

# Projects as the Institutional Context for Cultural Managers

A critical approach

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the differences between normative and narrative project interpretations. The aim is to reinterpret characteristic features of project management as narrative constructions. The narrative project approach represents a combination of the socio-semiotic theory of organising (Cooren, 2000) and critical project perspectives (Cicmil & Williams & Thomas & Hodgson 2006; Pollack 2007) which are applied to a narrative interpretation of projects. The narrative approach to projects is illustrated with the examples of two cases: an EU funded development project in the field of event management and an artistic project for the European capital of Culture 2011. The paper suggests how the narrative project interpretation could be applied to the cultural management practices, R&D activities and education.

## Keywords:

Cultural management

Event management

Projects

Organisational discourse

Analysis

Narrative analysis

## Introduction

This paper discusses the role of project management from the cultural manager's viewpoint. Projects are an important part of cultural management (e.g. Klein 2008). Event production and many development activities, for example, in the field of culture are carried out by projects. Projects are used for organisational changes and to achieve innovative outputs. For cultural managers and for R&D activities, the local institutional context is - at least to some extent - a series of projects. This is why project management appears to be an important part of curricula in cultural management studies.

Projects seem to be institutionalised in the practices of cultural management. Therefore it is useful to try to understand the effects of the projects on cultural management. To better understand the project reality, it is not enough to just try to manage projects as effectively as possible. The project itself is becoming a contradictory phenomenon. Many organisational and project researchers are becoming more critical about the ontological assumptions of contemporary project management.

My aim in this conceptual article is to re-describe the project, suggest new vocabularies to be used when interpreting projects and stimulate the debate on the impact of different interpretations of project ontologies. This paper develops a theoretical framework for interpreting project practices. This method is borrowed from Rorty (1989) and it has been applied to an organisational context for example by Hatch (1999). I apply narrative vocabulary which is mainly based on the ideas of Cooren (2000), Taylor (1993), Taylor and van Every (2000) and Boje and Rosile (2003) to two projects executed in the field of cultural management. The material presented below consists of the previous writings in the fields of project management, organisational discourse analysis and event management. The illustrative case studies are derived from my experience as a participating researcher in two projects. There are two important sources that make the experience visible. First, the reports, interviews and other documents produced during the projects are documented traces of the actual experience. Second, the instructions, brochures and software are part of the daily experience of every project manager.

This paper first discusses the discursive approach to institutions and outlines two different interpretations of projects: the normative and the critical approach to projects. The second section focuses on one critical project interpretation i.e. the narrative interpretation of projects. In the next sections, I illustrate general aspects of the narrative interpretation in two cases. In the first case, I show how nonhuman agents control and make humans do certain things during the project process. The institutional context in this case is the European Capital of Culture. In the second case, I show how the projects manage to be creative despite strict control. The institutional context in this case is an EU funded

development project. I conclude by proposing how the narrative project interpretation could be applied to the practices of cultural management, R&D activities and education.

## 1. Projects as the institutional context of cultural management

In this paper, I understand institutions as the "products of the discursive activity that influence actions" (Phillips & Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). In this view, texts play a significant role in institutions. Texts that are common in certain contexts make some ways of thinking and acting possible and others impossible. For cultural productions, project management constitutes that kind of institutional context where texts have an important role. Texts in the institutional context are understood not only as written documents. Conversations and computer software are also in this view "texts". They are all embedded in discourses that produce or call into question institutions. Not all texts have the same possibility to support the dominating discourse or produce competing discourses. Texts that are produced by actors who have the legitimate position to speak in a field, for example, have more influence on the discourse that produces institutions. Another feature which makes a text influential in the construction of an institution is the type of text. Texts which are "recognisable, interpretable, and usable in other organisations are more likely to become embedded in a discourse than texts that do not" (Phillips & Lawrence & Hardy, 2004: 643). This means that genres that are easy to recognise provide a template for texts to influence the discourse. Furthermore, texts referring to other texts that are widely known in other contexts and other well-established discourses have better possibilities to have influence on the discourse and institutions. In this way, projects could be understood as institutions which are produced in texts that are embedded in discourses concerning project management. The use of the institutionalised tool "project management" in the context of cultural production means that the values, the assumptions and practices of the project management ideals are applied in cultural management as well.

I call the institutionalised way of speaking about them and executing projects normative project management. This normative, mainstream way to study and manage projects is based on the scientific and positivist assumptions of project ontology (see Pollack, 2007). This means that project organisations are understood as neutral tools that can be clearly defined and applied to projects of all kinds. The project tool is used to achieve something that is well known beforehand. The planning of a project is a crucial part of the project management. The outcome of this planning is considered as a perfect future which should be achieved by the implementation of the well-planned tasks of the project. The resources, tasks and outcomes of a project are transformed countable units and a project is managed by the extensive use of

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project management tools. This makes project management deterministic, inflexible and control oriented. There is a strong tendency to define the project as a universal standard. These features of a project are institutionalised by a wide series of handbooks, standards and project management education.

Project management is a common practice in many professional fields, including cultural and event management. In event and festival management, project management is the main production tool. Event management and project management are actually merging. Project management has many benefits. For example, it enables one to produce a workable plan for the whole event production (Bowdin & Allen & O'Toole & Harris & McDonnell, 2011). Many other activities in the field of culture resemble the management practices of project management such as theatre production or art exhibitions to name a couple. Project management is not used only for simple one time endeavours but as a general tool for development and innovation as well. Lindgren and Packendorf (2006) argue that "in several sectors of society (such as cultural life, European Union programmes, research and so on) the project is the only work form available, which means that there is a severe risk that the division into different temporary projects makes it impossible to implement long-term strategies".

The critical approach questions the universal and standardised model of the project. There is a growing body of literature which criticises the assumptions of normative, mainstream project management (e.g. Cicmil & Williams & Thomas & Hodgson, 2006; Johansson, Löfström & Ohlsson 2007; Pollack, 2007). According to the critical view, the normative model of the project removes some questions, concerning ethics and politics for example, from the agenda of managing projects. The normative approach leads to a loss of reflexive and alternative thinking about projects. The critical approach emphasises the importance of looking at projects as social phenomena which are not neutral tools, but socially constructed in the interaction among people.

According to the critics there is a need for empirical analysis to understand human action in projects as well as a theoretical shift from the normative approaches towards a more developed one which focuses on practical action and lived experience.

In event and festival management the limitations of project management have been realised for example in connection with innovation and creativity. The project management standards enhance planning as a crucial part of project management. For festivals to be successful there is a constant need for improving and renewing (Getz, 2002). However, the innovation process is difficult to plan or understand only as a part of one single, independent project (Larson, 2009). Another limitation is that project management can become an end in itself and this might make creativity disappear (Bowdin & co 2011). Thus, there seems to be a need to reconsider the project management institution in general and in the field of cultural management specifically.

## 2. Narrative approach to projects

The critical approach to project management has made evident the weaknesses of project management, but there are still a few competing ideas for interpreting the processes and the practices of project reality. The normative project management uses expressions that are common in natural sciences. The project organisation is interpreted as a machine which refines raw material in a well-designed process into high quality, innovative products. The machine as a metaphor is very useful and easy to adapt to many industries where project management is applied. In cultural management, however, this kind of interpretation doesn't make sense. The experienced reality during creative production could be better described by using other sources of root metaphors.

Metaphors are widely used in organisational studies in theory building and redefining organisational phenomena (e.g. Hatch & Yanow 2008, Corneliessen 2004, Cooren 2012, Alvesson & Kärreman 2007). One

of the perspectives on project management meeting the needs of the critical approach is the narrative interpretation of projects. Metaphorical thinking about project organisations reflects changes in the social construction of projects. I use the narrative interpretation as a metaphor for the purpose of re-describing the ontology of projects.

The narrative approach focuses on the idea that, because the reality in organisations is so fuzzy and full of contradictory signals, the only way to make sense of what is going on, is to construct stories (Weick, 1995). People are narrating all the time and they have a common understanding of how things might proceed under certain conditions. This narrative rationality is the way people make decisions and communicate. (Fisher, 2009.) In real life situations people make decisions based on good reasons and not only on careful analysis of cause and effect. The normative project management is based on natural sciences and projects are managed by traditional rationality, which “implies some sort of hierarchical system, a community in which some persons are qualified to judge and to lead and some other persons to follow” (Fisher, 2009, 66). The world is seen as a rational puzzle which can be (and should be) managed by logical analysis. This mechanistic way to interpret the project reality may be problematic in some situations. Therefore, the use of alternative interpretations like narrative could make better sense.

The difference between normative and narrative approaches is evident e.g. when reporting the project outcomes. Reporting does not reflect the narrative and flexible practices that are part of the daily work especially in creative cultural production. When creating new artistic productions or developing new organisational models there is a need for improvisational space. This is in contradiction to the normative project approach where the project activities are evaluated in terms of the fictional plan, but not to the experiences and decisions made during the real activities. This may lead to double fiction where the plan is consistent with the report but both are fictional. The changes made during the artistic production might be considered suspicious and changes in the budget can be difficult to accomplish in administration. The institutional and political context and its bureaucratic control seem to be in conflict with the creative activities of project implementation.

The use of narrative vocabulary offers an interpretative framework to understand project

practices. The narrative constructions of projects create tragic and epic story lines. These story lines are narrative sense-making forms that Aristotle described in Poetics. In organisational studies these narrative interpretations are used to analyse the communicative constitution of organisations (e.g. Boje & Rosile, 2003; Cooren 2000). Epic refers to the multiversity of ongoing, ending and starting tragic narratives that are from some viewpoint significant to the project reality. To understand the project reality in a narrative manner, we need to construct the larger epic context of tragic projects. The tragic narration has a clear beginning, certain phases that follow each other and a definitive ending. A tragic narration has clear main figures and it is quite easy to communicate and reproduce in written or spoken stories. The epic reality of projects is an entity of many different and even contradictory tragic project narratives. The narrative interpretation of projects emphasises the role of power, conflicts and communication more clearly than does the normative project approach. Furthermore, the narrative interpretation of projects takes into consideration people’s actions, their personal experience, personal networks, communication and interpretations. This is how the narrative interpretation of projects significantly explains the social impact of projects.

In organisational life, the narrative viewpoints are expressed in many ways and by actors of a different kind. Especially the nonhuman agents are important when they are doing something on behalf of an actor. In an institutional context, for example, this agency can be made visible and active by the use of documents, brochures and forms. These nonhuman agents make things happen and they really have influence in the daily activities, even though they are not conscious beings (Cooren, 2004). In this way, the nonhuman agents have an important role in organisations and they tell a very significant story in each project. Thus, the nonhuman agents are crucial in maintaining the project institution, when the written documents, software and other nonhuman actors are interpreted in a narrative way. The main features of the normative and narrative interpretation are summed up in Table 1. These features are meant to be impulses to interpret projects from different viewpoints, not excluding descriptions.

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NORMATIVE	NARRATIVE
The project is a limited entity which can be managed externally	The project is an independent, nonhuman actor and an epic narration with many actors
The project tools represent the project reality	The project tools are interpretations of the project reality
The change to be achieved in a project is known in advance	The change to be achieved in a project is constructed during the project activities
The change to be achieved in a project is based on verified needs	The change to be achieved in a project is based on many different inspirers
The conflicts in the project organisation are problems to be solved	The conflicts in the project constitute a surprising turn of events
The project is a tragic narration with a clear beginning and ending	The project is an epic narration with multiple and unclear origins with no clear ending
The project is a neutral tool	The project is an exercise of power
The management of project focuses on control	The management of a project focuses on experiences, choices and legitimisation

TABLE 1. THE FEATURES OF THE NORMATIVE AND NARRATIVE PROJECT INTERPRETATIONS

### 3. Project management tools as controlling agents

One of the best-known brands in the field of cultural events is the European Capitals of Culture. According to the European Commission (2009) this initiative of the European Union is meant to make Europeans aware of what they have in common. The purpose of the European Capitals of Culture initiative is to show that culture, art and creativity are as important as technology, commerce and the economy. The initiative has been very successful and the impacts of the events of the Capital of Culture have been intensively documented in many studies (e.g. Impacts 08, 2010).

The brochure called European Capitals of Culture: the Road to Success From 1985 to 2010 (2009) characterises “the balance between political support and artistic freedom” as “one of the main challenges most capitals face”. This challenge certainly offers a common experience for all those who have been producing an event for a European Capitals of Culture. This common challenge is best experienced in the practice of production. The European Capitals of Culture is organised as a project consisting of several events, exhibitions etc. which are managed by the standards of project management. Project management has its roots in technology and one of its benefits is to enable the control of the inputs and outputs efficiently. This control guarantees that the goals of a project will be implemented as planned. This makes it possible to establish programmes that have overall objectives. These objectives are then achieved with separate projects that serve the same objectives. This kind of system is reminiscent of well-planned machinery.

The project as a machine is an independent organisation which has its own identity. This identity is made visible by written documents and software applications – project management tools. These

management tools and documents are a crucial part of project management, because only the written traces of the action can be measured and used as a means of control and steering. In this sense, projects are hybrids of human action and nonhuman agents. In this section, my purpose is to illustrate the hybridity of human beings and project management tools. First, I list the different software applications that were used during one project that was executed as part of the European Capital of Culture in Turku 2011. Second, I discuss how these important tools of project management influenced daily practices. Before I present the software, I also briefly describe the background of the project.

One of the themes of Turku 2011 were “memories and truths” (Turku 2011 Programme 2010). A network of artistic actors and some universities of applied sciences planned and made an application, because they had some prior experience in producing events which obviously fit the programme. The parent organisation of the project was a university of applied sciences. The idea was to collect narrow-film material from the local residents, to digitise the material and to create a performance combining film material and music performed with strings. For the students of the universities of applied sciences, the project was aimed at offering possibilities to learn in a real life, high level artistic project. The project plan was written in 2007 and the application was submitted in May 2008. The outcome of the project was a concert that took place in April 2011 as part of the European Capitals of Culture programme.

Because the balance between the political level and the artistic execution seems to be problematic in European Capitals of Culture projects, I focus on project management tools. I believe that these nonhuman agents and the traces they leave can highlight some characteristic features of producing the project institution. The nonhuman actors such as machines, documents, policies, signs and procedures

Project management tools provided by Turku 2011 Foundation	Project management tools provided by the parent organisation	Office software
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Application form</li> <li>- Reporting tool</li> <li>- Material data bank</li> <li>- Final reporting tool</li> <li>- Open website for the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working time monitoring</li> <li>- Billing</li> <li>- Travelling</li> <li>- Project documents</li> <li>- General ledger</li> <li>- Evaluation application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spreadsheet</li> <li>- Word processing</li> <li>- Email</li> </ul>

TABLE 2. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS USED DURING THE PROJECT EXECUTION

(Castor & Cooren, 2006) are a crucial part in organising. They participate in the daily organisational life. In project management these nonhuman agents play an important role when the normative project institution is produced. As an illustrative example, I list the software used during the project (Table 2). In this context, I consider as “software” all the computer applications I used during the planning, implementation and reporting of the project. The applications that were directly designed for the project management were provided by the Turku 2011 Foundation. The parent organisation of the project had its own tools for project management, and common office software applications were also used for the actual work.

These tools were all necessary during all the phases of the project cycle. The tools provided by the Turku 2011 Foundation were specifically designed for the projects of the European Capitals of Culture programme. The data produced for reporting was generated by the applications provided by the university of applied sciences (parent organisation). These applications are used in all projects and daily activities of the parent organisation. The office software applications cover the most general and globally known multi-purpose office applications which were mainly used to produce texts that were later copied to the project management tools.

Project applications have their own manuals and instructions that make the users choose expressions of a certain kind and to report certain aspects of the project. The project applications are typically electronic forms. These texts invite humans to follow specific organisational pathways (Cooren, 2004) which could be interpreted as narratives. The organisational texts in all forms: in print or as electronic forms are nonhuman agents that are working on behalf of some agency with their own agendas. In general, forms have two writers, the designer of the form – the first writer – and the user of the form – the second writer (Mclean & Hoskin, 1998). The writers are both working on behalf of their given agency, and they are not actually expressing themselves, but giving a voice to many different actors. The first writer is giving a voice to the organisational standards that are part of the European Capitals of Culture in general and the Turku 2011 Foundation especially. The second writer is filling out the form on the behalf of many actors who were

participating in the actual production. The second writer is constructing a narrative that can be filled in on the form. This narrative is a result of observations, documents and many informal and formal conversations, which cannot be reproduced directly in the context of the form. This kind of writing is necessary to get comparable narratives and some measurable figures of the project practices but on the other hand the use of forms simplifies the experienced reality. The software applications and the texts written with the applications are agents that are supposed to tell narratives that are in concert with the ideals of the first writer, who act for the normative project rationality and the objectives of the programme. The system for the project management tools (Figure 1) includes the idea of a normative project. In this system of text based project management tools the project managers write their narratives about the projects.

The project is an independent actor with its own identity proved by an application number and an account number. This identity is made visible and manageable by documents that are written by using the electronic forms. These documents are the final traces that are left of the production. Of course the products – the video or audio recordings of the artistic output for example – could be archived as well, but the actual management and production are made durable by the documents. Therefore, these documents are also independent actors which act on behalf of the independent project organisation. These documents tell a narrative of the project organisation. This narrative is then evaluated and sanctioned by the sponsors and parent organisations. This is how the project organisation and its actions are constructed in advance in the application form and later in the evaluation form.

In an institutional context where artistic production is managed by the standards of project management some problems might appear that I consider as a symptom of the tension between artistic freedom and the political support. The intensive use of computer-based project management tools makes it possible to choose projects that are supposed to support the overall objectives of a larger programme – such as The European Capitals of Culture in general – and the specific objectives of the cultural capitals especially. According to the project logic the plan is made before the actual artistic production starts. Still, there may be remarkable changes during the project

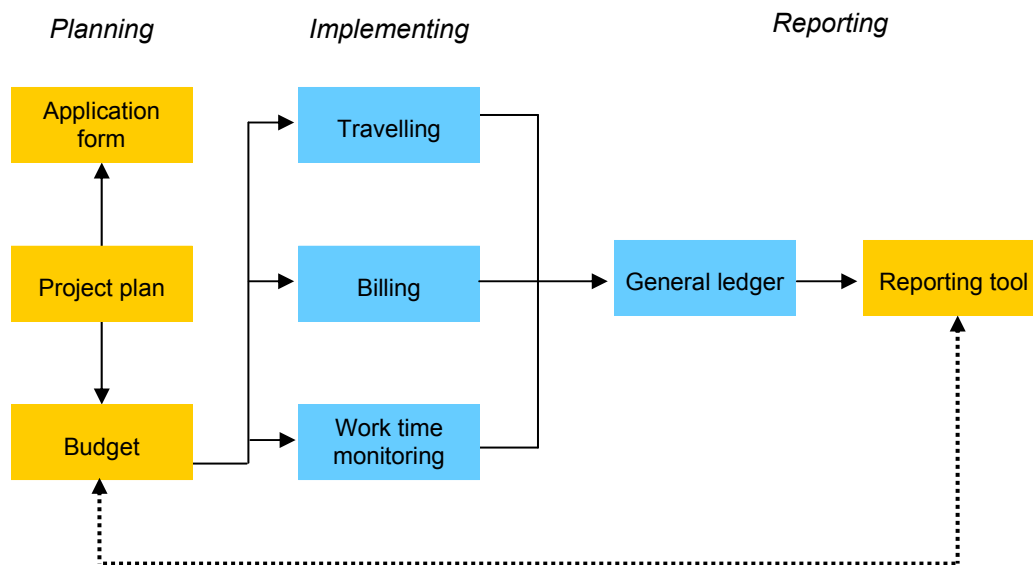


FIGURE 1. THE SYSTEM OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS.

implementation. The project progress is evaluated in regards to the plan, not the actual experience. This encourages the project managers to write reports in regard to the plan first and secondly in regard to the actual practice during the implementation of the project.

From the viewpoint of project management the most challenging task during the project was to translate the fuzzy reality of working practices to measurable task units with plausible explanations. One of the characteristics of project management is to measure and control the process, not only the outcome. This makes it possible to follow the progress of the project. On the other hand, this kind of approach emphasises the role of the plan and controlling tools at the cost of the actual experience. If the project team members are working in larger organisations which have their own project management tools, the members of the project team are supposed to report to both (or even more) organisations: the parent organisation(s) and the project organisation(s). This kind of situation is not uncommon. For example, in Turku 2011 (2008) some 20% of the applicants were public sector actors, and many of the projects were produced by associations of several organisations. Following the reporting practices of different organisations may lead to contradictory expectations. I noticed expectations of this kind while producing the project. The software for monitoring working time of the parent organisation didn't accept more than a certain amount of working hours weekly. If the hours exceeded the monthly amount of working hours, the wages paid by the hour decreased. This would have led to changes in the budget and the project plan. The changes in the plan may have involved negotiations and extra reporting. Therefore, the reporting tools led to reporting only the working hours that didn't exceed

the standard working hours. The extra working hours were then reported next month, when the actual work was already done. The number of the working hours was the same, but the moment was not.

This practice means that project workers and the project managers have to be flexible because the project management tools are not. The example above illustrates the problems the advanced project management tools might cause. The project reality is not always reported as it is experienced. The intensive use of project management tools prefers reports that remind the narrative written in the project plan, not reports that are based on the experienced reality. Because the plan is always a fiction about a "perfect future" (Clegg & Pitsis & Marosszeky & Rura-Polley, 2006), the report which is written to meet the actions, resources and results described in the project plan, is also – at least to some extent – a fiction. The emphasis on reporting that is convergent with planning might have some influence on qualitative reporting as well. This convergence might express itself in project reports in a way that results in actions described in the project plan that are emphasised in the report, but the unplanned actions and unintended results are undervalued. The very idea of a normative project is a simple and sound narrative that proceeds without unexpected aberrations.

#### 4. Unintended outcomes and improvisation

Another important institutional context for cultural management is provided by the European Union-based funding. The self-evident tool achieving the goals of the EU programmes is project management.

Projects are considered as important tools enhancing expertise, new innovations and continuous development in working life including cultural management. Projects are tools for development. In many regions the European Union-based funding is a significant part of the development of new initiatives in the field of cultural production.

Projects are planned to achieve the objectives that are prioritised in the documents of the EU programmes. This means that project applications and project plans are written so that the actions described in the project plan can be said to work for the programme. In practice this is achieved by using expressions and vocabulary that are used in programme documents. The vocabulary of the application forms, programme brochures and other publications are imperatives that have to be taken into account when project managers give their reports. This way, the daily practices are reported in order to fit the narrative of the EU programme. The reported data is a product of a filtering process in a hierarchical situation. Projects as part of EU programmes are similar to the hierarchical organisation structure. The applicant and later the project manager might try to be consistent with the narrative of the programme. The attempt to standardise the goals, methods and results of the projects might lead to a lack of innovation (Taylor 1993, 140).

This doesn't mean that project management would have a negative impact on innovativeness. Nevertheless, the intensive exploitation of formal, normative project management doesn't necessarily lead to innovativeness. In fact, some nations that have a very high number of certificated project managers are showing decreasing levels of innovation performance (Kavanagh & Naughton, 2009). Still, the project practices can be very innovative and projects sometimes produce surprising outcomes. If projects are defined as temporary organisations to achieve a planned objective, there is no room for surprises or unintended outcomes. Therefore, the surprising outcomes are by definition not achieved because of the project management practice but despite it.

Improvisation and unintended outcomes are sometimes spin-offs of the actual activities that have been mentioned in the project plan. Projects are experienced and executed by several people who incorporate the single events of their own experience in private life and in many other projects into a coherent personal narrative. This personal narrative is the outcome of the sense making process. Only some of these personal events are part of the project narrative. Therefore, the project itself can be a tool for achieving objectives that are by no means consistent with the objectives of the project. Some events just happen to merge for a while to be part of several narratives. One event during a project could be, for example, a part of the personal narrative of a temporary team member. The project manager translates the same event to be a part of the well-planned project narrative. The temporary team member experiences the events not as a part of the project and overall objectives of an EU programme,

but as a part of some personal purpose. For the project and for the project manager, the same event is an outcome of project planning.

When reporting on an EU project, for example, I realised that the narrative the project manager was writing was not very consistent with the narratives I heard from the production team members I interviewed. The project was designed to find new solutions for using the local fibre network in the media productions of the local cultural and sports events. This project goal was a part of the Objective 1 Programme for Eastern Finland. The strategic goal of the Objective 1 programme was to "encourage business operations based on the strengths of the regional economies and new opportunities for global competitiveness and strong economic growth". The selection criteria consisted of 16 criteria. All projects had to meet some of the criteria and others were considered as guidelines. Further, the project was to meet the expected activities of Measure 2.1 which was titled Development of Training and Education Systems and Improvement of the Quality and Effectiveness of Training and Education. The project guide supports the assumptions of the normative project institution when it sketches some general features of projects. Normative projects are produced by stating that: "A well-prepared project draws on existing knowledge and past experiences and involves a detailed analysis of the target areas". This and other instructions concerning projects constrain the actions during the project planning, implementation and evaluation.

Even though I did not expect the production staff to be well informed about the goals of the Objective 1 Programme for Eastern Finland, nor the selection criteria, I was surprised how little I heard narratives that were consistent with the official, normative narrative of the EU programme and project plan and vice versa. The production managers spoke about their own productions, difficulties they had faced, how they found improvised solutions to the problems they had had, and how they felt about the outcomes. One of the main activities turned out to be collecting and digitalising old narrow-films. These actions could be defined as collecting private cultural heritage, not as a new solution for the use of the fibre network and hardly as the encouragement of business operations. The outcomes were a documentary film, a portrait of a self-educated 85-year-old multimedia producer and an illustrated concert of the local string orchestra. Both outcomes were successful and the concept of collecting narrow-films for a live concert was used later in the project for the European Capitals of Culture.

These actions were in no way planned, based on detailed analysis nor described in the project plan. The collecting of narrow-films was started, because there was a new device available in the parent organisation. The device was actually meant for another project. Through collecting the narrow-films, the project team met dozens of people who had many stories to tell about the films and the filmmakers. Accidentally, the project manager met a person who told him about a man who had made narrow-films,



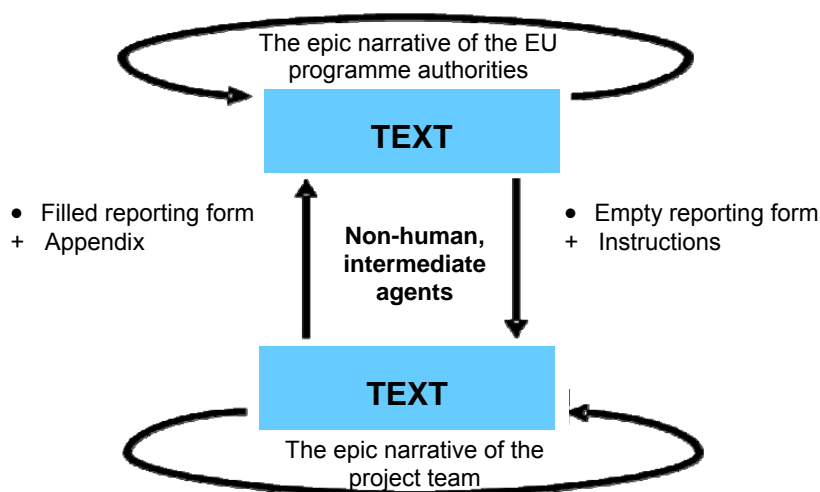


FIGURE 2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE PROJECTS AS AN AUTHORITY SYSTEM

voice recordings and animation with homemade devices back in the 40s. The project manager got interested in this story and then he heard that a local journalist had made a manuscript for the documentary film of this man. Therefore the project team decided to include this story in the project.

These actions were not based on a well-defined need or preliminary studies. In fact, this kind of practice doesn't take into account the well-defined project organisation. Accidental initiatives led to situations where the intentions of the new actors were improvised to be part of the original project narrative. This kind of activity could be better described for example as "jazz" not as a "machine". Hatch (1999) describes organisations with the jazz metaphor as "activity to be entered into, participated in and experienced". After all, these outcomes should be described as unintended and the process resembles more improvisation than the implementation of a plan. The outcomes and the improvised processes are certainly good examples of bad project management in the sense that these outcomes were neither consistent with the programme objectives nor were they based on careful planning.

Of course, the project team was able to report these activities in a way that they were actually serving the higher level objectives. Equally, the representatives of the EU programme interpreted that the objectives and selection criteria were included in the narrative of the project. This way the narrative of the project was accepted as a part of the epic narrative of "encouraging business operations based on the strengths of the regional economies and new opportunities for global competitiveness and strong economic growth". This process illustrates how the production of the epic narrative of the regional development operates. The experienced reality of the planning authorities, who were in this case agents working on behalf of the Objective 1 Programme for

Eastern Finland, was made understandable by narratives which were made visible by documents – the nonhuman agents such as instructions, brochures, electronic forms etc. The Objective 1 Programme for Eastern Finland needed several nonhuman, intermediate agents to be able to mobilise actions that were later reported as the outputs and effects of the programme. The existence of these two separate narratives resembles the organisation as an authority system presented by Taylor (1993). Figure 2 below illustrates the modified authority system and the role of intermediate agents in the case of reporting. The experienced project reality with improvisational processes and unintended outcomes will be translated with the help of intermediate agents such as completed reporting forms and spreadsheets into the conversation of the EU programme authorities. This conversation is embedded in the discourse concerning the project management which, in turn, supports the normative project management ideals. The epic narrative of the experienced project execution and the epic narrative of the EU programme authorities constitute the institutional context of cultural project management.

It seems that the unintended outcomes and improvisation of the projects are accepted as part of the normative project narration, if the projects are reported and translated to meet the normative ideals of project management. The experienced reality is based on narrative rationality, but the expected outcomes are based on traditional, scientific rationality. Project managers have to translate this narrative experience into the rational, measurable units of normative project management. Projects can offer an institutional context for surprising and creative activities. However, these creative outputs might not be achieved by the active creative work of the project machine. From the narrative viewpoint projects are part of an epic narration with multiple narratives and

protagonists. Project managers translate these epic narratives to meet the criteria of the tragic narration of normative projects. Therefore, project reports tell stories of cause and effect, effective use of resources and flawless closing of the books.

## 5. Conclusion

The use of project management is widely spread in the field of cultural management. Therefore, there is a need to find new ways to understand and interpret project management practices. Project management is not a neutral tool and certainly not the only possibility to innovate, be creative and develop. The normative project management approach is based on assumptions that are common in natural sciences. Many practices used in normative project management are used in construction industries, information technologies, mining, etc. The universal nature of project management is not definite. To find new ways to approach the management of temporary organisations and the practices to achieve with a temporary organisation novel, surprising and creative outcomes, there should be alternative ways to understand the project ontology. One possibility to try to change institutionalised practices is to seek a new root metaphor for the temporary organisation as I did in this paper. Instead of considering the project as a machine producing change, the alternative metaphor could be narration. Especially for cultural managers, administrators, educators and researchers this kind of approach to project management could be useful and refreshing. Organisation researchers use wide ranges of metaphors that are rooted in literature, arts and music when they describe organisational phenomena (e.g. Hatch, 1999; Boje & Rosile, 2003; Corneliessen, 2004). Cultural managers, administrators and educators should be in the position to apply these approaches as well when they study projects.

Normative project management produces continuously new applications and management tools that support the normative project management institution. The practices of cultural project execution are still based on surprises, unintended outcomes and improvisation. The less there is space for free interpretation, the more the project managers and the authorities representing EU programmes or other authorities have to be creative to make the activities fit the specific demands of the controlling applications.

This tension raises ethical questions at the ground level of project management. On the political level, this tension might lead to the development of even more detailed controlling devices. This, in turn, is expensive, time consuming and might prevent innovative outcomes.

The practices of project management especially in the field of cultural management are more about the narratives and interpretations of manmade constructions than measurable facts. This is why project management is more about storytelling than natural science. Therefore, the practices of cultural projects should be studied and managed as communicative constructions. At least the following themes on the critical and narrative approaches of project management are relevant to cultural management:

- The planning, implementation and evaluation of cultural projects should be studied by more experiential ways.
- The political and ethical aspect of projects should have a more extensive role while studying projects.
- There should be special funding and administrative mechanisms with flexible planning, implementation and evaluation tools for projects that are aimed at creative outcomes.

For these purposes the narrative interpretation of projects offers a good starting point and a constructive alternative and supplement to the contemporary,

normative project management in the field of cultural management. As with any conceptual paper, my framework lacks empirical evidence despite the illustrative cases presented in this paper. More focused empirical analysis to understand human action in projects is requested. Future research can build upon narrative conceptualisation and attempt to interpret project management as social phenomena. A narrative approach is significant in calling attention to how different project ontologies affect interpretations of projects. The narrative approach enables one to rethink the role of the project institution in the field of cultural management.

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