

Introduction. *Project Reality*

As pointed out by Małgorzata Jacyno [2017], Hito Steyerl, a German visual artist and art critic, noticed that nowadays no one would think of making a movie like *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory*. It is because being in the factory round-the-clock has been the norm since the nineties of the last century. Workplaces have no walls today; a laptop and a coffee shop table suffice to organize a factory, where, instead of things, people manufacture ideas. Projects, which require teamwork, though not necessarily a permanent physical contact, have now become one of the basic forms of employment. Projects, however, are more than just work—they make dreams and ambitions come true, and also make people become involved with their entire selves.

The concept of economic man assumes that there is some non-economic part. For example, the key issue in *laissez-faire* was the idea of separating the political from the economic [Davies 2017]. An individual may be a full citizen in the political sense (with all the resulting rights and obligations) and still experience poverty in the economic sense. The state can punish criminals but should not interfere in relations between entities on the market. The idea of classical liberalism, however, involved the existence of spheres that are independent of economics.

As maintained by numerous authors, particularly the critics of neoliberalism [Davies 2017], the non-economic spheres these days are becoming part of the economy thanks to innovations in the organization of work. This can be observed in therapeutic self-help books as well as coaching workshops offered to companies. After conducting his research in the years 1924–1932 at the Hawthorne Works factory, Jungian psychoanalyst Elton Mayo suggested that a good manager should be a good psychoanalyst [Rapior 2017: 64]. All this leads to the spiritualisation and emotionalisation of work [Hochschild 2012]. The ultimate rate for project work is life itself. Just like artists, individuals working in the project-based environment do not experience a moment that is not spent on creating and working.

How to deal with the situation when leisure time becomes work time? The answer is to organize the time off work—i.e. child-rearing, a holiday jaunt, or a get-together with friends—in the form of a project, which entails rational planning, cost estimation, writing down the tasks that need to be completed to carry out specific activities, and obtaining relevant information. Nowadays, we live in a project, and

projects have become a form of socialization of how people are related to one another and how they define themselves in relation to other individuals [Rapior 2017: 7].

Numerous authors show that the process of projectification, i.e. of organizing work in the form of projects, concerns every human activity [Jensen et al. 2016]. The authors of the book *Managing and Working in Project Society* [Lundin et al. 2015] distinguished three industrial revolutions: first, there appeared steam power, which was used in transport and the textile sector; then, the second revolution connected millions of flats with electric cables (kitchens were equipped with refrigerators and ceilings were adorned with bulbs), and electricity and fuel energy were used in transport and commodity production; finally, there came the technologies of large-scale data collection and transmission, advanced techniques of industrial process control, and systems of workplace and free time management (the third revolution). Now, we are on the brink of another revolution—the revolution of “project society,” where the temporal forms of organizing private and professional activities are at the forefront. The next revolution deals with the organizational sphere and relationships in our everyday life. The consequences of this revolution are not only legal and organizational, but they also have a socio-cultural dimension [Rapior 2017: 23–24].

One of the distinctive qualities of the project society is that it is ambivalent. On the one hand, as noticed by Barbara Skarga [2009], projects are born when our hopes are awoken, and when the horizon of our imagination surpasses our experiences of here and now. On the other hand, a project becomes a technique [Foucault 2011] producing a specific “subject” – an active subject able to initiate projects, ready to sacrifice everything that may inhibit their availability and to give up long-term plans. Also a flexible subject capable of adapting to existing conditions [Chiapello, Fairclough 2008]. Not everyone is able to meet these requirements, and the rightness of these conditions is not always obvious. Therefore, the project society yields winners and losers, which is particularly evident in the era of neo-liberalism.

Neo-liberalism is now the dominant ideology, although even the economists from the International Monetary Fund are beginning to publish articles undermining its advantages. In 2016, the IMF economists acknowledged the existence of “neoliberalism.” By doing so, “they helped put to rest the idea that the word is nothing more than a political slur, or a term without any analytic power” [Metcalf 2017]. One of the main tenet of neo-liberalism is the multiplication of the enterprise form [Foucault 2011: 165] and competition. The neo-liberal ideology says: if it were not for competition and rivalry, there would be chaos everywhere. In classical liberalism, for example in the works of Adam Smith, capitalism was the link that brought people together. People exchanged goods on the market as equals, and as a by-product they spent time together and had a chance to get to know or at least to learn how to tolerate one another. The logic of neo-liberalism involves discrimination: separating winners from losers, leaders from underdogs [Davies 2017]. Projects are a specific form of socialisation, because to certain groups of people they have nothing to

offer except incentives to action and volunteerism. There is a need for a debate on the societal costs of projectification. This is the discussion we wish to initiate in the present issue of “Culture Management.” The purpose of the volume entitled *Project Reality* is, firstly, to describe the manifestations and repercussions of projectifying everything around, and secondly, to critically deliberate over the idea of the project and to spark reflection upon how to make the project society more fair.

The project reality can be interpreted in three ways:

1. Reality as something that is real and thus true, not fictitious. In this case, the project reality is understood as a description of how projects *really* work, or how they are *really* implemented not so much in theory as in practice. That is why, the authors of all articles in this issue of “Culture Management” use empirical data.
2. Reality as something of its own kind, something external to the individual that defines the principles of other aspects of life—this is the *sui generis* reality. Does the projectification process determine the meaning of our actions? This is one of the questions posed by the authors of the current issue.
3. Reality as a network of heterogeneous elements (from objects and machines through diagrams and plans to human and non-human actions) which, once connected with one another, build relationships within which we function and which we can try, with no guarantee of success, to change with our own actions.

The volume is opened with the article entitled *Dilemmas of Life in a Scientific Project. An Autoethnographic Account* by Waldemar Rapior. His description of individual experience gained while carrying out a grant-funded research project reveals different aspects of the project work. In the context of the on-going discussions about the condition of universities and the meaning of research work, this strong voice is an important signal as to the risks associated with the projectification of the academia. Rapior also poses the question of how to include the moral values in the analysis of projectification.

In the next article, Agata Skórzyńska uses the *Oasis Little India* project, implemented in the historical district of Singapore, as a case study to deliberate about the already noticeable effects of the projectification of social reality. What is crucial here is that the author goes beyond the theory of management to focus on ontological issues. This article is an example of an innovative, humanistic approach to the phenomenon of projects.

Next, in her article *When a Project Swallows an Organization. Projectification in Cultural Non-governmental Organizations and Organizational Imagination*, Olga Kosińska shows, based on her own professional experience, how some projects can seduce and absorb smaller initiatives. A large prestigious project is a superior endeavour, in the shadow of which the enthusiasm for seeking new forms of cooperation and expression withers away. By focusing on the organizational context,

the author traces the consequences that this phenomenon evokes for interhuman cooperation and relations.

In her paper *Impact of Project Financing on the Operation of Community Archives as a Possible Research Problem*, Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak explains the extent to which the issue of project work appears in the analyses of other social and cultural phenomena. As an emergent research issue, projectification proves that organizations frequently enter the project bloodstream unwittingly, which makes them dependent on short-term activities, usually financed from external sources.

In the last paper entitled *Humanistic Dimension of Project Management Practice. A Case Study of the World Youth Day (Cracow 2016)*, Anna Góral and Ewa Bogacz-Wojtanowska focus on one mega project which proved to be a challenge from not only organizational but also social perspective. While attempting to determine what may be considered a success in such a situation, the authors shed light on the subjective factors indicated by the research participants and making the project experience truly unique.

Furthermore, this issue includes a never-before-published interview with Professor Zygmunt Bauman conducted by Małgorzata Ćwikła, Anna Góral and Michał Zawadzki in Leeds in 2013. Their conversation focuses on such issues as the projectification of art and cultural heritage and the challenges faced by modern science and education. In his own unique way, Professor Bauman outlines a broad context of how we should understand these issues, showing that it is possible to talk about management in a roundabout way and yet still mention the most vital organizational phenomena.

Particularly for the purposes of this issue of “Culture Management,” we also talked to Danish philosopher Anders Fogh Jensen, who penned the book *The Project Society* and co-authored the article *The Projectification of Everything. Projects as a Human Condition*. His work inspired several papers of this issue, and the idea of “projectifying everything” is evidence of how advanced the process in question is. In the interview, we discuss topics such as the ethical consequences of reality projectification, the problem of exploitation through projects, and the limits of compromise that people are willing to agree on in order to remain in the project cycle. Jensen points to various project-related traps, without shunning strong comparisons to mental illness. He also emphasizes the “forward-looking” orientation of the present day, explaining that we have lost our way in the projectified reality and have become unable to derive joy and satisfaction from what we achieve before the next project “chance” arrives in our inbox.

The issue is ended with Marcin Laberschek’s review of the book *Empatyczne zarządzanie w czasach kreatywności performatywnej* by Anna Lipka, Stanisław Waszczak, Małgorzata Król and Agnieszka Giszterowicz.

Magdalena Ćwikła
Waldemar Rapior

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