it wasn't communicable " (Interviewee, Faculty 2)

Source of data: Stage 2 interviews

The Faculty Sponsors held an assumption that the ESRC definition of 'core-departments' was the accepted definition. I probed the Senior Leadership Team on the actual appreciation and understanding of this assumption.

> *"No, I don't think it is, but I mean until you raised that I wouldn't have thought of it… and I suppose that, for me, that's always part of my consciousness, what Social Science is and what it isn't, and who sees it as such. But for others, maybe not...probably not, because my assumption is it's understood. There is always a tension between whether you're talking about Social Science or whether you're talking about the Faculty of Social Sciences, they're not the same thing, actually. And Social Science has a core, and the Faculty of Social Sciences doesn't". (Interviewee, Faculty 2)*

5.3 Summary

The proceeding chapter, the findings of both phases of analysis (that were presented in this chapter and the preceding chapter) are discussed in light of existing literature (which was presented in chapter two) to address the research question. Thus, providing new empirically grounded theoretical insights on socio-political complexities as the project formal and informal aspects of organizational life become entangled.

6. Discussion: Projects as negotiated and contested spaces

In this chapter, the findings are discussed in light of extant literature to address the guiding research question of *what tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects?* The findings presented a complex, inter-related, fluid and messy set of socio-political dynamics that presents a serious challenge to the project management orthodoxy. This chapter argues new, empirically grounded theoretical insights at the intersection of processes, relationships and rhetoric as they become entangled in a negotiated order.

While extant literature has called for socio-political complexities to be taken seriously, it has thus far failed to explore the intersection of the project processes with the complex relationships where there are differences of power, interpretations and sensemaking. These dynamics play out through diverse behaviours and perspectives within the governance system, where the formal and informal aspects of organizational life become entangled in a negotiated order, that is the project. I discuss a set of socio-political complexities that created a crisis of representation which challenged the legitimacy of representation with decision making, whilst the formal governance system continued blindly with assumed efficacy and efficiency. In doing so, some affected actors' voices were marginalised. Subsequent actions, or lack thereof, became unintentionally, but symbolically important to sense-making by such actors. I discus the importance of providing actors with "voice" and challenge the idea that merely putting in place "good practice" project governance structures are adequate. Otherwise change projects can unintentionally lose actors which can have lasting impact in the work place and undermine the strategic intent of the sponsors.

Whilst there has been scholarship on the temporal and responsive dynamics of project complexity (Geraldi & Williams T, 2011; Maylor & Turner, 2017), the thesis extends this work by developing a different discourse of the project and organizational life as they become entangled in a negotiated order. In this chapter, I extend the scholarship of project complexities through firstly, the examination of the elicit layering of dynamic,

interrelated, multi-faceted characteristics and conditions of socio-political complexities. Secondly, the interrelated relationship of these complexities with response, which contributes further complexities to the mix. Thirdly, the interrelated sense-making of affected actors, who don't have power or influence within the project, providing a different perspective that has been neglected to date in the project complexity literature and the practitioner Books of Knowledge.

This chapter proceeds in four sections. First, I discuss the evolution of pluralistic rationalities of what is taken to be 'the project'. Second, I extend the discussion to the importance of the project governance which legitimised 'the project' for actors; and I challenge the legitimacy of representation in the governance in light of the socio-political complexities in play. Third, I discuss the criticality of the dynamic relationship between response and project complexity. Fourth, I argue the official project structures and procedures operate in conjunction with the informal aspects of organizational life, producing a negotiated and contested order.

6.1 Pluralistic rationalities: What is the project?

The case under study was a single project, yet in reality there was an evolution of pluralistic rationalities in relation to its purpose and boundaries (as presented in the Chapter 4). It was in this arena that the politics of change manifested (as presented in Chapter 5), aided by the unionised work environment, the management of risk relating to local community groups, the perceived tension of the dual role of some staff members within local community groups, and the void in communication which project actors imbued with their own meanings. These pluralistic rationalities and the interpretations of what constitutes the project's purpose and boundaries created socio-political complexities due to multiple, evolving and fluid interpretations in play. This caused tensions and contradictions, which were neglected due to the project management practices adopted, with implications that the critical human aspects and the wider project context of change were neglected within the project system or dismissed by the Project Manager.

The findings point to the importance of project sponsors and project managers having a shared understanding of the strategic intent of change projects and their respective roles within them. In the case concerned, the Faulty Sponsors' and Project Manager's perspectives of the project were inharmonious. The Faculty Sponsors understood the

project as a capital build (which was the means) to facilitate organizational change to work practices (the end), which over the pre-initiation phase resulted in contestation. The project manager consistently approached the project as a purely capital design and build, positioning it as a site of rationality, control and instrumentation. In line with these assumptions, and his project management training, he adopted orthodox thinking and a modernist work view, despite him being an integral part of the sponsors' reference group, having access to the business case detailing the broader strategic aims of the project as an input into the pre-initiation phase.

Whilst the Project Manager held a clear and impermeable boundary around a capital build and design project, the affected actors developed an understanding of the project beyond the boundary of the formally articulated capital build project, and the subsequent implications to their wider work-life which caused contradictions and tensions. Previous studies have highlighted the challenges associated with organizations designing and implementing seemingly discrete projects to deliver change, when in reality the implications of such projects cannot be discrete by their very nature, as the reach and impact is interconnected across many organizational functions and beyond the lifespan of the project. Scholarship highlights the importance of the project manager understanding the project context to improve the appreciation of the organizational and individual responses to the project (C. Curran & Niedergassel, 2011; Joana Geraldi et al., 2011; Morris, 2013; J. Thomas & Mengel, 2008). However, the project manager's focus on inputs and outputs, resulted in the project – as a system – becoming a black box and what actually happens inside it, and how, is not attended to. I extend current scholarship with the study taking an initial step towards taking us inside the black box of the pre-initiation phase of project work with a process-relational view of work.

Whilst the nascent research stream that takes socio-political dynamics in projects seriously has gone so far as to acknowledge the importance of such dynamics, it has not yet sufficiently unpacked the 'process-relational' elements (Watson, 2006) of project management in a way that has challenged the dominant orthodoxy. Indeed, a review of the literature demonstrates prevailing assumptions of a bounded rationality where decision makers have full knowledge of all alternatives. The human element in projects, however, presents a major source of uncertainty to project managers trying to achieve control and predictability. It would appear that there is an inherent contradiction in the logic of the project management discipline; project success depends on those involved in

project work to be passively controllable as a project resource or input, while at the same time requiring them to take initiative and commit themselves to the task. By implication, this means that the variety of interests, orientations, preferences and priorities people bring to the project preclude them from ever becoming cogs in a project machine - as would be assumed by the dominant orthodoxy. An alternative perspective on projects and their management is necessary if the discipline is to reach its full potential in the world of organizational change (Beach & Coule, 2016; Beach, 2016; Beach Y and Coule T, 2016.)

Whilst the Project Manager acknowledged socio-political complexities, he actively dismissed them and demonstrated a strong rational and deterministic focus *" I don't do politics. I really do, I really struggle (laughter) it really gets me on the go. It really winds me up…Let's steam in and do it".* The Project Manager regularly expressed in words, activity and behaviour a focus on delivering the project pre-initiation phase whilst relying on the prevailing project management orthodoxy and practice of privileging cost, time and quality, which is founded on Barnes' Iron triangle (as presented in Chapter 1, section 1.1). This study starkly shows that the human element in organizational change projects presents a significant source of uncertainty and a potential blind spot to project managers trained and conditioned to achieve control and predictability. Whilst the practitioner books of knowledge are trying to address these blind spots they are lagging behind the academic scholarship on this matter, which acknowledges that project actors bring potentially conflicting interests, differing behaviours and complex responsive processes of relating (Cicmil et al., 2009; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Cooke-Davies et al., 2007; Maylor, 2001).

Practitioner Books of Knowledge demonstrate an initial shift of expectations, suggesting the project manager has a responsibility to understand and appreciate why the project is commissioned, what the project needs to deliver, and the challenges (commonly referred to as risk) of achieving this in an integrated system. It remains limited in scope and the cost, time and quality factors remain dominant (PMI Global Standard, 2017). Morris' (2013) seminal work took this idea further by proposing that the project manager should be responsible for leading an integrated and accountable system. Whilst this sits well with the calls for a shift towards a more organic management paradigm, it remains within a dominant deterministic system where the project manager is deemed the owner of the processes to plan, execute and deliver the project output with an onus on controllability

(APM, 2019; PMI Global Standard, 2017). Whilst, the academic literature has generally accepted the need for this shift from a dependence on planning and control, there remains a distance between academic scholarship and practice.

This study identified the complexities, the elicit conditions and the resulting sense-making of the departmental actors. By utilising Maylor and Turner (2017) duality of response and complexity concept as a framework (as introduced in Chapter 2: Literature Review, section 2.2), the dynamic nature of the complexities was examined to better understand the contributory reasons for the manifestation of such complexities, which is discussed further in section 6.3 of this chapter. Second, this was juxtaposed with the learning and reflections of the Sponsors who articulated the challenges between trying to manage the informal strategic intent (organizational change) and the formal remit of the project (design of a new space for the Faculty). In doing so, it surfaced unintentional and unrecognised implications for the project that have significant consequences in the developing rhetoric of the project and organizational life as they become entangled in a negotiated and contested order.

The power of influence of these practitioner Books of Knowledge should not be under estimated. During the process of selecting and deselecting appropriate projects for this study I observed a behaviour and passion from a senior member of the institutional leadership team, whom was extremely experienced in leading a portfolio of strategic projects, that illustrated the strong conviction and influence of the norms of the practitioner Books of Knowledge. When selecting potential projects for the case study, I dropped a pilot project because it became increasingly clear during the start of data collection it was not in the pre-initiation phase. During a meeting with the project lead about my decision, the senior project practitioner grabbed a hard copy of the PRINCE2 methodology Book of Knowledge of their bookshelf and pointed out a figure that presented the pre-initiation phase as not the PM's responsibility. The individual was very passionate and adamant that the pre-initiation phase was not an established part of a project in the project life cycle. The fact that this is part of the essence of what I am questioning and examining felt alien to this very experienced senior project practitioner. This experience is in contrast with the calls of project management literature for more scholarship into extending the boundaries of project management and the role of the project manager into the pre-initiation phase of projects.

It is generally accepted in the literature and practice that controllability and accountability for the project manager is located within the boundaries of the project. This raises a question around how success of the project would be measured within the context of pluralistic rationalities and disputed boundaries. Subsequently, this is critical to the measurement of project success within the discipline accepted norm. The output of the pre-initiation phase was the development of a successful planning application which subsequently becomes the scope of the project, post planning approval, for the execution phase. The formal artefact of the pre-initiation phase is the successful planning application. The practitioner Books of Knowledge focus on the pre-initiation scoping process where business documents from the sponsors provide the project focus and resources available to enable the project manager to focus in on identifying and controlling the planning and execution process to deliver the required outputs which defines the end of the project boundary (APM, 2019; PMI Global Standard, 2017). The importance of handling socio-political complexities and involving sponsors and stakeholders in a shared understanding of the project aims is acknowledged in the scholarly, practitioner and critical success factor studies (APM, 2019; PMI Global Standard, 2017; Rolstadås & Schiefloe, 2017), yet this is limited in its assumption of a static, unchanging understanding. Yet in contrast, this study contributes an analysis of a lived experience of a project where there was an evolution of pluralistic rationalities of the project's aims, with a multiplicity of goals. Furthermore, the study surfaced a political instrumental use of this by the Faculty Sponsors to utilise the assumed momentum of the 'project system' to aid allocation of resources to [Building B], as presented in section 4.2.1. Thus, this study highlights the importance of project managers to be skilled in working and recognising evolving rationalities of a complex project.

The Project Manager had a deterministic rationality that sees the project as an engineering capital build and forging ahead on delivering the project in the traditional orthodoxy. The Project Manager's preoccupation with the rational analysis of tasks to plan and achieve the desired project outcome(s), the resources to complete them and, in light of this, the design of a 'system' (of various work packages that convert inputs into outputs) that will ensure successful execution is aligned with conventional theory and practice. In many ways this positions the project manager's role as a bureaucratic one insofar as 'best practice' would encourage: the production of operating rules and procedures which are formally written down; the division of tasks and work packages to be allocated to people with the right expertise to carry them out; the control and

coordination of activities through a hierarchy of authority where deviations are reported and decisions made. Conceiving projects in this way provides project managers (and project stakeholders) with confidence to believe that they can control them. Whilst the literature acknowledges substantially different characteristics inherent in in organizational change projects with socio-political dynamics critical to project success (Hall, 2012; Hornstein, 2015; Pitsis et al., 2014), it stops short of understanding the socio-political complexities from the perspective of affected actors. The importance of understanding the project's context to improve the understanding of the organizational and individual responses is key (Geraldi et al., 2011; Morris, 2013; Thomas & Mengel, 2008) and cannot be neglected. Actors' of projects bring potentially conflicting interests, differing behaviours and complex responsive processes of relating (Svetlana Cicmil et al., 2009; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Cooke-Davies et al., 2007; Maylor, 2001). The human element in organizational change projects present a significant source of uncertainty and a potential blind spot to project managers trained and conditioned to achieve control and predictability.

This focus on processes, even during the pre-initiation phase, is located in the discipline of operations and is the dominant discourse in the practitioner books for practice. The Project Scope is generally accepted as the key project document of this phase within the project management practitioner Books of Knowledge. APM (2019), pg. 120 defines the project scope as 'the process whereby outputs, outcomes and benefits are identified, defined and controlled'. Similarly, PMI (2017), pg. 149, focuses the project scope as a tool that describes the projects inputs, boundaries, execution processes to deliver agreed outputs. Whilst, it is encouraged that this is an iterative process, it is the systems process that is privileged. So, whilst there has been some growth within practitioner training to shift towards a social sciences management domain, it remains process dominant with a primary role of controllability (APM, 2019; Axelos Limited, 2017; PMI Global Standard, 2017). Yet, it is arguable the time when particular decisions will have significant impact, during a time when there is limited knowledge and high levels of complexity due to individuals and groupings of stakeholders whose positions was not necessarily understood (Hjortsø & Meilby, 2013; Williams & Samset, 2010).

The dominance application of orthodox project management assumptions and techniques in complex organizational change projects is problematic and likely creates mental traps with a singular, constrained view of the project. This challenge is recognised in the project

management literature (Cicmil et al., 2006; De Rezende et al., 2018). The process of the project detaches the project form its context – privileging structure and processes and neglecting influencing context factors. Conceiving projects in this way no doubt provides project managers (and stakeholders) with confidence in their capability to control them. Whilst recent work has seen the creation of new understandings of the characteristics of complexity and the development of toolkits and best practice for managing complexity, they remain deterministic with a focus of controllability at the forefront. I argue this is limited in nature - the danger with this, is that values other than those of rational, instrumental analysis and formal procedure are removed and it becomes easy to forget or dismiss "all the conflicts, arguments, debates, differencing behaviours, ambiguity, complex responsive processes of relating, and sheer guess work that characterise the processes and relationships that project management has to deal with [project management practice] has to cope with all of the time" (Watson, 2006 p. 52); hidden agendas, interests and power of relationships (Geraldi & Williams , 2011).

The proceeding section discusses project governance and legitimacy in the context of the evolving complex pluralistic rationalities of the project; and examines further layers of project complexity at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project.

6.2 Project governance & legitimacy

This section examines project governance and legitimacy from two angles. First, how the presence of the project governance legitimised the project for stakeholders and the organization. Second, it challenges its assumed legitimacy in respect of representation due to a set of socio-political complexities.

Whilst the governance legitimised the project in theory – insofar as it provided an institutionally recognised structure considered to be good practice – I argue the actual presence of the governance privileged the quality of its contribution, with the formal governance system continuing blindly with assumed efficacy.

The project governance structure proved critical to the identity of the body of work as 'a project', which came with a set of assumptions and expectations regarding project boundaries, governance and relationships. No matter which rationality was held, the findings demonstrated that the governance system itself was seen as the 'project' by a

wide breadth of stakeholders during the pre-initiation phase. Thus, the pre-initiation phase of the project started from the point that the governance was designed and enacted. Thus, governance was the artefact that became the 'project' by the stakeholders.

It is generally assumed that the very presence of a structure that meets institutional norms and expectations regarding standardised groups, membership and processes will lead to accountability and effective management of risk within the project. In other words, the structure's efficacy has taken on an 'assumed' status and the act of meeting has come to represent 'the project'. On closer examination, however, it is apparent that certain elements of what would be considered 'good practice' in project governance were missing. For example: there were Terms of Reference documentation missing for three of seven governance groups; one governance group represented on the structure chart never convened; where Terms of Reference did exist, they were rarely subjected to presentation or discussion within the group; the production of agendas and minutes was inconsistent within and between the governance groups, particularly in the early stages of the project.

Thought around design and implementation of the governance structure in the context of the pluralistic rationalities (as presented in Chapter 4, section 4.2) and discussed in the preceding section was neglected. Yet, it could have provided an opportunity within the project to socialise and add value to the desired critical aspects of organizational change. Whilst it is accepted there were constraints on the operational detail of the intended organizational change due to the timing of the design of the new build and the policy timeline of change to work practices in the unionised environment, there was opportunity to socialise and explore the intent of increasing interdisciplinary work that would have started and facilitated a different kind of conversation. Scholarly work to date on the pre-initiation phase of projects has agreed that there are high levels of uncertainty, complexity and risk but that it is also the time when real value can by injected or destroyed (Hjortsø & Meilby, 2013; Morris, 2013; Samset & Volden, 2016). Furthermore, the academic literature has acknowledged the lack of investment during the pre-initiation phase to identify the best project governance approach when compared to the investment in improving tactical performance post the scoping phase (Samset & Volden, 2016). Thus, another example of the onus on implementation and execution of the project in practice which assumes agreement on a unitary project and its boundaries. This presents a tension between complexity and controllability in the practice of project management.

The design of the project governance was problematic due to the neglect of the evolving pluralistic rationalities of the project. The governance structure and subsequent project management practice adopted was based on the project as a capital and design project only (as presented as the first perspective within Chapter 4, section 4.1). It is notable, that the assumptions behind the design of the governance align with the consensus of the practitioner Books of Knowledge and project management academic literature that sees the governance as a system that that controls processes, relationships and interactions with an ordered rule of action converting inputs and processes to the delivery the required output (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Derakhshan et al., 2019; Joslin & Müller, 2016; Maylor & Turner, 2017; Müller et al., 2016; Samset & Volden, 2016). These disciplinary norms draw upon elements of Institutional Theory such as agency and transaction cost theories which privilege planning and control of inputs through the use of incentives (Ahern et al., 2014; Ahola et al., 2014; Pinto & Winch, 2016; Samset & Volden, 2016). However, it falls short of addressing the need of bridging the gap with the project context as presented in the Literature Review (Chapter 2, section 2.3)

If the alternative position is accepted, that this is an organizational change project with pluralistic purposes, vested interests and so on, there stills remains an unresolved question as to the boundary of what should be part of an organizational change project which presents a further and interesting tension between embracing socio-political complexities with the project management orthodoxy of controllability. This study contributes to unpacking this tension, which is necessary if the trend of using projects for organizational change continues to grow. The proceeding section discusses this tension in further detail and from the study highlighting this challenge during stage two interviews with the Faculty Sponsors, it stimulated thought and a subsequent shifting expectation from the Faculty Sponsors of the Project Manager. This has significant implications for project management practice and for the design of project governance and its legitimacy. This evolution of changing expectations of skills of the Project Manager, makes a contribution to project management practice that warrants further investigation in possible further research

If it is accepted that this is an organizational change project, there stills remains a question as to the boundary of what should be part of the project and the responsibility of the Project Manager. The practitioner literature provided a possible insight into the Project Manager's view of their role and responsibilities had he accepted the project was more

than a capital build. It is generally accepted ,in project management practice, that an organizational change project remains structured in approach to shift an organization from its current state to the desired future state by converting outputs into outcomes that will generate benefits. Significantly, the project concludes with the delivery of an output that is handed over to the sponsor who takes responsibility for any change management required to ensure that benefits accrue from the output (APM, 2019; PMI Global Standard, 2017).

Alternatively, is the outcome of 'the project' to simply deliver a physical vessel that change can be facilitated in, i.e. the buildings, whilst those aims are handed back to the Faculty Sponsors or a change manager once the buildings are delivered as two independent parts. This draws a distinction between providing a vessel or environment i.e. buildings to enable a change management process and the project facilitating organizational change via a capital design and build project. There is clear alignment with the APM (2019) assumption that a project expectation is the delivery of an output which is handed back to the 'organization' who is responsible for the change management aspect and the subsequent benefits that argue from the project output. The project boundary is firmly defined around the supporting the processes of planning and assessment of the change management whilst the organizational change is facilitated and delivered outside the project. Thus, the project is one of planning and reporting rather than implementation (APM, 2019). Even without the challenge of pluralistic rationalities there is tension for organization change projects with the constraint of the operations dominant orthodoxy of project management regarding responsibility for cultivating the required benefits of change to work practices.

As discussed earlier, the Project Manager saw this project as a piece of land and a building. Findings from the first interview, with the Faculty Sponsor, which was held at the start of the pre-initiation phase, echoed elements of APM (2019) positioning of the role of the project in change management *"EFM do buildings and they are sympathetic to the stuff but it's at the edges…. there're not dealing with them. Now personally I think it's my problem to deal with not [Estates] the PM's right? There might be a different view… but I think it's my problem" (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1).*

After unpacking the lived experience of the project and the Faculty Sponsors' reflections on the emerging themes of the findings there was a noticeable shift of expectations of the

project and the project manager towards increased emphasis on the organization change element of the project. As awareness built about the potential unintended consequences of socio-political complexities and the importance of the duality of response, expectations of the Project Manager and project shifted. There was a significant change in their view during stage two interviews *"Well why is it not more than the [PM] triangle?.....I might have to put something to make it more like a square, or I'll get my own triangle to bolt onto yours that, together, can do the entire job. But first I want a conversation, why I can't reasonably expect [PM] to do the right job in the right way" (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1).*

Whilst, both the practitioner Books of Knowledge and project management academic literature acknowledge the increasing use of projects to deliver change management the dominant orthodoxy remains one of rational operations. In particular the latest updated versions of the professional books of knowledge remain focused on a structured approach shifting from a current stage to a future stage by converting inputs via processes to outputs, with a remaining emphasis on seeking effective action of the project manager to allocate the right people and resources to the tasks necessary to deliver the projects objectives.

I build upon the augment that the evolution of plural rationalities of the project were neglected in the design of the governance system and elucidate that the presence of the governance privileged its legitimacy which undermined its purpose and created further inter-related and multi-faceted socio-political complexities.

The simple presence of project governance does not balance the power dynamics. The impact of the premise of crisis of representation, the lack of authority in the governance and the layering of the socio-political complexities contributed to a shift in power due to a lack of justified sense of participation and legitimacy. At the most it could be claimed that in the case study the governance as a social process could be seen as a tool for influencing and maybe as far as manipulating at the edges, yet the deterministic project management orthodoxy of control prevailed. By neglecting, meaningful and purposeful representation, voices were marginalised depending on which reference group individuals were part of. Actions, or lack of, became unintentionally symbolically important in sense-making by actors. The project neglected to provide the affected actors with a voice. The project could lose those actors but, may not know it which could have lasting impact in

the work place and undermined the strategic intent of the Faculty Sponsors of change to work practices. The project got lost in the assumed efficacy of the accepted toolkits and processes. The traditional project management approach taken privileged the how over the why. The significant challenge for practice is that the project governance took on a symbolic rather than substantive quality. The actual presence of the governance privileged the quality of its contribution.

The project governance had two distinct parts. First, the governance system at the institutional level down to the Project Executive Group which followed established institutional norms and requirements. The legitimacy and efficacy were assumed and unchallenged by actors or the Faculty Sponsors. The study primarily focused on the project governance within the Faculty and its intersection with the institutional governance system which occurs at the Project Executive Group. The Group also followed institutional norms which included the appointment of an independent Chair which is defined as an objective and independent person of the home Faculty of the Sponsors and the institutional central services stakeholders such as IT, Finance, Estates. I challenge the assumed independence of the Chair due to socio-political complexities within the informal life of the project and the normal life of work that influences the authority and power dynamics of the role which was played out by a series of 'work-arounds' which were accepted as normal practice. These warrant further discussion to unpack how the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project are actively engaged in selective politicking to bring about influence or manipulation of the project.

The independent chair was a peer Pro-Vice Chancellor from a different academic Faculty. The institution has five such Faculties and the five Pro-Vice Chancellors provide academic leadership to the institution and are members of the University Executive Board. Thus, the lead Faculty Sponsor and the Chair of Project Executive Group were Pro-Vice Chancellors of their respective Faculty. The concept of power in this concept of independent chair is interesting. The independent chair has significant authority and power over the pace and decision making of the project, with the Project Executive Group being the formal body who held the responsibility to make recommendations for the release of phased funds whilst also being accountable to the University Executive Board for the project and its return on investment. The peer relationships played out in the informal life of the project. Two years earlier the Sponsor held the same 'office' for a capital build project for the Chair, therefore a reciprocal service of office. Thus, a

relational dynamic prior, during and beyond the boundary and life of the project. This itself has a peer to peer relationship and constraint in current and future working outside the boundary of the project. The relationships were crucial in the day to day leadership of the institution and played out in workarounds in the informal life of the project when politicking was deemed necessary. This also played out in the informal life of the project when the Faculty Sponsors wanted to expand the boundary of the project scope to include the refurbishment of a second building [Building B]. They acknowledged this was a political move to formalise the work that was required to facilitate the shuffling of departments to meet the strategic needs of housing particular departments to "*force them to work together" (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1)*. When the Sponsors wanted to manoeuvre this, they explicitly sought a conversation with the Chair outside the governance system. Thus, politicking and through their actions accepting that the governance system of decision making is permeable *'So before the first Project Executive Group actually, we managed to tweak the Terms of Reference so [the refurbished building project] was explicitly mentioned and I saw the [the Chair of Project Executive Group] off… and said you need to back us, he said fine.' (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1)*

Furthermore, whilst the Project Executive Group was positioned at the intersection of the Faculty and the institutional governance system, the Faculty did not consider it an equal mechanism in terms of power. First, the Secretary was from the Estates Department who agreed the agenda and accompanying papers with the Chair. This was the same home department as the allocated Project Manager. Therefore, there was a close professional relationship between the Project Manager and the Secretary whilst the Terms of Reference of the Project Executive Group was to hold the project accountable. Second, there was an informal pre-group meeting held before the formal Project Executive Group meetings that excluded Faculty representatives who made up five of the thirteen members. Whilst, the informal pre-meeting was not part of the formal governance system, it was well known and accepted that it occurred before each meeting. No project documentation was produced and with the only members excluded being the Faculty members, it was interpreted that the purpose of the meeting was to influence the Chair in an attempt to 'manage and control' the Sponsors. Thus, pre-determining decisions. The Faculty Sponsors responded to this by influencing decision makers outside the governance in the informal sphere of the project by politicking. This was an accepted norm of doing business and was even acknowledged by some actors when asked where they expected project decisions to be made. However, the challenge of legitimacy is not

an exclusive issue held at the intersection of the governance between the Project and the instructional governance system. I now turn our attention to the Faculty level governance, where I again challenge the validity of the governance under the premise of legitimacy.

The Faculty Sponsors were responsible and had autonomy over for the design of the Faculty governance. They established a set of Steering Groups with the stated aim of providing actors with a voice, with a primary focus on consultation and decision making. This was not achieved. The findings presented a premise of a crisis of representation which marginalised actors' voices in contradiction of the Faculty Sponsors intentions. This premise arose in the absence of effective communication and the presence of unsurfaced socio-political complexities which had implications for actors' sense-making. First, the tension of the neighbourhood community role of a selection of employees and the subsequent gagging clauses imposed to manage the risk on the external planning consent consultation process. Second, the perception of the unionised work environment necessitating the confidentiality and lack of transparency on the strategic intent of organizational change and finally, how could actors represent their academic department if they were unable to socialise and discuss the details with colleagues? Furthermore, this was compounded with a shift of power from these marginalised voices by them self-disempowering themselves due to a lack of justified sense of participation and legitimacy. However, the governance assumed efficacy where their participation is given in their silence, by virtue of simply being a member of the formal governance system (Bolduc, 1980).

Subsequently, the actors primary need from the governance shifted to one of one-way communication of information about the project. The governance was identified as the project, the formal living body of the project, and there were significant expectations of it as the primary source of information. There was a felt absence by the actors and the lack of formal communications about the project outside project meetings and documentation. This presented a passive behaviour selected by actors which shifts power away from themselves which again is contradictory to the formal intended aims of the governance.

Furthermore, actors privileged the needs of individual departments over the collective with a concern over the protection and retention of departmental identity and culture. The transitional change intent of the project was to shift the "*the fragile coalition of*

departments" *(Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 2)* to a new collective to force inter-disciplinary working for future proofing *"we have tried lots of ways to make them and they still won't. And now we've got to…. Sit them next to people that we'd like them to play with" (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1).* Yet, this was never subsumed within the project and thus resources, such as time, was not invested to turn attention to the socio-political complexity of identity. Thus, a further example of the voices of academic departments being marginalised with consequences of decision-making driven by an active small number of members over a largely inactive majority. This questions the assumption of justified sense of participation of actors.

There were feeling of trust in the governance and the Faculty Sponsors shared by departmental actors, but due to a combination of factors such as, a crisis of representation, pluralistic rationalities and the risk of local identity and culture being neglected by the project the actors constrained their participation to a role of passive observer, rather than a legitimate representative with a voice in decision making. The crisis of representation provided a space where the accountability of the critical change to work practices strategic intent, was avoided, whilst the rhetoric blindly continued.

The governance system was the project and the engagement mechanism with actors. A significant amount of resources was invested into governance, yet its boundaries were closed to the unitary aim of a capital build and refurbishment. Neither the need for legitimate representation in decision making or effective information sharing were met. Yet, it continued blindly with assumed efficiency. The reflections of the Sponsors upon sharing the key findings of the study did show genuine interest in learning about the socio-political complexities retrospectively and the potential implications, whilst also expressing feelings of frustration about the departmental actors' actions of self-disempowerment.

Whist, this thesis is not a specific study of power, it has emerged from the data as a significant assumed contributory factor of legitimacy of governance. Whilst recent literature has argued a power shift away from academics and academic departments within continuous improvement and change projects (Cano et al., 2020; R. Winter, 2009), there remains scant project management scholarship in relation to project governance and legitimate participation. This study, highlights the importance of further research into this. With the call of shifting of project management towards a management domain an

alternative school of project scholarship has called for project governance to become more socially orientated utilising stakeholder theory assumptions (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Hjelmbrekke et al., 2014; Kochan & Rubinstein, 2000; Littau et al., 2010; Musawir et al., 2017; Scott-Young & Samson, 2008; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). Yet this call has its limitations. The underlying focus is on the giving of voice to stakeholders who have influence on the project (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Littau et al., 2010). Unless, the governance system provides members with power, the current scholarly debate falls short of providing an answer to the challenge of legitimate representation. It does not provide power to marginalised voices who do not have influence on the project, such as the actors in the study, yet are significantly impacted. I argue that this does not go far enough in the much-needed social/felt governance.

This section contributes to the neglected scholarship on social-political complexities and the impact of project governance on processes, people and organizations at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project. I discussed insights on the conditions of the identified crisis of representation, which marginalised affected actors' voices.

In the following section, I continue to build upon the insights of pluralistic rationalities and the layering of multifaceted socio-political complexities at the intersection of the formal and informal life of the project by scrutinising the dynamic relationship of these complexities with response, or lack thereof.

6.3 The duality of complexity with response

In this section, I discuss the criticality of the relationship between complexity and response. I unpack the consequences of neglecting this relationship and argue its significance to project management of change projects. I provide further insights into the 'messiness' and interrelated nature of socio-political complexities which I argue are further influenced by the dynamic relationship with 'response' (or lack of). Ultimately bringing a complex set of behaviours, responses and a developing rhetoric of the project as the politics of change kicked-in - which would have implications in relation to organizational change that have life beyond the boundary of the project. I discuss this from an affected departmental actors' perspective, in the context of a void in communication and the crisis of representation as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

The Faculty Sponsors articulated the challenges between trying to manage the informal strategic intent (organizational change) and the formal remit of the project (design of a new space for the Faculty) within the pre-initiation phase. In doing so, they demonstrated active attempts to keep organizational change intentions implicit. However, local departmental culture was raised as an important aspect of the project as the appreciation of the additional strategic intent evolved amongst actors. Actors involved in both the refurbished and new buildings were concerned with the loss of departmental identity to a newly privileged Faculty identity. The Faculty Sponsors strategic aim was to shift a fragile coalition of departments to work as a cohesive group. The fluid sensemaking of the actors of this implicit aim provides a further example of how the human element in the project presented a major source of uncertainty and complexity for the practice of project management, that is conditioned to achieve control rather than think about or engage with the dynamics of power and socio-political complexities.

The governance was the formal identity and system of the project. Whilst, the aim of the study is not to explore the concept of power, there is value in considering an alternative view in terms of governance having the capacity or ability of power (Lukes, 2005). Thus, actively (dis)empowering voices. This concept of power being one of capacity or ability aligns with Maylor and Taylor (2017) duality concept of complexity and response. The responsibility of the Faculty Sponsors and Project Manager to respond to the socio-political complexities discussed here could be powerful. Thus, the identification and understanding of socio-political complexities are critical. Doing nothing is just as powerful as doing something.

However, the assumed unitary interests and rationality that the governance system was driven by, is flawed. Just as the project boundary was important to the identity and operational life of the project, the permeability of the project boundary is influenced by the actors' fluid rationalities which were developed through the individual and collective reference groups agendas and lived experiences of the project. The level of legitimate participation of actors is conditional and limits the boundary of the consent given (Lukes, 2005). If this is neglected, there is potential for unintentional outcomes of the project such as conflict that will need to be addressed by the Faculty Sponsors at handover. With the redrawing of the boundary of the project; the inadequacies of the efficacy of governance; erroneous assumptions; a communication void - certain behaviours and actions became unintentionally symbolically important in sense-making by actors (as

presented in Chapter 5) which could have a lasting significant impact in the work place long after the closure of the project. Whilst, the testing of the potential impact is outside the scope of this study, I argue it is likely that such an unintentional legacy will require leadership corrective action in the future to deliver the strategic intent as outlined in perspective two (presented in Chapter 4, section 4.2), that being an organizational change project for future work practices. For example, it was not solely the impact of changes to organizational structure, staffing and practices implicated by the capital build and design project that act as a source of socio-political tension. The power of identity and language were overlooked which is discussed in the proceeding section.

Within the project governance structure, a language of 'core departments' had been adopted to identify those academic departments that would relocate to the new building. Interviews with the Sponsors, however releveled that the decision and language used had been driven by a desire to align with an externally derived definition of core social science disciplines adopted by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). There was a mis-match between the categorisation and identity of the collection of academic departments that constituted the Faculty and that of the ESRC definition. The Faculty Sponsors reflections illustrated that these were unintentional and erroneous assumptions which they were unaware of. As the project progressed towards the functional approval of the end of the pre-initiation phase and its accompanying funding, the rhetoric behind the use of core departments was neglected. The common definition of the word core in the dictionary is one of basic, most important or part of something that is central to its existence. The Sponsors had been living with the ideas and strategic narrative within a single reference group that actors were not privileged too. The institutional internal identity was deeply entrenched culturally. A strategic objective of the project was to build a world-leading interdisciplinary research hub around 'core' social sciences departments. Whilst this had been socialised with the University Executive Group, the Estates Department and the Project Manager as part of the business case for approval of the instigation of the pre-initiation phase of the project (and release of stage – funding), this was absent at academic departmental level as it progressed into setting up in the formal project systems. Conversely this also played out when a department had considered themselves as being on special measures prior to being told they were being relocated to the new building and subsequently felt the profile and future of the department had been secured due to selection as a 'core' department. This, by default,

constituted the departments who would occupy the refurbished building (referred to by some as “a slum”) as ‘non-core’, leading to a sense of being ‘second class’.

This interpretation was confirmed for affected actors by a set of conditions such as the lack of investment, time and money, into the refurbished building. Governance meetings relating to this work package were often cancelled at short notice, or if they did occur they were very short with little substance. The sense of feeling secondary to the new building was somewhat abated with the formal reporting of a request to Project Executive Group for release of funds for a feasibility study of the use and design of the space. Yet, this was undermined with little regard for the socio-political complexities and value attached to action of investment when the Head of Estates removed the paper from the Project Executive Group agenda without notifying the Sponsors or actors. This action reinforces the crisis of representation debate on the power of the pre - meeting of Project Executive Group that was discussed earlier. Whilst, the findings explained this as a political decision regarding the sequencing of decisions needed, the decision to withdraw it or the reasons for doing so was not communicated. The actors found out in the informal life of the project which reinforced the ‘felt’ second-classness. The mixed messages in the formal and informal life of the project are entangled which is a further layering of project complexity.

This section explored the critical dynamic relationship between the socio-political complexities and response, or lack thereof, which intensify or minimise the dynamic nature of project complexities. The example unpacked the use of language in relation to ‘core departments’ and its contribution to the unintentional consequences of a developed feeling and understanding of second-classness which could have been avoided. Whilst, Maylor & Turner (2017) concept of duality of response and complexity is useful to further the understanding of the dynamic relationship, its scope is limited due to the study focusing on the concept from a project managers point of view of identifying and mitigating project complexity in a rational instrumental way. I extend this work by examining the recursive relationship of response and complexity from a different perspective, that of affected actors. Furthermore, the study contributed by conducting the research within a case study in real-time, in contrast to Mayor and Taylor’s 2017 study which was conducted retrospectively through a series of workshops with project managers experienced in complex projects. The real-time context surfaced the criticality of the lack of response which would likely been lost in a retrospective study.

The proceeding section extends the discussion by recasting projects as negotiated and contested spaces and calls for a shift in thought on project governance to encompass social accountability as a possible mechanism to add maturity to UK HEIs project management practice.

6.4 Negotiated nature of projects

Organizational change projects are complex. The 'messiness' of the project and the informal aspects of organizational life become entangled in a dynamic negotiated order. Thus, I elucidate that such projects are negotiated and contested spaces. That the official structures and procedures involved in the management of organizational change projects operate in conjunction with the informal socio-political aspects of organizational life. In this section, I unpack this assertion and its consequences in the context of an immature project management practice within the UK Higher Education sector.

I have shown that within the micro-politics of the pre-initiation phase, numerous goals and purposes are being pursued and coalitions may form and reform on an on-going basis. I have identified characteristics in the accounts of stakeholders, involving trade-offs between the implicit and explicit intent of the project, covert details of project consequences and the bypassing or mediation of negotiations between 'the project' and the departments occupying the new versus refurbished buildings. The implication is that projects become constituted as a series of processes whereby technical and social arrangements, understandings, interactions and actions are shaped and managed to achieve complex tasks and meet a divergent range of goals and purposes of a multiplicity of stakeholder groups. Projects will advance through a constant repositioning processes through the many possible interactions between the project and the will of individuals and reference groups such as goals and perceptions of value (Floricel et al., 2014). The organizing context in projects through the formal and informal structure is influenced and influences which provides an illustration of the sheer complexity of today's organizations (Greenwood & Miller, 2010; Simard et al., 2018). Perhaps the one thing that is certain is that project relations and decision-making processes will be 'messy'.

The combination of continued significant changes required of the sector, the increased use of projects to deliver this change, and the immaturity of project management as outlined here presents an important challenge to the Higher Education sector, and the practice of project management for organizational change. The Higher Education sector

has experienced unprecedented change over the past 15 years. One of the most significant has been the change of funding model for universities in England and Wales, with a reduction of reliance of public funding to an open market model. This shift has been swift for a traditional, risk adverse sector (as discussed in chapter 1, section 1.1). There is no sense of this trend reversing in the current public policy. Universities have to continue to face unprecedented change; increased risk and uncertainty as they compete and operate in a global market (Berggren & Söderlund, 2008; Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Cano et al., 2020; Erickson et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2014; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Universities UK, 2017). Whilst, the use of projects within HEIs intensifies, current literature highlights immaturity in project management due to in deficiencies in leadership and the lack of focus on people (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Cano et al., 2020; Wierschem & Johnston, 2005) which concur with the findings of this study. The definition of project maturity selected is the level of learning and improvement in the effectiveness of project approaches (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Christoph Albrecht & Spang, 2014; Pennypacker & Grant, 2003; PMBOK, 2017). I unpack this challenge by asking at what cost to the academic character are these organizational changes been achieved in seeking increasingly commercialised survival for universities. The case study selected for this research is a research-intensive university whose identity, mission and culture are of research-led learning and teaching. The academic creativity and intellectual space are accepted as being critical to its endeavour. It has been argued, by some, that an outcome of the many changes the Higher Education sector has experienced and continues to face has led to a progressively move where the academic community is experiencing a lessor voice within decision making, thus an increasingly movement towards managerialism (Cano et al., 2020; Erickson et al., 2020). Whilst the findings of this study support that argument, I augment that the immaturity of project management within the sector and the subsequent tensions of socio-political complexities with the traditional project management orthodoxy of controllability is a significant contributor.

I argue the need to reimagine the project management orthodoxy to involve: recognition that project managers have to manage power relationships in which they are inevitably involved and not just manage tasks; appreciation of how such power dynamics relate to their involvement in the handling of uncertainties or perceived threats to project success; acceptance that managing decision making processes involves more than the rational analysis of risk and benefits and; that as a result, project management work itself has significant emotional dimensions to it. If we accept the business model of Higher

Education is one of creation and sharing of new knowledge, it is the academic community who creates this commodity. Yet, their voices were often marginalised. Whilst the second stage interviews with the Sponsors presents that this was not intentional, it was nevertheless a neglected aspect of the project. The analysis suggests that project managers involved in organizational change projects cannot – as in this case – afford to reject a role in working with the politics of project work or inherently believe that the biggest challenges of such projects (and the answers to them) rest within the golden triangle of quality, cost and time. These assumptions fail to acknowledge let alone work with the socio-political complexities highlighted. In short, the project management practitioner who continues to be socialised with linear, rational models emphasising controllability and project execution during training appears ill-equipped to play an effective role in working with the politics of organizational change projects.

In explicating this argument, I have examined the interrelated and interwind aspects of socio-political complexities and tensions with the project management orthodoxy of controllability. Whilst recent scholarship has acknowledged the need to shift beyond the traditional control orthodoxy and develop an ability to guide adaptable projects the practitioner Books of Knowledge have more work to do to accept that it is people rather than processes that delivery successful projects (Bernardo, 2014; Cano et al., 2020; Svetlana Cicmil et al., 2006; Cooke-Davies, 2002; Mark Winter, Smith, Cooke-Davies, et al., 2006; Mark Winter, Smith, Morris, et al., 2006). It has been argued that individuals may have the skills to practice project management and change management but often will favour one role over the other (Garfein & Sankaran, 2011; Pollack & Algeo, 2016). This presents a continuing and growing challenge for the practice of project management with the increasing use of organizations choosing to use projects to deliver change. I concur with recent scholarship that highlight the need for universities to invest into building the maturity of its project management practices, whilst balancing the core values and critical identify of academia such as academic freedom and collegial work practices with the traditional project management orthodoxy of deterministic, managerialism assumptions (Bryde & Leighton, 2009; Cano et al., 2020).

The reconceptualization of the pre-initiation phase, or front end of project work, in the manner mapped out in this study, has far reaching implications for the project management discipline and the role of project practitioners. In practice, a project manager is often allocated to projects at a stage where the focus is on the governance and

execution of the project with little or no time on requirement setting; often jumping straight to a solution without understanding the real problem statement and the dynamics of the project context within complex change projects – an approach criticised within project management literature (Geraldi & Williams, 2011; Williams & Samset, 2010). Where the nature and scope of a given project is being negotiated, decision-making processes are perhaps akin to 'garbage cans' in which a diversity of issues and differences of power and perception are thrown into the mix and subsequently shape outcomes (Watson, 2006). Project Management involves much more than organising tasks in a neutral and apolitical way. Accepting such an assertion holds significant implications for the fundamental role boundaries of the discipline and the role of practitioners. It involves the acknowledgement that project management involves much more than organising tasks in a neutral and apolitical way; to be involved in project work is inevitably to be involved in power and politics. Thus, there is a need for soft skills to be considered as important as the classical project management orthodoxy to lead and deliver change projects – a bold statement I accept, but maybe a reposition of project managers future role in providing invaluable expertise in guiding, rather than controlling, change projects to completion.

The nascent scholarship in the field of project studies privileges the importance of the context of projects and its reach outside the traditional boundaries of the project, whilst there has been attempts in practitioner Books of Knowledge and training to advance towards an increasing management domain, there is still a dominate orthodoxy of rational processes and their assumed efficiency. The importance and value of controllability in delivering the project is acknowledged, but there remain unresolved tensions with embracing socio-political complexities. I proport, the discipline can get lost is the considerable number of accepted toolkits and processes to control which leads to mental traps where pluralistic rationalities of stakeholders are neglected.

Whilst this chapter has provided insights into the perceived importance of the project governance, I challenge the relevance of project governance practice where resources and risk are privileged over social/felt accountability where social and moral legitimacy encapsulates the critical insights at the intersection of formal and informal life of the project. Whilst, the project governance blindly continued with assumed efficacy, the data surfaced a crisis of representation due to the politics of change and a void in communication. I challenge the legitimacy of the assumed efficacy of the governance

which marginalised stakeholders' voices in this premise. The lack of attention to the critical duality of complexity and response had unintentional consequences. The project needed to provide affected actors with a voice. Otherwise the project risks losing the very people whose future work practices and behaviours are to be changed. This has significant reach for the organization and the future life of work.

The outcomes of this study have led me to an interest in further scholarship into social/felt accountability of project governance, where people are a primary concern; which is values driven and negotiated to reap increased value from organizational change projects (Cano et al., 2020; Coule, 2015; Morrison & Salipante, 2007). Project management scholarship and practice is somewhat lagging behind organization governance and corporate governance scholarship. As projects continue to be increasing used for organizational change projects, projects management practice is increasingly interweaved with management scholarship and I argue that the project management discipline could learn from a more pluralistic, interdisciplinary scholarship. This need is acknowledged more generally within the project management literature (Kwak & Anbari, 2009; Morris, 2013; Söderlund, 2011; Winter et al., 2006), yet the project governance literature falls short of this, to date. It is acknowledged in the literature that there is a need for a better understanding about how governance is designed, accompanying operational principles and the multiplicity of individuals interactions which will contribute to the functioning of the project and ultimately organizational functioning post project closure (Müller & Lecoeuvre, 2014; Simard et al., 2018).

6.5 Summary

The thesis elucidates organizational change projects as complex where the 'messiness' of the project and the informal aspects of organizational life become entangled in a negotiated order. This study highlighted the likely mental traps the dominant project management orthodoxy created problematic with the multi-faceted dynamic and fluid layering of socio-political complexity and its relationship with response, or lack of.

In sum, the thesis recasts such projects as negotiated and contested spaces which has implications for future practice and scholarship which is discussed further in the proceeding, and final chapter of the thesis.

7. Conclusion

This Chapter concludes the thesis. It presents the outcome of the study, the contribution to practice and knowledge, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

The aim of the study was to examine what, if any, tensions might exist in embracing socio-political complexity with the project management orthodoxy of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects. To explore the practitioner challenge that renders the current project management orthodoxy, with its traditional assumptions and techniques, problematic for organizational change projects, due to the neglect of the project context and the human aspects. To achieve this, I used a single case study to explore actors lived experiences and sense-making of the project and identified the socio-political complexities and examined how they manifested.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. First, it outlines how the aims of the study were addressed. Second, the contribution to knowledge and practice is discussed, with a sub-section on the contribution to my own practice. Third, the limitations of the study are stated. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for different audiences, including directions for future scholarship.

7.1 How the research aims were addressed

The study examined what tensions existed, and how they manifested, in embracing socio-political complexity within the project management orthodoxy of controllability. The thesis provides the basis to argue the benefit of extending the thinking of project complexity beyond it being considered as an element for project practitioners to mitigate and control within the discipline's orthodoxy of deterministic practices. The characteristics of change projects call for a shift away from assumptions of bounded rationality and managerialism, to recasting the project as a negotiated and contested space. A different understanding of and conversations about socio-political complexities within the academic and practice spheres, which takes account of the dynamics examined in this thesis, would thus be beneficial to organizations and project practitioners.

It elucidated that the project becomes entangled in the life of work and the organization with implications of the evolution of the rhetoric of the project. Thus, the project does not operate in a vacuum and its implications outlive the limited life-span of the project. The study constructs project management as more than organising tasks and resources in a neutral, apolitical way. Accepting such an assertion holds significant implications for the fundamental role boundaries and skills set for the project management discipline.

The continuing growth of projects as a vehicle to deliver organizational change necessitates mitigation of the tensions between embracing socio-political complexity and the orthodoxy of control. The study provided important theoretical insights on the interrelated, layered of complexities and the contributory duality of response and complexity of response, that were hidden from the Faculty Sponsors and the Project Manager.

The study identified the pivotal role and identity of the governance system, despite the pluralistic rationalities of the project. I present a set of conditions that created a crisis of representation that undermined the assumed efficacy of the project governance. Subsequently, it would be beneficial for further research into project complexity and governance at the intersection of efficacy and social/felt accountability providing voice to the marginalised voices of particular groups of actors.

I assert that current dominant project management Books of Knowledge, training and mindset does not equip project managers to deal with the critical socio-political complexities of change projects. The research highlighted the likely mental traps that the dominate project management orthodoxy created, to be problematic. To be involved in project work is inevitably to be involved in power and politics; it is thus the time to reimagine the project management orthodoxy.

7.2 Contribution to practice and knowledge

This study contributes to understanding the socio-political complexities and the implications of neglecting them during the pre-initiation phase of a project, which is an underdeveloped area of scholarship compared to scholarships focused on the execution phase, i.e. post-scoping (Joana Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Hjortsø & Meilby, 2013; Morris, 2013; Wearne, 2014; Williams et al., 2019). The contributions to practice and scholarship are summarised below.

7.2.1 Contribution to practice.

It is notable that project management experience and skills are seen increasingly as a growing expectation of the modern manager (S A Leybourne & Sainter, 2012), therefore the significance and reach of this study is wider than purely the project management domain.

My social capital in the employer organization provided me with the opportunity to share the key emergent themes of the research with the Faculty Sponsors with openness and frankness, which involved sharing challenging insights "safely" between peers. The openness during the second phase of interviews provided invaluable learning and contribution to the individual's professional practice in project work, which will likely have long term impacts across the institution. One interviewee went as far sharing "*that issue is also one of my perennial weaknesses. I very, very rarely give enough thought to how we communicate decisions" (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1)*. Furthermore, the interviews demonstrated learning, reflexivity and planned changes to future personal practice. On sharing the socio-political complexities that contributed to a feeling of second-classness by departmental actors moving to the refurbished building, one sponsor responded *'that is a genuine problem and a genuine fair cop, but it's one that I've not been aware of...I need to turn my attention to that more… I need to do for [the refurbished building] what I've done for [the new building], which is push it up the hill and get it to the same point (Interviewee, Faculty Sponsor 1).* Thus, their approach to the case project was influenced and adapted as a result of this study. Due to the case-study still being an active project for the institution and the sensitivity of its findings, I sought and was granted a two-year confidentiality period on the thesis.

The study has also resulted in significant reflection and learning on my own professional practice as a project manager practitioner, a senior HEI leader, and as a researcher. As a senior project practitioner, with 15 years of leading a portfolio of projects, I found the project management orthodoxy renders traditional assumptions and techniques problematic for organizational change projects. Indeed, that was the practice problem that brought me to the topic of this doctoral programme of research. The DBA journey has significantly challenged my established thinking and practice which was firmly socialised in the professional Books of Knowledge. For example, as a result of this learning, I challenged the accepted institutional traditional project management methodology on the portfolio of projects for which I was responsible. As a result, I was provided with

resource to establish a new project management office for a period of three years, which consisted of five new members of staff, to lead on the delivery of the new learning and teaching strategy across the Faculty. These projects involved change to work practices and I was given freedom from the institutional accepted approach to deliver meaningful organizational change and added value, continuous improvement. The proposed research will continue to influence my practitioner thinking and the development of a contingency approach - where the project context, complexity and human aspects are taken seriously and are made explicit within the project. Thus, being flexible with the use of generally accepted project management processes and toolkits, adapting my approach and improving maturity to my practice. The value of investing time during the pre-initiation phase has already demonstrated an element of added-value in my workplace and sparked interest outside my immediate project team, with me subsequently being asked to deliver workshops on the importance of this phase of a project.

Prior to embarking on this doctorate, my background was firmly located in quantitative research data and methods with a background in Six Sigma projects. At the start of the journey, I grappled with the tension of the deterministic research methods I was experienced in and my chosen definition of complexity - one which is concerned with the nonlinear dynamical properties (Devaney & Gleick, 1989; Geraldi et al., 2011), where there is an absence of cause and effect. The study created an opportunity for me to develop a new set of research skills using qualitative data in a grounded approach. This has provided me with new insights and a new skillset in qualitative research methods.

The most significant contribution to my personal practice was the unexpected opportunity to shift from a professional services practitioner role to an academic role as Professor of Management Education (May 2020), in recognition of my work developing and leading a new Executive and Professional Education portfolio with a disciplinary focus on project complexity and organizational change. One example of the learning products that I successfully developed as an outcome of this thesis, is a new credit bearing module on Complex Projects for Engineering doctoral students.

Furthermore, I have been an invited speaker as an outcome of the contribution from this study at:

Beach, Y. Chartered Association of Business Schools Directors of Executive Education Forum (May 2020) 'The future challenges of professional education'.

Beach, Y (University of Sheffield) & Anderson M (Boston University). Advance Collegiate School Business (AACSB) Associate Dean Conference. New Orleans, Louisiana (November 2019). 'Managing when change is the only constant in Higher Education'.

I have three peer reviewed conference papers, with the latter paper subsequently being cited in (Kiridena & Sense, 2016) paper on developing a holistic profile of project complexity. My paper was considered as a contribution to two categories of complexity. First social-organizational complexity in relation to social interfaces and the need to gain a better understanding of the impact of socio-organizational factors. Second, socio-political complexity and its fit with social norms and order; and its relationship with the project and the subsequent power and political dynamics (Kiridena & Sense, 2016).

1. Beach Y & Coule T. Transforming the boundaries of project management: A critique of disciplinary assumptions and mental traps. *Thriving in Turbulent times. British Academy of Management, 6 September – 15 September 2016.*
2. Beach Y & Coule T. Socio-political dynamics in the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects: Approaching projects as a contested and negotiated space. Porto. *Procedia Computer Science,* Vol. 100 (pp 298-304)
3. Beach, Y. The Socio-political dynamics and complexity of organizational change projects: A research agenda. *Project Management Development – Practice and Perspectives.* University of Latvia, 14 April 2016 – 15 April 2016.

The knowledge development underpinning this thesis has profound implications for the requisite skills, knowledge and thus 'training' of project managers involved in organizational change projects. More needs to be done to educate those involved in project work with alternative views of organisations, work and projects that open up the 'black box' of change projects, acknowledge messiness and the multifaceted, layered nature of socio-political dynamics and how these play out in relation to project outcomes,

benefit realisation and so on. Until project managers are equipped to understand, leverage and mitigate such dynamics, project management is unlikely to fully realise its significant potential in the domain of organisational change. For this to happen on the broadest level, would require a significant shift in focus toward the 'human element' of project management within the disciplines Books of Knowledge. Finally, in a context where managing projects is seen as a core skill for "all" managers (not just project managers), the findings and implications of this research could usefully inform the programmes and activities of professional associations such as the Chartered Management Institute."

7.2.2 Contribution to research practice

This study contributes to case study research practice by illustrating a novel and valuable use of theory in the case-study protocol that extends current practice, which focusses on the development of a theoretical framework to guide data collection and/or analysis (see Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). This study usefully points to the potential for theory to act as a sensitizing concept (Bulmer, 1954) at a much earlier stage; for the purposes of defining criteria for case selection. In this research, this was crucial to facilitating conversations and a shared understanding (of what was meant by both 'complexity' and 'pre-initiation') between the researcher and other stakeholders involved in the selection process and making decisions about which cases fell inside and outside the boundaries of the research. Thus, theory fundamentally contributed to shaping the scope and design of the study, whilst honouring a commitment to verstehen and inductive analysis.

7.2.3 Contribution to theory

The thesis extends the limited scholarship on unpacking project social-political complexities by associating it with pluralistic rationalities and sense-making. It contributes to the underdeveloped scholarship on improving the understanding and implication of project socio-political complexity during the pre-initiation phase in contrast to the more developed levels of scholarship focused on the execution phase of projects i.e. post project scoping (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Hjortsø & Meilby, 2013; Morris, 2013; Wearne, 2014; Williams et al., 2019).

The primary contribution to theory is the extension to the socio-political complexity scholarship beyond the saturated knowledge on the characteristics of project complexity (reviewed in Chapter 2, section 2.2). I identified socio-political complexities and

examined how they manifested from a different stakeholder perspective - that of affected actors with limited power and influence, whose voices are often marginalised by the project governance system and in project management scholarship. Specifically, I extend Maylor and Turner (2017) concept of duality of complexity and response by adding a different stakeholder perspective, that of affected actors. Maylor and Turner (2017) extensive retrospective empirical study involved 1,143 practitioners who were involved in managing projects. I further extend this work by examining the recursive nature of complexity and response from the lived experience and sense-making of employees impacted by the project (actors) in real-time, providing insights that could otherwise be lost.

As an output of the study, I contribute to the emerging debate on the limitations of project governance and the challenges it faces as projects are increasingly used to deliver change to work practices. I pose a set of conditions that contributed to a crisis of representation, whilst the governance machinery continued with assumed efficacy. Subsequently, voices were marginalised of those affected by the project, yet who do not necessarily hold the power to be considered as important stakeholders.

Collectively, the contributions as outlined here contribute to the ongoing debate on the social and institutional context of projects that is seen in the nascent literature within 'Project Studies' (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018; Morris, 2013; Picciotto, 2019) and the building upon the seminal work of (Morris, 2013) of expanding the orthodoxy project boundaries.

7.3 Limitations of study

The outcomes of the study are limited by the constraints of the methodology selected and the robustness of the implementation. It was a single case study where grounded theoretical insights were developed from inductive, triangulated qualitative data of the daily realities as they played out in real-time. The data collection and analysis followed accepted practices (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018) and quality criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Phil Johnson, 2015; Symon et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Methodological reflexivity was a core element to achieve academic rigour and researcher objectivity. I think my senior position at the organization did provide me with full access to the subject matter and the level of frankness displayed during interviews. I had been with the organization for 15 years and had progressed through the ranks, which provided me with a level of

social capital that facilitated privileged access. I did make a point of reminding colleagues that I was there in the role of researcher and not as a senior project practitioner. I was asked on one instance for my view on an issue that was being discussed at a governance meeting by the Chair in which I had to remind them I was there in the capacity of researcher and observer only. The study collected data in real time which provided an invaluable opportunity to examine how the case-study played out in reality, which would not have been captured retrospectively due to the fluid and evolving understanding of the project. My consistent commitment to researcher objectivity and academic rigour challenged my pre-understandings that I brought to the study as a senior, experienced project practitioner, who had been socialised in the deterministic classical project management orthodoxy. The findings that challenged the legitimacy of representation within the governance of the project, that was setup and operated under institutional norms, was something I did not expect due to the pre-understandings that I brought to the study. Tietze (2012), pg. 68 captures the essence of the key challenge I experienced conducting this study within my employer organization 'it is about making the familiar strange'. This essence also facilitated significant new learning for me.

The insights are a snapshot during the research period of ten months during the pre-initiation phase of the project. It does not claim to be developing a new universal theory, however, it does provide valuable theoretical insights that contribute to examination of social-political complexities in light of current project management orthodoxy and practices from a critical stakeholder perspective that contributes to the maturity of project management within UK HEIs.

In explicating the thesis, the challenge is how to encourage project management practice to take this seriously. The value of practice orientated research, that is grounded in the life of work creates opportunities for learning that brings scholarship and practice closer together. Exploring the patterns of complexity builds upon existing complexity theories to enable a deeper, rich and lived description of complexity to enable the study of complexities of projects and provide practitioners with a starting point for reflection and learning (Geraldi J Williams T, 2011).

7.4 Suggestions for further research

The thesis recasts organizational change projects as negotiated and contested spaces and calls for a shift in thought on project governance to encompass social and felt

accountability, as a possible mechanism to add maturity to the Higher Education Institutions' project management practice for organizational change and continuous improvement. Social and felt accountability in this context is about providing legitimate representation and providing affected stakeholders with a voice. Specifically, I suggest it would be beneficial for further research into project socio-political complexity and project governance at the intersection of efficacy and social accountability with the aim of giving voice to marginalised actors.

There would be value in replicating the study in other universities to compare results and continue to contribute to improving the maturity of project management practices in the sector. Furthermore, it would create opportunities to contribute to social-organizational and social-political project complexity which has limited scholarship to date (Kiridena & Sense, 2016; M Winter et al., 2006).

7.5 Concluding remarks

In summary, by examining the lived experience of project actors, I have sought to offer a different discourse on the issues of the project management orthodoxy through embracing (inevitable) project socio-political complexities, and by unpacking the black box of complexity and response, or lack thereof. I assert that the official project structures and processes operate in conjunction with the informal aspects of organizational life which operate in a contested space, producing a negotiated order. Thus, it is time to reimagine the project management orthodoxy when it comes to delivering organizational change.

Appendix 1: Case study protocol

Exploring socio-political dynamics and complexity: An alternative perspective on project management.

Aim of the paper

The aim of this paper is to ask for support in identifying projects that could be used as case studies during the field work phase of my DBA. The field work is focused on organizational change projects that have not yet started the pre-initiation phase. Key features that must be present in order for the project to meet the requirements of my scope of research are as follows: they must be organizational change or continuous improvement projects within the higher education sector; the pre-initiation phase must not have commenced, and ideally; projects that are due to start during the first six months of 2016.

Introduction

My research is focused on exploring the pre-initiation[2] phase of complex[3] projects[4], with a focus on organizational change within the context of the UK higher education sector.

With historical roots in the engineering discipline, project management has been dominated by a rational, linear approach (Johnson 1997, Levene 1996, Eisenhardt & Tabrizi 1995, Whittington & at el, 1996, Morris 1994), but is increasingly applied in complex organizational settings (Hall 2012). I believe exploring the unresolved

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[2] That is from the point when the project exists conceptually and before it is planned and implemented, from the time the idea is conceived until the decision is made to finance it (Williams and Samset 2010)

[3] The definition of complexity that I have aligned myself to is one which is concerned with the nonlinear dynamical properties (Geraldi 2001, Gleick 1987, Waldrop 1992), where there is not a simple cause and effect correlation.

[4] A project is the whole of a group of activities limited in time and space, inserted in, and integration with a political, social and economic environment, towards a goal progressively refined by the dialectic between the thought (the project plan) and the reality' (Bredillet 2010, p23)

contradiction between non-linearity and controllability within the pre-initiation phase of complex change projects would deliver a significant contribution to interdisciplinary research across project management and organizational change theory, along with stretching the traditional boundaries of project management for the practitioner. A key question I am seeking to address is whether this can this be achieved within a discipline whose foundations are built on rational thinking and approaches, or whether an alternative perspective is required.

The research intends to draw on the dynamics of the project environment, people, uncertainty and decision making under the umbrella of complexity during the critical pre-initiation phase of a project, where real value can be injected or, alternatively, the project fundamentally undermined from the outset.

There has been a rapid and significant growth in the use of projects as a method to drive the implementation of organizational change and continuous improvement to processes (Hall, 2012, Stryhre 2011, Grundy 1998, Turner 1999, Pellergrinelli and Bowman 1994). The pre-initiation phase of projects is considered as a critical success factor (Miller and Lessard 2001, Flyvbjerg et al. 2003, Mier 2008). However, as a senior project management practitioner experienced in delivering organizational change projects, I have observed that in practice, project management often refers to the execution of a business case post project scoping. If this is the case, who is, or should be, responsible for leading the scoping of projects (i.e. sponsor or PM) and are the complexities of the social and political dynamics of the project environment explored and considered during this phase?

Research Interests

1. To explore the extent to which and how the socio-political dynamics of the project environment is considered during the pre-initiation phase of organizational change projects in the higher education context, where organizational change projects are becoming increasingly prevalent.
2. The literature on complexity within the project management discipline identifies the need to move beyond measuring complexity to further understanding of it and how complexity can be actively managed for the better outcome of deliverables (Geraldi 2011). There is an assumption that rational control of complexity is possible and desirable (Stacey 2001, Wood 2002). The proposed research will question that assumption and inductively explore the potential tension between embracing complexity within the project management tradition of controllability during the pre-initiation phase of complex organizational change projects.

Research Method

A case study analysis with an inductive and interpretive logic will be used to develop a deep understanding of the extent to which and how the socio-political dynamics of the project environment is considered during the pre-initiation phase. The aim is to objectively collect thick descriptions of actors' subjective experiences which will be triangulated with corporate documentation and observations

Data Sources

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with the Project Manager, the Project Sponsor(s) and a sample of project stakeholders at the start and at the end of the pre-initiation phase of a project. The first interview will explore the interviewees' key expectations, objectives, critical aspects and perceived challenges of the pre-initiation phase. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a sub-sample at the end of the pre-initiation phase which will explore reflections on the emerging thematic findings.

Observations of governance and working group meetings held during the pre-initiation phase will be conducted and recorded in a field diary and examination of corporate documentation such as project documents, project meeting agendas and minutes of meetings will be consulted. The project scope which is traditionally the output of the pre-initiation phase will be explored in the context of it being a political artefact.

Analysis

Data from interviews, field work diary and documentation will be analysed via thematic coding. The first level of coding will be at a descriptive level, which will be followed with a second higher level coding at a conceptual level. The third stage will seek to identify linkages across the conceptual codes to develop theoretical clusters with a recursive inductive approach. During these processes the data will continue to be sensitized with the literature to help develop a deep understanding. The final step will organise the theoretical clusters to pull together new theoretical insights regarding socio-political dynamics of the project environment during the pre-initiation phase.

Appendix 2: Sample: Project case study selection questions for interviews

- Thank you for responding to callout for projects so swiftly
- Tell me about the project(s) you have in mind?
- Any questions for me?

Pre-selection project interviewee	Ref: 1
Date of interview	04/02/2016
Project theme	4 potential projects were discussed, being: 1. Service integration of 2 teams from student services. 2. Transfer of English Lang teaching centre to student services. 3. Prevent agenda 4. Repurpose us of a building- pulling together multiple professional services departments to one building.
Current stage of project	1. Implementation 2. Implementation (pre-initiation last yr. and was v. interesting in terms of this piece of research as had lots of socio-political dynamics but no longer in pre-initiation phase). 3. Some work has been done, but not much with stakeholders. 4. Nothing as yet, but not sure will start this year.
How much uncertainty in the project?	Options 1 and two not applicable as not in the pre-initiation phase. Option 4 not applicable as unlikely to start during the year of my data collection. Option 3 – not much uncertainty as it is now a legal requirement.
Organizational change project?	1- Not really as 2 teams are naturally already working together. 2- Yes

	3- Yes, with lots of politics across stakeholders i.e. their role within. 4- Yes- significantly.
No of stakeholders? Level of agreement?	1- 2 internal teams 2- Many teams- finance, reception staff. 3- Lots internal & external- police, academics, students, student union government. 4- Many teams- all within student services- all with different ideas & agendas.
Time line of kick off?	1- N/A 2- N/A 3- Current 4- Not until at least next academic year
Research methods and data sources, are you happy with my planned: 1. Research methods and data sources collection? 2. Issue of access to documents and observations. 3. My role as a researcher	Yes- happy with the paper I provided and had no further questions
PM	Not as yet
Sponsor	UEB

Appendix 3: Positioning paper: Widening participation and BTEC students

Purpose
We have committed ourselves to developing new routes to degrees and to new forms of access, and to increasing the range and type of widening participation access activities. This paper proposes a progressive partnership, to develop new pathways and to broaden access to a wider pool of talented students.

Background
Overall, in England, the potential 16-18 cohort has dropped by 5% between 2008/9 and 2013/14. The proportion of the 16-18 cohort entered for at least one A-level has dropped marginally by 1.6%. At the same time, there has been a considerable increase, of 73%, in the number of 16-18 year olds entered for at least one Level 3 vocational qualification. Whilst A-level remains the most widely held entry qualification for higher education, BTEC continues to be the next most popular qualification in the English 18-year old cohort. The rate of students entering higher education with BTECs has more than doubled since 2008.

In the 2014 cycle 74% of ABB+ university acceptances were for English 18 year olds holding A-levels, representing a decrease from 87% in 2008. Comparatively, 23% of ABB+ acceptances in 2014 were those holding BTECs (an 11% increase from 12% in 2008).

In short, the proportion of 'high achieving' students holding BTECs nationally is increasing whilst the proportion with A-levels is decreasing.

The UCAS entry tariff allocates the same points – 360 – to three distinctions in the BTEC National Diploma as it does to three A grades at A-level. However, the University of Sheffield accepts Extended BTEC Diploma students in very small numbers across a wide range of disciplines (see Appendix 1).

A problematic context
National data shows that BTEC students with top results in BTEC at Russell Group universities are less likely to gain a first or 2:1 and more than 40 per cent failed to complete their degree course, with many withdrawing because of "academic failure". The Faculty of Engineering found that BTEC students did particularly badly at Maths in level 1 and ran a trial providing additional support in Maths for BTEC students aiming to improve outcomes. The trial was not successful and the Faculty of Engineering therefore now requires students from a BTEC background to also have an A-level in Maths for entry into the first year of their degrees. Entry from BTEC into the Science and Engineering Foundation Year is possible but implies an extra year of study.

This has raised questions about whether vocational qualifications are a good preparation for degree level work. Critics have argued that leading institutions should think twice about awarding places on competitive courses to BTEC applicants. Undoubtedly the difference in approaches between BTEC and A-level will mean that the transition to degree level study from BTEC is more difficult; for example, there are indications that BTEC style assessments are particularly poor in preparing students for the unseen exam based culture that is widely prevalent within the University. Transition may also be made more difficult by other, widening participation related factors. As a result, there is a need for strong connectivity

between Schools, sixth form Colleges & UTC's offering BTECs and University to ensure that the right students are identified for transition and that they are appropriately supported in the first year of their UG programme. This would require the development of focussed links with selected educational providers.

In addition, while the BTEC standard is well described and should, in principle, prepare students for an undergraduate degree the quality of the teaching is highly variable and academics comment that whether they will accept a BTEC student depends not so much on the particular provider but on the teachers involved in provision. This suggests that if we are to develop new types of pathways from BTEC to our UG degrees would require targeted outreach, again probably to selected educational providers.

Pearson PLC

In June UEB received a paper setting out principles under which the University might entertain working with or responding to a growing number of private higher education providers. The election of a Conservative Government, the Green Paper and a recently announced partnership between the University of Exeter and Pearson PLC has put this topic back on the agenda.

Pearson PLC are transforming themselves from a publisher to an end-to-end digital education provider by actively acquiring existing businesses in the digital space to complement their publishing portfolio. They now deliver a content catalogue and learning platforms to deliver Pearson PLC content, with open classes on line, social learning networks and digital learning support provided directly to students or with partner Universities. In the UK specifically, they are a qualification awarding body; developing a qualifications and assessments framework as owners of Edexcel (formed by the merger of the Business & Technology Education Council and University of London Examinations and Assessment Council).

On 17 November the University of Exeter and Pearson PLC announced a new partnership to develop online degrees and collaborate on international research. Exeter and Pearson PLC are currently researching the potential to deliver online post-graduate degrees in a variety of subjects. It is intended courses will start as early as September 2016.

Potential exists that we could propose to work with Pearson PLC to research:

- Degree Apprenticeships
- Learning Gain in higher education
- Progression routes into the higher education sector with a specific focus on BTEC (the vocational qualifications provided by Pearson PLC).

Methodology

It is proposed that the University starts to investigate this collaboration initially through the third of the above areas. We could, for example, form a 'University, regional BTEC providers, Pearson PLC' research partnership aimed at delivering a shared intervention which identifies what is required to ensure that the best BTEC students can successfully transition to a leading selective institution into traditional degrees or to Degree Apprenticeships. Given the BTEC Extended Diplomas are available in a range of subjects (General Engineering, Applied Science, Business Studies, Life Science etc.) this would be a cross-Faculty research intervention.

The initiative may involve, for example:

- Identifying academics in each Faculty, who are willing to work with BTEC providers as part of a pilot study;
- Identifying a range of BTEC providers in the region (Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and UTC's; ideally including at least one partner of each type) that are willing to enter into a co-operative partnership with the University;
- Recruit a PhD student and agree research objectives with the partners;
- Visiting potential partners to review whether the quality of their provision (on a subject basis) means that they are suitable partner for us to work with in the pilot;
- Formation of a network of partners with whom we would engage on a pilot scheme;,
- Visiting BTEC teachers and observing teaching within the network of BTEC providers to understand the pedagogical experience of the students;
- In collaboration with our partners, identifying students likely to successfully make the transition and identifying the additions/ changes that may be needed in the first year undergraduate curricula and/or tutorial support to enable these students to make a successful transition;
- Providing information, advice and guidance to the targeted students through the UCAS application cycle and offer admissions interviews;
- Recognising those who transition as a cohort on arrival in the University, with particular learning backgrounds and needs.

The BTEC Extended Diploma is a two year programme; and so, assuming the partnership would look at the existing cohort of first year BTEC students, it would be a three year project looking to admit students in September 2017.

Next Steps
It is proposed a group further this or a similar initiative

Two networks would need to be supported;

- An internal network of the Sheffield academics engaged in the initiative,
- An external regional network of participating Schools, Colleges or UTC's.

[anonymised author]

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information
Research: Exploring socio-political dynamics within projects

The [case-study institution] is sponsoring me on doctoral research programme where I am currently exploring the pre-initiation phase of complex projects, with a focus on organizational change within the context of the UK Higher Education sector.

The aim of this briefing paper is to ask you, as a member of the [the project], to be part of this study.

About the study

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with a sample of project stakeholders including the project manager, project co-ordinator, a sample of the Faculty Sponsors, a sample of the Departmental Managers. The interviews will explore the interviewees' key expectations, objectives, perceived challenges and experiences of the pre-initiation phase. A second set of semi-structured interviews will be held with a smaller sample from the stage one interviews to include the Faculty Sponsors and project management team at the end of the pre-initiation phase where the researcher will share the key emerging themes from the study with the aim of exploring reflections and learning. I expect the interviews to take no longer than 30 minutes each and will be held in a private space which will convenient to the interviewee.

Observations of governance and working group meetings held during the pre-initiation phase will be conducted and examination of corporate documentation such as project documents, project meeting agendas and minutes of meetings will be consulted. I will join project meetings as an observer only. I am requesting all members of the Project Meetings to consent to these meetings being recorded to enable a true and accurate record being collected.

Data will be analysed using a grounded approach using thematic coding which will be recursive with the literature with the aim of developing new understandings and insights regarding socio-political dynamics of the project.

Confidentiality and consent

I would like to clearly state that the data relating to yourself will be protected and will be used only for the purposes of the research. Any identifying features, such as name, will be anonymised at the point of transcribing to ensure that you cannot be identified by a third party. Nowhere in my research records will your name ever be entered; a reference number will be used in the records. Whilst I cannot guarantee full confidentiality as the research is likely to be published, I will ensure anything said by you as part of the research has any trace of your identity removed from it in order to protect your anonymity. The research records will be kept in encrypted files and in compliance with all data protection requirements. Data access will be granted to myself and my academic supervisor.

Data will be kept securely and anonymised until at least I have completed my doctorate study. But, it should be noted that I hope to publish from this study and therefore the length of time this data will be kept will be subject to the publisher requirements.

Participation is totally voluntary and you have the right of withdrawal at any point of the study.

Next steps

If you would like to discuss the research in more detail, or would like to opt out of the research at any time please feel free to contact my emailing me […]or calling me on either ext. […]. If you prefer to contact my Director of Studies. […], at Sheffield Hallam University for any further information, she can be reached on […] .

Appendix 6: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Research: Exploring socio-political dynamics within projects
Project: Planning application for the new FoSS building
Researcher: Yvonne Beach

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

		YES	NO
1.	I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.	☐	☐
2.	My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3.	I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4.	I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Participant Information Sheet.	☐	☐
5.	I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
6.	I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.	☐	☐

Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Contact details:

_____

Researcher's Name (Printed): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's contact details:

[contact details]

Appendix 5: REFERENCES

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