A Heideggerian paradigm for project management: breaking free of the disciplinary matrix and its Cartesian ontology

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to identify the new insights that emerge if key concepts in Heidegger's magnum opus Being and Time are applied to the phenomena of projects and their management. A theoretical approach is adopted with an introduction being provided to key Being and Time concepts, followed by the application of these concepts to the phenomena of projects and their management. A particular focus is on the relevance of Heidegger's ontology in underpinning the exploration of the 'lived experience' of project management and the disclosing of the actuality of project phenomena. It is found that key concepts in Heidegger's Being and Time (such as temporality, modes of being, being-in-the-world, dealing and the they) provide insights into various aspects of project management. The significance of such findings is demonstrated through a reconceptualisation of projects; and differentiation between, and reconceptualisation of project management versus project managing.

Keywords:

Theory of research into project management | Managing projects | Heidegger

1 Introduction

Heidegger's Being and Time provides an alternative paradigm for considering the phenomena of projects. Traditionally, project research and practice has been underpinned by a Cartesian paradigm. Bredillet (2010) provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical perspectives, ontologies and epistemologies of the nine project management schools; identifying that four of these schools are underpinned solely by positivism and the remaining five have positivists components. The necessity to explore the use of a paradigm that breaks fully from this positivist perspective has been instigated by the 'lived experience' of project management discourse. This paper explores the application of Heidegger's Being and Time as an alternative ontology that can underpin a shift to a non-positivist paradigm for exploring projects and this aligns with the 'live experience' discourse.

This paper provides a brief overview of the literature related to this exploration. Key concepts of Being and Time are introduced and applied to the phenomena of project management. The discussion draws together a selection of insights from the theoretical exploration to demonstrate the significance of adopting such a paradigm. For example, we disclose the experiential differences between operational versus project work and project management and project managing. Because of space limitations this paper cannot provide a comprehensive identification of all insights that can emerge from a Heideggerian perspective. But it is a beginning. A detailed comparison of the outcomes of the Heideggerian insights to current perspectives or project management schools is also outside the scope of this conceptual investigation, and no doubt a paper topic in itself.

2 Literature Overview

2.1 Disappointment in delivery yet 'growth' in the discipline

We need not delve far into the project management literature, or indeed mainstream media to see the ongoing dissatisfaction with projects and project management research (Bloch, Blumberg & Laartz 2012; Cicmil & Hodgson 2006b; Geraldi, Maylor & Williams 2011; KPMG 2013; McHugh & Hogan 2011; PM Solutions Research 2011; Thomas 2006; Winter et al. 2006; Zwikael & Bar-Yoseph 2004). Despite this, there continues to be a commitment by organisations to pursuing project management; ongoing growth in the number of project management methods/models/tools available; and in the uptake of certifications and memberships offered by the project management associations (Project Management Institute 2014; Wells 2012). This situation begs the question, 'if projects are not delivering, why is project management as a discipline continuing to grow?'.

2.2 Project Management schools and theoretical perspectives

As per Bredillet (2004), project management has evolved from a positivist paradigm and this dominates traditional tools, techniques and methods. Bredillet (2004, pp. 1-2) highlights that this foundation may be leading to the problems that have been noted in practice and is a "barrier to effective understanding and communication of the true nature of project management". Bredillet (2010) also provides a detailed discussion of the nine 'schools of project management', outlining their respective ontological, epistemological and theoretical perspectives. Smyth and Morris (2007) sampled the literature and found that over 66% of articles had a dominant positivist research epistemology. The literature was also examined by Pollack (2007) in terms of the soft versus hard paradigms. It was found that project management is predominately grounded in the hard paradigm associated with positivism.

However, there is a growth in the adoption of a soft paradigm in the literature that is associated with an interpretivist epistemology.

2.3 Move to 'lived experience'/being/becoming

The Rethinking Project Management network (Winter et al. 2006) was a milestone in redirecting our thinking about projects and their management. This has been followed by a growing commentary on the need to capture the 'lived experience' of project management (Cicmil & Hodgson 2006a; Cicmil et al. 2006; Hodgson & Cicmil 2006; Lineham & Kavanagh 2006; Smyth & Morris 2007). Such discussions include concepts such as project management as "becoming" rather than "being" (Chia 2013; Lineham & Kavanagh 2006) and adopting new research methods that embrace the relevance of context (Blomquist et al. 2010; Cicmil & Hodgson 2006b; Drouin, Muller & Sankaran 2013, Sec. 2; Smyth & Morris 2007).

The being/becoming discussion is of particular relevance to this paper as it recognises the ontological shift that is required to understand the 'lived experience' of project management. Being ontology focuses on objects, things and states in an objectified and discrete manner. The becoming ontology is interested in activity, process and dynamics (Lineham & Kavanagh 2006). The becoming approach is in stark contrast to traditional project management ontology which is largely positivist and aligned with traditional, objectified scientific paradigms (Bredillet 2010; Cicmil & Hodgson 2006b; Lineham & Kavanagh 2006; Oleary & Williams 2013; Packendorff 1995; Smyth & Morris 2007).

With the exception of this move towards a becoming ontology, there is minimal discussion in project management regarding the ontology underpinning project management research and practice. Exceptions include a study by Smyth and Morris (2007) and Ahlemann et al. (2013) on the paradigms (and lack-thereof) underpinning project management research; and Morris' (2013) and Gauthier and Ika (2012) discussions on ontologies in project management, including: realist perspectives, to post-modern and hyper-modern (i.e. becoming rather than being).

The drive towards understanding the 'lived experience' has been most evident in discussion and application of alternative research methods (Nocker 2006; Oleary & Williams 2013; Wells 2012). We would highlight that these alternative epistemologies and research methods can only provide truly new insights (and demonstrate research methodology integrity (Cicmil 2006; Drisko 1997; Gauthier & Ika 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009)) if there is a strong ontological foundation that aligns the research objectives, its epistemology, and research method.

2.4 Heidegger in the Project Management literature

Heidegger's Being and Time (1962) offers an ontological alternative to Cartesian subject-object dualism that, since Descartes, has not only underpinned the majority of positivist research (Laverty 2008; Orlikowski 2009), but has also dominated Western thinking at-large (Grof 1983; Seigel 2005). The potential application of Heidegger's thinking has already been raised in the project management literature. For example, Sewchurran (2008) highlighted an alignment between projects as objects versus 'lived experiences' and Heidegger's comparison of theoretical attitude and signification, and makes a case for an alternative approach to the education of project practitioners. Sewchurran's (2008b) dissertation highlighted that whilst there is a drive towards empirical work that explores the

'lived experience' of project management there is a need for an ontological shift to support this epistemological/methodological shift. Subsequently, Sewchurran draws on Heidegger and others to create a regional ontology to underpin debates in, and to improve information systems project management coherence (Sewchurran, Smith & Roode 2010).

Bredillet, Hatcher and Tywoniak (2013) draw on Heidegger from a praxis or projects as practice perspective. Muller, Sankaran and Drouin (2013) recognise Heidegger in terms of his influence on the practice turn. In Cicmil et al. (2006) Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* is specifically referenced to highlight the concept of an involved-in-the-world-manager.

Such discussions have focused on particular components of Heidegger's work or have drawn on this philosophical approach as part of broader discourse. Consequently, there remains an opportunity to devote attention to a broad range of Heidegger's concepts and consider what specific insights they may provide to the phenomena of projects and their management at the level of fundamental ontology. Indeed, and as raised by Söderlund (2004), surely understanding what *is* project management and what is it to *be* a project manager is foundational to understanding the 'lived experience' of projects and their management.

2.5 Heidegger in related disciplines

Being and Time has received attention in allied disciplines that have also traditionally been underpinned by dualism and positivist research methods. For example, Introna (1997) explores information and power drawing on Heidegger's ontology. Sewchurran (2008a) and O'Donovan and Roode (2002) also draw on Heidegger when discussing the ontology and emergence of the information systems discipline; a model for conceptualising the emergence of discipline based on Heidegger's thinking is proposed. Heidegger has also been drawn upon in the discussion of business strategy, particularly in terms of emergent strategy and the strategy-as-practice shift (Chia & Holt 2006; Tsoukas 2010).

In summary, there is an interest in discussion of ontology that supports exploration of the 'lived experience' of project management; and this has included preliminary references to the potential insights that can be derived by applying Heidegger's thinking to project management. However, these existing discussions are considered to be in their infancy.

3 Research Question

This paper is seeking to contribute to the literature on the ontology of a 'lived experience' approach to projects. Specifically, what new insights emerge if key concepts in Being and Time are applied to the phenomena of projects and their management?

4 Research Method

To follow is a theoretical exploration relating key concepts in Heidegger's Being and Time to the phenomena of projects. A comprehensive discussion and critique of the nuances of Heidegger's concepts and terminology in Being and Time is beyond the scope of the article. Rather, key concepts, such as *modes of being*, *temporality*, and *being-in-the-world* are used as a framework, a paradigmatic lens, to explore differently the various aspects of project management. The concepts have been selected for their ability to demonstrate significant insights that can emerge from this ontology. Within each section of the exploration an

introduction to the Heideggerian concept is provided followed by an application of the concept to the project phenomena. The insights are summarised in Table 1.

5 A Theoretical Exploration

5.1 Being and Time: Key concepts applied to projects

It is important to understand what we mean by exploring the 'lived experience' of the project manager. We can explore the 'lived experience' by asking such questions as

- To the individual, what *is* project management?
- How is *being* a project manager different from *being* anything else?

We have highlighted the words *be* (having existence), and *being* (the suffix-ing denoting an action or result of having existence) because what we mean by them is particularly important in this 'lived experience' enquiry. Throughout the remainder of this paper, the Heideggerian terms have also been italicised.

Before proceeding into the detail of the theoretical exploration, we provide an example of how these terms might be encountered and contextualised by means of a small fictional scenario grounded on plausible lived experiences.

> ***Simon's colleague:***
> Simon, I hear your project is behind schedule and over budget. What's the problem?
> ***Simon:***
> Well this particular project and all that's involved in it (*the-world*-of the project) is a complex interconnection of subcontractors, our people (*Dasein)*, tools, and equipment (*equipmental totality*).
> I'm using (*ready-to-hand*) various tools and techniques to (*in-order-to*) help us achieve our ultimate aim (*for-the-sake-of-which*). But to be honest I didn't ask to *be* the project manager on this project. I just found myself (*thrownness*) *being* the project manager one day. I really do give a damn (*care*) how things turn out, but my efforts (*coping*) are constrained by past event in terms of how much I can do now and what future options are available (*projection*).
>
> I want to do the right thing as a project manager and for this situation (*authenticity*), but, I find myself constantly fighting against the done thing… what *they* say I should be doing to resolve the problems. I ask other project managers (the *they*) at our chapter meetings and refer to the textbooks (the *discourse* of the *they*) for advice, but *they* stand on the outside, detached, and look in as if we were some scientific experiment that can be deconstructed and considered as parts *(a universe)*.
>
> The recommendations *they* give me are really just *idle talk* that responds to general situations rather than to my unique, concrete experience. *They* don't know what it's like inside this *world*; it's not all about talk, it's tacit knowledge and action, and how equipment and people work together that really affect the project's status. I've got stuff impacting me right-here (*nearness*), right-now (the *now* or *present*), and other stuff that is more distance but still on my radar (*spatiality*). All *they* can see is this stuff in a decontextualised (*present-at-hand*) manner. I'm *in the world*-of this project, and I'd like to drag the truth (*primordial discourse*) about what's really going on out into the light (*clearing*). But if I expect to retain my standing as a professional project manager I'll have to behave (be *unauthentic*) and conform with their advice

> (*fallingness: fall away from ourselves*); spending my time on Gantt charts and work breakdown structures (*signs*) that aren't actually helping me solve the issues. I am not confident enough (*anxiety*) to *take a stand* and respond to the concrete situation.
>
> So until the company starts looking at my situation as a complex nexus of equipment (*ready-to*-hand) and people (*Dasein*); and whose future possibilities are affected by their past (*facticity*) and the fact that they are already infused *in-the-world*-of the project (*temporality*), I've got no chance of making schedule.

5.1.1 Modes of Being

Being and Time identifies three primary *modes of being*: *Dasein*, *ready-to-hand*, and *present-at-hand* (Blattner 2006; Wheeler 2013). *Dasein* is a type of being that can take a stand on itself, it can seek to inquire about its own being (Cerbone 2008). *Dasein* is also characterised by its ability to *care* or 'give a damn'; it can have an attitude towards things (Kaelin 1988). *Dasein* have *for-the-sake-of-which's* that are fundamental to their being but not an end goal. It is important to note that it is not any anatomical/biological difference that sees Heidegger assigning humans as *Dasein*, but rather key characteristics such as giving a damn (caring) and taking a stand on itself that differentiates it from other *modes of being* (Greaves 2010). For example, neither things nor objects can 'give a damn' or inquire about the nature of their being.

Heidegger's classic example of things *being ready-to-hand* is a hammer (Heidegger 1962). The *ready-to-hand mode of being* includes objects that are useful to *Dasein* (Blattner 2006). Traditionally, the *ready-to-hand* mode includes *Dasein's* equipment that enables *Dasein* to achieve its *for-the-sake-of-which* (Dreyfus 1991). A computer is perhaps a more accessible example of *ready-to-hand*. If we are asked to explain what a computer *is*, we are likely to indicate what it can do for us, and how it connects to other pieces of equipment. We might say that a device is *being* a computer because it enables us to communicate via email, or access the internet. We might say that a computer is heavy and a tablet is light, but such statements are only possible because we are acknowledging that the items are tightly coupled into the nexus of a greater whole related to that equipment. A tablet can only be lighter than a computer because we know what a computer is.

Within the *ready-to-hand mode of being*, it is necessary to distinguish into three further concepts: *ready-to-hand* equipment that has become *transparent*, *ready-to-hand* equipment that we notice but is fulfilling its role, and *ready-to-hand* equipment that is not fulfilling its role, it is broken or nonfunctional (Dreyfus 1991). According to Heidegger, much of the *ready-to-hand* equipment that we encounter in our daily lives we do not even notice (Blattner 2006). For example, we walk through a doorway as a means of moving from one room to another, but we would normally not be conscious of the doorway as a device that enabled this action. Essentially, the doorway is *transparent* to us in the majority of our day-to-day life. However, there are situations in which whilst an object is still equipment it moves from being *transparent* into awareness.

Firstly, let us explore a piece of equipment that is not broken, but with which we do not have an intrinsic easefulness with the equipment; we are aware of the equipment. For example, we might be approaching a hotel door, but instead of being a door that we are accustomed to transitioning through several times a day, it is a revolving door. We know that this is equipment for moving from outside to inside the hotel (the device is *being* a door), but we are

not as familiar with this type of door as that with which we normally interact. As such, we will likely need to be more focused in our use of the door than normal. It is not that it is broken; we are just not yet sufficiently familiar with its use, and our interaction with it is not yet *transparent*.

We can also have *ready-to-hand* equipment that is broken; it has become *unready-to-hand* (Dreyfus 1991; Greaves 2010). A piece of equipment reveals itself to us as *unready-to-hand* when it is not operating as expected; it is not enabling us to proceed in our activity as we would normally do so (Blattner 2006). This may be when a door handle 'sticks' and the device that was *being* a door reveals itself to us by not opening. In such cases, the equipment (the door through the door handle) is *unready-to-hand*. It is not working as expected to enable us to carry out a particular task and the revealed equipment necessitates our attention.

Present-at-hand is the final *mode of being* and is characterised by omitting any purpose that the object may have for *Dasein* or in its environment (Brandom 2005). It is the *mode of being* when objects are decontextualised, and we adopt the traditional scientific, Cartesian, and reductionist approach, exploring the object's characteristics without reference to its environment or purpose (Cerbone 2008; Greaves 2010; Heidegger 1962). In our computer example, if we distilled a computer to titanium and cooper and plastic and measured its weight at 2kg, we are exploring the object in terms of its *present-at-hand* mode. Studying the computer as titanium, cooper and plastic and not in terms of its whole or the purpose which it serves amongst other equipment and for *Dasein* actually tells us less about the object in terms of its place in human existence than a *ready-to-hand* perspective.

The types of *ready-to-hand* mode provide insights in project management. For example, perhaps much of what project managers *(Dasein)* do is actually *transparent* to them. What they do is so familiar that it is not mentioned when they are discussing the phenomena of projects. It is more likely that those things that take more effort, are more challenging (i.e. not transparently *ready-to-hand*), are not working (i.e. *unready-to-hand*), or have a closer alignment to a *Dasein's ultimate-for-the-sake-of-which* will dominate conversation. We need to be aware of our tendency to focus our inquiry on equipment that we are consciously aware of in project management rather than that which we take for granted or is so *transparent* that it is not mentioned.

5.1.2 Being-in-the-World

Being-in-the-World is a cornerstone concept in Being and Time, and acts as a synthesising notion for many of the other concepts that will be discussed. It highlights the distinction between Heidegger's ontology and Cartesian subject-object dualism (refer Figure 1). *Being-in-the-World* states that *Dasein* (the *mode of being* that is associated with human beings), is not separate from its environment, rather humans are infused within their world (Blattner 2006; Schatzki 2005). *Dasein* does not project meaning onto objects, rather through its interaction with objects meaning is generated. Similarly, *Dasein's being* is understood through the objects with which it interacts (Dreyfus 1991).

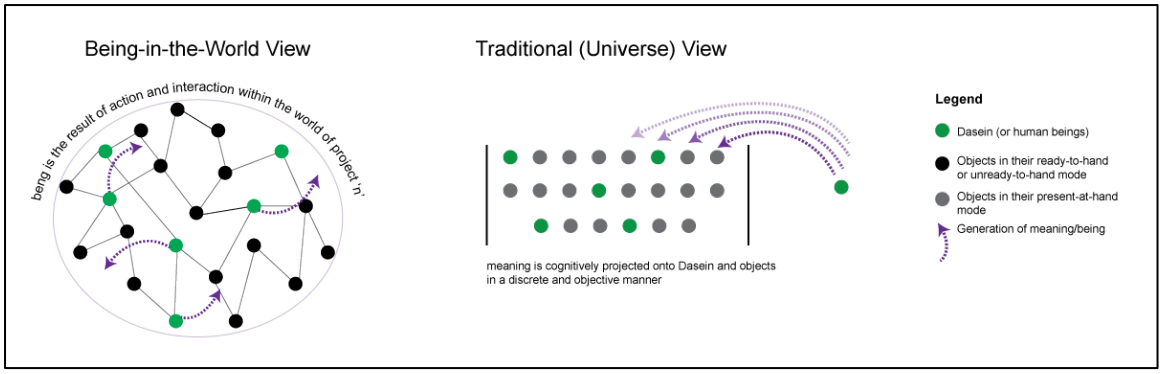

Figure 1: Heideggerian versus Cartesian thought

Heideggerian thought considers that Dasein are amidst their world/s that are a network of other Dasein and objects. The being of these Dasein and objects are a result of the interactions amongst this network.

The Cartesian, dualism perspective is that human beings are separate from discrete objects in the universe. The meaning of these things is created through a cognitive assignment by the human being.

From a project perspective, it highlights that if we divide the project management world into perceived components (i.e. people, from artefacts, and from processes) we are actually decreasing our understanding of the project management phenomenon. To increase our understanding of the 'lived experience' we need to recognise the inextricable coupling, and recursive feedback relationship between *Dasein* and equipment (and amongst all equipment in the project management world), and seek to reveal rather than ignore the criticality of this relationship and interrelatedness. The project manager (*Dasein)* cannot therefore *be* a project manager without *Being-in-the-World* of the project work. And it is the project work that reveals the project manager's existence, and reveals to the project manager the meaning of their role. The project work will necessarily be different in every case, and therefore what it means to *be* the project manager is different too. Through adoption of the Being and Time ontology that *Dasein* is infused with their *world*, we are more likely to reveal the phenomena of the project and what it means to manage it.

5.1.3 Care and Temporality

Care and *temporality* are synonymous with the *being* of *Dasein* (Heidegger 1962; Kaelin 1988). For Heidegger, *care* is *Dasein's*: *being-already-in-the-world*, *being-amidst-entities*, and *being-ahead-of-itself* (anticipating the future) (Dreyfus 1991; Kaelin 1988). This three-fold being of *Dasein* is the basis from which it can make a decision about what matters to it (what it *cares* about), and therefore the action that it takes.

Temporality is tightly coupled with *care* (Blattner 2005a). *Care* is what is important to *Dasein,* and *temporality* (the conceptualisation of time) enables *Dasein* to embark on its *in-order-tos* in support of what *Dasein cares* about. *Daseins being* (according to their perception) occurs *in-time*. Heidegger's concept of *temporality* has some relationship to the traditional term 'time', however it is a unifying concept that suggests that past, present and future are unified in Dasein (Blattner 2005b). That is, our past, present, and future inform one another (refer Figure 2). For example, what *Dasein* can possibly do, is influenced not only by what we want to do, but what we have done and our current situation (Cerbone 2008; Wheeler 2013). Heidegger uses the term *thrownness* (refer Figure 3) to describe our past context, from which we cannot break out of, and which is the foundation for our pursuing future possibilities (Haugeland 2013). *Projecting* is Dasein's movement towards its possibilities (refer figure 3) in the future, and *falling* links to our absorption in the present,

being amidst other entities, and being influenced by the *they* (refer section 5.1.6) (Cerbone 2008; Kaelin 1988).

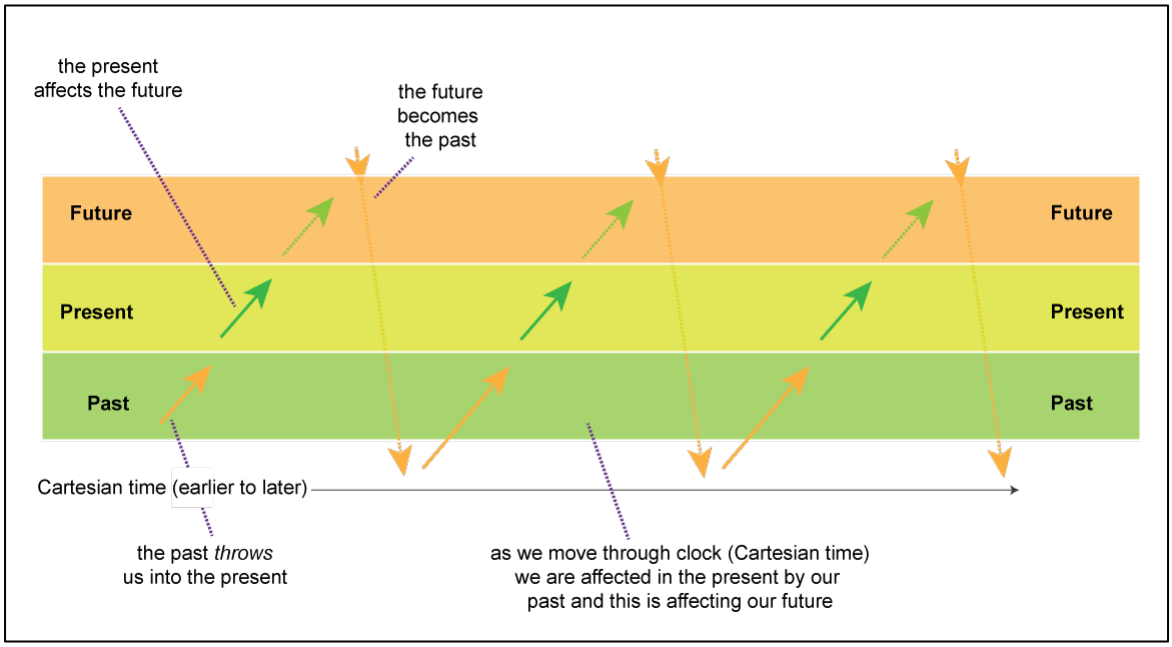

Figure 2: Temporality

As we move through Cartesian (clock) time, we are affected by the past (thrownness) and our present is impacting (projecting) into our future. As we move through Cartesian time, the 'future' also becomes part of our past and the cycle continues.

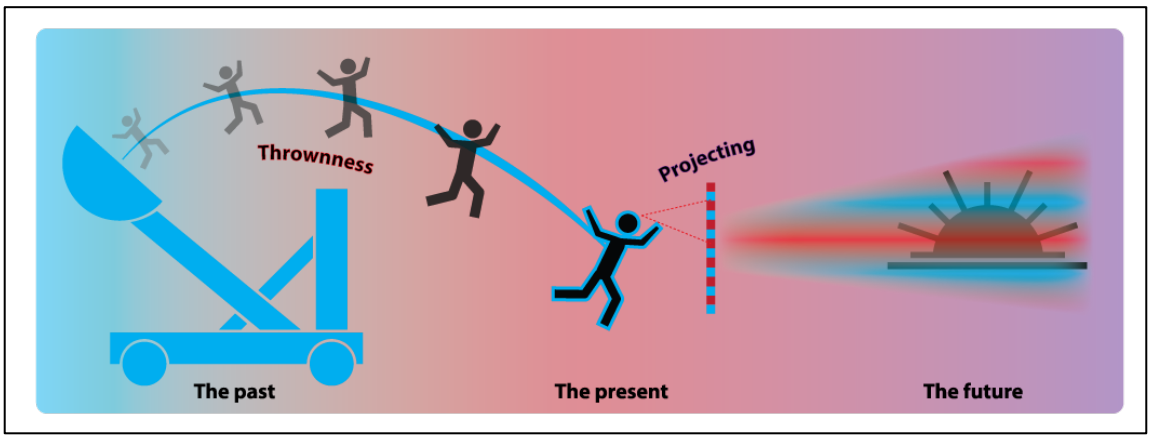

Figure 3: Thrownness and projection

Thrownness is Heidegger's term for Dasein having no choice over its past in the present. For example, Dasein do not choose to be born. They are 'landed' in a particular context (Earth). It is the past, coupled with the current (present) situation that will affect Dasein's possibilities for future action. The current and past will affect what Dasein sees in the future. This pressing into future possibilities is projection.

Given Heidegger's argument that *care* and *temporality* is the fundamental structure of *Dasein*, we cannot ignore that those people involved in projects will have attitudes towards that in which they have been involved (past), that which they are currently involved (present), and that to which they are heading towards (future). Whilst most practitioners and the 'lived experience' school would argue that is abundantly obvious, in this *care* structure Heidegger gives us an ontological foundation for arguing against the notion that those involved in

projects are rational, objective beings that project (in a Kantian way) meaning onto the project world. Rather, Heidegger's ontology appears to have greater alignment with the actual phenomena of the project, which is a complicated *world* of varying opinion, perspectives and attitudes resulting from many *Dasein's* past experience, present, and future possibilities that are constrained by the past and present. Therefore there is little rationality and objectiveness about projects.

Furthermore, *temporality* is useful in examining the definition of a project as an activity with a defined start and end (Project Management Institute 2013). If we draw on Heidegger's concept of a unified *temporality* we are able to ontologically ground the binding influence of the past and future on the present. Such an ontological foundation enables us to recognise the suggestion of a project start and a project finish as highly artificial (all be it useful at times). Again, this is not necessarily a new concept (refer (Engwall 2003)). However, in Being and Time we can find an ontological foundation that grounds such a perspective. Projects, through the people (*Dasein*, including project managers) that are immersed in them, are therefore inextricably coupled together. Decisions on one project can affect decisions on another project even if there is a gap of many years between projects. For example, a project may have been undertaken several years ago to acquire blocks of land for future expansion of a business. The land selected then will influence design choices for project constructing a new factory today. In another example, a project manager for whom an earlier project they were managing was found to be lacking in governance rigour, is likely to have a particular influential attitude towards governance in future projects that will affect how that project is managed. It is as if the gap in time is not there.

5.1.4 The world/s, and the universe

In Being and Time, Heidegger makes the distinction between the *world* and the *universe* (Blattner 2006). Simply, for Heidegger, the *world* is aligned with the mode of *ready-at-hand* and the *universe* aligned to the scientific, rationalistic *present-at-hand* mode. It is within the *world*, that we have Heidegger's cycle of *in-order-tos* and *for-the-sake of which* (Dreyfus 1991; Haugeland 2013). Heidegger claims that we use equipment *in-order-to* do something *for-the-sake of-which*. For example, a carpenter uses a hammer *in-order-to* drive in nails, *in-order-to* secure pieces of timber together, *in-order-to* make houses, *for-the-sake-of-which* to earn money to support a family, *for-the-ultimate-for-the-sake-of-which* to *be* a parent. The world is the place in which our *referential (equipmental) totality* exists. In other words, a hammer (and describing what it *is*) only makes sense in a *world* where there are nails. And nails only make sense in a *world* where there are timber houses.

Comparatively, Heidegger's conception of *universe* is the totality of the decontextualised 'stuff'. It is not our environment in which our everyday terms of reference exist (i.e. our *in-order-tos* and *for-the-sake-of-which*). The *universe* could be considered as our environment in its most objective/detached manner; a world without *Dasein* and the nexus of interrelationships between objects; the traditional scientific perspective (Rouse 2005; Wheeler 2013). For example, atoms and electrons are 'stuff' in the universe. However, it is only when they are in certain structures (i.e. a hammer) that they manifest in our *world* (as distinct from our *universe*).

The distinction between the *world* as our meaningful contextualised environment and the *universe* as decontextualised 'stuff' is relevant in our understanding of the *world*-of the project. If project management research is adopting an approach based on Cartesian subject-object ontology, it is reducing the components of the environment to 'stuff'- context neutral,

isolated objects- the *universe*. However, if project management research is looking to disclose the actual phenomena of project management, then this is best revealed through an exploration of the *world*-of the project.

Consequently, we need to acknowledge the *world*-of the project (and beyond - i.e. to the *world*-of work etc.) as being the environment in which our *in-order-tos* and *for-the-sake-of which* play out. The *world*-of the project is the project team and stakeholders' place of *being*, a place of acting, not a place onto which thoughts are projected in a detached or objective manner. For example, the project manager (*Dasein*) draws a Gantt chart *in-order-to* illustrate tasks and events against time, *in-order-to* organise and coordinate labour and resources, *in-order-to* make a prototype product, *for-the-sake-of-which* to earn money to support a family, *for-the-ultimate-for-the-sake-of-which* to *be* a parent. Alternatively, the project manager draws a Gantt chart *in-order-to* signal project progress to senior management, *in-order-to* manage the expectations of senior management, *in-order-to*, and so on. The *being* of the first Gantt chart is different to that of the second. Both can exist in the same *world*-of the project, but the structure of their *equipmental totality* is different. And so therefore is their meaning. The findings of Whitty (2010) would suggest that the latter is evident in practice.

A distinction can also be drawn between the *world*-of the project, and the *world*-of project management (refer Figure 4). For example, a project manager (*Dasein*) may be involved in both worlds, but a team member who has no exposure to the management equipment of the project or the norms of the project management *they* may only associate himself as part of the *world*-of the (given) project. This is pertinent, as it raises the question of whether project management research is exploring the-*world*-of the project (there being as many of these as there are projects), or the-*world*-of a certain type of project (e.g. construction or Australian) or the-*world*-of project management. There will be commonality between these worlds but there will also be variations in their *equipmental totality*.

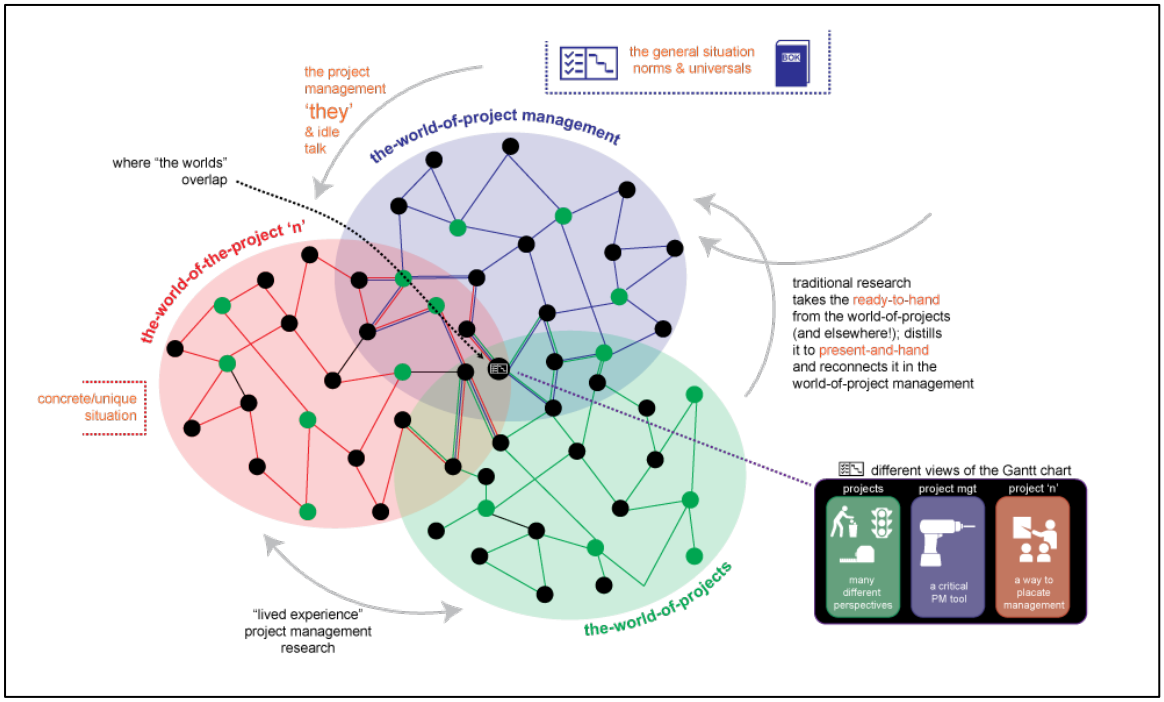

Figure 4: The relationship of the *worlds-of*

Three Heideggerian worlds have been differentiated in this article. This figure shows how they are each different, yet they have points of overlap. It also highlights the way that the worlds influence one-another and key characteristics of the world-of project management versus the world-of project n.
The sub-diagram - different views of the Gantt chart - captures the concept that whilst equipment may be a common node across all worlds that the equipment's significance will be as varied as the number of worlds in which it is part.

5.1.5 Dealing

Dealing is Heidegger's term for how we go about living in the *world* (Blattner 2006; Haugeland 2013). *Dealing* (sometimes referred to as *coping*) reiterates Heidegger's emphasis on action and immersion in the *world* rather than the cognitive projection of meaning by a subject (human being) onto the *world* (Dreyfus 1991). It is important to recognise that some of our *dealing* becomes *transparent* to us (Dreyfus 1991). For example, an experienced driver does not have to consciously think how to change the gears in their car. The driver has tacit knowledge that underpins their capability to drive (and therefore *cope* in the *world*-of traffic and driving).

This insight has already been discussed in the project management literature and in education/pedagogical discourse (Bredillet 2005; Cicmil 2006; Flyvbjerg 2001; Sewchurran & Scott 2009; Sewchurran, Smith & Roode 2010). Specifically, as Dreyfus (1992) has argued in his criticism of artificial intelligence, much of our ability to *cope* in the *world* cannot be distilled to formal, separate rules. Rather much of our know-how is complex, and inter-related and is tacitly embodied in action rather than cognition (Polyani 1966). We would suggest that Dreyfus' criticism of artificial intelligence aligns with the existing criticism of the project management community's attempts to codify its practice in the bodies of knowledge and various methodologies (Hodgson & Cicmil 2006; Whitty 2013). That is, management of projects cannot be reduced to a standard set of rules or procedures to be followed because a large portion of the interactions by project participants and stakeholders (with their *Dasein mode of being*) are tacit, contextual and *transparent* (Blomquist et al. 2010; Cicmil et al. 2006; Koskinen, Pihlanto & Vanharanta 2003). The rules emerge dynamically out of the totality of the changing situation. This necessitates that we take a broader perspective to what is the management of projects, and appreciate that the traditional notion of project management is likely failing to capture much of the tacit *dealing* that project teams and project managers experience.

5.1.6 DasMan/The they

Heidegger coins the terms the *they* (*DasMan* in German) to describe the source of the norms or behaviours to which *Dasein* generally conforms (Cerbone 2008; Dreyfus 1991; Haugeland 2013). The *they* is the source of the 'done thing' or 'the right way' of doing something (Greaves 2010; Haugeland 2013). In Western culture it is the *they* that infers that *one* sits at a table and chairs and *one* eats with a knife and fork. Yet in Japanese culture the *they* suggests that *one* sits on the floor with a lower table and *one* eats with chopsticks.

The *they* is also characterised by its ability to l*evel* behaviour, attitudes etc. to create an average (Blattner 2006; Dreyfus 1991; Schatzki 2005). According to Heidegger (1962), the *they* drives unique or new ideas or concepts to be distilled to a point where they fit within averageness. It is because of this process of *levelling* that unique, new or different ideas struggle to get traction and thrive.

The project management community needs to be vigilant to the *they* and its *levelling* capabilities if they are to progress project management research and practice. The project management *they* is evident in the professional associations, their certifications, the bodies of knowledge (the current disciplinary matrix underpinning project management), methodology manuals, and in the unwritten codes related to dress, comportment and language (Whitty 2011b; Whitty & Schulz 2006). It is suggested that if a project manager (*Dasein*) wants to be seen as doing the right thing (and therefore being classified as a competent project manager) they will do what is dictated by the project management *they*. Furthermore, if a truly new or unique idea is identified within research or practice, the *they* will be unable to be synthesise it because it does not fit within the current norm. The idea would need to be hooked into the existing frame of reference of the *they*.

It is critical to emphasise that this is not arguing that the *they* should (or could) be abolished. The norms and behaviours of the *they* provide the framework or disciplinary matrix against which existing research approaches and practice can be challenged, and provide some form of reference point for discipline discourse. However, we must recognise the dictates of the *they* for what they are: *levelled*, average, and general. In the project context, which is by definition about uniqueness, difference and abnormality (Association for Project Management 2006; Cleland 2004; Project Management Institute 2013; Turner 2007) there is a danger that the *they* can bring blind conformance. Again, this is not argued as a new notion, but rather Heidegger provides ontological credence to this insight.

5.1.7 Inauthenticity, authenticity, anxiety and fear

In Being and Time, Heidegger discusses the concepts of *authenticity* versus *inauthenticity*. *Inauthenticity* is aligned with Heidegger's temporal trait of *fallenness*, which refers to a being lost in the 'done thing' as prescribed by the *they* (Carman 2005; Greaves 2010). Conformance with the *they* relieves us of the burden of making choices for ourselves; a result of that fundamental characteristic of *Dasein* - which is that being that can take a stand on itself, make choices and choose to follow a particular path (Kaelin 1988). When we are *inauthentic* we generally respond in a general or standard-way to a situation, rather than to the actual or concrete situation which is actually being experienced at a given point (Dreyfus 2000).

In comparison, *Dasein* (including project managers) may choose to adopt a more *authentic* approach to the situation. Such *authenticity* requires that *Dasein* rise above what Heidegger describes as an ontological *anxiety*, and adopt a *resoluteness* in facing up to the choices it has as a *Dasein* (Blattner 2006; Cerbone 2008). *Dasein* who have not *fallen* into blind conformity with the *they* and adopt an *authentic* approach will respond to the concrete or actual situation being encountered (Dreyfus 2000). Similarities could be drawn here to the discourse on improvisation by project managers to 'get things done'; a need to move away from plans in certain situations (Leybourne 2006; Leybourne & Sadler-Smith 2006).

The significant uptake of project management certification, use of project management terminology, and growing membership of professional bodies are evidence of a growing conformance by practitioners to the project management *they*. At this point we will refrain from classifying this as a definitively bad thing, as arguably this conformance has a role in legitimising the profession and assisting project practitioners to demonstrate their belonging to this profession, and therefore remaining employed/employable (Whitty 2010, 2011a). It is here that Heidegger's position of how a *Dasein* avoids ontological *anxiety* (facing themselves) can be realised in project management.

Returning to *inauthenticity*, we can however foresee problems if there is blind or universal conformity with the disciplinary matrix of the *they*. If the *Dasein* involved in project management are focused on conformance with the dictates and norms of the *they* it is likely that they will often be responding to the general rather than the concrete situation they are encountering. It has been argued that project management needs to be tailored and contextualised to the uniqueness of each situation (Cicmil et al. 2006; Thomas & Mullaly 2008; Turner, Ledwith & Kelly 2012). However, it is suggested that the project management *they* still dictate parameters within which such tailoring is permitted. We wonder how many project managers (*Dasein*) who were asked by senior management 'where is the Gantt chart?, would reply 'we're not doing one for this project'. This is not to suggest, that in fact, project managers actually use Gantt charts to manage their projects, but rather that the usage of such artefacts and processes (in some cases), is a compliance to the norms of the *they* to legitimise the project and demonstrate the capabilities of the project manager rather than to enable project delivery (Whitty 2010). One cannot help but then ask, what 'project management work' is done because it fits with the norms of the project management *they* rather than the approach actually required for a given project. That is, *Dasein* has *fallen* into responding to the general situation of project management (potentially, for good reason such as *in-order-to* maintain employability), rather than responding *authentically* – taking a stand – and leveraging the tools needed for that unique situation. It would be feasible to distinguish between 'project management overhead' that actually enables delivery and the 'project management overhead' that is about appearances or conformance. This would substantiate the claim that modern project management is more about appearance than productivity, and that project managers are hostage to their environment.

In summary, those *Dasein* involved in projects can operate *authentically* or *inauthentically* (and indeed somewhere in between). There is likely justifiable reason for a *Dasein* to adopt *inauthenticity* in this aspect of their life. However, it is suggested that this does not necessarily result in the best project management approach for a given project.

5.2 Summary of the Theoretical Exploration

Table 1 provides a summary of the insights derived from this initial theoretical exploration of project management through the paradigmatic lens of Being and Time concepts. The consequences, impact and relation of these findings to the existing literature will be the foundation for our discussion.

Being and Time Theme/Concept	Insight/relevance to Project Management
Modes of being	*Dasein*: draws our attention to the humans involved in a project as they are able to have attitudes (*care*) towards one another and the project equipment, and they have individual *in-order-tos* and *for-the-sake-of-whichs* that will influence their *coping* with the project *world*. *Ready-to-hand*: draws our attention to the fact that the devices (physical, social, cognitive) that truly facilitate project work are often *transparent* to our everyday experience. We are unaware of them and largely not studying them. *Unready-to-hand*: enables us to identify equipment that is failing to fulfil its *in-order-to* role. It can signal the importance of equipment and the need for equipment to be repaired or replaced. *Present-at-hand*: This describes the dominant reductionist research approach where we decrease our ability to understand the project management phenomena by decoupling equipment from its being.
Being-in-the-World	The project and what it means to manage it is an infusion of people and equipment. Project people find meaning and terms of existence through their referential associations. There is a recursive relationship between all elements of the project.
Care and Temporality	Through the attitudes of the people that are involved in them, projects are inextricably coupled together as though time doesn't exist. Decisions tomorrow are obliged to be driven by the attitudes of the past and present.
The World and the Universe	The *world*-of a (given) project, the *world*-of projects and the *world*-of project management are different but related concepts. These *worlds* are complex, highly connected networks of equipment, *Dasein*, *in-order-tos* and *for-the-sake-of-whichs*. Traditionalist research (a *universe*-perspective) of any of these *worlds* decreases our ability to understand the phenomena of projects by omitting the interconnectedness that informs the *being* and existence of the components.
Dealing	The *being* (meaning) of those involved in projects is embodied in action rather than cognition. It is through action (*dealing*) that meaning is revealed. Cognitive knowledge distilled as standard sets of definitions, and rules of procedures in a body of knowledge book omits a significant amount of what is required to actually *deal* (find meaning) with the project phenomena.
The they	The project management *they* with their norms and artefacts are arguably a necessary but constraining force in project management. The *they* restricts innovation and dictates expected behaviours that may not align with what is actually required in a given situation.
Inauthenticity, authenticity, anxiety and fear	*Inauthentically* we blindly fall into the way of the *they* and respond in generalist platonic ways. *Authentically* we take a stand and overcome our *anxiety* and respond appropriately to the unique situation. These concepts also enlighten us to the motivations for behaviours or use of artefacts in project management

Table 1: Project management through the paradigmatic lens of Being and Time

6 Discussion

6.1 An ontological foundation to underpin the 'lived experience' research approach

Being and Time provides the ontological paradigm to break free of Cartesian dualism subject-object thinking and its disciplinary matrix (the bodies of knowledge and prescriptive

methods). Projects are not just simple systems processing inputs into outputs, but rather a complex network of equipment, interconnected roles, motivations, behaviours and the omnipresence of each participant's past and future at every given point.

The definitions of projects and project management is fairly standardised within the current disciplinary matrix (bodies of knowledge and prescriptive method). However, Being and Time discloses the phenomena of both these concepts and highlights that there is a need to reconceptualise these terms and to differentiate between project management (the current disciplinary matrix) and project managing. We propose that 'project management' is distinct from 'project managing'.

6.2 What is a project?

In section 5.1.4, we explored the concept of *worlds* as networks of complex, interconnected equipment and *Dasein*. If we abstract this to a broader level we capture a network of equipment and *Dasein* that is the *world*-of organisation n. As per sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.4, such a *world* will have *Dasein* that are *dealing* with their *world* using *ready-to-hand* equipment *in-order-to* do something, for their *sake-of-which*. Organisations are groups of *Dasein* with their individual ultimate *for-the-sake-of-which*. However, given they are working at a common organisation there is a common node in their *in-order-to*/*for-the-sake-of-which* cycle: that is, working at organisation n. Assumedly, this organisation has a set of equipment (including tools, norms – the *equipmental totality* of organisation n) that enables it to achieve its objectives and remain in operation.

At some point, a component of organisation n's *equipmental totality* may cease (or is predicted to cease) to enable the organisation to meet its objectives. That is the *in-order-to* cycle for the organisation, given its current *equipmental totality* breaks down somewhere. This breakdown may be due to failure of equipment or a change in the organisation's activities or objectives (i.e. the current *equipment totality* cannot deliver the new activity or objective). In such circumstances *Dasein* within the organisation identify that an element of its *equipmental totality* has become *unready-to-hand*.

Projects arise from this this *unready-to-hand* state of affairs. Projects are situations identified by *Dasein* as needing to be restored to *ready-to-hand* and *Dasein* is unable to easefully restore this situation within their current *dealing* and/or *equipmental totality*. The 'scale' of the project is the degree to which this breakdown (*unready-to-handness*) is beyond the collective *dealing* or *equipmental totality* of the *Dasein*.

It is noted that an organisation may decide that they do not wish to remediate the *unready-to-hand* situation, as it is not sufficiently impacting the organisation (this would be similar to a business case not being established as valid and therefore no action being taken). In such circumstances, the state of affairs is not a 'project', as a decision has been made not to remediate the issue. The organisation accepts a new type of *ready-to-hand*, and therefore no 'project' exists.

Dasein is infused in an operational situation when the *equipmental totality* of the organisation is tuned to meet the organisational objectives. In operational circumstances, the organisation (as a whole) is moving easefully with all the equipment contributing to the objectives as expected; it is akin to the equipment being *ready-to-hand*.

To explore the application of this alternative conceptualisation of a project, we return to Simon's narrative:

> Simon works for a business that has outgrown its premises and has requested the building of a new factory. This premises was a component of the company's *equipmental totality* and it is no longer large enough to manufacture the quantities demanded by the market (it is now *unready-to-hand*). *Dasein* within the organisation have *taken a stand* to remediate this case of *unready-to-hand* and have commissioned the building of a new premises (i.e. *in-order-to* meet the growing demand for their product). They have limited experience in *dealing* with such a construction project. That is, it is a 'project' because it has emerged from a situation that has an *unready-to-hand* component and *dealing* with the situation is beyond the current capability of the organisation.
>
> However, for the subcontractor laying the slab for this new building, whether this construction is a 'project' is contextual. For example, if the subcontractor has the *ready-to-hand equipmental totality* (equipment, networks, contacts etc.) and ability to intuitively *deal* with laying the slab of the new factory it would probably not be classified as a 'project' - it would be 'operational' work- a standard job. It is noted that this does not preclude the work being 'project managed' (refer 6.3) or Simon's company categorising the construction as a 'project'. Comparatively, if this were a special type of slab requiring a non-standard slab laying *equipmental totality*, the subcontractor may also call the activity a 'project'.

In sum, a 'project' *is* the situation that emerges when *Dasein* is required to deal with *unready-to-hand* equipment in their *equipmental totality* and does not have the capability to do so. The existing literature captures projects as having a defined start and end, being unique, involving risk etc (Office of Government Commerce 2009; Project Management Institute 2013). It is suggested that these may well be characteristic of projects, but these are not ontologically what a project *is*. According to Heidegger to understand *being* it is necessary to understand the totality within which the situation or equipment emerges. As such, the definition proposed here is more appropriate at capturing the *being* of a project than the traditional definitions that are suggested as frequently observed characteristics. These traditional characteristics (the current definition) of projects could also apply to operational work. For example, a computer system running a weekly payroll will be using unique data each week, and there will be a finite start and finish to the process, and there is an element of risk- the pay may not be disbursed to the employees. But this is not a 'project' because the organisation has the *equipmental totality* (including a computer system) which is *ready-to-hand* and with which the organisation's *Dasein* is adept at *dealing*.

6.3 What *is* project management

Through this Being and Time paradigmatic lens, 'project management' is a piece of equipment 'selected' to deal with a situation. We reiterate, that from this point forward we argue that 'project management' is distinct from the action of 'project managing'. It is noted that 'selected' has been emphasised in this definition as an organisation in a situation that could be labelled as a 'project', may choose not to use the 'project management' equipment (current disciplinary matrix) to respond to the situation. They may choose to 'manage the project' with some other piece of equipment (i.e. not the 'project management' equipment as designed and dictated by the *they*). Instead they may choose to use existing schedule tools or a series of 'to-do' lists, the activities may be managed through existing operational hierarchies rather than establishing alternative governance mechanisms and roles.

Given that 'project management' is a type of equipment it has Heidegger's equipmental *mode of being*. It becomes possible for 'project management' to be *ready-to-hand* or *unready-to-hand* (or *present-to-hand*) in a given situation. It is interesting that the *mode of being* of project management (as equipment) could concurrently be different for the many *Dasein* involved in the same project. That is, some stakeholders may certainly be aware of the 'project management' equipment in operation, but not necessarily that it is broken (i.e. it is just *ready-to-hand* but not in a *transparent* sense). Others may believe that the 'project management' equipment is failing. That is to say that it is not successfully resolving the *unready-to-hand equipmental totality* of the organisation. This then discloses the potential difference in the 'project' being resolved successfully and 'project management' equipment *being* the tool that enables the 'project' to be resolved.

In sum, 'project management' *is* equipment; the disciplinary matrix (a set of processes, artefacts etc.) underpinned by Cartesian thinking, and propagated by the *they,* through which an organisation is able to *deal* with a situation. Whilst it can be applied to 'projects' this does not preclude it from being used in other settings. According to the Project Management Institute (2013), sec. 1.3, project management is:

> "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements. Project management is accomplished through the appropriate application and integration of the 47 logically grouped project management processes, which are categorized into five Process Groups."

We would argue that this definition does not capture the *being* of 'project management' nor 'project managing'. The PMBOK definition argues that it is an application of particular skills (i.e. aligned to project managing). The definition indicates that it is achieved by using the knowledge areas and processes defined in this particular body of knowledge. This focuses the problem: these two concepts are phenomenologically distinct, and are actually separable. There is equipment ('project management') and there is doing ('project managing'). 'Project management' may be used in activities that are not 'projects'; and people may be 'project managing' a 'project', yet not be using the project management body of knowledge as the equipment, or the 'project management' equipment is used in combination with other equipment (techniques/processes).

6.4 What *is* project managing?

'Project managing' can now be conceptualised on the foundation of a Heideggerian paradigm. 'Project managing' *is* the action of a *Dasein* who is managing the restoration of the *unready-to-hand* situation (the 'project') to *ready-to-hand*. This *Dasein* may use 'project management' (i.e. the current disciplinary matrix) *in-order-to* manage the restoration of the situation. This is assumedly the disciplines current assumption given that 'project management' and 'project managing' are not generally distinguished from one another. However, there are at least three alternatives that must be recognised. For example, the *Dasein* may be 'project managing' the 'project', but they are not using the current disciplinary matrix ('project management') to restore the *equipmental totality* (i.e. they are using other equipment – artefacts and processes).

To explore this alternative conceptualisation of 'project management' and 'project managing', we return to Simon's narrative:

> Simon is using 'project management' to *deal* with the situation of managing the restoring of his company's *equipmental totality* to *ready-to-hand*. He isn't finding

'project management' (with its Gantt charts and work breakdown structures dictated by the project management *they*) as particularly seamless (*transparently ready-to-hand*) on this 'project'. In fact, he finds that the Gantt chart is not actually suited to this 'project' (it is *unready-to-hand*). To *deal* with getting this 'project' back on track (actually 'project managing') he really needs to be at the site rather than trying to update the Gantt each afternoon. He feels like he is spending more time wrestling with this piece of *unready-to-hand* equipment rather than actually 'project managing'. Simon's frustration (*anxiety*) is increased as he recalls how his colleague uses a Gantt chart to manage the production line… it's like a third arm for her (*transparently ready-to-hand*) (i.e. using 'project management' tools to manage non-projects).

The concreting sub-contractor (for the new factory), is not using 'project management' to manage the laying of the slab. They have their own *ready-to-hand* IT system and job sheets that work seamlessly for these type of routine jobs. However, the installation contractor is not accustomed to *dealing* with this type of factory construction, so they are 'project managing' the situation and are using 'project management' as their equipment. This installation firm is satisfied with how 'project management' is enabling them to *deal* with the project ('project managing').

7 Conclusion

This study has confirmed that Heidegger's Being and Time can provide new insights into the phenomena of projects and their management. To reiterate, this paper has neither provided a comprehensive analysis or critique of Heidegger's Being and Time, nor, detailed every possible insight that his perspectives can provide. However, it is argued that this exploration has provided sufficient evidence that concepts from Heidegger's Being and Time do provide an alternative paradigm through which the management of projects can be considered and through which new insights are revealed (refer Table 1 for a summary).

These insights can be aggregated into significant outcomes such as proposing Heidegger's Being and Time as the ontological base on which to undertake 'lived experience' research. It also enables us to reconceptualise and distinguish between fundamental terms such as project; and project management and project managing. For example, Heidegger's ontology allows us to define 'projects' as part of an *equipmental totality*; a more contextualised perspective that captures the *being* of projects; not just their generally applicable characteristics. The differentiation of 'project management' and 'project managing', discloses that 'project management' may be used not only for project managing, but also for other purposes. This distinction also provides the ontological foundation for exploring the nuances in the phenomena of projects. For example, why do we use Gantt charts, is there equipment (beyond 'project management') that support 'project managing', and are there circumstances in which 'project management' actually hinders 'project managing'. It also ontologically opens the literature to considering what differentiates 'project managing' from other types of managing, and 'projects' from non-project work.

Heidegger's Being and Time has been established as contributing at a theoretical/ontological level to the advancement of research into the 'lived experience' of projects. It is a key to unshackle the research and practitioner communities from the chains of Cartesian dualism and the bodies of knowledge and prescriptive methods. Heidegger's paradigm recognises the complex and infused nature of *Being-in-a-World* (including the *world*-of a project). It is a

lens that provides greater promise of reconciliation between practitioner experience or phenomena and research than our current paradigms.

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