

# Pluralism and innovation: Hard and soft paradigms in project management, Dominican Republic case

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## Abstract

**Citation:** Contreras, C. (2023). Pluralism and innovation: Hard and soft paradigms in project management, Dominican Republic case. Proceedings of the 2023 Academy of Latin American Business and Sustainability Studies (ALBUS), Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. ALBUS. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10155259>

Project management (PM) has been fundamental throughout history, adapting to technological progress to achieve company objectives. GP focuses on how a project's results can be developed effectively to meet customer expectations at the right time. The crucial thing lies in understanding how using different project management methods and practices can make the organization adapt to enhance the value delivered to the customer. In this context, we intend to analyze the techniques and their combinations that collaborate synergistically to promote a value-oriented GP. The research question we address in this article is: How does the plurality of hard and soft paradigms impact innovation at the level of project management in the Dominican Republic? To address this issue, we will conduct a detailed analysis of service companies with international operations in the Dominican Republic, where exploratory qualitative research will be conducted through interviews with GP professionals. These interviews will provide detailed information on how project managers adapt their management forms, methodologies, and good practices to allow the company to generate value in the market.

**Keywords:** Project management, innovation, Pluralism, ambidexterity

## Introduction

Research in project management (GP) has been conducted on various topics, from the history of project management (Engwall, 2003; Seymour & Hussein, 2014; Söderlund & Lenfle, 2013) to the different paradigms presented by Pollack (2007) that give way to methodologies such as those of Copola Azenha et al. (2021) and Špundak (2014) that have subscribed to these. Undoubtedly, this discipline has been taking an interest in different branches of research, such as organizational theory (Campos et al., 2021; Glodzinski, 2018; Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Müller et al., 2016; Packendorff, 1995; Sydow & Braun, 2018), the causes of their successes and failures (Costantino et al., 2015; Ika & Hodgson, 2014; Yang et al., 2006), among other approaches applied to the use of projects in organizations. Projects have been used to bridge the gap between organizational strategy and business strategy (Milosevic & Srivannaboon, 2006; Srivannaboon, 2006), giving way to see GP as tools and techniques that help meet the objectives of innovation projects. These techniques and tools have wanted to be used as if everything could be applied in different contexts, becoming known as traditional project management (GPT). For much of the time, the standardization originated by organizations such as the Project Management Institute (PMI), International Project Management Association (IPMA), and Association of Project Management (APM), among others, resulted in organizations using the expression of a measure applies to everything, which could impact on increases in times, success rates in projects, among others.

Several researchers have worked on the issue of pluralism, raising the need to face projects with different approaches (Bjarne & Pollack, 2005; Söderlund, 2011). Söderlund (2011) addresses pluralism in projects by analyzing articles written on project management and the different approaches used. These approaches led him to determine seven schools of thought and to conclude on the need for pluralism in GP. It highlights the care that must be taken not to fall into the trap of specialization due to the lack of pluralism or fragmentation because of having many options. Pollack (2007) addresses pluralism from two paradigms that he defines as the hard and the soft, with particular

characteristics. He proposes diverse approaches from the individual's competencies as analyzed (Grisham, 2010) for international development projects. Innovation also addresses a confident pluralism through disruptive and incremental innovation (Anderson & Tushman, 1990), which are reflected in ambidexterity with the concepts of exploration and exploitation defined by March (1991) and studied by other researchers (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2008; Petro et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2015).

## **Objectives**

We start from the assumption that the same measure only applies to some things. Therefore, it is necessary to see different options for facing different problems. The use of types of innovation allows the creation of value for the client. Some authors argue that incremental innovation drives radical innovation (Anderson & Tushman, 1990; Barbieri & Álvares, 2016; Henderson & Clark, 1990), enabling continuous innovation. This research identifies how project managers can use exploration and exploitation (ambidexterity) and soft and hard paradigms to innovate in the management model of the company in the Dominican Republic. Likewise, the result of this research seeks to open new lines of research on plurality in the field of innovation, project management, and other disciplines.

## **Justification**

The field of innovation presents many approaches from which academics can investigate it. One of the most critical points turns out to be the timely delivery to customers, either by one of the innovation managers described by Barbieri and Álvares (2016) or by the fact of delivering value to the client. Research on pluralism has touched on innovation from the point of ambidexterity described by March (1991b) and substantiated by Anderson and Tushman (1990), O'Reilly and Tushman (2013), and Tushman and O'Reilly (1996). However, it has yet to be contrasted with the paradigms described by Bjarne and Pollack (2005) and Pollack (2007) from the perspective of innovation and project management.

From the review of existing literature on project management, pluralism, and innovation, articles are identified relating exploration and project management (Lenfle, 2008), in portfolio management (Petro et al., 2019), and specific to project management with one of the branches suggested in this thesis (Bjarne & Pollack, 2005; Söderlund, 2011). This leads us to explore the tension between pluralism seen from the paradigms expressed by Pollack (2007) and the ambidexterity defined by March (1991) with his concepts of exploitation and exploration in project management. Based on this, the question arises: How does the plurality of hard and soft paradigms impact innovation at the level of project management in the Dominican Republic? Following the main question, another question arises:

- 1. How does plurality in innovation produce value-driven project management?*

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