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The Projectification of Everything:
Projects as a Human Condition

Anders Fogh Jensen, Christian Thuesen and Joana Geraldi

Abstract

Projects have become omnipresent not only in the economy but in our society and our lives. Projects organize and shape our actions at work, in our professional profiles and networks, but also in our homes and free time activities. Drawing on the philosophical cornerstone concepts of activity, time, space, and relations, this article introduces an alternative conceptualization of projects as a "human condition." The article concludes with implications to the project management community, in terms of both project management practice and research.

Introduction: Positioning Projects as a "Human Condition"

Projects abound in contemporary society. In the 1990s, "projects" spread across organizations in what was called the projectification of the firm (Midler, 1995). Whittington, Pettigrew, Peck, Fenton, and Conyon's (1999) survey of 3,500 European firms reveals a sharp increase in the use of project-based structures, from 13% to 42%, over the course of four years. The trend intensified in the following years, and projects became a prevalent form of organizing work. Indeed, cross-sector survey conducted in 2004 with 200 firms by PWC confirmed the trend. Notably, about a quarter of the sample had a portfolio of 100 projects or more. The report concludes that "it is hard to imagine an organization that is not engaged in projects" (Nieto-Rodriguez, Manager, Evrard, & Partner, 2004, p. 4). Accompanying the emergence of project portfolios was the growing relevance of a better context for projects inside and outside organizations, including portfolio management, governance structures, PMOs, and professional bodies. This programmification of the firm led to the development of a context for projects (Maylor, Brady, Cooke-Davies, & Hodgson, 2006; Morris & Geraldi, 2011).

The programmification took place across organizational boundaries. First, we noted how some sectors have traditionally been organized around projects, such as the advertisement and construction industry—what Grabher (2004) termed "project ecologies." Yet the proliferation of projects goes beyond specific sectors. Projects have become the unit (or at least a key driver) of economic action. "World Bank (2009) data indicates that 22% of world's $48 trillion gross domestic product (GDP) is gross capital formation, which is almost entirely project-based. In India it is 34%, and in China it is 45% (of GDP)" (Scranton, 2014, p. 1), and this is only one type of projects. Projects are also key to innovation, research, IT, and organizational change, to name just a few. Hence, projects have become a key vehicle for economic and social action.

However, the morphology of projects seems to extract much further. One example could be the change of warfare to terrorism, which most emblematically has the structure of projects. The threat rarely comes from state apparatuses in neighboring countries (as in the case of Ukraine and Russia in 2014), but rather comes from the project workers and their network activities, organizing terror attacks that can take place in innovative forms and unexpected geographical locations.

In sociology, Castells (2011) discusses individual's project portfolios in a network society. Boutinet (2004) proposes a typology of projects that includes individual or life projects (such as retirement and relocations) and social projects (for example, revolutions). Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) have stated a new regime of legitimation, a "*cité par projets*," in which capitalism can no longer legitimate itself as bringing security to the individual in the form of predictability, but instead has to reinvent individual security to be dependent on the possibility of movement and change, through transitions between projects.

Hence, projects have become intrinsic to our lives. They permeate what we do, how we speak, how we think of our daily activities (Lundin et al., 2015), how we construct our identities, and ultimately who we are. In this regard, we organize a portfolio of projects in our lives—from a family vacation to a career move—and in many respects, these projects and programs of projects will profoundly shape our lives, not only in terms of their consequences, but in terms of how we live, act, and relate to others. Indeed, we are experiencing the "projectification of everything." It is therefore reasonable

to argue that we are in the wake of the project society, a society in which projects are omnipresent as a form of coordinating human activities (Lundin et al., 2015), and in so doing, become a human condition.

Indeed, this article proposes a new way of understanding projects and their role in society: projects as a *human condition*. In classic philosophy, a human condition is something universal and stable over time, like breathing or becoming older. This perspective has changed in the past few decades and today a human condition is widely understood also in the context of historical and sociological transformations. This opens the understanding of human condition to something more fluid, while still permanent enough to have a lasting impact on us as individuals and a society. For example, living in a world where communication is aided by machines is a historical change that translates into a "new" human condition. Analogously, we argue that living with projects has become another human condition.

Our analysis of the project society is structured around four fundamental concepts of philosophy, which are useful to describe a human condition: what we do (activity), where we do it (space), when we do it (time), and with whom (relations).

Our main thesis is that a reshaping of activity, time, space, and relations has taken place in past five decades, not only at work, but in social living in general, and that this new condition is based on projects and can be described as the project society. This is argued more in detail in Fogh Jensen (2009). This article presents his main thesis and proposes avenues for further studies in project management as a field of research.

In parallel to the development of projects in society, project management as a research field has gained on importance and moved from a focus on operations management to being more strongly embedded in organization theory. We join the authors in this special issue, and in the past, to expand project theorizing to the helm of philosophy. By introducing a philosophical lens and its four cornerstone concepts, we introduce a new vocabulary for understanding project organizing, and thereby build a new platform for theorizing about projects.

We open the paper by outlining the philosophical underpinning of the concepts of activity, space, time, and relations (a Newtonian understanding of time, space, and activity). The subsequent two sections introduce the societal forms—the disciplinary society and the project society—followed by a detailed discussion on each of the philosophical concepts in which we identify central characteristics of the project society. The paper concludes with a summary of these characteristics, a discussion of its ethical implications, and suggestions for avenues for further theorizing about projects and its management.

Philosophical Underpinning: Activity, Time, Space, and Relations

In this section, we introduce the four fundamental philosophical concepts and their complex interrelations.

Time and Space

Time and the three dimensions of space form the four dimensions of our human reality. We are oriented in a space that has three axes. Time comes into being when we or something else moves in

space. Such movement constitutes activity (or, as Newton would put it, motion). Activity, in turn, allows us to discern one moment from another. Phenomenologically, the experienced space is limited because of the limitations of our body. For example, we cannot see 360 degrees, and so space doesn't reveal itself to us as 360 degrees, unless we begin moving. Therefore, our bodily experience of space allows us to add what we cannot see. Merleau-Ponty (1945) proposes a famous example to explain this condition: the cube. We only see three sides of the cube in a given glance, and yet we experience it as six-sided.

We can never perceive space and time in themselves. As argued by Kant (1781), space and time are *Anschauungsformen*—that is, a precondition for human perception. Therefore, they constitute part of our synthetic *a priori* knowledge. In other words, space and time are the very condition for perceiving. They are just as unchangeable as breathing to the human existence, meaning intrinsic to a human condition, and does not mutate through history, rather they are a condition for the existence of human activity.

Activity

Activity takes place in time and space. First, activities extend beyond a moment in time and have a duration; hence, activity can only be understood in relationship with time and space.[1] Understanding time also requires activity, because if there were no activity, it would not be possible to discern one moment from another—when every moment is the same, we cannot perceive the passing of time. Such a relationship is evident in mythologies about the beginning of time and space. For example, the Big Bang theory, activity begins as a result of an explosion that opens space. If the universe is expanding continually. The expansion of space is in itself not space; rather, it is an activity that unfolds in space and time.

Relations

Philosophically conceived, relations begin with being more than one. That is to say, relations can be triggered with just a reflection, a relation to oneself (Kierkegaard, 1849) or a relation from the partial to the total (Spinoza, 1678). Relation in Newtonian physics is cause and effect, with relations between bodies having effects on motion. In the social world, relations take place between people. They are what we call psychological and moral bonds, embedded in feelings. We can be tricked by spatial metaphors that suggest that society is nothing more than a container where individuals are placed but are not necessarily related to one another. However, it is widely accepted that humans do not exist in the absence of relations. In society, relationships become even more fundamental. In Marx's (1939) words, society is not the sum of entities, but of relations. In the philosophy of language, meaning and value are formed in relationships between subjects, conceptualised as

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[1] It could be argued that space is not a precondition for activity, as thought is an activity that does not occupy space. However, we could alternatively argue that on a microscopic level, neurons are moving in the process of thinking, and hence, there *is* a spatial dimension to thinking. The same argument is valid in regard to other activities that may appear not to require space, such as getting older.

intersubjectifity of language (Geraldi, 1991). To describe this, we usually use different metaphors for human relations, such as the pyramid, the network, the organism, or the shoal. Saramago (1997) provides an alternative illustration in the following passage of *Blindness* (the story is about an outbreak of blindness in human society, and the following dialogue takes place between the only seeing person and her blind husband):

> "- You won't believe me if I tell you what I have in front of my eyes, all the images in this church have their eyes covered
>
> - How strange. I wonder why
> - How should I know . . . maybe it was . . . the local priest, perhaps he thought that when the blind people could no longer see the images, the images should not be able to see the blind either
> - Images don't see
> - You are wrong, images see with the eyes of those who see them, it is only now that blindness is for us all
> - You can still see . . .
> - Even though I may not lose my eyesight I shall become more and more blind because I shall have no one to see me" (p. 301[2])

In summary, relations are an intrinsic part of our existence as humans, and as social beings. Relations provide the foundations for communication, understanding, and the development of meaning.

The Disciplinary Society as a Historical Foundation for the Project Society

In order to understand the rise of the project society, we will first explore how activity, time, space, and relations changed from antiquity to the Renaissance, when humanity was built around mathematized "time" and "space" and fixed "relations" and "activities." The project society not only builds on top of this grid, but also transcends it. In particular, we focus on the transformations of the disciplinary society becoming post-disciplinary. We use the terms *discipline* and *disciplinary society*[3] following Foucault (1975) to denote a way of organizing human behavior set during the period from 1650 to 1850 on the grounds of Renaissance conceptions..

During these centuries, we observed a fundamental transformation from a qualitative to a quantitative perception of space and time. In ancient Greek culture, a movement in space was viewed as a *qualitative* change*:* If the fire moved up, it was because it belonged there, and so it was, like Odysseus's movement home to Ithaca, a movement toward the better, toward order. Aristotle

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[2] The authors translated the text and changed to format of paragraphs to improve readability.

[3] In some contexts, synonyms for *disciplinary society* could be *modernity*, *industrial society*, *urbanity*, or later, *Taylorism*.

stated this as *Physis arché kineseos*, meaning that nature comes before movement: In other words, nature starts movements to bring the world from a more chaotic to a more orderly form.

What the Renaissance brought forward was, in the words of Alexandre Koyré (1948), a transformation from a closed, finite, and ordered space to an open universe. Space changed from being a home or a place for what happens to being quantified in equal pieces and transformed into a linear coordinate system, like time. This had consequences for our understanding of both time and space. First, space became quantified in mathematics, and thereby infinite, because the line of numbers in mathematics is infinite—that is, without end. Another consequence was that movement became indifferent. Movement is no longer viewed as a qualitative change toward a higher or lower degree of perfection but rather, as Newton put it, simply matter in motion. Hence, through the quantification of time and space, the world loses its ethical dimension. It becomes indifferent.

This indifference is central to the post-Renaissance world, including what we shall call the disciplinary society and the project society. Humans become subjects that are alienated from the objects they relate to. Such alienation can be clearly seen in the exploration of nature after the Renaissance. Nature is not part of us, but is at our service—a way of thinking that German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1954) called *Tecknik* (technique), but inaugurated by the dictum of 16th-century philosopher Francis Bacon (1597/1985): *Scientia est potentia.*[4]

The change in worldview to an indifferent view of space and time was exactly the condition that made the measurement and calculation of space, time, activity, and resources possible. *Scientia est potentia* created the foundations for new forms of organizing human activity, which shaped the disciplinary society. For example, new forms of organizing space allowed new forms of control and surveillance, as depicted in the Panopticon prison[5] and the assembly line. *Scientia est potentia* found its form in scientific management in the 20th century.

As in the case of space, it is important to distinguish between on the one hand, experienced time, what Bergson (1968) called *durée*, and on the other, homogenized and quantified time. Although time is experienced as *durée* (moments or episodes), many people will claim that they experience time as seconds, minutes, and hours. This is a sign that the homogenization and quantification of time, with hours of equal length despite the variation of the extension of the sunlight during the days, seems to have been incorporated by humans even more than the homogenization and quantification of space.

The homogenization and quantification of time follows a transformation comparable to that of space described above. However, it is important to note that our mathematical conception of time

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[4] *Scientia potentia est* is Latin and often claimed to mean "knowledge is power."
[5] Proposed by Bentham, the panopticon prison is a circular building with an observation tower at the centre reflecting bright light into the cells. Due to the lighting, the prisoners cannot see whether they are being observed, and hence feel constantly observed. Foucault built on the concept and proposed the panopticism as a social theory.

relies on a metaphorization of time as space. Homogenization and quantification come into being by projecting time onto space—as a timeline or as a clock, where a movement in space (like the hand on the clock) indicates that time is passing.

The Renaissance worldview explained above was a system of thought. This system made it possible to think about organizing human behavior in new ways during the 17th century. The quantification of time, space, and activity, and the homogenization, made planning possible. As Foucault shows it, the disciplinary organization divided movements, time, and space into pieces, and organized them in a precalculated flow—in other words, the plan. The plan unrolls activities in a deterministic sequence and speed and can be repeated reliably.

The project society exists on the top of and in dialogue with this older form of planning and fixations. The modern factory is just one example of fixed relations (colleagues), codification of activity (assembly line), mathematized space (factory, assembly line), and mathematized time (working hours). Discipline was and is not only an eminent way of controlling procedures and outcomes, but it was and is also something that concerns the individual body. As Foucault (1975) shows, discipline is written into the body through surveillance and repetition, and just as a docile body becomes a purposive instrument for a disciplinary organization, discipline also becomes integral to the way that urbanization and democratization can evolve, as the citizen becomes a curbed individual.

It is exactly the precalculation of activities in time, space, and fixed relations, which was challenged during the last third of the 20th century. Acceleration and globalization increasingly precluded prediction and long-term planning for nations, public or private organizations, families, or individuals, and contributed to the raise of the project society. Neither repetition of the past nor long-term planning and deterministic predefinition of the future is an adequate organizational response in a society that is in constant flux. In this context, projects emerge as a flexible vehicle for organizing activities geared toward change.

The Rise of the Project Society

Stating that we live in a project society does not imply that people never had projects previously in history or that all human activity is organized as projects today. Instead, what we claim is that projects have become so omnipresent as a form of coordinating human activity and behavior in the past decades, particularly in Western (and mostly European) culture, that we can talk of a project society.

The project society arises when (1) activity comes to play a central role; and (2) the precodification of time, space, activity, and relation is no longer suitable in a context of the ever-faster-changing world. The predetermination of activity allowed for predictability and repetition. Classic examples can be found in the assembly line and even in the routines of the traditional nuclear family. However, with increasing change and much more rapid speed of change, three factors gained in importance: (1) the ability to reorganize quickly, (2) the ability to incorporate what happens accidentally in oppose to eliminate accidents to happen, and (3) the ability to respond to feedback from the environment (Fogh Jensen, 2009). Much more than the competencies of a planning machine, like a handball team training with the same combinations again and again, it became

necessary to have the agility, sensitivity, and feeling of the right moment: to take what destiny brings (the surroundings, nature, the other people, the market, and so on), go with it, and use it your way, following, in some respects, what Weick (2001) illustrated as managers surfing waves. On social matters, the politeness of the trained aristocrat is challenged by the charm and the humor of Clumsy Hans, the protagonist of a classic Danish children story by Hans Christian Andersen about a boy who is able to impress the princess with unorthodox answers to simple questions.

One example of this shift can be seen on the dance floor from the beginning of the 1960s (explained in more detail in Fogh Jensen, 2012, Chapter 2). Because people let go of one another's hands to do the Twist, the relation between dancers ceased being fixed throughout the dance. One could no longer answer clearly the question "With whom will you dance the next four minutes?" Instead, dancing came to rely on the actual activity that took place during those four minutes, connecting and disconnecting without touching. The relation is continually negotiated during the dance and depends on the activity that one puts into the dance, and where this activity is directed. Therefore, it is possible to dance with more people at once, and with a different quality of relation between the people at the same time. The moment the activity stops, the relation is no longer there, and if all activity stops the dance floor simply disappears, as the space is no longer a dance floor if no one is dancing.

This example is not a metaphor. The history of dance develops together with the rest of society, and so the rise of the project society can be seen in the history of dance as well as in the history of warfare, types of appointments between friends, or the history of the distribution of sex and coupling (Fogh Jensen, 2009).

Another example is the rise of the single. The disciplinary society had maidens and widows, bachelors and widowers, but it didn't have the single. The single is a person living alone, accommodated to freedom, and who tries to turn it into his or her advantage, which is serial monogamy and polygamy rather than security in the repetitive. Dreams of freedom from 1968 have become realized as project life: temporary investments, multiplication of connections, overlapping activities. It is often brought forward as a choice to live in freedom, but to many people it is a structural condition, that the potential partners will not engage in long term planning. Consequently one has to adopt the single status in order to cope with the conditions of temporary relationships. In romantic movies and TV-series it is often pictured as the men not wanting to be monogamous boyfriends and this leaves the girl with opportunity to take on the single status. In the 1990s, this theme blossomed in TV series, such as *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City*, all trying to answer the questions: How do we navigate in temporary relations? How do we get the comfort and security of repetition, without losing the freedom of the project? In the first episode of *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw, the protagonist, reflects on the question: "How do we [women] have sex like men?" In other words, sex without feelings. This becomes relevant as relationships become increasingly temporary, with no guarantees of long-term bonds but as rather fluid connections. Emotional survival in such a context requires the ability to transit from one connection to the next or from one project to the next. Instead of having marriage as the main vision of each of these projects (and potentially scoring lower success rates than IT projects!), it may be useful to learn to accept this as a human condition and turn it into our own advantage—that is, to focus on enjoying the connections instead of insisting on conceiving of each connection as a potential "marriage." Hence, one of the

key consequences of the projectification of everything, even love and sex, is the priority of aesthetic criteria for judging which projects to surf with, and which to let go.

Projectification organizes human behavior in a more flexible way on top of and in dialogue with the old ways of planning and prediction. We see synchronic transformations in all sorts of fields: tactics in sports, warfare and terror, coupling and the distribution of sex, architecture and organization of spaces, pedagogy, leadership and management, dance, social help, the avoidance of epidemics. However, the projectification of everything does not come from a single institution or particular areas of the society, such as the prisons that Foucault analyzed as the model institution for the disciplinary society. Rather, the fields seem to inspire and contaminate one another toward a more flexible and temporary form of organizing that we sometimes call projects, or sometimes call by another name (like one-night stand or terrorist act) even though they have a "projective structure."

Therefore, one has to keep in mind that the word and the concept are not the same. By the concept "project" we mean the "throw" toward the future, and that is limited in time (though not always determined in time). As Martin Heidegger argues in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), when humans (to Heidegger, *Dasein*) are oriented toward the future (*Protention*), the future always comes first, and the past, condition, and necessity (*Fakticität*) follow. A more existential way of interpreting this is closer to Jean-Paul Sartres's (1943) phenomenological analysis in *L'être et le néant*: When people put forward a projection, something they want to do, they are forced to look at the conditions and necessities for realizing this. But that necessity, condition, and past come only after the projection (which is different from what a timeline, which suggests a linear development starting with the past and moving towards the future). Furthermore, from this perspective, projects are only supposed to take place once, and therefore are only done for the first time and are never repeated. The consequence is that they are pervaded by uncertainty. This means that some of the tasks in work life—referred to by the word *project*—are basically not projects, because they have been done before and we know exactly how to work our way forward. Thus, we could imagine a continuum between task and duties at one end and projects at the other end.

Classic project management is often the discipline that is concerned with the de-projectification of the project, trying to get more certainty without losing too much of the three factors that challenged disciplinary society: quick reorganization, incorporation of the accidental, and feedback sensitivity. The projectification of everything is thus not a question of the proliferation of a word (the omnipresence of the word is rather confusing). It is instead a proliferation of a temporary, future-oriented, purposeful, time-limited organizational form that is more agile, sensitive, and flexible than the disciplinary codification and planning, which operates in one-off activities (like a one-night stand or terrorist act).

In the following sections, we turn to the characterization of the project society as opposed to disciplinary society as two ideal types that shape the human condition. The discussion is organized around the four cornerstone philosophical concepts of space, time, activity, and relations.

Activity
As mentioned previously, the constitution of the disciplinary society relies on a plan. This again relies on a mathematization of space and time, so that the performance of the activity can be

predicted in space and time: when, where, how, and how fast it is going to take place. Through establishment of discipline(s), activities are institutionalized and uniformalized. Thus, activity in the disciplinary society is mostly defined by space, time, and relations. For example, a waltz is learned at a dance school, by following certain patterns in a certain tempo, predecided by the dance teacher.

As exemplified by the dance school, change in the disciplinary society operates through uniformization (discipline) and negation (correction). For example, the production line is optimized by the definition of an ideal mold (specific set of movements, pieces, setting, and so on), so that change (the production process) is about the implementation of the mold. Anything that does not follow the mold is considered waste and should be eliminated. This mind-set permeates throughout the society: In school, the pupil learns through corrections of faults compared to a scheme (for example, the perfect letter P), while professionals are trained to follow a pre-established body of knowledge. Hence, in disciplinary society, the discipline plays a much stronger role than, for example, independent thinking, initiative, and development of personal interests. Therefore, activity is calculated and put in frames based on former experiences. For example, bureaucracy determines rational procedures for activities, so that humans should work as consistently as machines.

This works as long as change is only an exception and not a rule. But in the 20th century, we began to experience an ever-faster-changing world. The organization of activity could no longer be built on the same type of predictions—or the predictions had to be made on a short-term basis. Hence, the project as a temporary organization emerged as a flexible form of activity, which can be more easily adapted and redeveloped on a temporal basis.

One of the main characteristics of the project society is that activity has gained importance and power to decide and format space, time, and relations. In other words, what the relations are, when the acting is unfolding, and where it unfolds is to a larger degree shaped by the activity itself rather than by a predetermined time, space, and relation.

The prestructuring of time, space, and relation (when and where and with whom are we going to do it) is still an important basis for activity. For example, we agree to meet at the tennis court to play tennis at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, and we will play with our usual partners. But we claim that to a larger extent, the activity shapes the space, the time, and the relations. For example, the skateboard course is a space that is opened by an activity; the bench, the sidewalk, and the stairs become the course as long as skateboarding goes on, and these places close down as a course when the activity stops. When they go the skateboarding, the playtime is opened by the activity and relations are formed by it; skaters might not know one another's names, parents, or schools but they are together in the activity. In the same way, at a private party, the dance floor is not there before someone starts dancing—that is, the dancing space is opened through the activity.

One could imagine the world of bureaucracy (Weber, 1922) and discipline (Foucault, 1975) as a scene in a theater: The wings are set, the time is set, the roles are set—and then begins the play, the activity. The project society is more like a dynamo: It is the activity that opens the space, the time, and the relations, and when the activity stops, the space shuts down, the time shuts down, and the relations stop.

Here, we can talk about a change from *a priori* determination to *a posteriori* determination. What, when, where, and with whom something is going to happen is, in the project society, to a larger

extent decided by what actually happens rather than by the plan. In extreme projects, even the criteria for and measurements of success are determined by the activity: Aim cannot be well articulated until some activity has unfolded.

Of course, planning responds to this knowledge by trying to keep obligations open. If the market changes fast, it is important (1) to have only a small number of items stored (lean production); (2) not to be obliged for long periods of time (contracts by activity is preferred to contracts by time); and (3) to postpone decisions close to the execution, and therefore to work in temporary structures. Because the future is unpredictable, everyone fights to keep his or her own flexibility. Paradoxically, this increases the unpredictability when everyone postpones their decisions. For example, if no one wants to say if they will come to a party before the same day of the party, the host has to operate in probability calculations or put the flexibility elsewhere—wait to order food until the guests have arrived or ask them to bring their own.

By organizing activities as projects, projects become the new home for action. Projects are sometimes driven by excitement and uncertainty. The activities in the project society are often characterized by excitement and uncertainty—most positively in the spirit of exploration, but often also in mediocrity, the feeling of being inexperienced, and sometimes even in a spirit of anxiety or fear.

The very concept of "being experienced" is undergoing change. If experience is to be able to use yesterday to handle tomorrow, then experience in project society becomes something else. In the disciplinary society, experience equates to the repetition of the same activity a large number of times. In the project society, experience becomes doing a large number of different activities in different contexts. This type of experience enables the flexibility to evaluate the different options for engaging in projects—which combination of projects is most beneficial? Even though this experience creates a platform for navigation, it is always obsolete, and hence experience gains a dynamic dimension.

This adds on to the anxiety of the passage between projects (see the section on relations): Even though an individual might not be threatened by the expiration of the project, he or she can perceive himself or herself to repeat too much and thereby not gain enough new experiences, and, paradoxically, becoming less experienced. Thus, the will to passage is not just something pushed forward by the increased flexibility of organizations, but also by individuals dealing with the human conditions in the project society.

This also has implication on an individual level. Being active is a condition in the project society. It is a premise for being seen. If you are not active, you become invisible or, at best, just boring. Thus, identity in the project society is not defined by position, but by activity. To rephrase Descartes: *I am doing, therefore I exist, ago sum ergo*. Here the CV (curriculum vitae) play a central role in illustrating who someone is, as they represent the collection of projects this person has been involved in and thus an account of his or her accumulated experience. However, identity is not only defined by what someone's activities in past and present, but is increasingly also defined by potential activities to be conducted through future projects.

Space

What is characteristic to the disciplinary space is that it is formatted before the activity takes place. Just as the scene with its décor is there before the play begins and the dance floor exists before the dance, so is every institution formatted to make certain activities take place at a certain time. The project society builds upon and rebuilds the *sorted* space inherited from disciplinary society, where functions are sorted out in different spaces. A space with a specific function and with opening hours could be an institution, but it could also be, for example, a classroom with specific functions. In order to perform a certain activity, one would have to go to that space at the settled time for that special activity.

What happens in the transition from the disciplinary society to the project society? Activity becomes more central, and the formatting of space loses some of its determinative power. Society becomes characterized by functions rather than institutions. For example, learning becomes important, not the school. Health care becomes central, not the hospital itself.

Using a verb from Deleuze and Guattari (1980), one could say that the project deterritorializes time and space in order to make it reappear as activity, and that the project deterritorializes the institutions in order to make them reappear as functions. As a result, to understand project society, it is more relevant to look at the world from the angle of activity than from the angle of space (which would be the disciplinary worldview).

This, however, does *not* mean that space does not exist in the project society; space remains fundamental to human experience. Nor does it mean that we don't have spaces organized for certain functions to take place anymore. Rather, it means that activities open space and can change the meaning attributed to that space. For example, a dance floor opens in the kitchen if somebody dances there. The activity of having a meeting opens a working function in what is formatted as a café, and so on.

Of course, architects are a part of this. They create more open and flexible spaces that invite activities to define them. In urban planning, the zone or the cloud becomes a term for this. In this regard, contemporary designers understand the nature of spaces as designed but also evolving. For some decades, the danger was that spaces became too open or unformatted. If the café doesn't seem like a café, but looks too much like an office, than having a working activity in such café will not have the same effect as transforming something that looks and feels like a café into a work space. . In this regard, spaces are nudged to be perceived as a café, or office, or gym. However, they are purposefully designed for maximum flexibility, and in so doing, they create the *probability* that some activity will happen, in oppose to allocating certain types of activities to specific spaces.

Further, the traditional, Newtonian understanding space has been challenged by the rise of communication technologies, the Internet, and social media. Through these technologies, virtual space emerges as the connection of different spaces and it becomes possible to act in several locations simultaneously. Thus, we are now able to be active in multiple spaces at once. The consequence is that what was previously separated is now blended. We work at the café and we do our banking activities from home or work. The increasing importance of virtual spaces is one of the reasons for the space formation to lose power. The important point here is that the blending is not a

mess: It is ordered by activity rather than by space. Only when considered from the viewpoint of space does it look like a mess.

Time

Parallel to discussions with regard to space, we observe an inversion from time followed by activity to activity followed by time. Instead of the hour coming for the activity, the activity opens the time. Just as the dance activity opens a time for dancing, the learning activity opens school time, instead of a school bell ringing based on a predefined plan.

Planning very often is a predetermination of a "when" and "how fast" as well as a "where," a "how," and a "with whom." In the disciplinary society, planning very often focused on repetition. Here, time was associated with tact (on the dance floor and production line), ensuring continuous flow between different types of activities. However, because a project only runs once, planning a project can never be planning a repetition. Moreover, because it is the first time the project runs and the event is therefore surrounded by uncertainty, planning can be very illusionary or sometimes a play in order to imitate the more predictable world of the disciplinary organization.

This shift has also been mirrored in the development of scheduling techniques. In Western cultures dominated by scientific management logic. It was Henry Gantt who introduced time as a key dimension to coordinate production in the late 1900s (Geraldi and Lechler, 2012). Originally, a Gantt chart was actually used to report the completion of past tasks. Only later did the Gantt chart became an instrument for planning projections in the future. Thus, time moved from a focus on repetitions and plans to projections and orientation toward the future.

The project society, always oriented toward the future with its projections, is caught in the omnipresence of the idea of change. And projects are used exactly to make changes. As citizens in the project society, we expect tomorrow to be different from yesterday. We require change. This is partly a new form of capitalism, where expanding the market is not finding new physical domains (territories) to export to, but rather an expansion in time: The existing becomes the old as the new model appears. However, it is also a more inherent logic in culture that has since the dispute between the ancients and the moderns in the 1690s (Rigault, 1856) been the condition in art: Something only has value if it has not been seen before. This has a further impact on what experience is worth (as discussed in activities): Previously, experience was to have done the same thing lots of times. Now, experience also means having done a lot of different things.

We have thus moved our orientation in time from the past to the future. Project society is oriented forward, not relying so much on repetition of the past. As Giddens (1994), Sennett (1998), and others have pointed out, tradition has lost its legitimatizing force. This affects even our identities: We draw meaning from the future, from what we are becoming, when we understand ourselves, rather than where we come from (space) and what we have repeated (past time) or our family (relations).

Further, "project language" has also been used to enrich repetitive jobs; from a business perspective, this is useful to increase variability and response to change, but it also creates more human, engaging, and interesting work (for example, the mini-factories where employees plan their shifts and rotate in a "project-based" rhythm). Time thus becomes a motivator and way to

coordinate work—deadline-driven work (different from "time at work" and time measurements in scientific management).

One of the ways time appears in projects is as temporality. Projects finish! They are made to end. Thus, time is always present as "What next?" or "What after this?" This also makes us think of questions such as: Are we going to deliver by X? How can we complete the work? How can we successfully conclude it? (So we can continue moving on to the next one.) Thus, the omnipresence of the mentality of the *passage* from one project to the next is the form time takes in the project society.

We have time in projects and time out of projects, and these times and timing are felt and organized differently. Yet time without projects is avoided. We are often afraid of being in transition, afraid of not finding new projects, of being inactive, and hence ceasing to "exist" in the project society. Therefore, we don't say "no;" we double-book work, we nurture different project ideas simultaneously, and we jump into the most interesting one just in time, delaying others. And if the project is not as interesting or things are not developing as expected, we may well find opportunities to exit the project and start in a new one. We may also commit to several projects and attempt to execute them simultaneously, multitasking between them. This principle of multitasking is connected to the decline in the importance of being in the space where the activity takes place (see Space section, above).

Even though multitasking is an important skill, a person only has the ability and time to participate and contribute to a limited number of projects. We can partially offset this limitation by creating synergies. For example, the same activity can contribute to two projects, for example, a vacation to an exotic location can contribute to education project with the family, in which you aim to expose your child to different cultures, and data collection for a research project. For active members of the project society, time becomes the scariest resource, and despite the temporality of projects, we have a feeling of never being finished, always in flow, always catching up. Experts in project society manage to "book" time for relaxation, vacation, and reflection. Interestingly, such "booking" becomes a project in itself: It is not the scary and inactive "emptiness" in a transition time; instead, it becomes a transitory project, a time for oneself.

Finally, the speed of changes in life is accelerating. The orientation toward the future and the central features that we realize ourselves through projects results in a constant striving for personal development. Through private and professional projects, we are always seeking to live multiple lives and to achieve as much as possible. We simply live our lives faster (Rosa, 2003; Virilio & Bratton, 2006) and the normality of this speed becomes a normative of this speed bringing forward the "slow" activities as compensation, as mentioned above in regard to leisure projects.

Relations
In the disciplinary society, relations were formatted by space (the village, the neighbor) and time (the generation). Relations were formed by structure and existed only within it: spatial (neighbors), blood (family), and functional (colleagues). The relations were between entities or persons that in some sense belonged together within the structure. For example, the colleague was the one working

beside us during the same working hours. Just as time and space were settled before the activity, so were relations. The dance partner in the disciplinary society was defined before the dance, as one had to ask for a dance. Moving from the disciplinary to the project society, the dance relation changes character by not requiring physical contact to create space for self-expression. This opens the opportunity to dance with more people at the same time.

As we enter the project society, relations are (in the purest form of the project society) no longer relations in a hierarchical structure, but in a network. It is more adequate to describe the relations in the project society as connections. Connections between individuals are, ideally, on the distance, where they don't oblige you to do anything or to abstain from doing anything, but are still so close that they can be 'used' in projects or in passages between projects. Connections are considered pathways, partners, or providers of a quasi-security. When we have a lot of connections, we call it a network. A project is an activity within a network (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999).

When the project society distributes its goods and projects (apartments, jobs, projects) are not distributed by time (you wait until is it your turn) or qualification (hierarchal structure), as it was the case in bureaucracy, but by who you are connected to. The network has always existed, but for a period of a few centuries, it was the unofficial way of getting something. From the beginning of the 1990s, networks appeared on conference and meeting programs. Networking as an activity became the legitimate and official way to obtain something, thereby breaking with one of the formulations of Kant's categorical imperative, that you must never treat another person only as a means, but always as a goal in him- or herself as well.

Still, the ability to connect to others, build a network and use it becomes an important skill. This skill is a balance of distance versus proximity: The ability to keep relations at a certain distance (so that they remain connections) is a core competency for the individual in the project society. You don't want relations to be to close or too far away. Relations should be within a manageable distance so you'll be able to "use" them in your activities/projects, but not so close that they obligate you or limit your flexibility. The administration of a network is thus centered around the ability to connect and disconnect with a minimum of obligations. This practice is obviously supported by social media such as Facebook or LinkedIn, but also simply through the address book in our mobile phones, which contains many names and numbers that we may no longer use, but could be useful in the future.

In order to exist, a connection must be renewed from time to time. As connections begin to get cold, they must be encouraged. Networking is itself an activity—namely, the activity of creating or holding close (warming up or renewing) connections. The constant encouragement in the network increases the transactions' costs (that is, waste): The disciplinary society had its waste in bureaucracy and formalities. The project society has two great sources of waste: the work for passages to new projects that doesn't give passage (like the effort dedicated to the application for a research project that is wasted if the project is not funded) and networking (maintaining a large network of connections is time consuming).

Whereas the old structure of relations was hierarchal, the network seems flat and equal. However, the new role of connections in the project society gives priority to social skills. This gives way to new hierarchies and the need to learn to behave in ways that keep doors open for future passages. Connections enable the shaping of a personal identity through passages from project to project.

Thus, on one hand, each individual has the potential to design his or her own identity through the choices of projects and connections. One the other hand, an individual who is not active will have a reduced visibility and the network will diminish. This results in a paradox where it is preferable to be exploited than it is to not be used.

Uncertainty plays a key role in this context. Because every individual is uncertain about the future, he or she tries to remain flexible, keeping the appointment "open" and the connection at half distance, in order to be able to maneuver later on. This provides a culture of overbooking, where all individuals as well as all companies take in more "projective promises" than they can ever execute, knowing that some of the appointments will probably run into the sand. Overbooking again increases the uncertainty in the system of projects: It encourages the attitude of "yes" and makes people less reliable. Their "yes" does not mean "yes" anymore; it means "perhaps in the future" or "maybe." Similarly, maintaining connections in the network also means keeping a positive language among project people, who learn to behave as always encouraging, and so, for example, corrections of 'bad performance' are packed into jokes (Bechky, 2006). Table 1 summarizes the discussion above and characterizes disciplinary and project societies as two ideal types.

	Disciplinary Society	**Project Society**
Relationship between activity, space, time, and relations	Space, time, and relations define activity.	Activity becomes the order and opens up time, space, and relations. Space, time, and relations can create the *probability that an activity will take place*.
Activity	Activity is mostly repetitive and organized through predictions.	Activity is emerging, unique, temporary, and organized through projections into the future, as opposed to repetitions of the past.
Space	Space shapes activity: One space is related to one activity.	Activity shapes spaces. Spaces are designed for maximum flexibility aimed to create the probability for activity.
Time	Activity is "permanent," based on repetition in a constant flow.	Activity is temporary; hence, there is time in and between projects. This raises the need for a passage between projects.
Relations	Relations exist in a fixed hierarchy, bounded by time and space.	Activity is relational, thus connecting is more important than relying on fixed relationships.

Table 1: Disciplinary versus project societies.

Ethical Implications

First: This manifestation of projects as a human condition and an imperative for life obviously has ethical implications. One of the formulations of the categorical imperative by Kant (1785) was, that you should never treat humanity in yourself or in another person solely as a means to something else, but always as an end in itself. Networking to secure passages to future projects, i.e. engaging with others with the purpose of using them as means to future activities such as paid temporary work, seems to violate this humanistic rule of the Enlightenment (1620 – 1789). One of the ethical flanks that the project society opens is how far you can go in treating your relations as connections for your own future optimization.

Second: These considerations can be prolonged into ethical questions about new forms of exploitation. It is clear that if the passage between projects poses problems to individuals, then they would be willing to refrain from claiming basic rights such as a wage or security rights. This is one of the main challenges to labor unions in the 21st century: Their help is based on older organizational forms and more stable relations, while the project society keeps bringing forward an individualization of the risk of passages between projects, i.e. the individual carries the risks involved in e.g. potential unemployment, delays in the start of new project, need to undertake projects that are far from one's competencies or intensions, etc. This is why we see concepts such as employability in opposition to employment and a rhetoric of "free agents" moving from one task to the next, accompanied by a "reality" marked by the explosion of work for nothing, freelance, and unending sequences of traineeships. In other words, the project society makes not only the labor market, but also the human condition that it pervades, more precarious (Standing, 2014). Nation-states can only set down limits through frameworks defining working conditions. However, such efforts are met with great difficulties, as long as states see themselves as being in competition with one another.

Third, an ethical dimension is brought forward by the coping mechanisms related with uncertainty of the passage and the practices of double booking, for example the promise that is not really an promise in order to keep flexibility needed in a world with high level uncertainty Such attitudes may become more prevalent in the project society, but they are, by in large, still recognized as unprofessional and potentially unfair. Navigating relationships as connections and delaying commitments until the last minute, while still maintaining high levels of professionalism and good reputations, are some of the ethical dilemmas and paradoxes that go along with living in a project society.

A fourth and perhaps more serious Nietzschean consideration involves the values of the project society. What is described above is how the project society came into being, and how it functions, but it is unclear what such a society holds as its values. As Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) have showed, capitalism is in itself a meaningless system (in the sense that it lacks a purpose or greater "meaning") and has thus always needed to borrow meaning from religion, human needs and rights, or other value systems. The same seems to be the case for projects: Projects—whether they are intended to produce a nuclear bomb or develop the FairPhone[6] or just to do something "new"— seem to have no value other than bringing forward change, regardless of the ethical dimension of that change. This is not to say that valuable missions cannot take the form of projects, nor that project managers cannot develop the values often required to manage passages between projects, such as reputation (Clegg & Courpasson, 2004). Instead, our point is that if the project as an organizational form seems to gain its own rationality (and by this we mean that it is self-evident and

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[6] A FairPhone is a mobile phone that attempts to increase awareness of the supply chain behind mobile phones, which can be sourced through child labor and in war zones, instead offering a "fair" alternative.

self-legitimating), then it is not human, global, environmental, or other values that justify the project, but solely the change.[7] Put in Kierkegaard's (1843) terms, project people are afraid of repetition, because repetition has boredom as its shadow. Put in Nietzsche's terms, the project society seems to be at great risk of producing a still more profound nihilism, if values are not constantly in sight (Nietzsche, 1887).

This raises the need for an open discussion around ethics in projects, both for practice and theory. How can we as a society and as individuals develop ethical values that are acceptable and compatible with a project society?

Implications and Avenues for Further Research

The project society provides a different *Weltanschauung* - that is, a different perspective into ourselves, our work, and society at large. This opens space for a new domain of research in and around projects. This section explores some of the potential avenues for further research.

Following Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary society, the first avenue of research calls for a discussion of the project society from a philosophical and historical perspective. Here, there is room to explore questions such as: Is projectification intensifying? What impact does the project society have in ways of living? Are people born in project society more apt to live in it? In what way does the project society coexist with the disciplinary society and in what way is it a substitute for the disciplinary society? How will it shape future generations? Can we observe project society spreading across outside European and Western culture? How do historical and cultural differences shape different forms of project societies? Can they still be considered a project society? How is the project society evolving?

Second, the projectification of society has a political dimension. It shifts responsibility from government and companies to the individual level, and positions all of us as entrepreneurs who "commercialize" ourselves and develop our "unique value proposition" (to use classic managerial jargon)—in other words, a unique profile that builds on our identity, constructed as unique and valuable. Therefore, the lack of success becomes individualized, and the breaks and passages inherent to the project society are suffered at individual level. In this respect, the projectification works in tandem with neoliberalism. These reflections raise fundamental questions in regard to power. What is power in the project society? How is it exercised? Which classes have advantages? Which interests does it serve? Who becomes marginalized?

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[7] This point has been widely debated by the authors, and we did not reach an agreement. Some of us argue that the being "new" is the only self-legitimizing and self-evident value of a project; others argue that the value is in the "change" (which involves but is not necessarily conditional to the "new"). What we agreed on is that projects are in themselves value-free, and hence, they require external value systems.

Third, the projectification calls for normative and ethical guidance on living in project society. What can we do to escape the rationality of the project society? Can we escape it? Or should we see it as an opportunity? How can we develop sustainable living for everyone in project society? What kind of competencies and skills are needed? How can we educate children and adults to live in a project society? How do we cope with the stress and anxiety inherent to this new form of living? How can we maintain high levels of professionalism, legitimacy, and reputation if temporality is a human condition?

Although professions as structures of the disciplinary society can still have some relevance, they are not sufficient to navigate in the project society. Profession and private life melts into the development of our identities. The aim becomes that of developing an identity, which is recognized to be "exciting," unique, and based on one's own path beyond profession. In a disciplinary society there were doctors, lawyers, engineers, and so forth. Today even lines of study are becoming increasingly blurred and varied based on interdisciplinary projects. Profession and other structures therefore become springboards to the development of one's own identity. For example, an interesting character in the project society will be more than only a lawyer; he or she will be someone fighting for the rights of X or Y; he or she will be more than an ophthalmologist, someone also involved in the irradiation of blindness in the world. Trajectories become individualized and partly unpredictable. The project society values being connected to "cool things," having an interesting life, opinions, and experiences, along with the old recognition of titles or professions. In this context, projects such as a year of travel across the world, being part of *Mèdecins Sans Frontiéres* (Doctors Without Borders), participating in an Olympic game, or involvement in other bold projects and programs increase the perception of success.

In this respect, projects become opportunities to develop "interesting" and "exciting" identities, and thereby build attractive and successful individuals. In other words, projects become the building blocks of our identities—both as individuals and as professionals. People like being involved in projects with so-called interesting people, and such interesting people themselves increase the legitimacy of projects. Therefore, survival in project society depends on how each of us manages, proliferates, and cuts connections in order to become and remain an interesting and exciting person—hence, the importance of "self-marketing" increases. This also entails reframing existing structures and practices. Thus, the practice of the caretaker can be reframed as a project with the goal of helping increase the quality of life for the elderly, even though the task is still highly repetitive. In this respect, we construct narratives of our lives as a collection of "meaningful" projects, independent of whether this would follow a classic view of projects in a more realist ontology.

Marginalization and attempts to escape it are interesting avenues for further research, particularly as we explore the development of identities and the negotiation of meaning in project society. For example, there is ongoing pressure for each individual within a crowd to, paradoxically, "stand out" from the crowd. In this process, the private and professional persona merge into a single identity, and "private" decisions such as types of vacations, ways of raising children, sexual orientation, and so one all become part of the development of an unique and interesting profile. Similarly, participation on global social movements, driven and aided by social media, acts as a form of demarginalization and helps with the development of an alternative profile. The construction of meaning becomes essential. "Professions" that don't have a clear project orientation may find an

increased need to frame and verbalize even the most repetitive operations as projects—that is, activities geared toward a unique and relevant purpose. This raises further questions, such as how identities are developed and constructed in project society and how to keep up with the relentless momentum in the face of increasing depression and anxiety.

Fourth, there is a need for reflection on organizing, managing, and leading in project society. Is classical models of project management a heritage of disciplinary society in project society? What are the emerging forms of organizing/managing/leading in project society? What could it all mean? Is it possible to "lead"? What is the role of distributed leadership? How can we integrate efforts? How do we address different levels of commitment? In other words, how does the project society challenge and substantiate existing managerial theories, models, and practices?

The project society have implications on how we theorize about projects. Common to the abovementiond questions are a call for theoretical framings that emphasizes the role of agency compared to structure. In parallel to the development of the project society, theories have been developed to help understand increasingly vibrant and fluid societies. These include Giddens's (1984) duality theory of structure and agency, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) criticism of the iron cage of the disciplinary society, and Vygotsky's work on activity theory (e.g., Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999), to mention just a few. Thus, a wide range of theoretical perspectives is promising in the further research of projects as a human condition enabling us to understand the complex relationship in and around projects, humans, and society.

Finally, broadening the concept of projects to view them as part of the human condition can intensify fragmentation in the field of project management. It is difficult to develop any sense of integration and common theorizing if we, as a knowledge field, study a phenomenon that is so diverse and ill-defined to include both a megaproject that costs billions of euros and the finding a new life partner (Söderlund, 2011). We do not advocate for the understanding of projects as a human condition. We only posit the possibilities that such perspective might entail and note the potential for cross-fertilization between the two domains (projects as an organizing system and projects as a human condition). First, the growing and insightful body of literature on project organization can become useful for each one of us as individuals as we navigate within project society. Understanding how we navigate projects as human beings, in turn, can help us understand some of the underlining challenges of managing projects, such as engagement, careers, transitions between projects, construction of meaning, value and ethics, leadership, and so forth. Second, seeing projects as a human condition opens up to a far more extensive empirical context—studying the behavior of people in projects, outside of classic organizational settings. Such studies can have, at least to some extent, common theorizing and can allow for fruitful cross-fertilization. They also reiterate some well-known fundamental theoretical questions, such as why projects (in the sense of human condition) exist, what constitutes a project, what kinds of projects exist, and whether projects can be managed.

Conclusion

Building on Fogh Jensen (2009), this article describes an alternative understanding of projects beyond organizational practices: projects as a human condition. This human condition emerges as society shifts from a disciplinary to a project society. Guided by the philosophical concepts of activity, time, space, and relations, we describe the project society as an ideal type, in opposition to

the disciplinary society. This article is only a first step. It scratches the surface of a complex and dense philosophical subject. We hope to spark interest for future research that explores projects as human condition and its implications for organizing projects, as well as the applications of concepts of project organization to our way of living.

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