

IRNOP XIII conference in Boston, Massachusetts

By Jouko Vaskimo

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IRNOP (The International Research Network on Organizing by Projects) XIII conference was held in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 11 ... 14, 2017. The conference, a biennial series started in Sweden in 1994, took place at the **Boston University Metropolitan College** Charles River Campus, and was organized by Associate Professor **Dr Vijay Kanabar**, Assistant Professor **Dr Stephen A. Leybourne**, and Associate Professor **Dr Roger D. H. Warburton**. The conference theme was *The Modern Project: Mindsets, Toolsets, and Theoretical Frameworks*. The Boston University Metropolitan College provided an excellent venue for the event, which the participants found appropriately informal and collegial, encouraging active exchange and networking.



Boston University Questrom School of Business (photos courtesy Jouko Vaskimo)

The conference program included plenary sessions with state-of-the-art keynotes, and several parallel tracks with a total of over 80 keynote and paper presentations. The conference was attended by over 170 participants from more than 30 countries, and by some of the most renowned scholars in the field of project management. The conference was organized for faculty and students from universities from all over the world having an interest in projects, temporary organizations, project organizing and project-based organizations. In addition to the official program, the conference offered a social program of dinners and receptions, and a doctoral workshop for PhD students.

The conference was sponsored by **Project Management Institute (PMI)**, **International Project Management Association (IPMA)** and **Boston University Metropolitan College**.

In his opening presentation Professor Leybourne welcomed everyone sincerely to the Boston University, and to Metropolitan College Charles River Campus. Professor Leybourne has been involved with the PM academic community since his first PMI Research Conference in Seattle in 2002, and considers at least 50 of the attendees to be friends as well as academic colleagues. Indeed, he mentioned that at his first PM research conference, he had just submitted his PhD, and that the list of 2002 attendees was like ‘walking through the bibliography’ of his dissertation.

Subsequent to the three-day event Professor Dr Leybourne was very happy with the way that the conference progressed. He thanked the participants, the presenters, the keynote speakers, and the Boston University organizing committee – especially the volunteers who made the conference possible. He concluded: “I would like to thank my co-Chairs, the volunteers, and the project team, and would also like to acknowledge the support of our department – Metropolitan College – who allowed us to spend significant time on making this conference a success.”

Professor Dr Leybourne can be contacted at sleyb@bu.edu .



Professor Dr Stephen Leybourne opening the IRNOP XIII conference

The third **IRNOP Doctoral Workshop**, in which doctoral candidates presented their research to an audience of peers and senior international scholars in a friendly and constructive atmosphere, took place the day before the main conference. On the same day, a welcome reception was organized at the Boston University **Questrom School of Business** Atrium to welcome the conference participants.

The first conference day was opened, subsequent to a welcome by Professor Leybourne, with an opening address by Professor **Dr Rolf Lundin** titled *Projects, research on project society, and IRNOP*. Professor Lundin talked about the series of IRNOP conferences, recalling the snowy conditions of the first IRNOP in Lycksele, Sweden in 1994. Professor Lundin also returned to several key questions, such as the implications of project society, and what is the penultimate definition of project.



Professor Dr Rolf Lundin presenting the IRNOP XIII conference opening address

The first conference day proceeded with three parallel tracks: *Project Innovation* chaired by Professor Dr Rolf Lundin, *Alliances & Markets* chaired by Professor **Dr Christophe Midler**, and *Time, Cost & Value* chaired by Professor **Dr Emmanuelle Bernardin**.

Before lunch the editors of the major project management journals discussed publication requirements, explained publication policies and answered journal-related questions from the audience. The editors and the journals were the *International Journal of Project Management* edited by Professor **Dr Rodney Turner**, *Project Management Journal* edited by Professor **Dr Hans-Georg Gemünden**, *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business* edited by Professor **Dr Nathalie Drouin**, *Project Management Research & Practice* edited by Professor **Dr Beverly Pasian**, and *Journal of Management in Engineering* edited by Professor **Dr Young Hoon Kwak**.

After lunch the first conference day continued with three parallel tracks: *Project Theorizing* chaired by Professor **Dr Monique Aubry**, *Contemporary Approaches* chaired by Professor **Dr Rolf Lundin**, and *Time, Cost & Value* chaired by Professor **Dr Nathalie Drouin**.

The parallel tracks *Sustainability in PM* chaired by Professor **Dr Rolf Lundin**, *PMOs and SMEs* chaired by Professor **Dr Emmanuelle Bernardin**, and *Competencies & People Development* chaired by Professor **Dr Lynn Crawford** completed the official business of the first conference day.

The first conference day way concluded with a Conference Dinner Cruise on the Boston Harbor, sponsored by PMI.



View of downtown Boston from the Conference Dinner Cruise

The second conference day started with three parallel tracks: *Stakeholder Management* chaired by Professor **Dr Jaakko Kujala**, *Programs & Portfolios* chaired by Professor **Dr Thomas Lechler**, and *Competencies & People Management* chaired by Professor **Dr Tomas Blomquist**.

Before lunch there was a panel discussion on *Theory development in project management: Where are we and where are we going?* The panel discussion was moderated by Professor **Dr Roger Warburton**, with Professor **Dr Rodney Turner**, Professor **Dr Roy Stratton** of Nottingham Business School, and Professor **Dr Monique Aubry** participating as the panel experts.

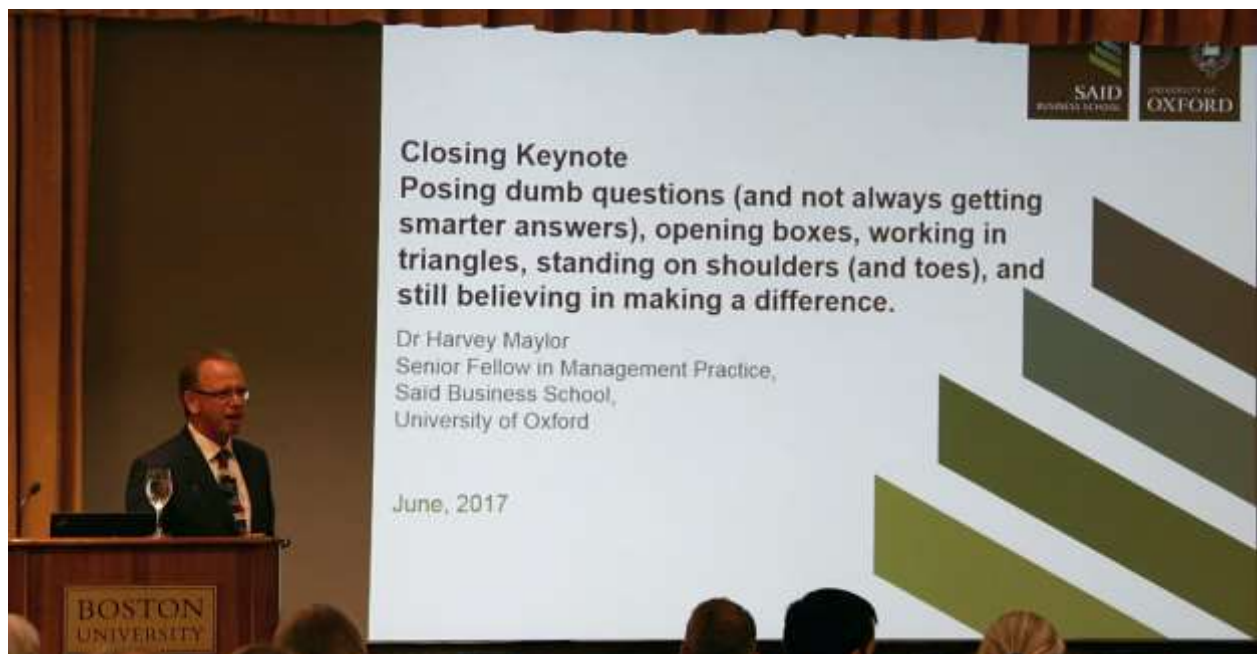
After lunch the second conference day continued with three parallel tracks: *Agile PM* chaired by Professor **Dr Thomas Lechler**, *Megaprojects* chaired by Professor **Dr Andy Davies**, and *Tools & Practices* chaired by Professor **Dr Derek Walker**.

The parallel tracks *Complexity & Complex Projects* chaired by Professor **Dr John Steen**, *Megaprojects: Cases* chaired by Professor **Dr Rodney Turner**, and *Leadership & Decision-Making* chaired by Professor **Dr Gary Klein** completed the official business of the second conference day.

The second conference day was concluded with an optional *Boston Duck Boat Tour* within downtown Boston, and in the Charles River surrounding the downtown area.

The third conference day started with three parallel tracks: *Governance* chaired by Professor **Dr Beverly Pasian**, *Megaprojects* chaired by Professor **Dr Tim Brady**, and *Leadership & Decision-Making* chaired by Professor **Dr Gary Klein** and proceeded with the final parallel tracks of the conference: *Flexibility, Autonomy & Experimentation* chaired by Professor **Dr Christophe Midler**, *Education, Learning & Teams in PM* chaired by Professor **Dr Beverly Pasian**, and *Strategy, Benefits & Change* chaired by Professor **Dr Hans-Georg Gemünden**.

The conference closing session was opened by a keynote presentation by Professor **Dr Harvey Maylor** titled *Posing dumb questions (and not always getting smarter answers), opening boxes, working in triangles, standing on shoulders (and toes), and still believing in making a difference* in which he reflected on several different aspects of where project management research has been, where it is now, and where and how it is likely to go in the future.



Professor Dr Harvey Maylor delivering his keynote presentation

During the closing plenary several awards and recognitions were presented:

Professor **Dr Helgi Thor Ingason** and **Dr Carla Messikomer** presented the **IPMA – PMI Best Paper Award at IRNOP 2017** to Professor **Dr Hedley Smyth**, University College London, for his paper *Projects as preconditions: Creating the preconditions for routine operations in use*, and the **IPMA – PMI Best Student Paper Award at IRNOP 2017** to **Maude Brunet**, UQAM, for her paper *The governance of Major Public Infrastructure projects*.

Professor **Dr Hans-Georg Gemünden**, PMJ Editor-in Chief, presented the **PMI Project Management Journal Paper of the Year Award 2017** to Professor **Dr Sylvain Lenfle**, Conservatoire Nationale des Art et Métiers in Paris, École Polytechnique, for his paper *Floating in Space? On the Strangeness of Exploratory Projects*, and to Professor **Dr Anders Jensen**, Filosooffen.dk, Professor **Dr Christian Thuesen**, Technical University of Denmark, and to Professor **Dr Joana Geraldi**, Technical University of Denmark for their paper *The Projectification of Everything: Projects as a Human Condition*.



Professor Dr Sylvain Lenfle



Professor Dr Anders Jensen (left), Professor Dr Christian Thuesen, Professor Dr Joana Geraldi

Dr Carla Messikomer presented the **PMI Teaching Excellent award 2017** to Professor **Dr Vijay Kanabar**.

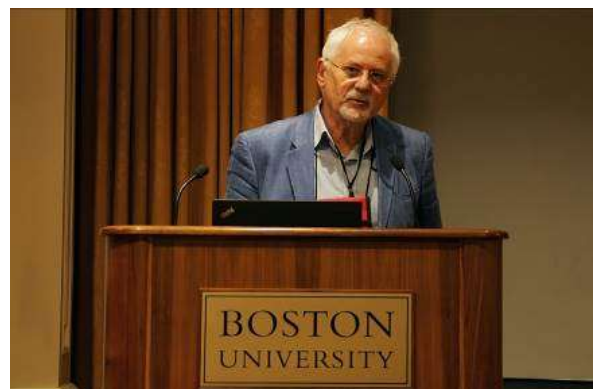


Professor Dr Vijay Kanabar

Professor **Dr Andrew Davies** presented the **PMI Scholar-Practitioner Award 2017** to Professor **Dr Ray Levitt** of Stanford University.

Dr Carla Messikomer presented the **PMI Research Achievement Award** to Professor **Dr Svetlana Cicmil** of University of the West of England, Bristol, Professor **Dr Damian Hodgson** of The University of Manchester, Professor **Dr Monica Lindgren** of KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and to Professor **Dr Johann Packendorff** of KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

In his final remarks Professor Dr Stephen Leybourne thanked sincerely all IRNOP XIII organizers and participants, reminded the conference papers are available at <http://irnoboston.org/papers>, closed the IRNOP XIII conference, and handed the responsibility for organizing the next IRNOP conference – IRNOP XIV – to the **Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)**. Professor **Dr Derek Walker** (right) invited the entire IRNOP family to RMIT for IRNOP XIV on December 10 ... 12, 2018. Also the organizer of IRNOP XV was announced in the closing plenary: IRNOP XV will be organized by **Uppsala University**.





IRNOP, The International Research Network on Organizing by Projects, was founded in 1993 as a

loosely coupled network of researchers and has developed from there, adding researchers in countries all over the world. The IRNOP network connects scholars with a background in business, economics, engineering and other fields, with a common interest in projects, project organizations and temporary systems. The IRNOP Project Research Conference gathers scholars who have a research interest in projects from all over the world to a conference every second year (in 2006 a decision was made to schedule the IRNOP Project Research Conferences to odd years). IRNOP Project Research Conference has been organized thirteen times:

- IRNOP I in Lycksele, Sweden in 1994: *Temporary organizations and project management*
- IRNOP II in Paris, France in 1996: *Aspects of society and business organized as projects*
- IRNOP III in Calgary, Canada in 1998: *The nature and role of projects in the next 20 years: Research issues and problems*
- IRNOP IV in Sydney, Australia in 2000: *Paradoxes of Project Collaboration in the Global Economy: Interdependence, Complexity and Ambiguity*
- IRNOP V in Rotterdam, The Netherlands in 2002
- IRNOP VI in Turku, Finland in 2004: *Project business*
- IRNOP VII in Xi'an, China in 2006
- IRNOP VIII in Brighton, UK in 2007: *Projects in Innovation, Innovation in Projects*
- IRNOP IX in Berlin, Germany in 2009: *Organizing by Projects*
- IRNOP X in Montreal, Canada in 2011: *The Expanding Domain of Project Research*
- IRNOP XI in Oslo, Norway in 2013: *Innovative approaches in project management research*
- IRNOP XII in London, UK in 2015: *The Power of Projects*
- IRNOP XIII in Boston, Massachusetts in 2017: *The Modern Project: Mindsets, Toolsets, and Theoretical Frameworks*

For further information please navigate to www.irnop.org .



Boston University (BU) is a private research university in Boston, Massachusetts. BU has over 3 900 faculty members and nearly 33 000 students, and is one of the largest employers in Boston. BU offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorates, and medical, dental, business, and law degrees through 17 schools and colleges on two urban campuses. The main BU campus is located by the Charles River in the Fenway-Kenmore and Allston area, while the Boston University Medical Campus is located in the South End area. BU is categorized as an R1: Doctoral University i.e. with very high research activity in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. BU is a member of the Boston Consortium for Higher Education and the Association of American Universities. BU was ranked 39th in the undergraduate programs at national universities and 32nd in global universities by U.S. News & World Report in 2017. For further information please navigate to www.bu.edu .

About the Author



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Jouko Vaskimo is an International Correspondent and Senior Contributing Editor for **PM World** in Finland. Jouko graduated M.Sc. (Tech.) from Helsinki University of Technology in 1992, and D.Sc. (Tech.) from Aalto University in 2016. He has held several project management related positions with increasing levels for responsibility. Jouko holds a number of professional certificates in the field of project management, such as the IPMA Level C (Project Manager), IPMA Level B (Senior Project Manager), PMP, PRINCE2 Foundation, and PRINCE2 Practitioner. Jouko is also a Certified Scrum Master and SAFe Agilist. Jouko is a member of the Project Management Association Finland, a founding member of PMI Finland Chapter, and the immediate past chairman of the Finnish IPMA Certification Body operating IPMA certification in Finland. Since October 2007, he has been heading the Finnish delegation to ISO/TC 258. Jouko resides in Espoo, Finland and can be best contacted at jouko.vaskimo@aalto.fi . For more information please navigate to www.linkedin.com/in/jouko-vaskimo-6285b51 .