Agile is not the end-game of project management methodologies. How and why project management will continue its path of adaptation...

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previous research

• both the paper’s authors have examined project management from an evolutionary perspective

• this entails in part analysing project management as a collection of memes

• today’s presentation continues that line of research but narrowing the focus to agile methods

• by its nature this research is ongoing and accommodates consideration of alternative views and inferences
reconceptualising project management

- presented a phylomemetic tree to depict inferred relationships among tools and methodologies

the issue at hand

• agile methods are perceived as a revolution in project management

• agile manifesto gathering self-described as organisational anarchists (Beck et. al. 2001)

• but research shows agile methods are merely part of an ongoing evolution of project management
what’s in a meme?

• Dawkin’s “The Selfish Gene” (Oxford University Press 1976)
  
  • gave rise to widespread and diverse research into applications of “memetics”
  
  • a definition...

“The least unit of sociocultural information relative to a selection process that has favourable or unfavourable selection bias that exceeds its endogenous tendency to change”

of memes and memeplexes

- “memeplex” is a grouping of memes which increases the memes’ prospects of survival and propagation better than the memes would individually manage
of memes and memeplexes

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research approach

• project management is a socio-cultural phenomenon

- Socio-Cultural Evolution
  - society and culture evolve in response to environment

- Non-biological Phylogenetic Analysis
  - we can compare this evolution with biological evolution

- Phylomemetic Analysis
  - we can compare the behaviour of memes with genes

- ‘Agile’ Phylomemetic Tree
  - we can trace Agile’s lineage
phylomememetic analysis

“phylomemetics” is to the exploration of the origin and propagation of ideas, or ‘memes’ as “phylogenetics” is to the study of evolutionary relationships among groups of organisms
1. Despite seeming at odds with modern work, **scientific management** still has a strong influence on project management and agile methods.

2. Taylor’s work gave rise to the influence of Henry Gantt ("**Gantt Chart**") and the Gilbreths (Time & Motion, **Process Charts**).

3. Influences coalesced around work in building ships in WW1 (Emergency Fleet Corporation).

4. Example of memes **propagating** in a suitable environment (military-industrial complex) which would come to influence US programs introduced in Japan post-WW2.
5. the **Training Within Industry** program introduced by US to help **rebuild Japanese industry** relied heavily upon the work in the Emergency Fleet Corporation and its **scientific management** influences.

6. Large emphasis upon **standardisation** (e.g. PDCA / SDCA cycles) which originated in the US in the 1920’s - **work simplification** and **process control** were other scientific management tools which took hold in the lean movement.

7. Acknowledged as major influence upon **lean methods** and **kaizen (Toyota Production System)**

8. 1980’s-1990’s saw **Japanese software industry** adopt “**agile project management**” in response to globalisation and move to standardisation.
9. Post-WW1 **US military programs** provided environment for emergence and adaptation of new methods – **incremental methodologies**

10. these had their **roots** also in the early quality movement (Shewhart)

11. various methodologies emerged which influenced the likes of **XP** and **Scrum**
12. Influence of “traditional” project management takes a different path
13. Some traditional memes (e.g. Iron Triangle) are re-cast to suit the new “Agile Marketplace” – need to adapt to survive
14. once-dominant memeplexes (e.g. PMBoK, PRINCE2) try to “attach” themselves to the new environment (e.g. co-hosting in agile methods) to retain relevance
15. agile methods respond through their own adaptation of traditional project management and agile methods to evolve to “Agile Project Management”
looking back
to look ahead

Memetic paradigm frees us to infer how influences interact and without any “grand design”...
implications for business

- diverse “religious views” on project management result in entrenched positions which see opposing views as not being ‘real’ project management, or being ‘dinosaurs’
- regardless, the evolution of project management occurs in response to changes in the socio-cultural environment
- project management also influences how work is organised by adapting memes and forming memeplexes which in turn find new fields of application
- businesses need to be aware of how the environmental shifts, such as globalisation and the adaptation of technologies, impact upon work and embrace approaches to project management
- but, have we reached...
the end ❓❓❓