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MIDOCEAN
UNIVERSITY

Global Project Management

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Global Project Management

Lecture 5

Global Project Structure

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Global Project Structure

International projects can be structured in different ways, depending on the project size, complexity, types, organizational structures and the creation of work packages according to functional or regional criteria.

The maturity level of the organization on global project management and the level of experience of the project manager, project coordinators and team members on global projects are also key factors when choosing between the different project structures.

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This lecture shows some examples of these basic structures, keeping in mind that experienced project managers will often apply a combination of them according to the organizational culture and the availability of resources.

Some organisations may prefer to have mainly collocated teams and opt for the structures with local coordinators, while others prefer to employ virtual teams and can opt for the centralized structure.

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The first group of organisations can have difficulty in finding resources available in the right location and can use expatriation and temporary assignments to fill their requirements .

The second group will employ the right resources in any possible company location, and need to have a high maturity in project management and worldwide adoption of the Global Project Management Framework.

Centralized project management

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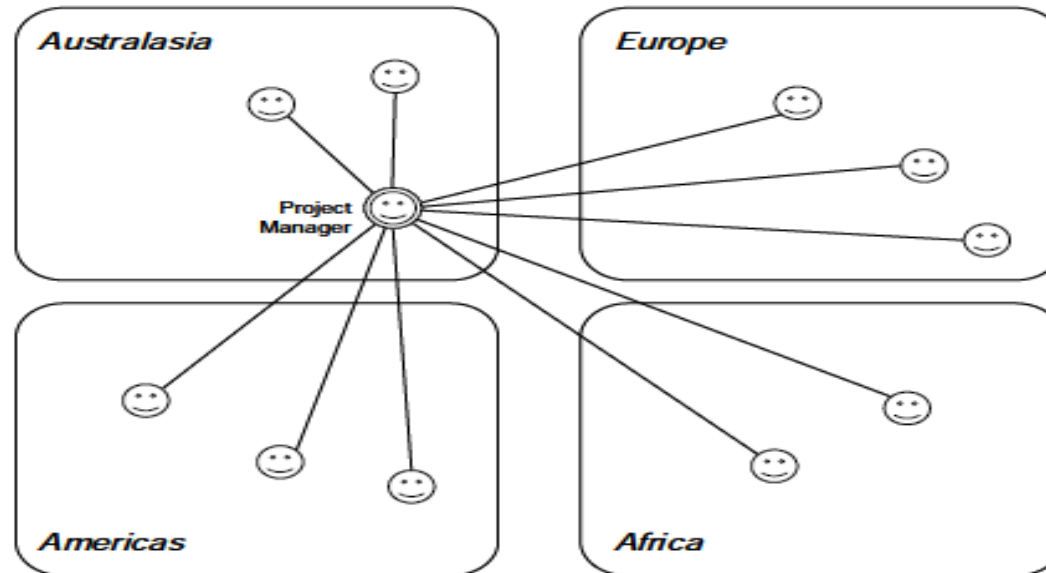
In the first form of project structure , Figure below all team members report directly to the project manager, who performs most of the coordination and control tasks using collaborative tools .

The projects can have a centralized form when the level of complexity of the coordination activities is relatively low, or when other forms are not applicable. Some examples:

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1 Example of centralised structure

Centralized project management

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- When the size and complexity of the project are small enough to allow effective coordination over distance.
- When the dispersion degree is high among team members and the size of each local team does not justify assigning local coordinators.

Centralized project management

- When the team members working in different locations are familiar with collaborative tools and different cultures, and like to work independently – having a proven record of delivering their tasks on time without close coordination.
- When the use of other structures is not possible because local coordinators are not available.

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Some recommendations to project managers working with centralised project teams are:

- to train all team members on the collaborative tools, cultural differences and all other areas discussed in this book;
- to study and apply the good practices on global team leadership and the other topics.

Centralized project management

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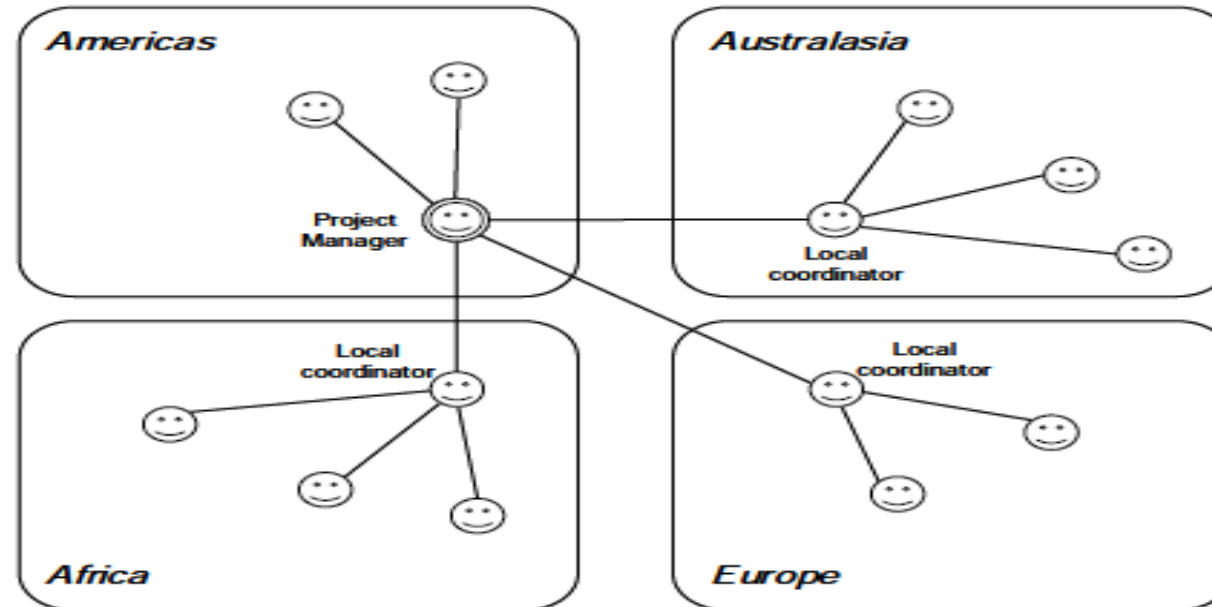
- to identify team members with good communication and coordination skills, who can work as local coordinators on future projects (allowing the use of the project structures described in the next sections).

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

This is the recommended structure for most global projects.

All or most of the team members report to local coordinators, who are responsible for the planning and execution of sub-projects or work packages, depending on the project complexity Figure below.

Distributed project management, with local coordinators



2 Example of distributed structure

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

In other situations, each local team receives a detailed definition of their scope of work and performs their tasks autonomously.

Key team members can be involved in a detailed definition of the interfaces between tasks performed by different teams, and between the deliverables produced by different teams.

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

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The need for communication over distance may be reduced to the monitoring and control performed by the project manager, and to the follow-up meetings among all local coordinators.

This avoids misunderstandings and reduces the amount of work outside office hours when the teams work in different time zones.

Some situations when global projects can benefit from distributed structures are:

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

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- when the international companies are organized using local competence centers, and most work packages group the activities from a functional perspective;
- when competencies are distributed and every location can develop a complete component of the final product;
- when a cultural or geographical proximity to the final customers is important.

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

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Project managers with distributed teams will need to perform coaching, training and organize meetings over distance with a limited number of local coordinators, while these will manage their own teams without the barriers created by different languages, time zones, cultures and distance.

Distributed project management, with local coordinators

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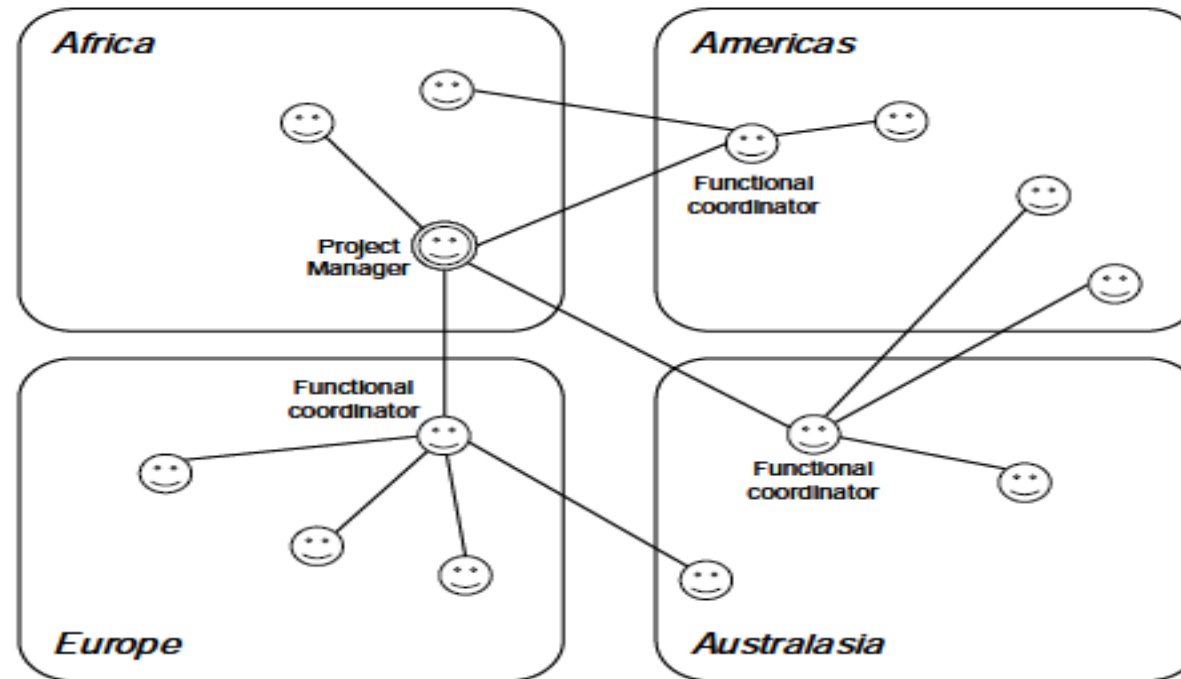
All knowledge and practices for global project management will be implemented and employed by the project manager and local coordinators.

The local team members will learn these practices by participating in the meetings, using the project collaboration devices and attending the cultural workshops.

Distributed project management, with functional coordinators

This is the recommended structure when the complexity or size of the work packages demands a group of knowledgeable people coordinated by experienced or specialised coordinators, all in different locations Figure below.

Distributed project management, with functional coordinators



.3 Example of distributed-functional structure

Distributed project management, with functional coordinators

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Some examples are:

- when organisations allocate people to projects based on their knowledge and availability, not their location;
- when companies are organized on functional competence centres, and each work package includes many cross-functional activities;

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- when competencies are distributed across locations, and the project work packages are grouped on a functional perspective;
- when the project team must include team members close to the customers or key stakeholders.

There is an important difference between the two distributed structures. The functional coordinators working with team members in different countries must receive training and coaching in global communication and collaboration tools, and transfer this knowledge to all distributed team members.

Distributed project management, with functional coordinators

Most meetings happen over distance and must avoid the barriers created by the different languages, time zones, cultures and distance.

The project manager, local coordinators and most team members must learn and employ the knowledge and practices in the Global Project Management Framework.

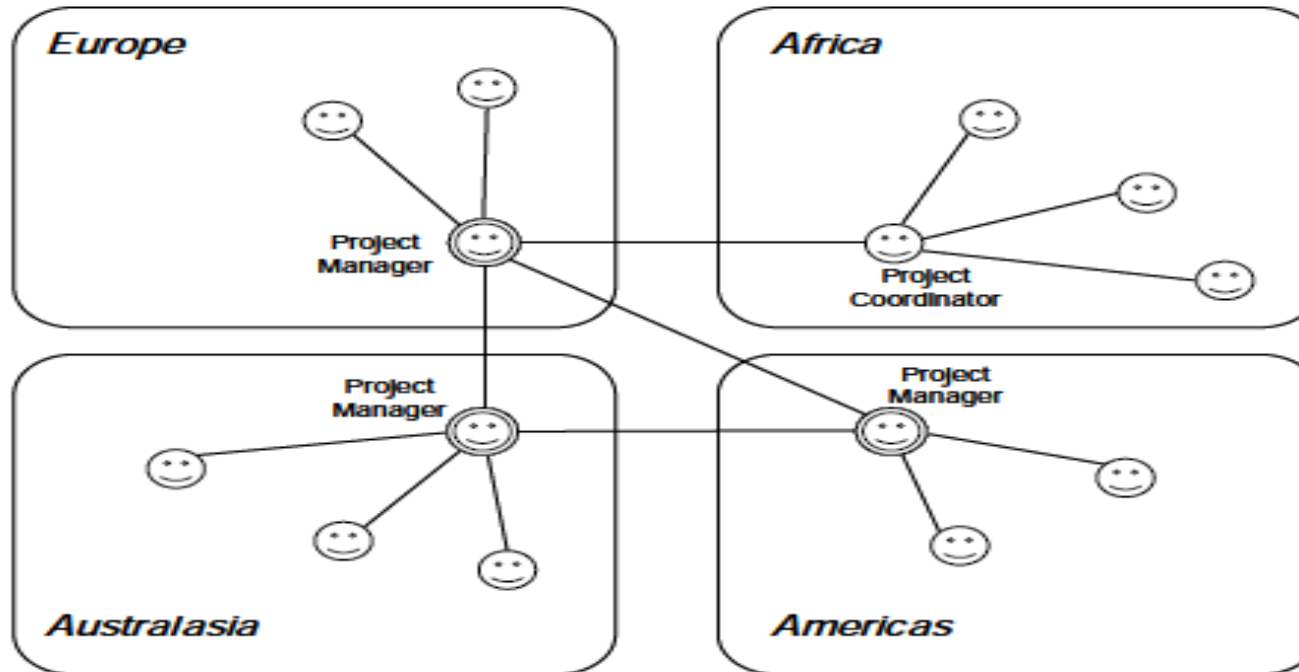
Organisations with a high level of maturity on their processes can deploy specialized teams strategically located around the globe to reduce the time to complete the deliverables, or to implement them in customers dispersed geographically.

The communication methods among the different teams and project managers must be clearly defined and understood by all parties, the level of integration and teamwork must be extremely high, usually with a global work authorization system in place.

The benefits achieved by global organisations are often worth the effort in setting up this structure, which is very similar to distributed project management.

The main difference is the high degree of independence of the project managers, which makes them share the responsibilities of updating the project records, preparing presentations to the stakeholders and taking strategic decisions Figure below.

Round-the-clock project management



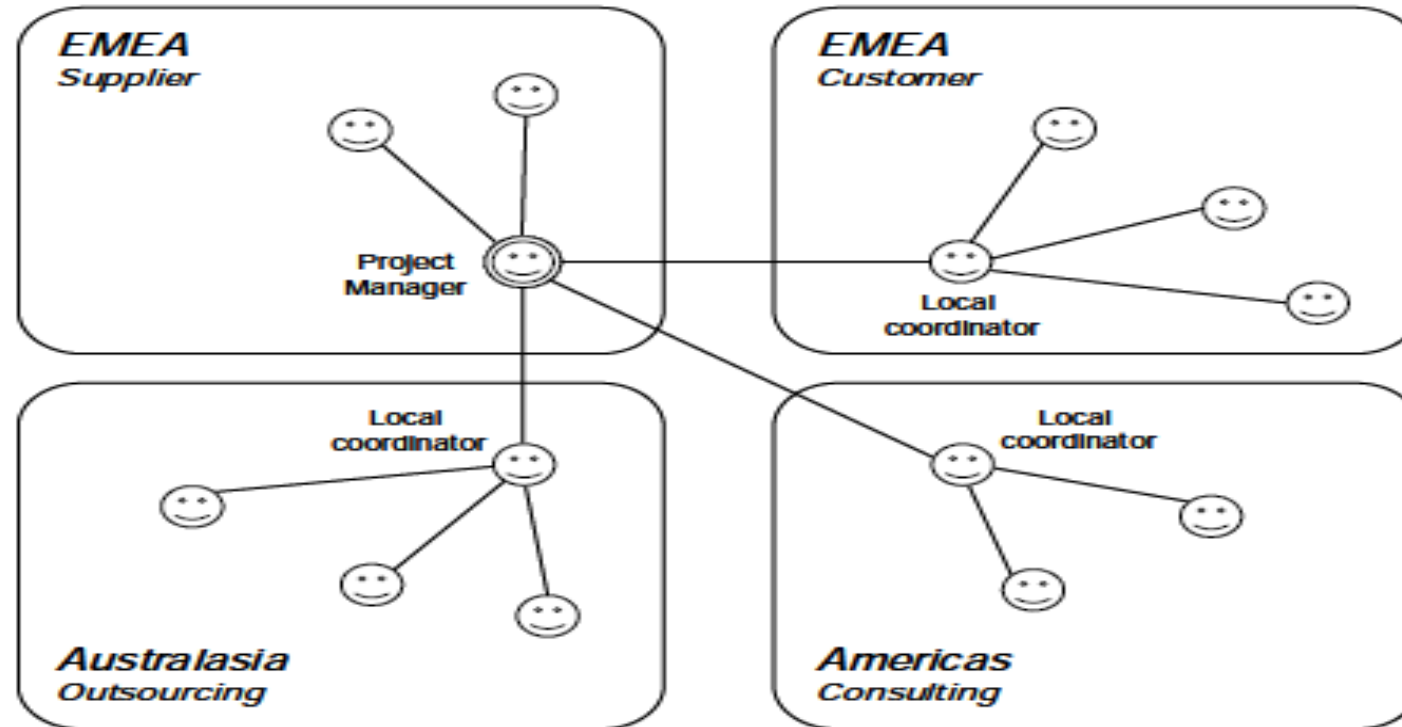
1.4 Example of round-the-clock structure

This is another variant of distributed project management, when the local coordinators work for different organisations. This is the usual structure of projects that employ outsourcing, offshoring and out-tasking strategies for the execution of certain work packages or activities in Figure below .

Project management global network

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5 Example of project network structure

The added challenge of this structure is the need for the project manager to understand and synchronize different organizational cultures and country cultures in the same project. This type of project organization is very common, and often the main reason for project failures involving different companies around the globe.

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Resources:

Global Project Management

Communication, Collaboration and Management Across Borders

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