

Inside the New Professionalism: Innovative Institutional Agents and Social Change

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The Rise and Fall of the Profession

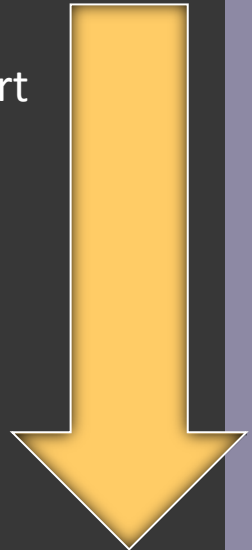
- **Professionalism described as ‘the third logic’ (Friedson, 2001)**
 - **Beyond markets and bureaucratic managerialism**
- **Popularity of this logic has waxed and waned**
 - **Victorian ‘Golden Age’ of Professionalism**
 - Unassailable Authority, Social Value - Elevated Rewards and Status
 - Cf. the Autonomy and Status of the Doctor/Lawyer/Cleric
 - **Modern Scepticism towards Claims of Altruism/Social Value**
 - The attempt ‘to translate a scarce set of cultural and technical resources into a secure and institutionalized system of social and financial rewards’ (Larson 1977: xvii)
 - Professions seen as Elitist, Monopolistic, Self-Serving, ‘Anti-competitive’

The New Resurgence of Professionalism?

- **Professionalism as ‘the dominant principle and form of organizing and controlling expert knowledge and skill in the 21st century’**
(Reed, 1996)
 - **The New Professionals**
 - 27% of UK working population identified as professionals in 2004
 - Over 270 distinct professional associations in the UK alone
 - **‘New’ professions unable to reproduce traditional liberal professions**
 - A ‘Hollowed Out’ New Professionalism?
1. **How do these new professions operate?**
 2. **What is the likely impact of these new professions?**

Institutional Understandings of Professions

- Professions are “not the only, but are (...) the most influential contemporary crafters of institutions” (Scott, 2008: 223)
- According to this formulation, professions act as;
 1. **Regulative Agents**
 - Able to exercise coercive power based on state or corporate support
 2. **Cultural-Cognitive Agents**
 - “exercising control by defining reality” (Scott, 2008: 224)
 - Relies on (declining?) faith in ‘cultural authority’ of professional
 3. **Normative Agents**
 - Providing “prescriptive guidance” based on (scientific) evidence



New Professions as Institutional Entrepreneurs?

- **New institutionalist emphasis on continuity/conformity/stasis (Suddaby, 2010; Scott, 2010)**
 - “If institutions control conduct, how do institutions become established and how do they change?” (Willmott, 2011: 68)
- **Belated incorporation of agency and thereby change into theory**
 - “Institutional theory, as functionalist, had to invent the overused category of institutional entrepreneur to ‘save’ the theory and include an account – among all the status, conformity and legitimacy – that things and times change” (Clegg, 2010: 5)
- **Attention must be paid to the discursive tactics involved in institutionalisation**
 - “institutions are not just social constructions but social constructions constituted through discourse” (Phillips et al, 2004: 638)
 - Agency *itself* is constructed through discursive action

Follow the Actors: New Tactics

- **Call for integration of naturalistic and agentic accounts of institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation (Scott, 2010)**
- **Professionalisation is furthered by the strategic use of power on the part of professional associations**
 - “reliant on skilled analysis, deployments and coordination grounded in local knowledge” (Clegg, 2010: 10).
- **Identify the multiple and divergent discursive resources employed to transform, subvert or maintain the status quo**
- **Empirical Base:**
 - Interviews with current/previous senior members of APM
 - Documentary analysis of public material, reports, promotional and marketing literature

Project Management as a New Profession

- **Professionalisation in PM has followed traditional route**

1. Establishment of Core Knowledge – PMBOK®, Standards, etc
2. Direct Certification of Individuals
3. Promotion of Credentialism within key job markets

Not (yet) control of entry/strong internal regulation/altruism

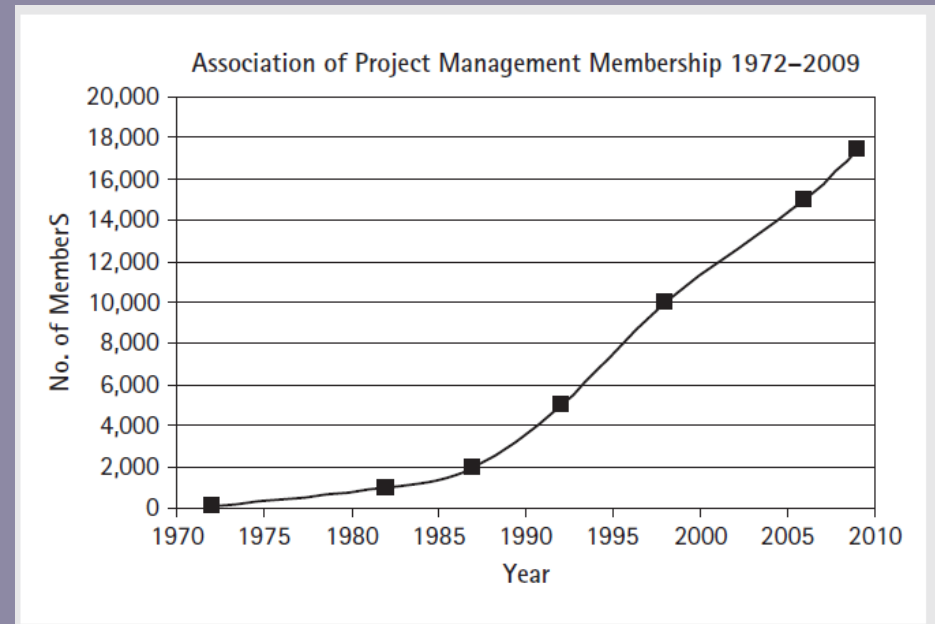
Project Management as a ‘commercialized profession’ (Hanlon, 1998)

Claims to exclusive expertise are indexed primarily upon

1. **technical ability**
 2. **managerial competency**
 3. **the delivery of economic benefits for client (Morris et al, 2007)**
- Parallel to HRM, consulting and certain other ‘new professions’

The Evolution of the APM

- APM formed in 1972 as 'INTERNET'
- Changes name to 'Association for Project Management' in 1975
- Rapid growth following launch of Certificated Project Manager® qualification in 1992
- Revamp in 2005, including;
 - New brand identity
 - Publication of 5th APM Body of Knowledge
 - Revised governance structure
- Campaign to earn Royal Charter initiated in 2007



New Discourses I: Modernisation

- **‘The Barnes Challenge’ (Dr Martin Barnes CBE, APM president)**

Challenges the APM to be “the model of a successful, modern professional organisation, pre-eminent in the fields of project and programme management” (APM Report, 2010-11)

“If you really sort of sat down with a blank sheet of paper and said what would a modern professional body be like and what would it do and how would you engage the majority of the members? You would probably come up with something quite different from what any traditional professional body does.”

Not just “limestone and gold chains and crests with funny animals”

“The traditional member’s approach is ‘I belong to an established Victorian fuddy-duddy chartered body’, there is an opportunity to educate those members, to say that professionalism doesn’t have to be like that and maybe there is another way.”

Symbolic Transformation: Rebranding APM



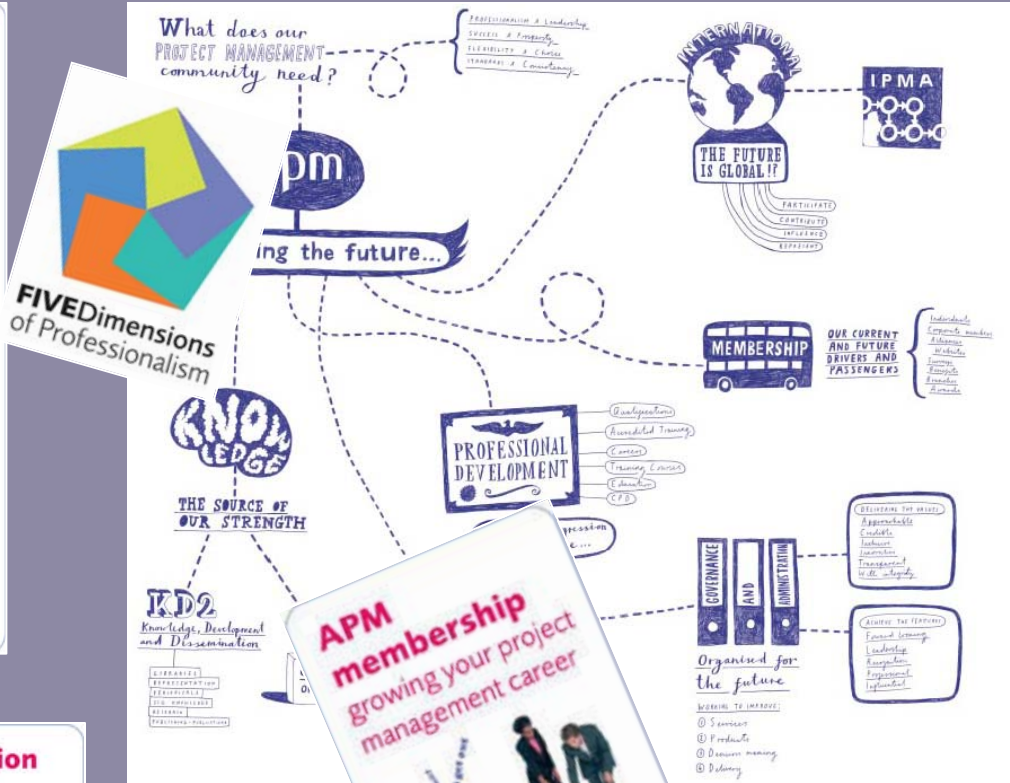
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New Discourses II: New Relationships

Renegotiated Relationships with State/Corporations/Individual Members

- **Focus on Corporate Membership**

- In 10 years, from 150 to over 500 corporate members

“APM would want to have corporate members as well as individual members because it gives us a chance to expand our sphere of influence, into not just talking to individuals but talking to some quite powerful structurers.”

- **Diminished Influence of Individual Members**

“We’re having sometimes to cut a few corners on the consensus side, (a) because I know it will take too long and (b) because I know it won’t actually improve the results necessarily”

- **Transnational Ambition**

“(PM) could be the first international profession... The activity is the same all over the world and it’s just got local differences as to what projects people do but the technology and the professionalism is common.”

New Discourses III: Markets *and* Society

- **Legitimised by Market Value**

“The impact of a really competent approach, a really professional approach, is a multiple not a percentage improvement in performance. It’s really quite dramatic when you see it at close quarters.”

BUT ALSO

- **Renewed Recourse to Public Good**

“Project management is a vital contributor to the UK’s economic interests... Projects are required to be delivered quicker and better, represent increasingly good value-for-money and achieve increasingly efficient use of scarce resources...Society at large, therefore, gains from the improved effectiveness and efficiency of project and programme management which APM promotes.”
(APM Annual Report, 2010)

“And when we say we’d like to do it for the public good, the public now generally says ‘yes please’, as opposed to ‘who the hell are you?’”

Follow the Actors: New Tactics

- **Professionalisation understood a conscious and strategic, largely coordinated but not entirely coherent**
- **Professionalisation draws on multiple/divergent discursive resources;**
 - Reinvent professionalism through ;
 1. **Mobilising symbolic resources** to evoke modernism
 2. **Renegotiating relationship** with State, corporate and individual members
 3. Shifting from **national to global interests**
 4. **Combining claims to social trusteeship and market value**
 - Also exploit established and traditional sources of legitimacy where necessary/appropriate

Towards New Professionalism: The bigger picture

Table 1. Key characteristics of ‘corporate professionalization’ compared to more ‘traditional’ models

	Old ‘Collegial professionalization’	New ‘Corporate professionalization’
Knowledge-base	Reliance on an abstract body of knowledge	Co-production of knowledge with industry, situated knowledge, focus on competences
Market	Statutory closure via Royal Charter	Market closure via corporate practices (‘embedding professional membership’ in tendering and procurement processes)
Legitimacy	Legitimized by public benefit	Legitimized by market value
Composition of association	Individual membership Single-tier membership structure	Individual and organizational membership Multi-level membership structure
Relation to state	Licensed/regulated by state	Not licensed/regulated, state acts as (significant) stakeholder/consumer of services
Relation with clients and employers	Arm’s length	Close engagement
Jurisdictions	National	International

The Consequences of New Professionalism

- **The case of the APM (and other new professions) is evidence of;**
“the emergence of a new organizational model of professionalism which is more suitable for the landscape of contemporary expertise and more acceptable in an ideological climate which is increasingly sceptical towards traditional professional claims and arrangements” (Muzio et al, 2008)
- **Potential to challenge established models of professionalism**
 - Self-consciously ‘alternative’ and ‘modernising’
- **Increasing focus upon;**
 - Corporate Stakeholders (*including* State) & Market Validation
 - Shift from Member-run to Professionally-administered body
 - Global Expansion

Institutional Entrepreneurship and New Professions

- **The Cost of Professionalisation**
- **Changing “currency of legitimacy” (Abbott, 1988)**
 - Conflates social trusteeship with technical expertise validated by market (Brint, 1994)
- **Socially Inclusive yet Politically Conservative?**
 - Professionalisation ‘from above’ rather than ‘from below’
 - Dominance of employers/client organisations over practitioners
 - Difficulty in defending professional autonomy and discretion
 - Collegiality undermined by stratification of profession
 - transactional vs. strategic PM
- Long term trajectory towards “cultural demystification, managerial routinisation, technological commodification and, in short, deprofessionalisation” (Reed, 2007)