When project autonomy turns into isolation

Understanding the influence of project isolation on project-based learning

Willems, Thijs; Kuitert, Lizet; van Marrewijk, Alfons; Volker, Leentje; Hermans, Marleen

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1238 - WHEN PROJECT AUTONOMY TURNS INTO ISOLATION. UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF PROJECT ISOLATION ON PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Authors : Alfons Van Marrewijk - VU Amsterdam, Leentje Volker - TU Delft, Thijs Willems - Signapore University of Technology and Design, Liset Kuitert - TU Delft, Marleen Hermans - TU Delft

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Successfully sharing knowledge through interactions between projects and the organization is, especially in a situation of changing work processes, an important capability for organizations to learn. The aim of this study is to gain insights into the process of project-based learning, specifically by studying how project-based learning relates to project autonomy. Drawing on the data of two teams in collaborative projects, we found that in both projects symbolic, discursive, and spatial practices of isolation were developed that changed the relationship with the permanent organization. We show how these practices contributed to the project teams moving from operating autonomously – whilst still having their goals aligned with the organization – to operating in isolation from the permanent organization. The findings indicate that project autonomy is beneficial for explorative forms of project-based learning, but when turning into isolation project autonomy inhibits the dissemination of knowledge to the wider project
oriented environment.

Keywords : knowledge, learning; project autonomy