

KEYWORDS ■ Project management ■ project relationship ■ stakeholders management

ABSTRACT

Project management research has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Traditionally based on positivism and quantitative approaches, work in the field has gradually expanded to include qualitative interpretative approaches (Biedenbach & Müller, 2011). However, the development of new insights seems to have bypassed several key areas within project management, including stakeholder management. Progress relating to this topic could have a theoretical and pragmatic impact. The work of Achterkamp and Vos (2007) and Jepsen and Eskerod (2009), focusing on stakeholders as a key factor in success, has driven interest in this aspect of project management among academics. The result of this data analysis is that researchers have been able to define several observations and questions with the aim of optimizing the complex process discussed by Bourne and Walker (2006).

DISCUSSIONS AND LESSONS
LEARNED FROM THREE ITERATIVE AND
LONGITUDINAL STUDIES AIMING TO

OPTIMIZE THE IDENTIFICATION
AND ANALYSIS PROCESS FOR
STAKEHOLDERS
WITHIN A PROJECT CONTEXT

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LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1990s, authors led by Donaldson and Preston (1995), among others, built on Freeman’s 1984 work, in which stakeholder theory was presented from a primarily strategic and ethical perspective, to present four key perspectives of stakeholder theory, namely descriptive (Jones, 1995), instrumental (Clarkson, 1995), normative and managerial. Two concepts, linked to the current article, were found to be indispensable: identifying and analyzing stakeholders. The issue of stakeholders is more relevant than it has ever been. An increasing number of articles and authors are investigating this project management topic. The Project Management Institute (PMI) has turned its focus on the subject, dedicating an entire chapter to the issue in the latest edition of the PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge). Stakeholder management became a full

knowledge area in the 2013 edition of the guide. Project stakeholder management now includes four processes: identifying, planning, managing and monitoring. PMBOK 2008 already contained a description of two processes, identifying and managing stakeholder expectations, in its chapter on communications management. In the latest edition of PMBOK, two new processes, “Planning stakeholder management” and “Monitoring stakeholder engagement,” were added to the two existing processes to create a new chapter (Chapter 13) entitled: “Project Stakeholder Management.” Some researchers (El-Gohary et al., 2006; Newcombe, 2003; Olander & Landin, 2005) have highlighted the importance of stakeholder involvement in completing projects. It has become increasingly clear that project success is not limited to managing the Golden Triangle of cost, time and quality; it also needs a balanced relationship between the participants and their social environment contexts. Given the trend to open up projects, it has become increasingly difficult to respect the constraints of the Golden Triangle. This creates pressure on constraints, where project managers have to guarantee timely delivery while meeting costs and specification requirements despite the fact that an increasing number of participants are involved. This in turn, has led to a general review of how projects are run: is it possible to complete projects while dealing with various constraints? Back in 1992, Youker pointed out that uncertainty would become a problem for project managers due to the dependency relationship between projects and the uncontrolled elements in their environments. Several more or less elaborate processes and tools have been developed by professionals and academics with the aim of helping project teams identify and analyze stakeholders for their projects. Although the issue of stakeholders is extensively addressed in project management literature, their identification and analysis is less so. Most research into stakeholders has focused on theoretical discussions and debates on the concept of stakeholders and the nature of stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jones, 1999; Rowley,

1997; Frooman, 1999). In fact, stakeholder theory has diversified significantly, which has led to a variety of definitions and perspectives. This highlights the importance of having an understandable model of stakeholder classification in addition to an identification process as the first step in involving (engaging) stakeholders. However, project management literature seems to “lack” a clear and operational approach to stakeholders. In terms of identification, Achterkamp and Vos (2008) used a meta-analysis to demonstrate problems linked to identifying stakeholders, thereby acknowledging the difficulty of this task. Furthermore, of the articles analyzed, eight provide a general explanation of how stakeholder identification took place, while only four go into greater detail. This means that 25 of the articles have not addressed the issue of identifying stakeholders at all. None of the authors have come up with a consensual definition of the “stakeholder” concept. Although various authors have proposed several stakeholder management models, it would seem that there is no coherence between them, nor enough detail within them to be practical (Yang, Shen, Ho, Drew & Xue, 2010). For example, Karlsen (2002), considers “identifying and analyzing the stakeholders” to be the first two essential stages in stakeholder management, although he ignores the previous stage of “collecting relevant information about stakeholders” that Young (2006) considers important. This demonstrates that the authors are contradicting themselves. This contradiction can also be seen in the use of terminology, such as “stakeholder management,” “stakeholder analysis” and “stakeholder engagement” (Yang, Shen, Ho, Bourne, Drew & Xue, 2011). It is, therefore, clear that an overall process model for stakeholders should be defined and developed. Following an impressive literature review, Yang, Shen, Ho, Drew and Xue (2010) highlight what they consider to be the limits of the field. They concluded that a systematic model for stakeholder management needs to be developed, while a range of practical approaches to stakeholder management still needs to be consolidated.

ed. Furthermore, existing models are almost all static and do not allow stakeholder development to be understood, monitored or studied dynamically over time. Tools that currently exist in the literature are, therefore, not longitudinal. The idea of time, integral to longitudinal studies, should be incorporated through chronology rather than duration and requires data gathered over several periods (*or phases*) must be taken into consideration during analysis (*Forgues & Vandangeon-Derumez, 2003*). This would integrate a dynamic aspect that is missing from current stakeholder theories. Gond and Mercier (*2005*) expressed regret on the mainly static nature of these descriptive and normative theories.

Regardless of the approach identifying the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency, whether it was that the one favored by Clarkson (*1995*), that of Mitchell et al. (*1997*) or that of other authors, the lack of coherence among attributes and criteria has always been an issue, preventing the creation of a comprehensive and practical model. Most of these approaches are still linked to attributes taken from normative studies carried out over 20 years ago. However, stakeholder management has evolved significantly, especially over the last 10 years, due not only to the increasingly complex projects, but also to the increasing num-

ber of stakeholders that gravitate around them. This means that greater focus must be given to researching the dynamics of stakeholder management.

1. Methodology

A longitudinal case study was used to investigate the three scenarios presented. Longitudinal methodology makes it possible to address the complex phenomena involved in an interactive and temporal manner in order to respect their dynamic nature (*Patton, 2002*). This approach offers the necessary flexibility to identify complex processes within a specific organizational context. According to the definition by Yin (*1989*), the case study method is a qualitative approach to empirical research which allows complex social phenomena (*events, groups or a collection of individuals, selected in a non-random manner*) to be studied in depth before describing them precisely and interpreting them with relation to the contextual conditions in which they are found. Furthermore, as our research is focused on a dynamic phenomenon that is closely linked to a specific context and the results this creates, we wanted

to approach the study from a procedural and longitudinal perspective. Our aim is to understand how things develop over time.

Although there were some differences in methodology used for each of the three scenarios, the same process was followed for each (*see Figure 1*): the best period in which to start the iterative process was identified, the stakeholders involved in the project were identified (*qualified*), the centrality of the stakeholders chosen was weighted (*quantified*), the project and development of stakeholders was described, and finally, results were interpreted and lessons were extracted.

The only methodological element that varied throughout the above process was the definition of critical periods in Stage 1. For Project 1 (*Quebec City Amphitheater*), the media weight developed by Influence Communication was used, while in Project 2 (*Niobec Mine*) and Project 3 (*Val-Jalbert Mini Power Plant*), the periods were identified once monthly average production was overtaken, leading to media alerts (*Giasson, Brin & Sauvageau, 2010*). Researchers followed the established process for the remaining projects.

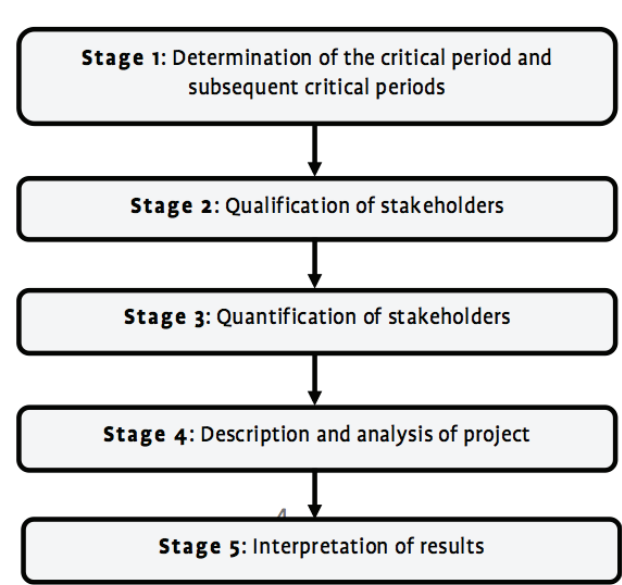


FIGURE 1. Research process

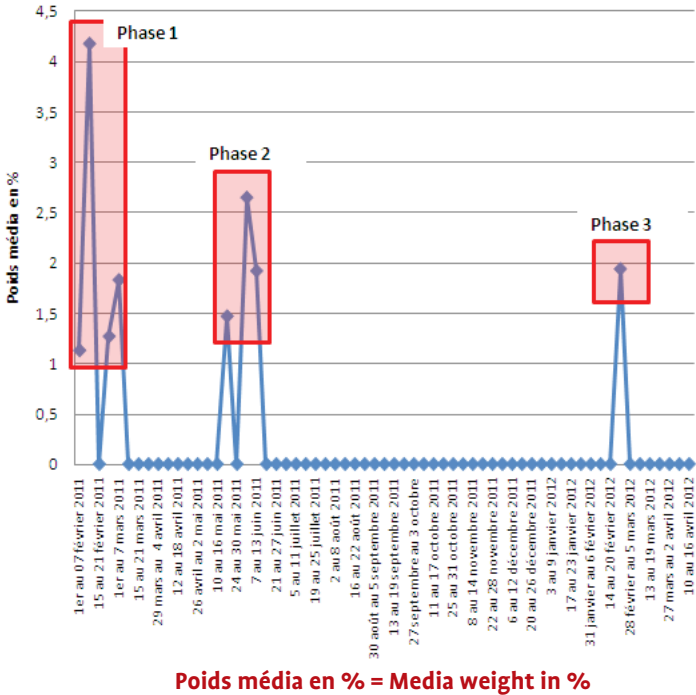


FIGURE 2. Progress of the Quebec City amphitheater project

FIGURE 3. Changing stakeholders over the course of the Quebec City amphitheater project

	Stakeholders	P1	P2	P3
1	Quebecor	12	14	15
2	Quebec City	17	14	14
3	J'ai Ma Place Group (Mario Bédard)	14	11	11
4	Nordique Nation	12	11	12
5	City of Winnipeg	7	4	
6	Population of Quebec (excluding Montreal)	5	5	6
7	Population of Montreal	5	5	6
8	Population of Quebec City	8	8	8
81	Population of the area east of Quebec		6	
9	Rest of Canada	4	3	3
10	Quebec provincial government	13	13	14
11	Canadian government	6	4	4
12	NHL Commissioner (amphitheater)	9	9	5
131	Media (Quebecor Group)	15	14	14
132	Media (excluding Quebecor Group)		11	13
14	Montreal Canadians	6	7	7
15	NHL Players' Association	8	7	7
16	Mayor of Québec City	17	17	17
17	True North Sports and Entertainment	10	2	
18	Canadian Olympic Committee	10	9	6
19	Quebec Olympic Committee	9	10	6
20	Lobby groups supporting the project	8	8	8
21	Lobby groups opposed to the project	8	8	10
22	Steering Committee		8	8
23	Project Director (J. A. Bédard)		7	7
24	Project manager (Consortium Pomerleau-Verreault)		7	9
25	Quebec Lobbyists Commissioner		6	3
26	D. de Belleval		14	10
27	A. Kahir (Québec Solidaire)		11	6
28	Parti Québécois (PQ)		10	8
29	NHL Commissioner (Return of Nordiques)			11
30	Barreau du Québec			10
31	Phoenix			8
	Average	9.23	8.48	8.87

For Stage 2, stakeholders were identified manually based on a document review of local press coverage of the targeted project. Only in Project 3 (*Val-Jalbert Mini Power Plant*) were occurrences between the selected stakeholders completed using the qualitative analysis software Atlas/ti.

To quantify stakeholders (*Stage 3*) and highlight their centrality, the authors (*Bousquet, Diallo & Leyrie, 2013*) selected criteria that appeared most regularly in the literature in order to develop a centrality score (*centrality = interest + power + position + involvement*). Once this was calculated for all stakeholders, it became easier to note which seemed to be more central to the project during the period studied.

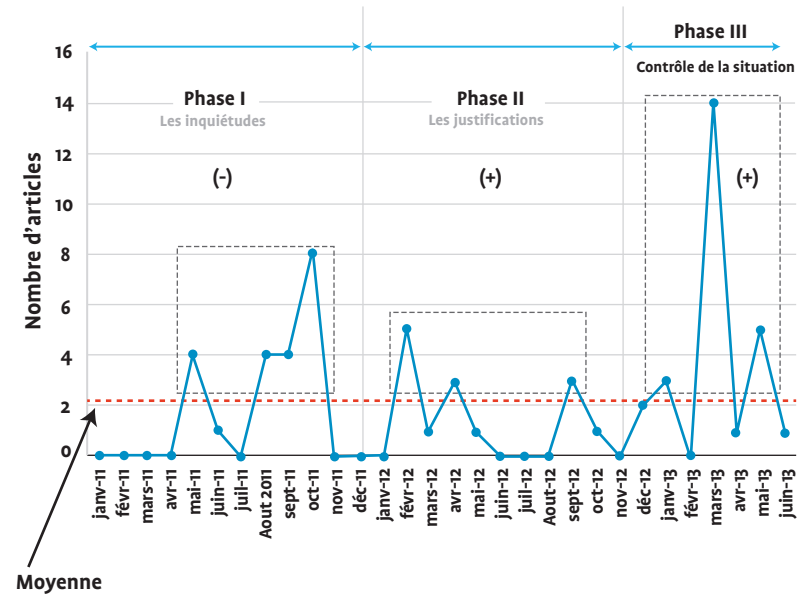
The two final stages (*4 and 5*) made it possible to describe the project using a sociogram as well as to interpret the relationships between participants (*stakeholders*) and to draw lessons from these with the aim of developing theoretical and practical aspects.

2. Results

Description of Project 1: Quebec City amphitheater

The Quebec City amphitheater project was announced in January 2011, with a cost of around 400 million dollars and an anticipated delivery during the summer of 2015. Over the past 4 years, the project has undergone three distinct phases (see **Figure 2**), triggered

FIGURE 4. Progress of the Niobec mine expansion project



by key media alerts. Each of these alerts represents a period of media activity, a sign that something is happening among the project participants as the media reflects any activity among stakeholders.

Progress of the project:

Over the last four years, the project has been marked by three phases, each triggered by a media alert. At the project launch (*Phase 1*), stakeholders were mainly positive towards the project. There was immediate popular enthusiasm, fueled by interest in adding an NHL team to the project. There were many stakeholders, and they were relatively active on a provincial scale. Phase 2 was triggered by the investment of 200 million dollars into the project by the Quebec government and was negative from a media perspective. The announcement instantly polarized debates linked to media reports and to the issue of such large-scale investment in a private project. The final phase occurred almost a year later and could also be defined as negative, as it mainly dealt with the developer justifying costs and making repeated promises that the project would not go over the initial estimated budgets.

The stakeholders:

The centrality of stakeholders to this project evolved over time (see **Figure 3**). Nevertheless, it is clear that only a few remained constantly central to the project, such as Quebecor Group, Quebec City, J'ai Ma Place Group, Nordique Nation, the Quebec government, the media and the Mayor of Quebec. The number of unavoidable stakeholders with whom the developer needed to interact increased over the years. The more the project was disputed, the more the "hostile" stakeholders came to the front of the media, while the popular support linked to the project launch seemed to evaporate. Also noteworthy is the fact that aside from meetings open to the public, no relationship-building measures seemed to have

FIGURE 5. Changing stakeholders over the course of the Niobec mine expansion project

	Stakeholders	P1	P2	P3
1	Jean-Lin Otis, development advisor to the Maximization Committee of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (C MAX)	6	6	6
2	Martine Bourgeois, General Director of the Center for International Solidarity of Saguenay-Lac- Saint-Jean	4	4	4
3	The federation of manufacturing industries (FIM-CSN)	5	5	5
4	Marie-Luce Martin, Mayor of Saint-Honoré	17	17	17
5	Town of Saint-Honoré	17	17	17
6	The company Iamgold	17	17	17
7	City of Saguenay	14	11	10
8	Guy Auger, project manager for the promotion of the Mining Industry Sectoral Workforce Committee	6	6	6
9	FTQ Regional Council of Saguenay-Lac- Saint-Jean	6	6	6
10	The federal government	11	10	10
11	Jean Tremblay, Mayor of Saguenay	14	14	12
12	Plan Nord by the Quebec government	5	5	5
13	Francois Plourde, President of the Saint-Honoré Niobec mine trade union	10	8	8
15	Elected officials for the Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean region	14	14	14
16	Regional media	9	10	10
18	Residents of Saint Honoré	10	12	11
19	Serge Bureau	8	8	8
20	Serge Simard, former Minister of Natural Resources	14	12	12
21	Bruno Tremblay, Saint-Honoré Town Councilor		7	7
22	Christine Dufour, Managing Director of the Fjord MRC		9	7
23	Mayors of the Fjord MRC		10	8
24	Gilles Ferlatte, Vice President and Managing Director of Niobec		17	17
25	Pauline Marois, Prime Minister of Quebec		12	12
26	Population of the Saguenay- Lac-Saint-Jean region		9	9
28	Office of environmental public hearings (BAPE)		9	9
29	Environmental committee		12	10
30	Yves Bourguignon, Director of projects for public consultation on the future of mining in Quebec		10	10
32	Michel Venne, Managing Director of INM		9	8
33	Government of Quebec		14	14
36	Municipalities in the region		12	12
39	Jean-Marie Claveau, MP of Dubuc PQ			12
40	Association of owners neighboring Niobec (APVN)			11
41	Saguenay Chamber of Commerce			9
43	Quebec Chamber of Commerce Federation			11
44	Niobec mine			17
45	Martine Ouellet, Minister of Natural Resources			13
48	Regional Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development			9
49	Michel Lavoie, Director of the Regional Council for the Environment			9
51	Marc Asselin, Mayor of Alma			10
52	Nicolas Marceau, Minister of Finance			9
53	Alexandre Cloutier, Minister in charge of the Nord-du-Québec region			12
54	Jean D'Amour, opposition party spokesperson for mines			10
55	Gérald Savard			12
56	Éric Dufour, President of the Saguenay Chamber of Commerce			10
57	Stephen Letwin, President of the mining company Iamgold			17
58	Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean Chambers of Commerce group			10
59	Members of the Saguenay Chamber of Commerce			8
60	Organisme de bassin versant du Saguenay			9
61	Stéphane Bédard, President of the Treasury Board and MP for Chicoutimi, Minister			14
Average		9.85	9.54	9.59

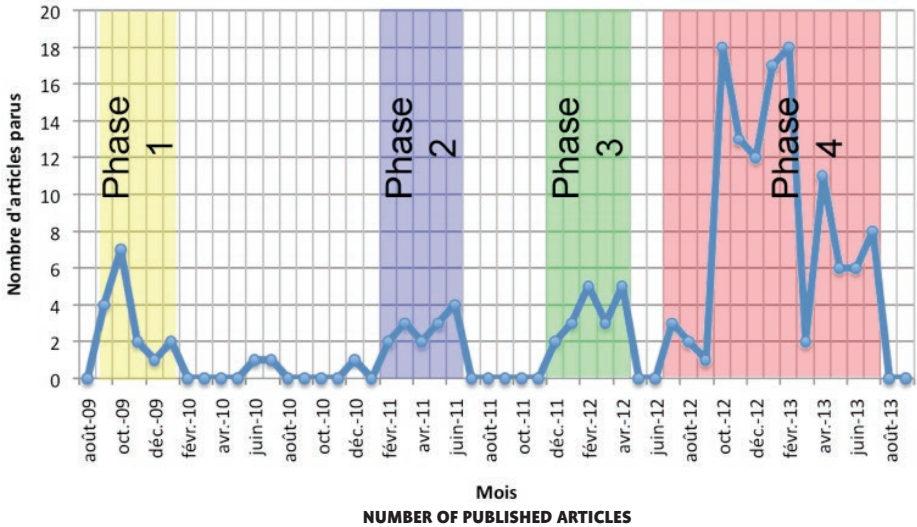


FIGURE 6. Progress of the Val-Jalbert mini power plant project

	Stakeholders	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
1	MRCs affected by the project	17	17	14	17
2	Community energy trust of Lac-Saint-Jean	17	17	16	17
3	Population of the MRCs	7	6	8	11
4	Hydro-Québec	10		12	12
5	Historic site of the village of Val-Jalbert	12	12	13	13
6	Engineering firms hired by the SECLSJ	7			11
7	Office of environmental public hearings	3	3	14	14
8	Government	7	7	13	16
9	Fondation Rivières	7		15	15
10	Local entrepreneurs		3		7
11	Media		8	7	8
12	Experts hired by the SECLJ		6		6
13	Opponents of the project			13	15
14	Government experts			4	5
15	Jobs created			3	
16	Architect hired by the SECLSJ			5	
17	Club plein air de Roberval			3	3
18	Organisme de bassin versant du Lac-Saint-Jean			5	
19	Regional Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development			5	
20	Government opposition				9
21	Supporters of the project				8
22	Conseil du patrimoine culture du Québec				7
23	Energy regulator				6
24	Judge Sandra Bouchard				3
25	Independent experts				3
Average		9.67	8.78	9.38	9.81

FIGURE 7. Changing stakeholders over the course of the Val-Jalbert mini power plant project

been implemented to enhance the social acceptability of the project.

Description of Project 2: Niobec mine expansion project

The project to enlarge the Niobec mine, owned by the lamgold Group and specializing in the extraction of niobium, was announced in January, 2011. The 1.5 billion dollar project is ongoing. Once again, three phases characterized the project over the last 4 years (see Figure 4). In the Fall of 2014, the Niobec mine was sold to foreign interests.

- Nombre d'articles = Number of articles
- Les inquiétudes = Concerns
- Les justifications = Explanations
- Contrôle de la situation = Monitoring the situation
- Moyenne = Average

Progress of the project:

Occurring soon after the project was announced, the first phase was typified by the seemingly unanimous dissatisfaction of some regional participants. Environmental issues and concerns linked to a lack of information about the project seemed to worry everyone from the general public to the Mayor. In contrast to the amphitheater project, this project was characterized by significant popular criticism from the very start. Very quickly, the organization behind the project set up a press liaison office to “manage” relations with their stakeholders, thereby entering the justification phase. Participant opinion (for and against) could be defined as mixed for this second phase, as the project was still heavily criticized. The final phase, positive from a media perspective, could be considered a monitoring phase, during which efforts at communicating and building relationships seemed to bring results. The team set up to

manage media relationships made a significant effort to distribute information through letters, websites and one-on-one meetings to justify the choices made by the organization and finally to reassure participants. Since the communication and relationship-building efforts have been implemented, the organization seems more in control, as negative media reports relating to the project seem to have disappeared.

The stakeholders:

The centrality of stakeholders to this project evolved over time (see Figure 5). Nevertheless, it is clear that only a few remained constantly central to the project, such as the Mayor of St-Honoré, the St-Honoré town council, lamgold (owner of the Niobec mine), the federal government, the Mayor of the town of Saguenay, elected officials from the region and the residents of St-Honoré. As in the previous case, stakeholders were dynamic rather than static as they evolved over time. An interesting point to note was that, as the project progressed, the number of stakeholders grew, which made the identification and analysis of stakeholders increasingly difficult. In contrast, as the project progressed, the number of stakeholders “opposed” to the project decreased. This seemed to coincide with the communication and relationship-building strategy implemented by the Niobec mine in order to manage participant relationships.

Description of Project 3: Val-Jalbert mini power plant

In 2009, a project to build a mini hydroelectric power plant at Val-Jalbert in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean was announced. With a budget of around 59 million dollars, the project was led by the Community Energy Trust of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and mainly funded by the Quebec government.

Progress of the project:

This project seemed to have been marked by four phases (see Figure 6). The first of these occurred in the Fall of 2009 and revealed few challenges to the project. Media coverage focused mainly on events supporting the project. This was the period in which the Community Energy Trust of Lac-Saint-Jean submitted a bid to the call for bids launched by État Hydro-Quebec as part of the program to buy 150MW of electricity

from small power plants. The second targeted phase occurred from February to June, 2011. As in the previous phase, the media mainly covered events that supported the project. Project consultation sessions for the general public were held during this phase. The third phase occurred from December, 2011 to what date? During this phase, dissent against the Val-Jalbert mini plant project began to grow. Protesters began to be featured in the media coverage and the public sessions of the Office of environmental public hearings took place. The fourth and final phase took place between July, 2012 and July, 2013 and was the most critical phase of the project in terms of regional media coverage. Most of the articles were considered negative for the project. During this phase, several articles were published focusing on protesters against the project. This phase coincided with the publication of a favorable report for the project by the BAPE and with the start of work on the project itself.

The stakeholders:

Once again, it can be clearly seen (Figure 7) that the number of stakeholders grew over time. In addition, the centrality of stakeholders evolved according to the various phases. As the project progressed, the number of stakeholders opposed to the project increased. Nevertheless, some stakeholders, such as MRC, the Energy Trust, the population of MRC, BAPE and the Quebec government, remained central to the project for its duration. It is interesting to note that not only did the stakeholders evolve as the project progressed, but their centrality also evolved according to the various phases. The number of stakeholders also grew over time in this third case study. It is interesting to note that opposition to the project reappeared at several points during the project, possibly due to the fact that no specific actions were taken to improve stakeholder management.

Although it was innovative, as with any methodology, had its limitations. The main limitation was the fact that the identification and analysis process was based on an approach that was “external” to the projects studied. From the very start, the process was based on an analysis of secondary data (newspapers), supported by an evaluation of participant (stakeholder) centrality by researchers involved in the process.

3. Discussions, limitations and lessons learned

As in every research project, studying these three specific cases revealed limitations and lessons to be learned in the identification and analysis of stakeholders.

The main limitation was the fact that the methodology used was “external” to the situation, as it relied on newspaper articles to trigger the identification and analysis process. Researchers defined the centrality score before analyzing project and stakeholder development.

The first lesson learned was that the complexity of the process was linked to the difficulty in triggering the identification and subsequent analysis of the stakeholders. Using a media weight would provide a more systematic and “objective” way of triggering the process. The fact that occurrences had to be recorded manually from newspaper articles could become particularly restrictive for large-scale projects involving several thousand media articles, although it is not an insurmountable difficulty, while projects remain “regional” and only covered by a few media outlets.

The second lesson was that understanding the stakeholder phenomenon using a longitudinal approach should be central to any concerns relating to this subject. All three scenarios studied revealed an increasing number of stakeholders as the projects progressed. Some were visible from the beginning, while others appeared later in the process. In contrast to most tools developed, too few take this aspect into account.

The third lesson was that any proposed centrality score must be simple and representative. By choosing the four most commonly cited

criteria in the literature, the authors attempted to make this tool easy to use and indicative in order to define, as clearly as possible, the position of participants within the projects. The evolution of stakeholder position within the project must be monitored, even after the project has been delivered.

4. Conclusion

There seems to be some agreement on the importance of looking more closely at the identification and management of stakeholders, a topic gaining unprecedented popularity within the project management field (*Littau, Jujagiri, et al., 2010*). Furthermore, there seems to be a clear need to develop more pragmatic processes and tools to make it possible for project managers to improve their understanding of the subject. We believe that the process proposed in this article is a good example of the current convergence within project management research between traditionally positivist, quantitative approaches and more modern, qualitative, interpretative approaches.

The three cases studied made it possible to highlight elements linked to stakeholders, such as their growth over time, the importance of the media, the advantages of implementing relationship-building measures, the rapid identification of stakeholders central to the project and the importance of having a longitudinal identification and analysis process.

This article provides an opportunity for reflection due to the methodology that made it possible to improve the identification and analysis of stakeholders. Future work should address the gap surrounding “how.” In other words, how should project managers manage stakeholders in order to maximize the success of their projects?



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