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Visualizing Knowledge in Project-Based Work

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This article considers how visual practices are used to manage knowledge in project-based work. It compares project-based work in a capital goods manufacturer and an architectural firm. Visual representations are used extensively in both cases, but the nature of visual practice differs significantly between the two. The research explores the kinds of knowledge that are (and aren't) developed and made visible in strategizing and planning activities. For example, whereas the emphasis of project-based work in the former firm is on exploitation of knowledge and it visualizes its project context largely in commercial and processual terms, the emphasis in the latter is on exploration and it uses a wide range of visual materials to understand physical interdependencies across the project boundary. We contend particular kinds of visual tools can help project teams step between *exploration* and *exploitation* within a project, and articulate the types of representations, foci of attention and patterns of interaction involved. The findings suggest that business managers can make more deliberate choices about how knowledge is made visible, and can change visual practice to align the project with exploring and exploiting opportunities. It raises the question: What don't you see within your organization? The work contributes to academic debates about managing through

projects, strategising and organizing, while the focus on visual representation disrupts the tacit-codified dichotomy in the broad debate on knowledge and learning, and highlights the craft skills central to strategizing and organizing.



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