



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper presented at *European Academy of management annual conference. Oslo, Norway. May 17th - 20th 2006.*

Citation for the original published paper:

Lindgren, M., Packendorff, J. (2006)

Caught in the act?: On co-construction of project work and professional identities in theatres.

In:

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kth:diva-49113>

Caught in the Act? On Co-construction of Project Work and Professional Identities in Theatres

Monica Lindgren, Johann Packendorff
KTH Royal Institute of Technology
School of Industrial Engineering and Management

Paper for EURAM, 2006

Abstract

Earlier studies point at that the notion of working in a project brings with it expectations on several aspects of the work situation, expectations that are institutionally given by project theory and practice and re-constructed by the project workers in interaction. At the same time, working by projects and re-constructing organisational and institutional norms on how projects should be, they also successively constructed an image of themselves in relation to these norms. This points at that not only are individuals reinforcing established notions on project work while working by projects – they also at the same time construct their own identities, reinforcing notions about themselves as professional, committed and structured enough to endure the hardships of project work. In other words, a project is here seen as a process of co-construction of the project form and of project worker professional identity. In this paper, we will thus analyse how people in project-based operations socially construct projects and individual identities – i.e. what happens when something is labelled a project and/or a project-based firm.

The analysis of the interviews from two theatres indicates that projects and project-based operations are co-constructed with individual identities in several ways simultaneously, through discourses that may look internally consistent but not always easy to combine with each other. Even though most producers, directors and stage managers at the two theatres are most familiar with Gantt charts, project goal structures etc, they are not actively promoting Project Management as a distinct competence of neither themselves nor the organization. What they do promote is still a modernist notion of professionalism that is closely linked to the project form of work organization. What is co-constructed is a system of inter-subjectively held beliefs linking organizational poverty, legitimacy and success to individual identification with what are high-standard artistry, organizational loyalty and self-fulfilment. The single projects become arenas and critical incidents for such co-construction, for yet another confirmation of the current development or for experimenting with other forms for theatre production project work.

1. Project work and individual identity

Projectification of work and life

Since the middle of the 1960's, it has been repeatedly claimed that our society – and thus also our lives – is becoming increasingly projectified, i.e. organised in terms of time-limited sequences of action and interaction (Miles, 1964, Bennis and Slater, 1968). This development was expected to imply an increased use of the project work form, but also an increasing tendency to view ongoing processes as limited in time and scope. When discussing reasons for this development, authors usually referred to a general increase in the speed of change at all aspects of society in combination with an increased complexity. For organisations, the solution to a reality in which most relevant factors changed and interacted at the same time was to organise the flow of events into discrete projects, limited in time and space.

As a trend in the development of work organisation, projectification is usually expected to imply increased task focus, better conditions for learning, renewal and flexibility, less bureaucratic forms for management control etc (cf Pinto, 1996, Ekstedt et al, 1999). Even though there are some dangers of projectification – such as short-term thinking and increased de-coupling of organisations (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a) – this trend is mainly perceived as a positive one for contemporary organisations given that proper administrative systems are used (Hendriks et al, 1999). The basic reason for this perception seems to be that the project – viewed as a task specific and time-limited form of working – is perceived as a way of avoiding all the classic problems of bureaucracy, inertia and rigidity with which most "normal" organisations are struggling (Pinto, 1996, Clegg and Courpasson, 2004).

In many industries and companies, the project is now the normal work form (Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003). This is obvious in cultural life, advertising, consulting, R&D, IT etc, but also in several large corporations who executes numerous projects both externally and internally. Given this trend, one might assess that work life for many people is becoming increasingly projectified, i.e. that substantial parts of individuals' work lives are spent in projects and similar

temporary forms of organising. This is especially evident where individuals working in "project-based firms" are concerned, i.e. firms where almost all operations take place in projects and where the permanent structure fills the function of administrative support.

What hamper this development are the taken-for-granted views of industrial organisations as dependent on routines, hierarchies and technologies rather than flexibility, teamwork and customer orientation (Ekstedt et al, 1999). Instead of actually using project-based organizing as a way to find genuinely new ways of production and development, most firms seem to maintain a bureaucratic interpretation of the project form (Hodgson, 2004). Still, just a small portion of contemporary organisations actually organise work with both decentralisation and organised knowledge development in mind (Karlsson and Eriksson, 2000). Many of the calls for new organisational forms and a strengthened civil society can be analysed in a similar manner – if people are liberated from their structural chains, they can create wonders together (cf Kidder, 1981, Grantham, 2000). Most research on individual work satisfaction and commitment also support these claims (Karlsson and Eriksson, 2000).

Project work and identity – a critical perspective

While the existence, benefits and administrative hardships of project-based organising is well documented in the literature (cf Hendriks et al, 1999, Elonen and Arto, 2003, Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003) there is a lack of empirical studies inquiring into the abovementioned development from a critical perspective. The studies actually made indicate a clear need to pursue such a line of inquiry. Viewed from the perspective of the project worker, projects are often stimulating, but also sources of stress, loneliness, disrupted family lives, superficial work place relations etc (Gill, 2002, Packendorff, 2002, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a, 2006b). One might even say that projects is a way of disciplining the individual in a way that organisations in general cannot do anymore (Hodgson, 2002), that they are not necessarily panaceas to all sorts of bureaucracy problems (Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Hodgson, 2004), and that the work form reinforce traditional masculine attitudes to work and life (Gill, 2002, Buckle and Thomas, 2003, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a)

In our earlier studies, it appeared that many individuals working by projects tended to describe projects as something separated from the organisation in general (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a). Together, they constructed projects as extraordinary and temporary work contexts where 'normal rules' did not apply (Lindahl, 2006). Especially striking was the differences in how they viewed work conditions; while the organisations were described as friendly places that took care of their employees, projects were described as stressful, achievement-oriented places where everybody had to take care of themselves. This points at that the notion of working in a project brings with it expectations on several aspects of the work situation, expectations that are institutionally given by project theory and practice and re-constructed by the project workers in interaction.

At the same time, working by projects and re-constructing organisational and institutional norms on how projects should operate (Strauss, 1988), they also successively constructed an image of themselves in relation to these norms. If project work is different from other work, they were also different from other workers. When asked about if project work requires special skills or traits, many claimed that higher levels of discipline and dedication were needed, and they also took some pride in being amongst the chosen ones for these hard endeavours (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006b). This points at that not only are individuals reinforcing established notions on project work while working by projects – they also at the same time construct their own identities, reinforcing notions about themselves as professional, committed and structured enough to endure the hardships of project work. In other words, a project is here seen as a process of co-construction of the project form and of project worker professional identity. In this paper, we will thus analyse how people in project-based operations socially construct projects and individual identities – i.e. what happens when something is labelled a project and/or a project-based firm (Cicmil, 2003).

Theatres as project-based organisations

One of the most established 'industries' when it comes to project-based organizing, is the cultural sector. Apart from some ongoing operations in

museums, schools etc, most cultural activities in society are based in temporary organizing processes – events, exhibitions, plays, publications, installations etc. In the opera and theatre sector – which is the empirical focus of this article – each play is organized as a project (Ekstedt et al, 1999). During the project, manuscripts are finished, scenic design and costumes developed, plays and music rehearsed. In parallel to these internal activities, the upcoming play is marketed, printed material is designed etc – all with the first night as the undisputable deadline. Most theatre producers and directors work with project planning in order to be able to coordinate everything, and the team often perceive their work in terms of a series of projects (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006b). The ‘theatre industry’ is thus a suitable place for the inquiry into how projects are constructed and re-constructed in social interaction. It is also a place where problems of organizing, innovating and working around – a place where success is hard both to define and claim. As noted already in 1981, an important

“...concern in the management of temporary systems is the effect of outside, personal, or organizational life space on the task performance of participants. This phenomenon is certainly a problem in permanent organizations as well, but this author knows of no serious mention of it in the organizational literature. Typically, there are emotional, financial, and physical fluctuations in individuals’ lives that alter their capacity for work. Illness and death in the family, marital problems, house guests, or problems with children may all affect the participant’s concentration. New friends, graduations, anniversaries, recognition, or new opportunities all may increase the ability to perform. In the theatrical setting, the ambiguities about expected success, the public nature of the product, and the intensity of the rehearsal period all make the outside influences more powerful in terms of their impact on final performance.” (Goodman, 1981: 41)

The typical theatre project (as described by Dollar, 2000) starts with a preproduction phase, a short period of time when directors and stage managers prepares for the upcoming rehearsals. It begins with the selection of production

and design teams and includes the analysis of the script, auditions (if actors must be brought in from the outside) and production meetings. At this point, much of the process is driven by the director's artistic intentions. The stage manager and the producer (who might be the same person in smaller organisations) plan for the rehearsal process and the commercial process of marketing and performance planning, respectively.

During the rehearsal period, directors rehearse all parts of the play with the actors and musicians, while other groups of specialists develop all the other things needed. Electrics and lighting must be designed and installed, a sound system developed. Scenic construction people construct the scenic design together with prop masters who build all sorts of smaller items. A lot of work is also carried out at the costume department, where all clothes to be worn by the actors are manufactured. The rehearsal period ends by the so called "Tech weeks" (i.e. the technical rehearsals when all costumes, scenic design, lightning etc is used by the actors for the first time), culminating in the preview or 'general rehearsal' where a live audience is admitted. Then, at last, the opening night comes and the project crew may go on to new assignments while actors, musicians and sound & lighting experts continue into the repetitive work of re-performing the play during a number of evenings.

Many of the typical characteristics of project work are thus also to be found in theatre productions, not least because a theatre project has an absolute deadline that can never be postponed. In the following quotation from an experienced stage manager, we can see both the demands put by the project work situation and the individual professional identification as the well-planned, prepared and expedient coordinator:

"Any courtesies that are provided to the company members should be prepared, such as coolers of water or pots of coffee. (Yes, Stage Manager's do make coffee.) Coffee and donuts or bagels are hospitalities that are commonly provided for morning rehearsals. The SM should check with the producer before rehearsals start to see how much of a budget is available for this sort of amenity. If there is no budget, try to arrange for a collection from the company for this kind of thing (especially coffee and tea). It's a real morale booster.

The SM's workspace should also be prepared with the schedule, contact sheet, script and any other materials needed before the company begins to arrive. The SM should be completed with these tasks and free to answer questions, solve problems, schedule costume fittings or call missing company members before the rehearsal is scheduled to begin. Hopefully, the cast will never see the SM team running around like chickens with their heads cut off. If you are always early and always prepared, the Comfort Zone is increased.

Always remember to be tactful when dealing with company members who are not as punctual as you. Make sure that they understand how very important it is that they are present and ready to work at the scheduled time. Encourage the director to start rehearsals at the published time, even if everyone called is not present. Someone from the SM team should be responsible for calling the stragglers to find out why they are not yet present. Asking, "Is there anything we can do to help you get here on time" is much more effective than growling, "Why are you always late?"

As early as possible, you should post the running order of the show everywhere. You or your ASM should produce big copies of the scenes and songs, including who is in each scene, what season, or year the scene takes place, or any other important information. Be sure that any Reprises are indicated as well. This running order should always be posted in the same place from the first day possible. Make sure that it is always kept current and that it is well lit and easy to read at a glance. It should be posted in at least the following places: both sides of the stage, the callboard, the dressing rooms, the green room and anywhere else the cast and crew congregate." (Dollar, 2000)

2. Studying projects as processes of social construction

In focus for this paper is what happens when you label something a project out from a social constructionist perspective. How do people construct reality in everyday practice? The ontological standpoint is thus that project does not exist 'out there', it is a subjective and inter-subjective (Louis, 1982) construction

produced and re-produced in everyday interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Consequently, the knowledge yielded in research should be concerned with understanding how project concepts and acts are constructed, rather than establishing 'objective truths'. Ideologically, this also means opening up the field to critical questions for example concerning how people can be occupied with project and the link to social life, what acts that are seen as the results of project and, thus, what stereotypical images of project that had been established in society.

A social constructionist perspective will help us to understand how interaction between actors and structures implies production and reproduction of project in their daily life. This perspective has been used in related different academic fields earlier; the most well known are perhaps to be found within identity theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, Gergen, 1985, Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001) and gender theory (Butler, 1999). Applied to the inquiry into projects this will imply questioning how project unfold, how values develop, how do life styles/life forms develop, how do conflicts arise. A social constructionist perspective will concern every part of the research process, from formulating research area/questions, through empirical approach, to ways of presenting results. We should also be aware of that there are different ways of handling these parts depending on situations and possibilities. For instance, an anthropological study can be very suitable for this paradigm, but not always possible to conduct in practice due to access matters. Therefore, a social constructionist perspective is not a 'single best way' of performing research; it is rather a quest for increased pluralism and creativity in research.

Co-construction of work and identity

The concept of identity is widely used on a daily basis in both texts and conversations, and during the last decade it has also entered into the public debate in society. Identity is usually seen in a static fashion, implying that human beings "are something" (e.g. a teacher or a doctor) and that their identity construction process is over, more or less. The notion of post-modern society implies a redefinition of the individual as compared to modernist collectivism - the individual is someone special that should have a stimulating job, a

stimulating life etc. When exposed to discontinuities in life, the identity of an individual is thereby open to change through a process of reflection upon both the past and the future (cf Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). Life can thus be seen as an ongoing process of identity construction, where the individual tries to understand and define her/himself from the various social situations to which he is exposed. With a social constructionist view we treat identity as something that is constructed and re-constructed in daily social interaction throughout life.

Identity construction can be analyzed in terms of what we can call “institutionalised identities”, i.e. concepts such as professional identity, gender identity, ethnic identity etc. On an aggregate level (society, organisation, clan etc) these socially defined identities are valid and homogeneous to a certain extent, but on the individual level they are expressed in a multitude of ways depending on how different individuals describe themselves. Different individuals tend to compose their identity from different institutional sources, and they also vary to the extent to which they use established categories in constructing it. In an earlier study (Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001) it appeared that individuals can connect their identity construction to cultural values (history, art och literature), but also to religious beliefs, political ideology or just a lifelong rejection of tradition and collectives. They may also use professionalism and/or organizational belonging in their construction of identity, i.e. that they identify with their work and their industry and the values and practices that they find there.

Analysing project work discourses

In most modern research on individuals and organizations, the importance of the language as a medium for information about reality is highlighted in one way or another. In this paper, our ambition is to discuss narrative approaches where the language is seen as the main medium through which individuals conveys his/hers interpretations of reality (cf Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997). Linguistical approaches in which the language is viewed as a complex system in itself are thus excluded; our discussion is rather directed towards the language as it is used to convey stories made by individuals. This implies analyses of how individuals describe their daily life, how different phenomena are described, and

the different meanings and levels of importance attached to central concepts (cf also Foucault, 1972).

In the analyses described below, we use this approach in analysing the identities of individuals. The ambition is to go beyond formal positions (like accountant, manager or professor) and institutionalized identities (like Swede, catholic or woman) in order to understand latent patterns in how individuals perceive themselves in relation to work and organizations and how these patterns unfold over time. Identity construction can thereby be described as a process where past, present and future are parts, a process where reflexion is vital to create consciousness of identity (cf Nord and Fox, 1996, Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). Identity is thus also open for change over time as the individual pass through different social interactions in time and space (cf Giddens, 1991, Knights and Willmott, 1999, Nkomo and Cox, 1996).

Language oriented research approaches where language is seen as a complete system in itself are therefore excluded; our interest is aimed, rather, at how language is used by individuals to construct narratives of themselves and how we as researcher treat these stories. This implies analysis of how individuals describe themselves in their daily lives, how different phenomena are described and how different meanings are related to different discourses (see also Foucault, 1972). It is also important to note that this should be seen as the construction of reality rather than the 'real description' (cf also Potter, 1996). In this paper we use narrative approaches where language is seen as the medium through which individuals create their interpretations of reality (see for example Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997). It has been our ambition in the examples of narratives we present here to be as faithful as possible to the accounts that the individuals have given. We have used citations, so that we may also open up possibilities for readers to interpret the material for themselves. Texts can be open or closed and the researcher/writer is thus obliged to make a choice of which strategy to adopt in reading them. Potter (1996) discusses rhetoric in terms of an offensive or defensive strategy: the offensive rhetoric in the text undermines alternative readings, whereas a defensive strategy concerns a defence of interpretations. Our general position is to be as clear and open as possible in our analysis. At the same time, we are also conscious that we cannot, 'feed' the reader with all information about the

different steps in the process as it is difficult to see what is missing when 'inside' a study. On the other hand we welcome alternative interpretations, indeed, we see this to be an asset in research rather than a problem.

Our practical way of doing this is that individuals were asked for their spontaneous story on their life including both work and life in general during a specific project in two different companies (described below). These interviews held on for two-three hours with each person. Out from the basic question how people construct projects we have generate some themes based in earlier studies (both our own and others): How projects are initiated (cf Söderlund, 2004), how individuals are committed to projects (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006b), how individuals organise project as work episodes (definition, roles, time, deadlines, technology, cf Strauss, 1988), how individuals describe themselves in relation to work and established identity bases (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2004). The empirical material was, after typewriting the stories by ourselves, put into these themes. Boje (2001) describe theme analysis out from deductive and inductive approaches and for us it has been a combination of these two ways, where a number of general theoretical themes have formed a framework for the inductive extractment of specific narratives. We have also been inspired by Martin's (2001) method, which emphasised narratives concerning the construction of gender but in our case of projects. In order to find discourses in this construction processes, we took a special interest in contradictions and competing discourses (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 1999; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2004). Based on these we then find some different discourses surrounding projects.

Empirical background: IMPRO and BOH theatres

We have used stories from two theatres: (1) the government funded big Baltic Opera House, and (2) the co-owned small Improvisation theatre. Despite their differences, they work in almost the same way. The main characteristics and the interviewees of both theatres and the projects analysed in this paper are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Summary of the two case studies.

	<u>Improvisation theatre (IMPRO)</u>	<u>Baltic Opera House (BOH)</u>
<u>Organisation</u>	Co-owned private theatre. Performances, courses and theatre projects for companies. 7 full-time employees, 29 part-time.	State-funded public opera house with it's own symphony orchestra. Sets up operas, concerts and ballets. 90 full-time employees, 3 part-time.
<u>Project</u>	Setting up a new improvised play.	Setting up an opera play.
<u>Project results</u> (according to team)	Tested new ways of improvised narrating, learnt a lot. Well-received by audience.	Well-known Italian opera for the large audience. Performed at the first night as planned. Well-received by audience.
<u>Team composition</u>	Producer works both with administration and marketing, director leads rehearsals. Actors rehearse and play together with single musician and a lighting improvisator.	Producer works with administration, director leads rehearsals together with costume manager, scenic designer and orchestra conductor. Stage manager act as project coordinator. Actors rehearse and play.
<u>Interviewed team members</u> (fictious name, age, role)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nathan, 37, theatre manager • John, 43, actor • Patrick, 42, director • Ursula, 31, producer • Sarah, 35, actor • Anne, 34, actor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosalind, 45, producer • Barbara, 41, costume manager • Roger, 48, scenic artist • Tom, 41, stage manager • Mary, 33, orchestra violinist

3. Theme 1 – The eternal state of emergency

When speaking about their organisations, the interviewees present an image of scarcity and external pressures that force them to seek for new projects and assignments all the time. They also feel that they cannot turn down any offers or orders since they need all the resources they than get. Aside from the commercial point of view, they also speak about a kind of cultural responsibility as a reason to work hard – their basic organizational missions are about spreading art forms and cultural awareness. Their narratives on their organisations' struggle to get resources and expand can be broken down into several themes.

Earning one's living

Both organisations are a part of the cultural sector, and they are used to scarcity and problems of matching incomes and expenses. In the case of IMPRO, they even went bankrupt in 2002. Still, this is something they must accept in order to be able to do what they do:

“Well, a lot of people left, including the guy who started the theatre. And we was a bunch of people that wanted to continue, so we said “let’s hire ourselves”. Then we went out of money and started to think about what we could do to get incomes enough to live on this. Our performances here just means losses all the time, and we never get a dime from the authorities. Then we started to sell theatre performances to companies.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

The commercial parts of their operations become increasingly important to them, and take up a rather substantial part of their time and energy:

“It has been too much work, and now it has slowed down a bit. But then you start to worry about lack of work. I never used to worry before, but now I do. We have felt the recession; several of the big corporations have stopped calling us.” (Sarah, IMPRO)

The struggle for income also means that most long-term planning must be kept open for swift changes as new orders appear:

“Today, we spoke about a corporate assignment that we might get next fall. It is a company that wants to hire us for a marketing tour all around Sweden, 31 performances. We can do it, and we want to do it. It is a quite big thing, if we get it we will be financially secure for some time. But the ordinary production and performance schedule here at the theatre will crack down totally, of course.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

Fame and making dreams come true

While they all want their theatres to be well-known institutions, they have mixed feelings on visionary projects and fame. Growth, fame and dreams go hand in hand, but not always in a harmonical way:

“Development is perhaps a better word than growth. If you work with theatre you want to develop, and one way to develop is to grow. If you want to play at a bigger stage you must be famous, and I frankly do not think that we are interested in appearing in the newspapers and so on. But we want a bigger stage and then we need a bigger audience, and then you need... You see.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

“We went bankrupt after a very big project called ImproExplosion, which was an international theatre festival. We did not have the financial strength to go for such a project but we went on since we did not realise how bad it was. Then the festival came in August and the weather was magnificent, and it was very hard to attract any audience despite that we had hired the City Theatre downtown. It was a fantastic project but a major fiasco.” (John, IMPRO)

Reputation and artistic development

If fame and growth are thus ambiguous and sometimes doubtful concepts, reputation and artistry are at the core of what these organisations are about:

“We were a very odd phenomenon from the beginning. Now we are an accepted part of the local theatre society, we have done a tour with the National Theatre and stuff like that. In the old days we were just a small group, now everybody watch us. You want some kind of respect after coming back despite bankruptcy!” (Patrick, IMPRO)

One part of being a prestigious institution is to be open to others; to invite and be invited, to open their premises for competitors, experiments and external assignments:

“We do have a planning horizon for our own performances that stretches three years into the future. Then we have subsidiaries that arrange all sorts of events, ensembles and orchestras come here for guest concerts, all sorts of small theatres want to use our stage, schools want to visit us, et cetera. Some days we plan our own projects, and other days we plan for all the other activities in the organizations. We might look like a big house, but we will disappear if we are not open to the world.” (Rosalind, BOH)

Artistry is also about always searching for new ways of expression, new ways of narrating, new ways of organising performances. The stagnating theatre is a theatre that do not count:

“We do not want to repeat things, get stuck in old patterns. During the last project we actively tried to avoid that by bringing in external impulses. That works very well, we are now rehearsing with a vocalist in order to develop improvised singing. I think it is necessary to be open in that sense, that you borrow external specialists that bring in fresh knowledge. You get a kick out of it, and hopefully you improve. Then you do not repeat yourself, since you have added something to your repertoire of expressions.” (John, IMPRO)

“We are very good at idea generation here, that’s what we do best, I think. When we started anew we had so much ideas and expectations, too much actually. Some of them find their way into the computer, but not all of them. You see, when our everyday operations are up and running we have very little time to initiate new projects. But we always try. We must try.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

4. Theme 2 – Individual loyalty and professionalism

Out of these organisational ambitions, the individuals identify themselves as the ones that are going to do their job as good as possible. Most of them have also

entered their respective organisations with earlier experiences of performance orientation and high ambitions. In their narratives about themselves in relation to their upcoming projects, we find several stories that are used to justify both the organisation's demands on them as well as the performance they require from themselves.

Professionalism

The idea of professionalism is important to our interviewees; they are all trained theatre professionals with years of experience. That means that they automatically assume responsibility for hard and demanding tasks – it is what can and should be expected of them. For those working as actors, this is a natural part of their job:

“All of us are able to lead a play from idea onto the opening night, but then we have different interests. We all have our own projects. I am director of a play that we start to rehearse today, and John is director of another one, Sarah... Our form of theatre is different in the sense that it is my responsibility as an actor to make things happen at the same time as I am to communicate with the others.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

“The actors just love to jump into unknown challenges where they do not know what they are doing. You have to have courage, dare to fail, to lose control, to forget things. Sometimes it goes wrong, it is permitted to go wrong. It is an incredible piece of teamwork – we usually say that we only have co-actors at stage. It all goes back to have a keen ear for each other, to take care of each other.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

When the people behind the stage is concerned, they all have demanding jobs from the outset, and in addition they will have to handle all emerging problems and keep everything in order. Even though this always mean much more work than full time, they think that it is needed to do the job in a professional way:

"As a producer, you are never at the centre of anything, you are never visible. But you are supposed to be everywhere, and that feels a bit unrewarding and lonely sometimes. Everybody assumes that everything will work, and if it doesn't, everybody come down on the producer. I took a producer course once, and realised that I can also be as excellent in my work as the singers and directors are at their jobs. That is quite motivating for me." (Rosalind, BOH)

"I have always wanted to learn new things. You can be tired after a project, but when the director and the scenic designer gives you new blueprints, you get yourself going again – it is a damned nice feeling! I know that I will fix it somehow. You have to be special to work at a theatre, work must to mean something to you, people can see if you are not paying enough attention." (Roger, BOH)

Professionalism also means being rational and controlled despite all emotions around you:

"When I think of this job of mine, I do not find anything to be negative. What might be strenuous is when the opening night gets closer and closer and everyone's nerves start to affect the process. Is everything OK? Will we be successful? The actors get really nervous and there are emotional outbursts and so on. All these things cause stress for me, but not always negative stress." (Barbara, BOH)

Ambition, career, capability

Closely connected to the notion of professionalism is the ambitions and the need to be seen as a capable and resourceful employee. For some, this is related to cultural development:

"I do a lot of other things outside this theatre, but in the same occupation. I am going to a regional theatre up north as director for a week, they are working with an improvised narrative performance there. I am also going to

teach at the Theatre Institute, I am a bit dependent on external assignments. I also go to international festivals a lot, at least twice a year, you need to download new ideas all the time. It is the same thing if you are an actor. All great artists talk about all the pain and strain they have to give birth to their new works, and it is the same thing for us if we do not have anything new to start with.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

For others, an ambitious and capable employee is a person that does her job notwithstanding the conditions and consequences:

“Stress is a different thing for different people. If I have a lot to do I feel capable and I get a lot of work done. I demand a lot of myself, but if these demands become too high I feel bad, my stomach hurts and I think that everything is just bullshit. I do not get angry and yell at people, I just get apathetic and tired when I come home.” (Rosalind, BOH)

“I am really a flexible employee! And I must be one! New things happen all the time and I must be creative and think new thoughts. You must always adapt to the situation at hand!” (Barbara, BOH)

In some of the interviewees, there is also the notion that the more roles they can handle in the organization, the better they are:

“I think that I work about the same amount of hours as before the bankruptcy, but I think that it is even more funny and rewarding now. If I have done a good performance at a company gig and we get new orders, I also feel that I have made some money for the theatre and for our survival. It was like that before as well, but it is different now when we own the theatre ourselves. That is important, it is a kind of identity. A mixed identity; sometimes you think that you became an entrepreneur when you actually wanted to be an actor, and then we are also employers. It is important to think about yourself in all these terms.” (John, IMPRO)

Self-fulfilment

A quite usual story among the interviewees is that their work is actually a life-project for them, something they do to fulfil their dreams and potentials:

“It was quite natural for us to re-start the theatre ourselves as actors – all we do is based in love for what we do here. We have an ardent passion for improvisation theatre! Of course there were more people that wanted to become co-owners, but we wanted the total freedom that we can allow each other in this constellation. Nathan is not an actor, but he is with us because he loves this theatre so much.” (Sarah, IMPRO)

Self-fulfilment and commercial values are sometimes seen as problematic to combine. Still, since they are able to work with theatre, they are working with something that they feel is the biggest thing in life:

“Personally I do not need to expand the theatre as long as we have fun here. We try to focus on the performances, and perhaps we will have the time for other stuff later on. The last months we have been able to focus on actor’s work and that is what matters most in life.” (Sarah, IMPRO)

At the same time, there are also reflections of the other side of self-fulfilment and devotion to professional projects:

“I work a lot. I have no children. When I do not work here I work with other projects. I write, I read, I travel, I see people. Many of my friends are from the theatre world and from this town, and as an outsider I am stuck with them. I think it is a drawback for me that I have no other social arenas. No natural relations.” (Patrick, IMPRO)

I am indispensable

A last story about the reasons for hard work is the externalisation of the source of long hours and commitment, i.e. that the individual view herself as a necessary precondition for important activities in the organisation:

"Of course I am replaceable, and I don't want to feel indispensable. But in some situations I am, and I don't like that. If I should die on the spot, the project would go on anyway, but often I just have to go down to the opera to ensure that work continues. You feel indispensable during quite long periods, especially when you are working against a deadline." (Roger, BOH)

The source of indispensability may also come from a sense of loyalty for one's colleagues:

"Sometimes I can feel that something is not really a part of my job, and that it is not a part of someone else's either. Then I might of course go to my producer and complain, but that means handing over the problem to a colleague, and they have just as much to do as I have." (Tom, BOH)

The sense of loyalty can also include a perception of structural social pressures, not always liked but inescapable if you are to be a member of the organisation:

"An orchestra is like a construction team. The hall and the equipment are there generating costs all the time, and then you force everybody to come there at the same time. I certainly don't want to be the one who cause delays and extra rehearsals, so I must be well prepared. Of course this is stressful, and it is a stress that you must learn to live with here at the opera." (Mary, BOH)

5. Theme 3 – Projects as organized chaos

When it comes to the stories about the two production projects at the core of the narratives, several constructs related to the traditional notion of projects appear, such as teamwork, creativity, risk and deadlines. Generally, project work is seen as necessary and as an effective and satisfying way of working.

Teamwork

Project work is seen as characterised by close teamwork, and a lot of the comments about the problems of projects are related to aspects of teamwork:

“People are interested in different things at different times. If I present a marketing idea, nobody cares at first and then we spend half the weekly meeting arguing about it. People get stuck in details, and I try to make everybody happy and then someone yawns and looks bored to death. Then the ones that were bored come afterwards with a lot of comments and critique. It is quite interesting to study human behaviour at our weekly meetings.” (Ursula, IMPRO)

Teamwork is usually characterised by different roles. Roles may be formal or informal, and there are also perceived gender structures that are brought into the projects:

“I am the only woman here among the owners, and sometimes I regret that there are no more women. I feel that. We all communicate in a masculine fashion, and it is not easy to be too much of a feminist in our meetings. It works all right, but there is a macho attitude among us that becomes a part of our culture. I speak openly about this because I want all people to be attracted to this theatre, not just tough guys. If one of the guys is in a bad mood, everyone tip around on their toes, people yell at each other and so forth.” (Sarah, IMPRO)

Outside the meetings, work is independent and often poorly planned and supervised:

“I am needed here because I am a woman, but I am very independent. I must ask and ask again if I want some answers from the others. I run different sub-projects that need to be done here and now. I book things, follow up the budget, I plan for the cafeteria and recruit people for sound

and light, I see to that the theatre is cleaned, I look at other parallel projects. I say to the owners that we need to sit down and discuss and let the answering machine take care of some calls, that they need some distance to all this, that they should take care of themselves and their families. But they are here all the time. Myself, I work my hours and nothing more. When I have done what I am paid for, I go home.” (Ursula, IMPRO)

A source of problems in the project teams can also be external disturbances that originate from the organizational context:

“I like my colleagues, but then there are always problems that upset me; organizational matters that concerns the whole theatre and not specifically my project. These things affect my job and make me stressed and confused. One such thing is all the unclear orders and rules that come from the theatre director.” (Rosalind, BOH)

Creative chaos

The traditional artistic notion of creative and constructive chaos is much alive in both theatres. It seems to be a widespread belief that good projects should always be chaotic in some ways, otherwise they have been too well-planned, not allowing for artistic freedom:

“From an administrative viewpoint, our production projects are the same. You need to write contracts with actors and musicians, you need a scenic artist, make-up artist, house hostesses etc. You need to produce flyers, tickets, posters, programmes... almost the same things every time. The contents and the people are different every time, of course. My dilemma is if I am to write a marketing text about the performance, then they change the performance as they rehearse. So I need to keep abreast with the ensemble at the same time as I need to write catchy and touching copy. It is funny, it happens every time.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

Creativity is often linked to brainstorming activities and organisational improvisation, while administrators are expected to handle all the negative aspects of chaos:

“I had an idea about this play and presented it to the others. It was during our planning conference where we just brainstorm about what would be funny to do. In our current performance we have a lot of music, and that is because we had not done that for some years and felt for it. So we did it and found ways to develop the idea.” (John, IMPRO)

“What I do during a work day depends much on which production phase we are in. Right now there is rehearsals and scenic construction going on at the same time, and I am also working with the marketing package. Besides that, there is all the ongoing administrative work that you always have to take care of – bookkeeping, course administration, ticket sales, company contacts. I have it all in my head. Well, we do have a common calendar where everyone writes down what they will do and where and when. At least, they should. We are careless.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

Taking risks: Balancing between risk and return

A story that relate to the idea of creativity and chaos is the story about production projects as balance acts where you take commercial, artistic and personal risks in order to get something extra out from them:

“During the production, we accepted to do a job for a big company. The company pays a lot of money, and it must be right. Here at the theatre we can do mistakes, but at the company we cannot afford mistakes – which is certainly a source of pressure. But if you can handle that pressure it is big fun, and then you are even more happy with yourself. It is risky business, but I appreciate that. If I had not liked the company assignments I had not stayed here. You must like them if you want to work here.” (John, IMPRO)

For administrators, the risks are mostly to be found in the constant negotiation between long-term organisational work, short-term project work and the immediate handling of all sorts of upcoming problems and crises:

“The actors never know exactly what will happen the next week, they have a slightly more foreseeable work schedule than I have. I spend my time solving problems all the time. My dilemma is that I never find time to plan and build administrative structures.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

“Well, as a producer you do everything and you never know what your day will be like. I am quite an organised person, I have a project plan and a list of things to do, I know exactly what I intend to do. But since I am the one who everybody contacts about almost everything, I always have a lot of visitors at my room who come up with all sorts of ideas, problems, changes to the production – you name it! So I never get the time I need to do all the things I want to get done.” (Rosalind, BOH)

Deadlines and the satisfaction of completion

The deadlines in the theatre industry are absolute, which means that a project can never be late – unlike many other industries where projects can be late even though they should not. A first night can never be rescheduled, so everything must be completed then. The notion of absolute time structures is a cause of long work days and stress:

“My formal work hours are 8 am through 5 pm, but then we have our deadlines where everything shall be delivered. Then there is no choice other than to work overtime, and then there are rehearsals and performances in the evenings that you must attend. A lot of irregular work hours, indeed.” (Barbara, BOH)

“People are always worried, and some can get quite nasty when they are nervous. We rehearse during eight weeks, and when there are three weeks left to the first night, nobody thinks there will ever be a performance.

It's just chaos. It is always like that, that is how it is supposed to be. If you had no deadlines, you could go on forever, which would be quite unsatisfying. Knowing that you will be ready and knowing that everybody is working in the same direction, that is a fantastic feeling.” (Rosalind, BOH)

On the other hand, most people in the study appreciate deadlines because they imply and ensure that something will actually be completed, evaluated and discarded:

“In a theatre there are two forms of organisation. The ordinary structure that goes on all the time, and then we have the project organization where everything is projects. It is really very satisfying that you complete tasks and achieve results. If you then receive positive criticism in the press, then you have really accomplished something. And it is not one project only, it is several ones in parallel.” (Rosalind, BOH)

“Projects are good. They have a start, a work process and an ending. And when they are finished you can not do anything more, they do not stick to your mind anymore.” (Barbara, BOH)

“I like project work. I have been a factory worker before, and of course you see results there as well. But it never ends there. Here, you can work as much as you like in order to save time. It is great fun for me, even though I feel tired from time to time.” (Roger, BOH)

6. Theme 4 - ‘War stories’

Finally, we will look into the stories about the consequences of project work in these organisations. Unlike the stories about individuals’ ambitions about work, these are reflexive stories about what kind of values and norms that are further institutionalised as each project episode pass and is organised the same way

as before. They also has an element of 'war stories', i.e. relating to previous hardships and heroic action in the comfort of post-project disengagement.

Long work days and problems of mentally disconnecting work

"How much I work? Not more than 40 hours a week [laugh]. No, I never count the hours. I have kids, but I am divorced... but the kids want attention and that is good. When they are not staying with me it is more dangerous, it is much easier to stay here at the theatre. Instead of going home to my stinking two-room apartment I hang out at work [laugh]. To be serious, it is a lot to do – when we do not play performances we have courses or company assignments". (John, IMPRO)

Several people in the study refer to the long work hours as a result of structural conditions, things they cannot do much about:

"My work hours vary a lot. Sometimes, I work weekends to. We almost exclusively work evenings and nights, and when we are on tour we can be away for weeks." (Tom, BOH)

"I am responsible for the whole department, but in this specific project I must work the evenings too – I run the department at daytime and the project during the evenings. The reason is that I have a project in another town also, and I sent my best employee there. So I do everything here and I trust that she lives up to our responsibilities there." (Barbara, BOH)

Others openly admit that long work hours is something they have got used to and that they cannot really imagine working in another way:

"I work 50-55 hours a week, sometimes weekends too. I can't let go of it, I burn for it. And I am always lagging behind. The atmosphere and all the activity here is most exciting, but it consumes me. You can never focus on

anything, as soon as you are into a discussion on important stuff someone calls or knocks at the door.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

This also means that work invades private life:

“Patrick and I are best friends, we spent the weekend together in Italy, we do not talk work much. But somehow work and private gets mixed, suddenly you realise that you sit at a restaurant in the evening with a glass of wine and discuss work.” (John, IMPRO)

The project-based organisation as emergency ward

Another consequence of how project work is organised is that they all get used to a work life where “fire-fighting” is a natural ingredient of everyday interaction.

“My idea was to do a lot of small things that day, and then a singer called in sick. My whole long-term planning for the project just had to be closed down, and I spent the rest of that day finding another singer who could make fast rehearsals, come to this town, find somewhere to stay and so on. Suddenly my priorities changed altogether.” (Rosalind, BOH)

Like the long hours, the institutionalised notion of their organisations as crise-ridden and chaotic was explained by reference to external conditions beyond the influence of anyone:

“What is hard for the work climate is the economic pressures, we are so dependent... Often, things happen with very short notice. Someone might call today and want us to come and play something at their company next Thursday, and then we must re-schedule our performance here at the theatre and move people between the activities. Our weekly meetings are filled with things like that.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

“An orchestra is a strict hierarchy, from the conductor downwards. This fall, we had a concert and some days before, the conductor replaced one of

the songs. He thought that we knew the new one from the past, but we did not and it was also technically complicated. When such things happen, I serve take-away food to my family the whole week and skip the laundry.”
(Mary, BOH)

Self-responsibility and lack of structure

To most of the interviewees, projects mean that someone defines a goal and that everybody then must take responsibility themselves to reach the goal, notwithstanding if the goal is realistic or not:

“The theatre manager decides the date for the opening night, and then you calculate backwards to achieve a reasonable start day for the rehearsals. Ideally, the scenic construction and the prop-making should be ready when rehearsals start, then you have the time to change things as the manuscript changes. That does never happen, we often have to build things that we have never built before. And we must keep the costs down even if there is a lack of time. Directors want expensive materials.” (Roger, BOH)

Some think that everybody are used to that someone always take responsibility and fix things despite personal sacrifices. The self-responsible employee who devotes unpaid hours to solve problems caused by unrealistic planning gradually becomes the normal image of the normal theatre worker:

“My husband is one of the stage managers here, and I do not think that anyone in the organisation really understand how much he accomplishes. When he is ill I take care of his job even though I am a musician, but it is because I know how he works. The theatre manager do not understand how good it is to have such a hard-working man in the organization, and when I jumped into his shoes when he caught the flu last fall I was not recognized at all for that extra effort. That’s the way it is – if something happens you just have to let go of everything that you do and run away to fix it.” (Mary, BOH)

As long as individuals take care of things themselves and make it work somehow, it also means that the organisational structures that could enhance their work situation are never developed:

“I have followed this theatre for a decade, and it has both developed and stagnated at the same time. We have the same discussions year after year; how to behave outwards, how to guarantee a certain quality, how open are we to be to others, what is secret and what is not, are we too tough on each other and so forth. We are dealing with some delicate people here, and it is very important who communicates things, how information spreads – eternal dilemmas. We tend to discuss new issues all the time; first we decide on principles but suddenly a new issue appears that make us abandon the principle. So I try to decide on my own instead.”
(Ursula, IMPRO)

Tiredness

All the hard work in the projects also means that they easily become irritated and question why they work where they work:

“Before the bankruptcy I was very close to leave this place. There were no money, there were a bad atmosphere and I worked all the time to keep this place up and running. If you work around the clock, disliking your colleagues, not knowing if you will be able to pay your rent, well then you would rather prefer unemployment.” (John, IMPRO)

The worst time is often in the end of the project, when they have worked hard for weeks rehearsing, start to get nervous about the opening night and need strength to perform for weeks to come:

“It has been too much, much too much. And tonight it is the big opening night! [bursts into tears] I can’t do it, I have no energy, I’m finished. I do not

understand how this will work out at all, it is so damned hard!” (Anne, IMPRO)

Privileged situation

Still they look forward to new projects and endure the hardships of the current ones. After all, they work with the occupation of their dreams, and there are many that envy them:

“Our salaries are lousy, and it is hard for us to maintain our own house despite that we have both been working for ten years now. On the other hand, I learn new things all the time, and there are always new challenges. It is an amazing feeling to be able to learn things that I had never been able to do before. Sometimes, I really feel privileged to get a salary for just playing the violin.” (Mary, BOH)

“The reason why I left corporate life is that this is so much more fun. It is fantastic to work with a dedicated team that really has an artistic glow... I get my kicks in life from two things. The first one is then the audience leaves the theatre and I stand here in the foyer and hear them laugh, smile and cry. I hear them speak about how much fun it was, I love that feeling. And then the actors come out, laugh and feel that they have done a good performance. When these two things happen at the same time, that is my reward. That is what I work for, that the actors feel challenged and happy as improvisators, and that the audience walks home moved and happy.” (Nathan, IMPRO)

7. The co-construction of project work and identity

Given the above discursive analysis of the interviewees' narratives, we will conclude this paper by discussing some theoretically interesting themes that are all related to the notion of co-construction of projects and the individual

identities of project workers. We will start by briefly revisiting the four themes from the empirical analysis. Then, we will discuss how the processes of co-construction unfold, and also what possibilities there are to resist and change the direction of these processes.

Discourses on the construction of projects and identities

The first discursive construct here called *state of emergency* (Lindahl, 2006) can be traced in the meaning of ‘We can and must do anything!’ The organisation is perceived as constantly being exposed to economic and/or political threats that eventually may lead to bankruptcy, and the members of the organisation are thus never safe in the long run. Here we find the organisational stories on the constant external pressures on the organisation and the neglect of internal capacity to handle new incoming projects. It is also the stories on how the seemingly unlimited organisational capacity is also assumed to be valid for single individuals by means of loyalty and professionalism.

Every time a new project is launched, it is seen as an important attempt at saving the organisation. Each project launch can then be said to imply to declare a state of emergency. In such a state, normal expectations and ideas about work and organisation do not apply, hence the tendency to de-couple projects from ongoing work. In the improvisation theatre some of the persons own their business and in that way also commit themselves to take responsibility for economic and administrative tasks. It means that they must produce and sell plays to other companies and in that way commercialise cultural tasks. They do not really perceive to have any choice (which they did as young and even poorer actors), rather these circumstances has been socialised into their minds.

The second discourse, *loyalty and professionalism*, is constructed out from processes by which individuals identify themselves as ambitious and responsible, accepting and embracing the projects that are launched. They show to themselves and others that they are legitimate members of the organisation and their professions by always dedicating their full energies to each new project. They never call in sick, they want to be best in the industry – both as individuals and as representatives of their organisations –, they assume

full responsibility for everything in the belief that things will otherwise fall apart, they take pride in being flexible. They also know that they are only just as good as their last project, which means that they must never be part of a major failure, and they also try to build their personal brands over time.

The third discourse, *organised chaos*, is about the construction of goals, deadlines, teamwork, plans, creativity etc. It is a discourse expressed in terms of long project with rehearsals and pressures, structured work mixed with urgencies and emergencies, all with the opening night in mind. Projects are rational sequences of planned action, but everything can happen – these projects are also artistic endeavours where creativity and new ideas must be acknowledged and let into the process.

The fourth and last discourse interpreted out from the empirical study is about ‘*war stories*’ on project hardships and the mixed feelings when confronted with positive and negative consequences of each project. They relate – not without pride – their long work hours, their chaotic private lives and their tiredness, but also the medial arousal, the standing ovations and the sense of accomplishment and meaning in life. Work in the theatre industry is not easy and straightforward, it is rather to be characterised as demanding and somewhat mysterious – somewhere, somehow they create magic. And magic is always a result of mundane things such as money and long work hours in combination with the mysteries of talent, devotion, taste and other fascinating concepts.

On the processes of co-construction

The basic question discussed in this paper concern the process of the simultaneous construction of project work and professional identity, and it is clear that working by projects has a strong connection to individuals’ identity construction. The themes developed from the stories concern different dimensions of these identity processes that also construct the project process. Discourses on e.g. projects as well-planned states of emergency, arenas to display professionalism and loyalty or as episodes of hardship and magic serve to connect modern ideals on project work and the elusive occupational symbolism of artistry and culture. It does not make life easier for the inhabitants

of the projectified society – but it creates possibilities to construct identities conform with organizations. “We” and “I” are the same thing, subjective and objective reality fit each other (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Processes of co-construction are discontinuous in the sense that they happen when the two notions of project work and individual identity construction meet in one and the same socially constructed situation. In these situations, different aspects of project work and identity construction confirm and/or disconfirm each other, thereby affirming some notions of projects and identities and disaffirming others.

At the core of the abovementioned discourses is the co-construction that happens when the project work situation is interpreted as inevitably demanding something from individuals, may it be more time, changed priorities, shift of loyalties etc. After all, projects have been constructed as the main way of organizing new plays, and since projects rest upon collective coordination no single individual can disapprove of pieces of projects. Either you are in or you are out. Individuals – given that they see themselves as professional and responsible – will therefore live up to these demands, thereby confirming both the inevitabilities of the project form and their identity as loyal professionals.

There are also situations where projects and identities are co-constructed through processes of confirmation/disconfirmation or even mutual disconfirmation. An example of the former is the well-known emotional irrationalities that some actors and directors may exhibit during the rehearsal process, irrationalities that fit with the identity as an artist but neither with the identity as theatre professional nor the ideology behind project work. Emotional outbursts and nervous over-reactions becomes something to be handled by those not on stage, whose identity rest on the ability to implement their projects whatever happens. When disconfirming irrational emotions in relation to project work, rational thinking is at the same time confirmed as an adequate individual response to project demands. If some parts of the team view themselves differently and behave accordingly, it means that the rest is doing the right thing.

Mutual disconfirmation may also occur, i.e. when there are deviations from the established notions of project work that individuals experience as demanding deviations from their own identities. Such situations happen when organizational politics or financial scarcities are allowed a central place in the

organizing of the project, and the professionals in the project feel that such perspectives are illegitimate. Thereby, it is a new established that organizational/commercial matters are something that is not of the same world as work in cultural projects. Still, such perspectives can be found in the identities of most interviewees in this study, not least because both organizations have operated under scarcity for years which has meant that many directors, stage managers and producers have been forced to incorporate organizational and commercial considerations in their professional identity in order to be able to exercise their professions in the future. Project work and professional identities are thus not stable; they are subject to change over time. In these long-term processes of co-construction, each project is a 'critical incident' opening up for changes but also offering yet another instance of confirming what is already there.

On possibilities of resistance and change

If projects and individual identities are then in a long-term process of co-construction implying an increased focus on projects as rational action sequences and individual identities increasingly incorporating the rational/commercial perspectives, what can be done to resist and change this development? Should it be resisted and changed?

In Hodgson's (2002) analysis of the disciplinary effects of the emerging field of Project Management, it is claimed that the notion of 'professional project management' is a way to make rationalism, functionalism and control over organizational processes more legitimate in the subjective eyes of employees. In the terminology used here, it implies co-construction of both the project work form as such and of the notion of the disciplined, (self)responsible and professional individual. In an era where well-educated, skilled employees were supposed to be liberated from their bureaucratic iron cages through their autonomous possession of knowledge and experiences (Bennis and Slater, 1968), Project Management becomes a way of re-disciplining them through the coercive use of goals, time schedules, demands on flexibility etc (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006b).

In the cases analysed here, it cannot be said that Project Management as a discipline has gained any significant influence in neither IMPRO nor BOH. Even though most producers, directors and stage managers at the two theatres are most familiar with Gantt charts, project goal structures etc, they are not actively promoting Project Management as a distinct competence of neither themselves nor the organization. What they do promote is still a modernist notion of professionalism that can be described through the different discourses analysed above. What is co-constructed is a system of inter-subjectively held beliefs linking organizational poverty, legitimacy and success to individual identification with what is high-standard artistry, organizational loyalty and self-fulfilment. The individual projects become arenas and critical incidents for such co-construction, for yet another confirmation of the current development or for experimenting with other forms for theatre production project work.

Given that there are always possibilities for change, and that each new project can be seen as a window of opportunity for such change, resistance is possible if it is directed at the core of the co-construction process. Instead of adapting the traditional professional identity as theatre professionals to the emerging economist, professionalist and (project) managerialist discourses, employees could instead handle the problems raised by these discourses as traditional problems of theatre operations that have always existed from *The Globe Theatre* onwards¹. That could e.g. imply handling commercial matters as necessary evils or handling project work as a scenic process of artistry rather than as a managerialist process of functional planning. What is new is not the problems of funding, planning or meeting deadlines – what is new is the humble obedience with which people discipline themselves into managerialist identity construction that has ‘project management’ written all over.

¹ Cf the movie *Shakespeare in Love*, where all the hardships of theatre project management and the resistance of employees to commercial and managerialist interventions into the parallel processes of manuscript writing and rehearsals can be found. Those with an inclination for slightly more burlesque accounts may instead watch *Living in Oblivion*.

References

- Alvesson, M. and Sköldbberg, K. (1999). *Reflexive Methodology. Interpretation & research*. London: Sage.
- Bennis, W. G. & Slater, P. E. (1968) *The Temporary Society*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. London: Sage.
- Buckle, P. and Thomas, J. (2003). 'Deconstructing project management: a gender analysis of project management guidelines'. *International Journal of Project Management*, (21), pp. 433-441.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Cicmil, S. (2003). *Knowledge, interaction and project work*. Paper presented to the 19th EGOS Colloquium, Copenhagen, Denmark, July 2003.
- Clegg, S. and Courpasson, D. (2004) "Political Hybrids: Tocquevillean Views on Project Organizations." *Journal of Management Studies*, (41)4, pp. 525-547.
- Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (1997) *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Dollar, C. (2000) *Stage Managers Do Make Coffee: A Handbook for Stage Managers* [<http://www.geocities.com/Broadway/Stage/2203/SMHandbook.html>, read 24/11-2004].
- Ekstedt, E., Lundin, R. A., Söderholm, A., & Wirdenius H. (1999) *Neo-Industrial Organizing: Action, Knowledge Formation and Renewal in a Project-Intensive Economy*, London: Routledge.
- Elonen, S. and Artto, K. (2003) "Problems in Managing Internal Development Projects in Multi-project Environments." *International Journal of Project Management* (21), pp. 395-402.

- Engwall, M. & Jerbrant, A. (2003) "The Resource Allocation Syndrome: The Prime Challenge of Multi-project Management." *International Journal of Project Management*, (21), pp. 403-409.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *Vetandets arkeologi*. Stockholm: Bo Cavefors bokförlag.
- Gergen, K. (1985) "The Social Constructions Movement in Modern Psychology." *American Psychologist*, 40, 266-275.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2002) "Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe." *Information, Communication & Society*, (5)1, pp. 70-89.
- Goodman, R. A. (1981) *Temporary Systems*. New York: Praeger.
- Grantham, C., *The future of work: The promise of the new digital work society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000)
- Hendriks, M. H. A., Voeten, B. and Kroep, L. (1999) "Human Resource Allocation in a Multi-project R&D Environment." *International Journal of Project Management* (17)3, pp. 181-188.
- Hodgson, D. E. (2002) "Disciplining the Professional: The Case of Project Management." *Journal of Management Studies*, (39)6, pp. 803-821.
- Hodgson, D. E. (2004) "Project Work: The Legacy of Bureaucratic Control in the Post-Bureaucratic Organization." *Organization*, (11)1, pp. 81-100.
- Karlsson, J. C. and Eriksson, B., *Flexibla arbetsplatser och arbetsvillkor: En empirisk prövning av en retorisk figur* (Lund: Arkiv, 2000).
- Kidder, T. (1981/2000) *The Soul of a New Machine*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Knights, D. & Willmott, H. (1999) *Management Lives. Power and Identity in Work Organizations*. London: Sage.
- Lindahl, M. (2006). "Engineering improvisation: the case of Wärtsilä." In Guillet de Monthoux, P., Gustafsson, C. and Sjöstrand, S-E. (Eds.) *Aesthetic Leadership: Managing Fields of Flow in Art and Business* (forthcoming).
- Lindgren, M. and Packendorff, J. (2004) *Woman, Teacher, Entrepreneur: On Identity Construction in Female Entrepreneurs of Swedish Independent Schools*. Paper for the EIASM Workshop on Female Managers,

Entrepreneurs and the Social Capital of the Firm, Brussels, Belgium, November 17-19.

- Lindgren, M and Packendorff, J. (2006a) "What's New in New Forms of Organizing? On the Construction of Gender in Project-based Work." *Journal of Management Studies* (43)4, (forthcoming).
- Lindgren, M. and Packendorff, J. (2006b) "Projects and Prisons", in D. E. Hodgson and S. Cicmil (eds.) *Making Projects Critical*. London: Palgrave (forthcoming).
- Lindgren, M. and Wåhlin, N. (2001) "Identity Construction among Boundary-crossing Individuals." *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, (17)3, pp. 357-377.
- Louis, M. R. 1982. A cultural perspective on organizations: the need for and consequences of viewing organizations as culture-bearing milieux. *Human Systems Management* (2), pp.246-258.
- Martin, J. (1990) "Deconstructing Organizational Taboos: The Suppression of Gender Conflict in Organizations." *Organization Science* (1), 339-359.
- Miles, M. B. (1964) "On temporary systems." In M.B. Miles (ed.) *Innovation in Education*. New York: Teachers college press.
- Nkomo, S. M. & Cox, T., Jr. (1996) "Diverse Identities in Organizations." In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (eds.) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.
- Nord, W. R. & Fox, S. (1996) "The Individual in Organizational Studies: the Great Disappearing Act?" In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.
- Packendorff, J. (2002) "The Temporary Society and its Enemies: Projects from an Individual Perspective". In K. Sahlin-Andersson & A. Söderholm (eds.) *Beyond Project Management: New Perspectives on the Temporary-Permanent Dilemma*. Malmö: Liber/Copenhagen University Press.
- Pinto, J. K. (1996) *Power & Politics in Project Management*. Sylva: Project Management Institute.
- Potter, J. (1996) *Representing Reality*. London: Sage.
- Strauss, A. L. (1988) "The Articulation of Project Work: An Organizational Process." *The Sociological Quarterly* (29)2, pp. 163-178.

Söderlund, J. (2004). *Bland förvaltartyper och förändringsagenter: Skapandet av ett projektmedvetet företag. Exemplet Posten.*