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Hearing the Quiet Voices: Digital Empowerment of Low Status Stakeholders in Complex Value Co-creation Construction Scenarios
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Purpose
This study seeks to address contemporary issues in stakeholder influence in long-term projects with multiple actors. These projects are complex in nature and value outcomes are established along the way. This value co-creation process requires input from all stakeholders, ranging from low to high status. Many of the low status stakeholders find themselves on the outside of the decision making process and use digital platforms to bolster their engagement. We analyse the journey of stakeholder co-creation by categorising the process and identifying the periods in which high status stakeholders ‘get noisy’ and digital platforms for the empowerment of low status stakeholder contribute the most.

Design/methodology/approach
This study adopts an exploratory methodology and the design orchestrates case study-based qualitative interviews. We conduct two research stages, firstly defining key concepts associated with the project process through the application of the Delphi technique. Respondents from the different stakeholder groups are asked a series of questions to identify clear definitions of these concepts and these are revisited in subsequent interviews having shared the definitions from the first round of interviews. The second phase is the creation of the phases of the project, based on the identification of milestones that generate agreed points of value co-creation.

Findings
The study is in progress and early indications show a three phase process, (1) building, (2) using and (3) destroying. At this stage of the study, fine-grained analysis reveals further sub-processes that are so critical to understand when making true value co-creation happen. Furthermore, we find that digital empowerment takes place through online engagement platforms. These platforms are typically set up by the high-powered stakeholders including but not limited to construction firms, architect and central planning authorities. This is modelled on standard development projects and is extended here to specific targeted low powered stakeholders who are already involved from the conceptualisation phase.

Research limitations/implications
This research is exploratory and so lacks generalizability at this stage. Further research would seek to extend our work through an empirical analysis of a wider sample of projects, both domestically and internationally. Empirical testing of the conceptualisations will also refine these categories improving the prospects for generalised truths about the process of digital empowerment in complex projects.

Originality/value
This study evaluates a novel area in the value co-creation literature and extends the static dyadic perspective to develop a dynamic view of the co-creation process. This process involves multiple actors at different project stages. The extant literature does not examine the role of digital platforms in this context to any significant extent. Yet, throughout the construction project stages, stakeholder groups are digitally connected. This insight into the on-going process of value co-creation is revealed through the changing nature of the interactions between stakeholders as the project moves through different stages. Looked at value co-creation in an online/offline and dynamic fashion, our study will contribute to theory building that is urgently needed for the 'value co-creation research area' to advance.

Keywords: Digital empowerment, co-creation, SDL, stakeholders