Public Sector Projectification – A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Abstract

"Projectification" is an emerging subdomain of project management research which argues that proliferation of projects is one of the most important current trends in the public sector. As an emerging sub-field within projectification research, "public sector projectification" has been given increasing attention in the past few years. This article presents a structured literature review (SLR) on "public sector projectification", with the aim of systematising the existing empirical knowledge guided by the research question: "What are the empirical implications of public sector projectification at the personal, organisational and societal levels in journal articles?" The SLR search detects 53 articles published between 2009 and 2021. Articles were detected by a literature search in three selected scholarly research databases and by reviewing cited references in the articles detected. By analysing researched empirical implications from the projectification literature at the three levels of personal, organisational, and societal, the SLR demonstrates that public sector projectification is a multilevel phenomenon with contradictory implications and interesting dynamics between the levels, which should gain increased attention in both research and practice to release the potential for organising projects in the public sector context.

Introduction

Projects and project thinking are spreading to most parts of society and dominate today's economic reality (Maylor, Brady et al. 2006; Packendorff and Lindgren 2014; Lundin, Arvidsson et al., 2015). In Germany, as much as 34.7% of total working hours were taken up by project work in 2013 (Schoper, Wald et al., 2018). In Iceland, it was measured at 33% in 2014. Both countries had a stipulated growth rate of 40% by 2019 (Ingason, Fridgeirsson et al., 2019; Wagner 2021). This proliferation of projects is most visible in the transformation of traditional firms into project-based firms (Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014), but it also extends to governmental organisations, educational institutions, and volunteer groups (Lundin et al., 2015). In the public sector, there has been a growing reliance on projects and project management techniques (Hodgson et al., 2019), and it is currently one of the most important structural changes in the public sector (Sjöblom, 2009; Godenhjelm, Lundin et al., 2015; Jensen, Johansson et al., 2018; Hodgson, Fred et al., 2019).

This proliferation of projects is captured by an emerging subdomain of project management literature that labels the trend as "projectification" (Kuura 2011; Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014; Kuura 2020). "Projectification" is one of today's buzzwords (Schoper, Wald et al., 2018) and one of few terms specific to project management as a research field (Maylor and Turkulainen, 2019). "Projectification" was first coined by Midler (1995), who researched how the Renault car company transformed from a functional organisation into a more project-like organisation. Since then, there has been a striking increase in scholarly interest in projectification, which has achieved academic rigour and richness as coverage of (sub)topics, issues, sectors, levels etc. expands (Kuura,

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2020). There have been previous surveys and reviews of the projectification literature (Maylor, Brady et al., 2006; Packendorff and Lindgren 2014; Kuura, 2020; Jacobsson and Jałocha, 2021), but not a review which focuses on "public sector projectification." Projects in the public sector differ from those in the private sector, in that there is an absence of focus on revenue, and they have been surrounded by other norms, institutions and roles (Lundin, 2019), making it necessary to view projectification in the public sector as a separate phenomenon.

"Projectification" represents a novel and challenging set of organisational practices which challenge how we think about and do public organisation and administration (Hodgson, Fred et al., 2019), and doubts exist about the extent to which results are achieved (Wenhold, 2021). Project funds have been detected as an important driver of projectification in the EU (Godenhjelm, Lundin et al. 2015), and issues such as an aging population and tight public budgets put pressure on governments demonstrates how citisens are obtaining good value from public spending. Public organisations undergoing a loss of reputational capital also experience a loss of trust (Luoma-aho 2007). Trust is essential for a functional democracy and government (Warren 2010); hence, determining the results of projectification is particularly important in the public sector context. Sjöblom (2009) argues that project proliferation has been a highly neglected administrative change of the past decades (in the public sector). He further remarks that there is a need for systematic knowledge as the consequences of project proliferation are fragmentary and there is insufficient theoretical understanding. Meanwhile, Jensen, Johansson et al., (2018) have suggested that the projectification of public policy and organisation carries some inherent complications that are insufficiently understood either by policymakers or current research on policy implementation. With the last decade exhibiting an increased scholarly interest in the field of projectification in the public sector, an SLR seems warranted to clarify how the emerging concept of public sector projectification contributes to knowledge concerning the impact of project proliferation in the public sector.

Development of research question

Guided by the research question: "What are the empirical implications of public sector projectification at the personal, organisational and societal level in journal articles?", the article has the aim of systematising the existing knowledge and possible impact of "public sector projectification" at each of the three analytical levels of personal, organisational and societal. The focus on the three levels of projectification in the research question is grounded in developments in the field of projectification. In its early phase, the literature evolved around topics involving structural changes in the organisation due to projectification, a narrow view. In this narrow view, projectification is the transition from functional to project organising in an organisation (Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014). "Programmification" is suggested as the end-stage of projectification in this view, defined as the establishment of programmes and portfolios of programmes as a way of managing organisations (Maylor, Brady et al., 2006). More recent projectification research has broadened its scope to include cultural and social aspects. A broad view (Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014), which at its broadest incorporates massive societal changes (Hodgson et al., 2019) with an emerging

"project society" (Lundin et al., 2015) and "the projectification of everything" (Jensen et al., 2016). This development in the literature implies that projectification occurs structurally in the organisation (Narrow), culturally among individuals (Broad), and as a profound overall development in society (Broader). However, as the field of projectification has broadened its view, has it perhaps neglected the multilevel aspect of the phenomenon? In a review of the projectification literature, Kuura (2011) argues that more attention should be paid to the levels of projectification. Although being a multilevel phenomenon, the multilevel aspect is often neglected in projectification research: Kuura further provided a definition of three levels of projectification:

- **Personal projectification** is a change in a person's work relations and/or private life to increase the primacy of participation in projects.
- **Organisational projectification** is a change in organisational and governance structures to increase the primacy of the processes of projects within a central organisation and its supply networks.
- **Societal projectification** is a change in governance structures to increase the primacy of the processes of projects in the whole society.

These definitions aligned with traditional views of hierarchical levels in the state, which favours a multilevel approach; these three levels of projectification became the focus of this SLR.

Another concept which requires clarification in the research question is "implication." Different notions have been used in the projectification literature when explaining what happens to B (the subject or topic in focus, often an organisation or parts of an organisation) as A (projectification) emerges. For example, Kuura (2011) applies the term "changes," Packedorff and Lindgren (2014) "consequence," while Fred (2020) applies the term "unfold." "Implications" was implemented in a call for papers on "projectification and the impact on societies" in 2018 (Schoper and Ingason 2019), where the editors called out public administration and politics as areas which have not been a focal point of projectification research so far. This call for papers indicates these terms are materialising and therefore applied as terminology in this paper. How implications are interpreted is further explained in the analysis section. Due to time limitations, it was also decided to limit the focus of the literature search to journal articles. Journal articles are easily accessible and follow a scientific standard, which makes it manageable to detect the scientific contribution in each source. It may exclude interesting contributions from books, conference papers, and dissertations. However, most contributions from these sources are likely found in a published article, as researchers are encouraged to actively publish articles to participate in the scientific debate and gain academic prestige.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the review methodology, the search strategy, the analytical framework employed in the SLR and the analysis. The analysis is a thematic analysis which gather the implications of "public sector projectification" in the articles detected, sort them by the three levels and synthesise themes at each level. Section 3 presents the results of the thematic analysis. Section four debates the findings with a focus on the empirical impact of the SLR results and limitations of the SLR approach.

Section five summarises the article by concluding that the public sector projectification is a multilevel phenomenon with contradictory implications and interesting dynamics between the levels. Therefore, further attention on the multilevel aspect of projectification in the public sector context is necessary to increase our understanding of these contradictions and how they impact public sector performance.

Review Methodology

The SLR follows the five steps proposed by Denyer and Tranfield (2009): question formulation; locate studies; study the selection; evaluate, analyse, and synthesise; then report and use the results. The methodology demands transparency and reporting results in a manner which allows drawing reasonably clear conclusions. With the results being more "defensible" and "replicable then less rigid review methods," the SLR methodology aids the development of research paths and questions by providing a foundation for future investigation (Massaro, Dumay et al., 2016). The following subsections describe the methodological development of the SLR, including research questions, the analytical approach, a description of the process of the detection and inclusion of articles and thematic analysis of the implications.

Development of search strategy and screening of articles

Searches to locate studies were conducted in three selected scholarly research databases: Web of Science, Business Source Premier, and ProQuest in February 2022. Databases were chosen based on their predominance in social science and management literature. As "public sector projectification," derives from projectification research, a search string with "Projectification" and possible synonyms was conducted. Including all research on projectification seemed beneficial, as public sector organisations have many different labels, shapes, and functions. Hence, including search words capturing public sector organisations could potentially exclude relevant articles. The database searches were set to look for the included words in all fields and limit hits to journal articles available in full text. A total of 377 sources were detected in the database searches, which then were exported into EndNote with the automatic removal of 17 duplicate papers.

The screening of the remaining articles was executed in three stages. In the first stage, the title, abstract, and keywords were reviewed, detecting sources for exclusion outside the thematic focus of the SLR (public sector projectification). In this stage, the decision was made to include all articles concerning projectification in full-text reading to secure all relevant articles and to get a better overview of the projectification literature in general. 253 articles were evaluated as being outside the thematic focus of projectification, oriented toward technical issues in single-unit projects (e.g. technicalities to project management, ICT technology, agriculture and urban development). The second stage excluded 72 articles that focused on something other than the trend of public sector projectification but on projectification in business and non-profit organisations. Also excluded were articles concerning project success in project-oriented organisations, business organisations, or NGOs. To secure the inclusion of

relevant articles the database searches failed to detect, the third stage of the screening process was screening references in the 38 remaining sources. Fifteen cited references were included following the same process of stage 1 reading of abstracts and stage 2 full-text reading.

Figure 1. Flow chart of SLR process
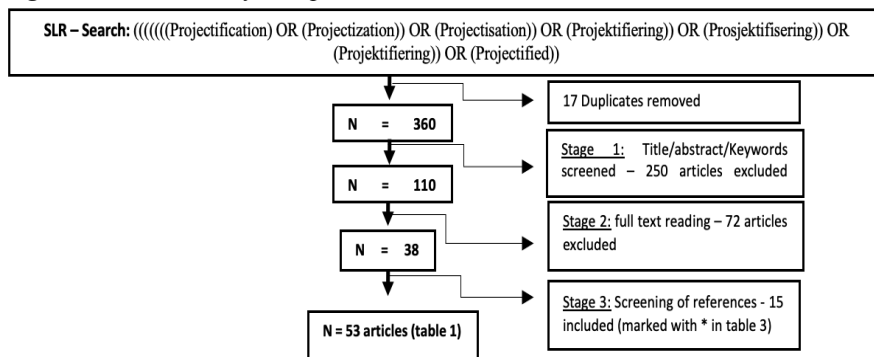
Descriptive analysis

In total, 53 articles were included, spread across 31 journals (Table 1). The overview of journals publishing on public sector projectification exhibits that projectification as a trend concerns a wide range of public administration research. 13 journals focus on public policy, government, and planning. The remaining journals are field-specific and relevant to subsectors within the public sector context.

*Table 1. Included articles by publisher. References marked with * are included based on the citation search.*

Publisher	Articles
International Journal of Managing Projects in Business	(Fowler, Lindahl et al. 2015, Godenhjelm, Lundin et al. 2015, Cicmil and O'Laocha 2016, Ekstedt 2019, Ingason, Fridgeirsson et al. 2019, Jalocha 2019, Nesheim 2020)
International Journal of Project Management	(Schoper, Wald et al. 2018) (Müller, Zhai et al. 2016)
Project Management Journal	(Jensen, Thuesen et al. 2016, Lundin 2016)
International Journal of Contemporary Management	(Jałocha 2018)
Critical Policy Studies	(Mukhtar-Landgren and Fred 2019)
The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology	(Meinert and Whyte 2014)
Local Government Studies	(Fred 2020)
Journal of Local Self-Government	(Olausson and Svensson 2019)
International Public Management Journal	(Wenhold 2021)
Social Science and Medicine	(Marten and Sullivan 2020)
The International Journal of Health Planning and Management	(Jensen, Johansson et al. 2013)*
Public Policy and Administration	(Jensen, Johansson et al. 2018)
Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration	(Cowen Forssell, Fred et al. 2013, Godenhjelm 2013, Jansson 2013, Krohwinkel-Karlsson 2013, Kuokkanen 2013, Poulsen and Löfgren 2013, Sjoblom, Löfgren et al. 2013, Fred 2015)*
Kommunal ekonomi och politik	(Abrahamsson and Agevall 2009)*
Education as Change	(Edstrom and Brunila 2016)
Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy	(Gustafsson 2017)
Teaching in Higher Education	(Dollinger 2020)
Time and Society	(Hubmann 2021, Virtova and Vostal 2021)
Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Digital Ecosystems	(Jalocha 2016)
Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift	(Fred and Hall 2017)*
Administration and Society	(Mukhtar-Landgren 2021)
Science Technology & Human Values	(Wehrens, Oldenhof et al. 2021)
Minerva	(Franssen, Scholten et al. 2018, Torka 2018)
NORA—Nordic Journal of Women's Studies	(Öjehag-Pettersson 2017)
Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space	(Munck af Rosenschold and Wolf 2017)
Environmental Policy and Governance	(Nylén 2021)
Eastern European Countryside	(Perger 2016)
Journal of Environmental Planning and Management	(Storbjork and Isaksson 2014)
Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning	(Munck af Rosenschöld 2019) : (Andersson 2009, Kovach and Kucerova 2009) (Sjoblom and Godenhjelm 2009, Sjöblom 2009)*
Land	(Hodge and Adams 2016)
Foundations of Management	(Janka and Kosieradzka 2019)
Engaging Science Technology and Society	(Felt 2017)

Most articles apply case study methods, where they have researched projectification in an organisational setting, typically a specific sector within a public organisation. There is an evident cluster of regions concerned with public sector projectification. The clusters have different concerns and interests: developmental and public health issues (African region), macroeconomic consequences (Germany), personal experience (Scandinavia and UK), and municipal and regional policy and administration (Nordic countries). Scandinavian and UK authors dominates the field of projectification in the public sector, which exhibits the "Scandinavian School of Project Management Research" and the UK network of "Rethinking Project Management" as important for developing the field. The Scandinavian school of project management is a branch of project management research focused on human activities and greater attention to the complexities of organising (Hodgson and Cicmil 2008).

The publication trend illustrates public sector projectification as a relatively new concept, with the first publication in 2009. However, articles prior to 2014

are sources included from cited references and do not use the term projectification but project proliferation or administrative short-termism. There is a stable publication rate, with minor peaks in 2013 and 2016 (Figure 2.).

Fig. 2: Publication trend public sector projectification
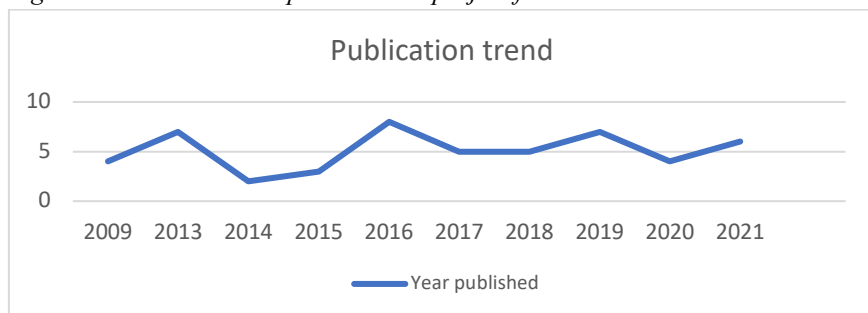
Thematic analysis

This section describes the approach of the thematic analysis. First, all articles were screened for implications. As mentioned, "implication" is not the common or explicit phrasing in the sample of articles. Hence, detecting implications in the sample literature were a process of interpreting the research results. These results are sometimes actual economic values, results based on larger qualitative samples, case studies, or a suggestion based on a theoretical view. Second, detected implications are sorted by levels. As not all articles are definitive on the level of analysis, what level the implications were placed is also an interpretation, following definitions from Kuura (2011) mentioned in the introduction. The analytical subject of interest in the different papers often became determinant to placement in distinct levels, whether the selected paper was interested in individuals, organisations, or more macro-oriented toward societal development. After sorting by levels, the implications were synthesised into second-order themes by the thematic resemblance to other implications within each level (Table 4).

Table 2: Thematic analysis

Level	First-order Implications	Second-order themes
Personal	Projectified time, Challenges uniform time and stable workplace, time tricking strategies, timely output production, time stretching, reduce presence at workplace, work of omnibus character	Projectified time and space
	Favours masculine manners, strictly timed career structures, new professional identity, projectocrats, project class temporary employment, disadvantaged social groups, administrators as political entrepreneurs	Projectified profession
	From logic of discovery to logic of delivery, Frontstage/backstage of work, growing importance of the project logic, project logic has long-term effect, Projects as human condition, new understanding of work, permeated through services and describes all work-life, Balance of projects and non-project work	Projectified understanding of work
Organi-sational	complexity in organisations (due to frontstage/backstage of work), Rediscover and reshapes central bureaucratic practises, increases transparency, organisational isomorphism, projectification – stable characteristics as projects co-exists with non-projects over time	Projectified organisational structures
	Empower local actors to produce new knowledge, problematic to epistemic innovation, Managers face contradictory demands (funds demands outputs, complexity makes it impossible to know how), funding shortfalls creates side hustles, efforts are scaled down when funding ends, Weakens local autonomy, reframe local policies into EU projects, projectified finances, projects takes precedents over actual work, projects loose innovative traits, possible funding and not implemented, not implemented just generates new projects, projectified politics, project fatigue	Projectified funds and innovation
	Political support to project time, more dependence on management, new relations of accountability, enforced project procedures (push-effects), Project approach inclination (pull effects), projectocracy, Standardised programme and project management, Balance of projects and non-project work, projectified control of work, politicised projects run overtime, Project governance new dimension of governmentality, challenges administrative values, administrative short-termism, Political involvement secures long-term development, projects risk encapsulation, weak relationship between project and permanent organisation,	Projectified organisational governance
Societal	Disrupt policy – new policy needed, Damaging to social good, Challenges central institutions, project funding as economic driver, legal regulations supporting project implementation, important economic driver, unintended effect as policy tool, Policy/funding stipulate project work (push), Projects are known for efficiency (pull), Projects are used for strategic purposes, Economic driver, Challenges traditional institutions, projectified state governance, local government must adapt to new policy, Key economic driver, temporary and partial policy integration, funding bodies accountable for tensions encountered by individuals, transforms local power structures, mismatch between project logic and evaluation logic, temporal effects to the global health agenda, Challenges the role of the nation-state, Europeanisation	Projectified policy and public governance

The analysis detected 74 (first-order) implications, sorted by thematic resemblance and reduced into 8 (second-order) themes. "Themes" are, for the purpose of this article, defined as concepts which describe the subject matter, core ideas, and conceptual linkage of expression represented in the included sources (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The final labelling of each theme was inspired by how several articles use the word projectified to describe an implication. At the organisational level, the clustering of implications was inspired by differentiating between narrow structural implications and the

broader oriented implications, following the views on projectification mentioned in the introduction. It also seemed relevant to have funds and innovation as one theme. The later discussion section elaborates on how project funding is particularly important to innovation policy in the public sector.

Results

Following the dividing logic of levels from the analysis, the three following sub-sections report the SLR results by exemplifying from the included sources.

Personal level

At the personal level, the thematic analysis detected two second-order themes. First, projectified time and space, gather all the empirical evidence from the sample literature, which argues that work time and space are altered due to projectification. The time aspect of projects contradicts traditional uniform work time and a stable workplace (Ekstedt, 2019). Dollinger (2021) applies the concept of projectified time, exhibiting projects as time-consuming and affecting the university teacher's routine work. Projects require timely output production of research (Torka, 2018), and Virtova and Vostal (2021) suggest that workers apply a strategy of "time stretching," where the boundaries of projects are stretched in time. Hubmann (2021) argues for "time-tricking" in the same manner. Virtova and Vostal (2021) investigate project work strategies in fusion research and argue increased projectification may reduce one's presence in the workplace. This is supported by Ekstedt (2019), who—supported by IT solutions—notes that project work may take place almost anywhere.

The second theme, *projectified profession*, gathers all the results from the sample literature, which argues how individuals perceive themselves as professionals is altered due to projectification. Projectification brings a new profession and professional identity to individuals (Fowler et al., 2015), demands new expertise (Godenhjelm et al., 2015; Jensen et al., 2018), and favours more traditionally masculine manners (Edstrom and Brunila, 2016). Jensen et al., (2016) argue there is anxiety due to the passage between projects and remark that the value of experience is now not just to have done the same things many times; experience now also means having done a lot of different things. Jalocha (2016) suggests that project workers in the public sector are projectocrats, people involved in temporary project work but enjoying full privileges of stable employment, good employment conditions, additional benefits offered by employers, and high wages. The negative aspects of the work then, are less connected to financial working conditions and more to negative psychological effects. While Olausson and Svensson (2019) find that projectification enables public administrators to function as political entrepreneurs in response to policy change and increasing project logic.

The third theme, *projectified understanding of work*, gathers the findings from the sample literature, which argues that how individuals make sense of their work is altered. Projectification comprises organisational changes and affects how employees talk about, understand, and make sense of their everyday work (Fred, 2015). It is not only a mechanism to organise work, but distinct vocabulary changes the very nature of work itself. Jensen et al., (2016) argue

that projects are on our minds to the point where it is a human condition, activity becomes central and the formatting of space loses some of its determinative power. Fred (2020) argues that public sector projectification can be understood and conceptualised as the enactment of multiple, co-existing institutional logics and found in a case study of Swedish municipalities that the project logic appears disseminated at the expense of other logics. When the project logic was put forward in ordinary activities, there were less critique and more praise for the clarity it brings. Felt (2017) found in her study of university research a shift from a logic of discovery to a logic of delivery within the scientific community.

Although, Öjehag-Pettersson (2017) notes that projects are a middle ground between the conservatively oriented production logic of bureaucracy and the change logic of politics. Ekstedt (2019) argues that there are often conflicts between persons primarily working in the line and persons working on projects due to different attitudes toward work between the two groups. These different attitudes may lead to frustration and uncertainty. Godenhjelm et al., (2015) uncovered a push and pull in the mindset of the projectified, where there is a vision (or wishful thinking) that pulls you into arguing for a project approach, as well as a push thinking from the environment to apply project working principles in getting things done. However, Fowler et al., (2015) argues for a frontstage and backstage understanding of projectification—although formal structures and management change, workers continue as before.

Organisational level

At the organisational level, the thematic analysis found three second-order themes. First, projectified structures gather all the findings from the sample literature, which research how the stable structures of organisations are projectified. Storbjork and Isaksson (2014) Proved it problematic to overcome traditional cemented sectorisation and find ways to interact across sectors in their study of regional environmental policy development in Sweden. No forums and processes provide arenas for inter-sectoral exchange and mutual learning, possibly because the old structures are strengthened by projectification. Causing complexity (Fowler, Lindahl et al., 2015), or as Hodge and Adams (2016) in their study of projectification of ecological restoration in the UK, argue, causes difficulties with the delivery of outcomes. Fred (2015) found in his study of Swedish municipalities that project characteristics creep into the more permanent organisation in the process of projectification. The old structures do not vanish but are projectified, causing a porous organisation and increased transparency (Fred and Hall, 2018). Nesheim (2020) found in a study of the Norwegian petroleum directorate that projects and non-projects over time functions in the core of the organisation in a balanced manner. In comparison, (Jalocha, 2019) argues that projectification causes organisational structures in Polish public organisations to move toward a project-oriented direction changing management and methods to work, as a result of massive EU funding of Polish public administration.

The second theme, *funds and innovation*, gathers all the empirical evidence from the sample literature, which argues how public sector organisations find themselves in a situation where project funds become a vital determinant of what the organisations produce of public goods and services. The organisations report

on the standards set in the grant announcements, which might contradict organisational needs and goals. Project funding provides control to funders (Hodge and Adams, 2016); however, these funds might not achieve the intended outcome. Abrahamsson and Agevall (2009) found in their study of Swedish human service organisations engage in projects a means to get funds and seldom implemented in the organisation when the funding ended. In the projectification of the public-funded health sector in sub-Saharan Africa, Marten and Sullivan (2020) exhibited that organisations initiate "side hustles" to make ends meet because of funding shortfalls. While Mukhtar-Landgren (2021) found that project funding weakened local autonomy in the Swedish public sector as funding requirements are strict and local actors attempt to align their political goals to the project funds. Local governments reframe policies to fit EU funding (Mukhtar-Landgren and Fred, 2019). However, Munck af Rosenschold and Wolf (2017) found it, on the contrary, empowered local actors in environmental governance in the United States. Perger (2016) supports this finding by arguing that charismatic (local) leaders achieve progress by attracting enterprises or development funds and play a key role in local development.

Krohwinkel-Karlsson (2013) found in her Swedish national aid agency study that projects are politicised, implemented with long-term goals, and run over time. While in Ugandan health care, efforts are scaled down or end when the funding ends (Meinert and Whyte, 2014). Franssen et al. (2018) proved project funding problematic considering epistemic innovation as it does not allow deviation from proposals. Andersson (2009) argues for an innovation paradox in the case of regional development through projects in Finland. He suggests relaxing the innovation requirements in projects (which creates control of the project funders) might release the inherent innovation potential in projects (proven unreleased in his study). While Fred and Hall (2017) claim the project funding regime causes a chain event where projects lead to new projects. There are also signs of project fatigue among project workers in externally funded projects (Fred, 2020).

The third theme, *projectified governance*, gathers all the results in the sample literature, which argues that projectification is a new standard of governance in organisations. As a form of new governance, projectification represents market-oriented, managerial, and self-organising networks and incorporates, produces, and positions everyone involved with project-based work (Edstrom & Brunila, 2016). Munck af Rosenschold and Wolf (2017) argue that project governance has the potential to leave an accountability gap in situations characterised by freedom from bureaucratic control and is not a clear pathway toward decentralisation and relaxation of bureaucratic control. Hodge & Adams (2016) argue for adaptive governance as a concept to understand how hierarchy has been altered, defined as "a process by which institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are tested and revised in a dynamic, ongoing, self-organised process of learning-by-doing". Adaptive governance advocates a long-term perspective and accepts uncertain outcomes. According to Müller et al., (2016), the extent to which organisations are projectified is shown by how extensively the organisation use projects and project management as organising principles.

Fred and Hall (2017) argue that this new form of organising work in the public sector can be understood as a new form of organisational logic, slowly emerging and creeping into organisations. The practical outcome of the project logic does not represent a radical break with traditional bureaucratic management models. Instead, it appears to aid the rediscovery and reusing of central bureaucratic practices and procedures, such as reporting, documentation, and standardisation (Fred, 2020). Due to the limited duration of projects, the personnel become more dependent upon the management level (and, ultimately, the political will to decide on new investments). On the other hand, the personnel demand to be "responsibilised" in this manner and strive for a more thorough implementation of the project model (Fred & Hall, 2017). Hodgson et al. (2011) found that the influence of project managers is diluted, and undermined, and bureaucratic reporting structures often curtail their decision-making authority. While Fred (2020) argues that the project logic and the political logic go hand in hand when initiating activities, the project logic seems to create bonds between the organisation's political and administrative parts.

Societal level

At the societal level, the thematic analysis did not find any sub-themes with thematic resemblance within the level, as all implications are related to policy. At the societal level, the research results in the sample literature projectification suggest implications to policy and public governance and macro structures in society, which require we rethink how we view public policy and governance. According to Jensen et al., (2018), it has become increasingly common to use the project as a work method when implementing public policies. Projects are a means of government delegating responsibility for policy outcomes, sharing the responsibilities between central and local levels while remaining in control of programme development, funding, and evaluation (Hodgson et al., 2019 p. 6). Projectification is consistent with the current understanding of governance and the ostensible turn from "government to governance" (Munck af Rosenschold and Wolf 2017). Munck af Rosenschöld (2019) argues that this type of government may have adverse effects due to unintended outcomes when projects fail. Similarly, another article states that projectification could be a barrier to policy implementation (Jensen et al., 2018).

Perhaps the issue is that a new type of policy is needed to fit the project society (Munck af Rosechöld & Wolf, 2017), due to how public institutions do not fit or are challenged (Sjöblom et al., 2013; Ekstedt, 2019). Jensen et al. (2016) argue that society becomes characterised by functions rather than institutions. For example, learning becomes important, not the school; health care becomes central, not the hospital itself. Godenhjelm et al., (2015) argue that current societal institutions are responding to diverse temporal logics. A key challenge for the future is synchronising institutions, policies, and instruments in increasingly complex structures. Lundin et al. (2016) argue that the change toward a project society is causing tensions in the institutions of traditional industrial society. The expansion and spread of project and temporary work challenge the traditional industrial work organisation and its internal and supportive institutions. As project work increases, the labour market changes (Jalocha, 2013; Norkus et al., 2016). However, Ekstedt (2019) argues that

projectification has left few imprints on the institutions and organisations supporting work life. At the same time, in public policy, the technical instrumentality of project management and the ethically driven social good are two different approaches to work, which causes contradictions and damaging consequences (Cicmil and Loacha, 2016).

We have seen a vast increase in how extensive project work is in the national economy (Schoper et al., 2018). Projects are key factors in the development of society (Lundin, 2016) and major economic drivers (Jensen et al., 2016). Cicmil and Loacha (2016) argue that the funding policy where project funding essentially becomes a tyranny of target deadlines and efficiency-obsessed systems of measurement and evaluation of outcomes. The funding policy hence does not serve the flexibility needed when one on the ground discovers there are other more immense and important issues for the "targeted" community than the problem framed by the funders. Henning and Wald (2019) find that the changes at the individual, team and firm levels due to projectification affect the macroeconomic level, causing differences in key sectors, and induced changes in innovativeness and employment. Also, projectification varies between nations; Müller, Zhai et al. (2016) found it low in Scandinavian and Chinese organisations.

Discussion

First, the discussion section debates the possible conflicting impacts of the detected implications at each of the three levels. Last, the discussion section addresses the limitations and importance of defining levels of projectification as a starting point for this review.

The possible conflicting impact of public sector projectification

The SLR analysis exhibits how the empirical evidence provided in the included articles argues that personal projectification is causing a new temporality to work in the public sector. These new project practices contest existing work practices in the permanent structures with the projectified time and space, new professional identity, and understanding of work. Overall, the SLR results on the personal level show that there are interesting work conditions where work has new temporary characteristics. Although the "old" permanent does not vanish. Meaning individuals working on projects must balance these two forms of work. The projectification literature which has researched large functional private companies that offer stable work conditions suggests negative implications and coping strategies because of the tensions of balancing work in projects and lines. These point to implications such as stress, tensions, burnout, extra challenges to project managers, and more (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Hodgson, Paton et al., 2011; Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014; Ballesteros-Sanchez, Ortiz-Marcos et al., 2019). Even though the project workers in public sector organisations have stable work conditions, they still must relate to these seemingly different approaches to work. These are important considerations, as there is a potential negative circular nature that challenges the project resilience of workers in the long run (Cicmil, Lindgren et al., 2016). Understanding how individuals experience project resilience in public sector organisations is important for work

satisfaction and the results of project funds as policy tools. As Wehrens, Oldenhof et al. (2021) argue, the funding bodies are held responsible for the tensions experienced by individuals.

At the individual level, we may be witnessing a more significant or "broader" change of the individual due to the "projectification" of everything, and not an impact unique to the public sector as context and perhaps not solely due to projectification. However, the literature on projectification suggests that the project idea is now a profound trait of the human mind and by following the reasonings from the projectification literature, these other changes are secondary. Jensen, Thuesen et al., (2016) argue that viewing projects as a human condition allow for studies beyond context and the development of theory that allows for fruitful cross-fertilisation. In an increasingly complex world, where the traditional understanding of space, time, and work is changing, it is beneficial to have a common ground for discussing these subjects across fields and disciplines, which the projectification literature provides.

From the projectification literature, we find the concept of "projectified self" that captures how individuals in contemporary neoliberal societies urge to become self-controlling, self-improving, self-commercialising, life-compartmentalising, and deadline-driven (Yannick 2017, Berglund, Lindgren et al., 2020). Olausson and Svensson (2019) suggest viewing public administrators as political entrepreneurs, which is interesting to further evolve as a concept in a public administration context, as it incorporates how projectification enables public administrators to actively pursue goals by retrieving project funds. As the SLR analysis shows, it is crucial to understand the possible negative implications these political entrepreneurs encounter to enhance project performance and resilience to project work.

Nearly all included articles mention that the proliferation of project work transforms the stable structures of organisations as they state what projectification is, which might relate to the strong research tradition in projectification literature on these structural implications. It is also an argument as to why projectification is interesting in a public sector context, where projects represent a break from the old structures and bureaucratic traditions. However, the empirical evidence at the organisational level is paradoxical in this hindsight. Even though projects intents to create flexibility, projectification might strengthen the structures or lead to more control and bureaucracy (Fred, 2020; Mukhtar-Landgren,2021). This paradox is by Hodgson (2004) described as a general feature of post-bureaucracies working as hybrid organisations embodying both bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic logics. This paradoxical feature of projectification of public sector organisations makes it a compelling argument that projects appear as a new form of iron cage, with a relative lack of flexibility and action space (Bailey, Hodgson et al., 2019). Maylor, Brady et al., (2006) labels this implication as a paradox of control where the attraction to projectification appears to lie in the promise to deliver controllability and adventure. This paradoxical situation at the organisational level seems important to address further in public administration research. Often, the argument as to why public sector organisations engage in project work connects to funding mechanisms in public policy and the assumptions about project flexibility and innovation possibilities. While research on public sector projectification shows

that these assumptions might fall short, and the outcome of public policy fails its intent (Jensen et al., 2018; Munck af Rosenschöld, 2019).

Project funding is a means for funders to target areas of development and increase innovation. However, the SLR results suggest it might lead to outcomes where projects have unwanted results. Where local needs are not met, innovation is hindered, and measures end when funding ends. When the funding body is the EU, articles have discussed this implication as "Europeanisation." Both nation-states and local government adapt their activities to receive project funding. The political aspect of these implications overall seems to lack attention. What are the political views on project funding policy and potential policy failure? Öjehag-Pettersson (2017) comments upon this and states that how the politics and power of the project lack attention, compared to other features of NPM, is surprising. The understanding of how public policy is implemented is central for public administration scholars and the backbone of a well-functioning democracy (Jensen et al., 2018). Further research into project funding policy and the implications of projectification should be of practical relevance to planners, implementers, and researchers in public policy and administration. How the project's share of the economy is increasing emphasises the relevance and need for more research on the subject.

This SLR point to conflicting conditions of projectification in the public sector context, where projectification is experienced as both positive and negative (table 3). Continuing to increase the project share of public spending is unwise, as this SLR exhibits that adjustments suppressing the implications of projectification which hinder the policy outcomes from being achieved are needed. A deeper understanding of the conflicting implications at each of the three levels of projectification and the interconnections between them is important. Munck af Rosenschold and Wolf (2017) stated that future research on projectification would benefit from carefully examining the dynamics of projectification, as projects have innovation potential, but funding rules constrain these. As mentioned in the introduction, governments rely on trust. It is in the public interest that the increasing project funding achieves the expected results. Increased attention to projectification in public administration research seems warranted and necessary to equip policymakers with knowledge on the implications of public sector projectification and how to overcome the potential conflicting conditions that cause the project funding policy to fail.

Table 3: Summary of SLR results

Level	Positive implications	Negative implications
Personal	Flexible work conditions. Possibilities to function as a political entrepreneur	Tensions balancing two opposite forms of work
Organisational	Flexible structures and project funds create possibilities to innovative and develop	Funders control development and local needs are not met. Project fatigue and efforts ends when funding ends
Societal	Driver of the economy. Funders could target development and boost innovation	Potential damaging to social good, policy failure and "project tyranny"

Limitations (and benefits) to the analytical approach of levels

There are many choices made when conducting an SLR, all of which influence the outcome. The different choices are presented and debated throughout the method section. One limitation to the transparency of this review is that implications and placement into levels are interpretations made by the author. Sometimes, separating implications in some sources into distinct levels might overanalyse the source's empirical evidence. Often, the articles are not explicit in the level of analysis but rather in the research's subject of interest or context. It is not a critique of the articles that choose a single-level focus. However, it is a remark that the multilevel aspect of the phenomenon often is neglected, which, as Kuura (2011) noted, is an issue overall in the projectification field. The state structure of the public sector, with tight connections between levels, favours a multilevel view of projectification in the public sector context. Hence, this article argues that it might be of greater importance clarify on the level of analysis in public sector projectification than what is necessary for the projectification of private and non-governmental organisations. Hence this approach of being rigid on the level of analysis serves a purpose for delivering on the aim of this article.

The SLR results exhibit interconnections between the levels should get further attention in research and practice. The increased use of projects has conflicting implications at all three levels and implications interconnects between levels. Negative outcomes of projectification in the public sector are possibly overlooked due to possible neglect of the multilevel aspect in theory and practice. The funders view the benefits projects provide in controlling innovation and development, not acknowledging the negative implications occurring at individual and organisational levels. The organisations acknowledge the benefits of projects to get extra funds, the potential to overcome structural hindrances in the hierarchy, and perhaps suppress the negative implications for local needs and individuals working on the projects. Projects are praised for their innovative and developmental possibilities and continue to proliferate. More research is needed to address these conflicting conditions and multilevel dynamics of projectification. Further focus on levels in research and practice seems beneficial to overcome these conflicting conditions and release the innovation potential of projectification in the public sector.

Conclusion

Sjöblom (2009) argued that the proliferation of projects in the public sector has been neglected in the otherwise extensive governance literature, the existing empirical evidence on the consequences of project proliferation is fragmentary, and the theoretical understanding is insufficient. Although the debate is perhaps still neglected in the governance debate, the concept of public sector projectification is getting increasing attention from the projectification literature. Projectification raises the debate on project proliferation from focusing on the increase of projects as a temporary form of organisation in stable structures to how projectification is a new form of stability and continuity (Munck af Rosenschöld, 2019; Forsell et al., 2013). It has developed from the notion of "administrative short-termism" to projectification, where projects are unfolding within the old, not contesting or replacing the old (Fred, 2020).

By detecting and systematising the implications of public sector projectification and placing them within the three levels of personal, organisational, and societal, the SLR contributes to developing the interpretation of projectification understood as a multilevel phenomenon in the public sector context. Jensen, Johansson et al., (2018) proclaimed that the projectification of public policy and organisation carries some inherent complications that are not sufficiently understood by policymakers and current research on policy implementation. The empirical evidence presented in this SLR supports this statement. The implications detected in this SLR demonstrate a complex and conflicting situation in the public sector that potentially hinders the project funds' policy intentions. The projectification of public administrators, public organisations, policy, and institutions has been a focal point of research in the projectification literature in recent years. Still, public sector projectification carries some inherent conflicting multilevel implications that are not sufficiently understood, which deserves attention in research and practice.

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