

Synergising sub-themes and unifying diversity

While papers submitted to *BEPAM* may themselves be classified under various themes, let us momentarily isolate or position ourselves in “*BEPAM* space”, so that “Built Environment Project and Asset Management” becomes our theme. Then taking *BEPAM* as our over-arching theme or frame of reference, the papers we publish would be under various relevant sub-themes. One task that I have found interesting as an Editor, is to identify and map the linkages between the sub-themes covered in an issue (and indeed, at times, across issues), so as to demonstrate potential synergies and even trigger cross-cutting research questions that may inspire subsequent R&D exercises and useful findings. This would be even more rewarding in our case, if the sub-themes are on either side of the present “divide” that *BEPAM* has sought to bridge from the outset, i.e. the usually segregated R&D in “construction project management” vs that in “built asset management”.

Apart from “synergising sub-themes” as above, the second part of the above caption on “unifying diversity” signals the benefits of moving beyond these sub-themes and indeed “behind the scenes” of the papers, to draw on the diverse contexts and backgrounds of the research (or R&D) and even the researchers (authors) so as to identify broader-based patterns and trends that transcend specific contexts, say countries, regions and even author backgrounds, including specific disciplines or strengths. Other benefits from identifying commonalities and connecting apparently diverse and disconnected contexts and backgrounds, arise from generating a broader perspective, as well as an enriched and enhanced “whole” in terms of a collective contribution to the body of knowledge.

The first paper in the current issue is on the “Development of a web-based system for managing suppliers’ performance and knowledge sharing in construction projects” by Zi Quian Li, Hai Chen Tan, Chimay Anumba and Fah Choy Chia. It presents the development of a web-based suppliers’ performance management system for facilitating both supplier selection and the monitoring of supplier performance. One noteworthy feature is the specific provision to recognise a supplier’s knowledge contribution as part of their performance portfolio. This contributes to the body of knowledge in “knowledge management”, apart from its practical objective of triggering a virtuous circle of performance improvements.

The second paper shifts the setting from South East Asia (the above work being based in Malaysia, while one co-author based in USA adds an international perspective too) to West Asia, the focus being on “Challenges to the implementation of building management systems (BMSs) in Saudi Arabia”. Interesting connections to improving “supplier selection and monitoring” are noted with the first paper, given that the second paper identifies the top influential challenges that include “inappropriate selection of the A/E team”; “inappropriate selection of sub-contractors to install the BMS”, “inappropriate selection of the BMS suppliers”, “inadequate initial training for the BMS facility personnel” and “poor operation and maintenance activities”. The authors – Mohammad Hassanain, Ameen Bin-Mohanna, Abdul-Mohsen Al-Hammad and Muizz Sanni-Anibire – focus on the development of an effective BMS implementation plan. Indeed, another co-located sub-theme connection is noted, in that a paper in the previous issue *BEPAM* 7.1, gave a good account of “Physical asset management practices in the Saudi public sector” since improved BMSs should help enhance many physical asset management scenarios in Saudi buildings.

Moving further “west” to Africa, Charles Amoatey and Mawuena Hayibor probe into “Critical success factors for local government project stakeholder management” in Ghana.



Improved “Stakeholder Management” is a “trending” sub-theme attracting attention to help organisations rise beyond traditional limits to performance. The focus on “Local Government” can also be compared with papers in previous issues, and addresses a gap, in that many papers often pay more attention to big projects, whereas a large volume of relatively small value projects add up to significant project portfolios where efficiency gains can make a significant overall cumulative difference.

Indeed, my above observation is substantiated by the purpose of the fourth paper in this issue, which is stated as: “Diminishing local government budgets and the need to reduce highway works activities necessitate cost effective and efficient processes. This paper investigates streamlining road works administrative processes to enhance coordinated working at Derby City Council”. So moving North-West from Africa to the UK, Rizwana Shaheen Hussain, Kirti Ruikar, Marcus Enoch, Nigel Brien and David Gartside present a case study on “Process mapping for road works planning and coordination”, thereby diverting our built asset focus to roads for a while, also in keeping with our diversity, albeit still within the local government sub-theme.

The authors of the fifth paper are also based in the UK, but their work prompts us to “step back” and “zoom out” from our smaller project focus, to a broader and fresh “helicopter overview” of more complex projects. Pournima Sridarran, Kaushal Keraminiyage and Leon Herszon present the results of their study into “Improving the cost estimates of complex projects in the project-based industries”. While homing in on a few “high-impact complexity dimensions [...] which need more attention in reducing unforeseen cost implications”, they also recommend a “knowledge sharing system” to provide better information for cost estimation. This “knowledge sharing” sub-theme connects back to the first paper in this issue itself, thereby also transcending or connecting the contexts and broadening the scope of potential knowledge-sharing systems.

Moving even “further west” to USA, the sixth paper by Kamalesh Panthi, Kanchan Das and Tarek Abdel-Salam, is a specific example under the umbrella of the wider BMSs sub-theme that was examined in the second paper above, although elsewhere. Indeed this example represents a special, but not unusual scenario in many popular locations for vacation homes, given that the energy usage characteristics would differ markedly from traditional residential homes. Drilling into some specific aspects of a BMS, energy consumption was investigated and energy inefficiencies identified through energy modelling software, in their case study of “Sustainability and cost assessment of coastal vacation homes for energy retrofits”.

Juxtaposing the seventh paper against the above, illustrates the diversity of sub-themes covered by *BEPAM*. First, it moves us from the “asset management” realm in the above paper, back to the “project management” domain. Indeed there is the expected mix of papers from both domains in this issue, just as in other *BEPAM* issues. However this paper on “Developing labour productivity norms for aluminium system formwork in Sri Lanka” probes a quite specific case of a very important generic issue – improving productivity. This case study by Ruchini Senarath Jayasinghe and Nirodha Fernando unveils six relevant labour productivity factors in this particular sub-domain. This type of paper could suggest methodologies for adaptation in exploring and developing productivity barriers, drivers and/or norms in other sub-domains.

The final paper is aptly positioned at the end of this mix of paper on “project management” and “asset management” since it homes in on the final phase of a building life cycle, i.e. on “deconstruction”. The authors, Felix Hübner, Rebekka Volk, Anna Köhlen and Frank Schultmann, while based in Germany, have looked much wider apart from digging deep, in their “Review of project planning methods for deconstruction projects of buildings”.

Moving on to forthcoming issues, two Special Issues are planned for 2017: the next *BEPAM* issue 7.3 would be on “Securing Clients’ Objectives throughout Construction

Project Life Cycles”, the Guest Editors being Chamila Ramanayake and Monty Sutrisna (both based at Curtin University, Australia); while the next Special Issue will be on “Emerging Issues in the Built Environment Sustainability Agenda” guest edited by Thanuja Ramachandra in Sri Lanka and Gayani Karunasena in Australia.

Given the wider recognition and increasing popularity of *BEPAM*, I accepted our publishers’ (Emerald’s) recommendation in early 2016, to increase the number of papers published this year too, having only recently increased the number of issues/year from four to five. Our steady organic growth is demonstrated by the fact that we targeted only 14 papers each year in the two issues per year in our first three years. Given the steadily increasing demand and good paper submissions received, we now plan to increase the number of papers targeted for 2018 to 42. This is an increase of four papers, over the 38 planned for 2017, while it is thrice the 14 targeted for even 2013. This reflects the rising demand for *BEPAM* from all stakeholders, which is indeed rising even faster than our growth in the number of issues as indicated by our publisher statistics.

In conclusion, I would like to disseminate and congratulate, respectively, the following *BEPAM* awards and awardees for 2016. The list also provides additional evidence of our “synergies in sub-themes” and “unity in diversity” (as in the caption and thrusts of this editorial), as well as some threads of continuing interest in certain sub-themes such as stakeholder and relationship management and sustainability issues, in specific sub-domains in project or asset management.

Outstanding paper (2016)

Identifying stakeholders’ involvement that enhances project scope definition completeness in Saudi Arabian public building projects – Mohammed K. Fageha, Ajibade A. Aibinu.

Three highly commended papers (2016)

- (1) Analysing relationships between project team compositions and green building certification in green building projects – Jack C.P. Cheng, Vignesh Venkataraman.
- (2) Fault tree analysis method for deterioration of timber bridges using an Australian case study – Weena Lokuge, Nirdosha Gamage, Sujeva Setunge.
- (3) Improving relationships in project teams in Malaysia – Florence Y.Y. Ling, Wei Wey Khoo.

Outstanding reviewers (2016)

Dr Hemanta Doloi – The University of Melbourne, Australia.

Dr Yasangika Sandanayake – University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

Mohan Kumaraswamy