

# Riding, Surviving & Thriving on Large Scale / Global Project Dynamics

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# An appetite for fresh thinking....

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Look at something familiar

Add a fresh lens

1. Project context
2. Operant culture inside
3. Unfolding 'pathology'

Now what can you see?

Risk Load = 3P+CM+DM

## Why now? - An emerging trend

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- Coping with Project Dynamics in an Inter-firm Context  
[Production planning & Control] Weck, 2002
- ‘Collaboratory’ for Research on Global Projects - Stanford
- Balance Between Order & Chaos in Multi-Project Firms  
Geraldi, 2007
- Preparing the Mind for Dynamic Management Hartman, Jan 2008
- Creating a Global Mindset [Chief Learning Officer June 2008]
- The New Global Manager: Learning Cultures on the Fly  
[Journal of Org. Dynamics, 2008]
- Megaprojects – paradoxes, complexity & project design  
[International Journal of Project Management Aug 08]
- Competency-Based Measures - should contextual behaviours be distinguished from task behaviours?

# The Project – Our ‘object’ through 3 lenses

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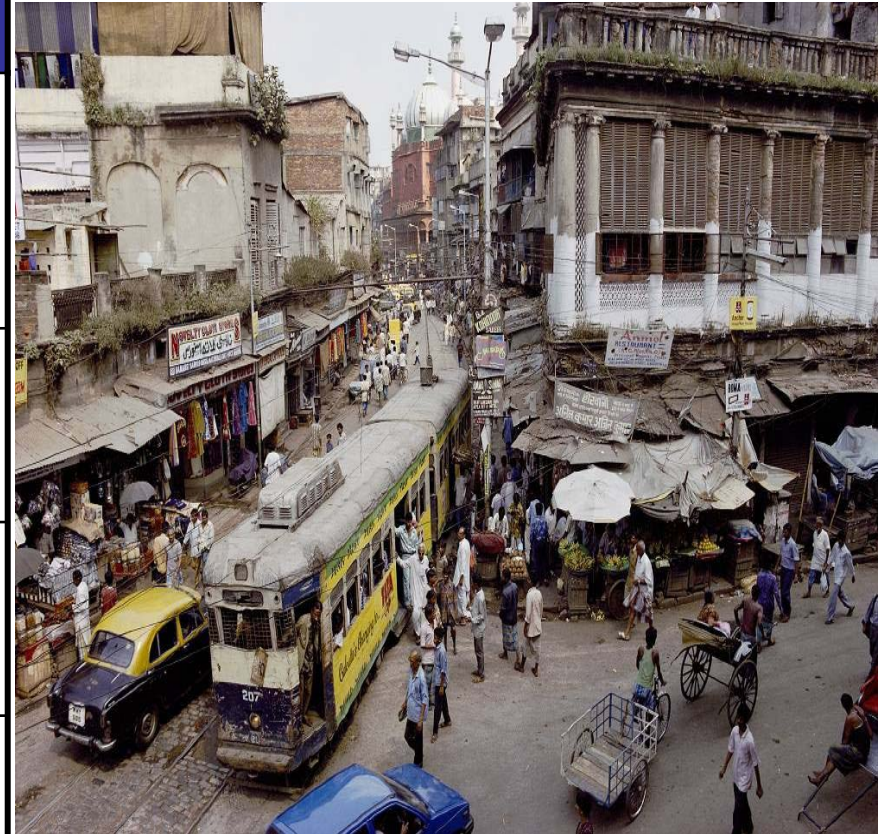
- Reliance Retail, India
- Mukesh & Anil Ambani – combined wealth AUD \$90B
- “...fierce, violent, cruel, blood-thirsty & savage”

The Age Aug 2 2008

- Farm to fork
- 320 stores in 3 months
- zero retail & supply-chain base
- 98 training modules
- No SOPs or in-country experience
- Team – 26 cities/ 15 nationalities – Median age 27/ F
- 1 million staff impacted

# Lens 1: Project Context

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Specialist Job</i>            | Retail   |
| <i>Org. Culture</i>              | Last week's sales<br><br>Hungry<br>Indian                |
| <i>Operational Field</i>         | Sensory Challenge<br>Hardship<br><b>Resource issues</b>  |
| <i>Scale of Operations</i>       | 1 million staff<br>320 stores<br>11 modules p/w x9 weeks |
| <i>Institutional Environment</i> | Private equity<br>Family feud<br>Limited cover           |



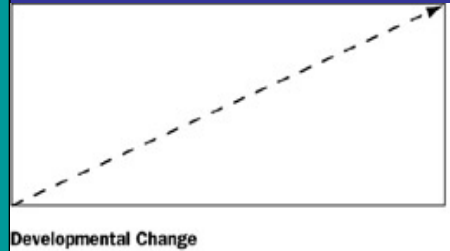
# Unexpected human resource issues

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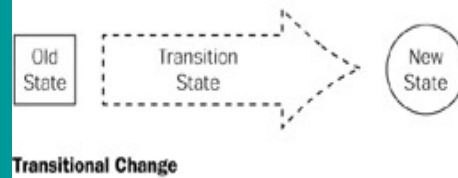


# Change Context - Transformational or less...

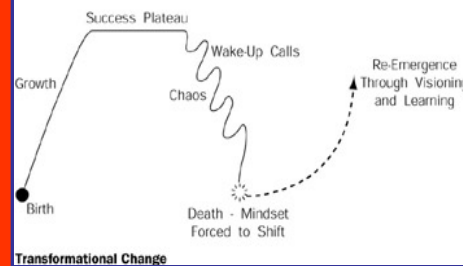
**Developmental  
Change**



**Transitional  
Change**



**Transformational  
Change**



# Unshakable Confidence in the Implausible



- Feasibility
- Do-ability
- Capacity

## Lens 2: The Culture

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### Relation to Others:

power distance, authority, familism, trust, individualism vs collectivism  
High/low context communications

### Oneself:

Masculinity vs femininity, assertiveness vs nurturance

### Certainty:

uncertainty avoidance (work-hard /orderliness)/ anxiety Vs casualness

### Sense & use of Time:

One track / multi-track, past/present/future, rubber time

Thinking: abstractive / associative

## Lens 3: Project Pathology (study of illness)

Ackoff then S. Beer's systems movement – organizations as a viable system

*"...may not be in full good health; it might be really ill; its condition might actually be pathological".*

Pathology origins:

**Hereditary:** diseases transmitted and manifested at birth or later on in life

**Acquired:** diseases transmitted through environmental factors or habits - generally manifested after birth or even through the environment during the birth process (congenital)

Diseases classified as:

- Inflammations
- Degenerations
- Neoplasias (tumors)

These diseases can be produced by different agents:

- Physical
- Chemical
- Biological
- generally referred to as "noxa".

# Context – dissimilar projects, similar observations

| <i>Specialist Job</i>            | Retail   | Government                            | IT + Consulting   |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Org. Culture</i>              | Last week's sales<br><br>Hungry<br>Indian      | Catching out<br><br>Well fed<br>Anglo | Design/Build<br>Unravel, Model,<br>Lead<br>Looking good<br>French |
| <i>Operational Field</i>         | Sensory Challenge<br>Hardship / Promise        | Their own truth                       | 52 'fields'<br>80+ sites<br>46 entities inside                    |
| <i>Scale of Operations</i>       | National                                       | .5 Billion \$<br>National             | 100,000 staff<br>25B Euros savings                                |
| <i>Institutional Environment</i> | Private equity<br>Family feud<br>Limited cover | Senate watching                       | Share market<br>watching  |

A dramatic landscape featuring a dark, stormy sky with heavy, dark clouds and several bright lightning bolts striking down. The horizon is a flat line of green fields. A road with white and yellow lines leads from the foreground towards the horizon, creating a strong sense of perspective.

Risk Load = PM + CM + DM

Pathology

Culture

Context

# Lessons Learnt – from risk mitigation to absorption

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1. Design and explore / test the project dynamic consciously (context, culture, pathology)
2. Check you have not morphed (or metastasized!)
3. Large scale projects impact lives and usually leave scar tissue
4. Cultural challenges must be defined and openly acknowledged
5. Apply an intra-project change management stream – as dynamics monitor
6. Sometimes it's just a white knuckle ride – not all risks can be known, mitigated or managed.



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