



## **Paper for the Track: Leadership, Teamwork and Human Resource Management**

**Mag. Andrea Cerny, MAS (PR)**

Research Fellow

PROJEKTMANAGEMENT GROUP

University of Economics and Business Administration

andrea.cerny@wu-wien.ac.at

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### **Abstract**

Understanding emotions in the organizational context is an important research issue and a strongly emerging field of research. The management of emotions is a new trend in management science. As there are also emotions involved in projects, there is a demand to consider emotions as well as management of emotions in project management.

Project gain an increasing relevance in companies and in the society as organisational option to perform complex processes. Because of the high dynamic of projects emotions of individuals and teams in projects are inevitable. Emotions are an important factor of consideration. The management of emotions is a success factor in project management and a task of project management and a success factor in projects. Individuals and teams in projects need emotional competence (as part of social competence) to handle emotions. How to deal with these emotions and how to use emotions in the context of project management is part of the presentation.



## Relevance of the research field

Understanding emotions in the organizational context is an important research issue and a strongly emerging field of research (Härtel, 2005). A growing number of serious researchers are beginning to take the study of emotions into workplace settings. In particular, the emergence of theoretical frameworks such as affective events theory, and the wider acceptance of an emotional basis in organizational theory suggests that the time is ripe for further development of this area. The benefits of studying emotion in workplace settings derive from the evidence that organisational members seldom carry out their work in an objective fashion based on cold, cognitive calculation. Workplace experiences comprise a succession of work events that can be pleasing and invigorating, or stressful and frustrating. These events affect the way we feel and behave at work. For instance, some jobs require a display of positive emotion that may be quite different from what is actually felt. Evidence is also emerging that emotional trait constructs such as negative affectivity and emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) affect behavior and decision making in the workplace context. Further, research is linking work-evoked emotions to psychological stress and well-being.

The topic of emotions in organisations and former in projects has been taken up by both practitioners and academics, and in some cases, with what appears as uncritical zeal. It is therefore an area requiring particular attention to the ethics and regulations necessary to govern research and practice in the area. Submitted papers will address topical issues in emotions research and stimulate discussion on both the dangers and opportunities in emotions research, wrestling with the issue of how to define the parameters for safe research in emotions.

## Introduction

Organizations are constantly changing because of the globalization of markets, new technical developments and redefinition of values in society. To be able to keep up with these changes, more and more projects were performed to manage management processes. Therefore the project-orientation in organisations and societies has been increased and is still increasing. To manage business processes as projects secure the ability to compete.

The role and the central importance of emotions in the organizational context are often underestimated in current management research and in project practice. The main reason might be the “myth of rationalism”. For many years, organizations – both structures and processes – have been considered as rational, according to the machine-metaphor. This consideration also included individual beings. Emotions were irrational and negative. They have been seen as a disturbing factor which has to be controlled, better be eliminated.

The view on organizations as „emotional arenas in which different emotions are generated, displayed, shed, and traded“ (see FINEMAN 1993) is relatively new. Since the end of the 70s the myth of rationalism has ended.

Projects are characterized through dynamics and discontinuities which are causing emotions. From the view of the systemic theory, emotions in social systems are determined structurally but they also can be triggered. (GAREIS 2003, 135) The use of emotions in projects is a management function. The conscious handling of emotions is a success factor in projects. Emotions have reasons and causes.

It is a function of leading in projects to analyse expected emotions, to plan and realize strategies and measures to handle these emotions. (GAREIS 2003, 135)

The emotionalism in projects is an instrument to control the energy of different project roles. The paper covers the systemic view of emotions, project management and the management of emotions. Further the research method will be explained. As the PhD is process there are no results at the moment.

## Project and Project Management

Projects can be perceived in different ways, as

- complex tasks

- temporary organizations and/or
- social systems. (see GAREIS 2002, 10)

Projects are complex, mostly new, risky and important undertakings for the organization undertaking the project. They are goal-determined tasks, since the objectives for the deliverables, the deadlines, the resources and the costs are agreed between the project owner and the project team.

Furthermore, projects can be perceived as organizations. In comparison to the relatively permanent structures of the permanent organization (such as divisions, business units, departments), projects can be seen as temporary organizations.

Projects can also be viewed as social systems which can be clearly differentiated from their environments and at the same time have relationships to these environments. As an independent system a project has a specific purpose and its own structures. Elements of the project structure are, for instance, project specific values and rules, project roles, project specific communications, planning and controlling methods.

Project management is a business process of the project-oriented organization. The project management process (see Figure 2) begins with the project assignment and ends with the project

approval. It contains the sub-processes project start, project co-ordination, project controlling, project discontinuity management and project close-down. These sub-processes of project management are related to one another. The objects of consideration in project management are the project objectives, project scope, project schedule, project resources and project costs, the project organization and the project culture, as well as the project context (pre and post project phases, project environments, other projects etc.).

## Emotions

The knowledge about emotions has increased in the last years. This know-how derived from physiology, psychology, personality- und social psychology, medicine, and others.

The term „emotion” has to be considered in its context. Therefore there are many different definitions up to the theoretical framework. Wenger, Jones und Jones (1962, S. 3 in: SCHMIDT-ATZERT 1996, 18) wrote why it is difficult to find a general definition of emotion: „Emotion is a funny word. Everybody is thinking to understand what emotion means until trying to define it. Afterwards nobody argues to understand emotions.”

„Although there are different definitions and focuses of emotions, psychologists agree, „that an emotion is a complex sample of changes that includes physical excitations, feelings, cognitive processes and behaviours, which occurs because of a situation an individual noticed as important.“ (Kleinginna & Kleinginna 1981, in: ZIMBARDO 1995, 442).

The physical excitations include neuronal, hormonal, visceral and muscular changes. The cognitive processes include the interpretations, memories and expectations of an individual. The visible reactions in behaviour are expressive (smiling, crying) as well as instrumental (cry for help). (ZIMBARDO 1995, 442)

There are different design possibilities of emotions. They focus on demonstrating the relationships between emotions. The Circumplex Model, a circular design of emotions, has been mentioned first by McDougall (1908). „He demonstrates a parallel between colours and emotions and assumes that all emotions could be derived from the basic emotions, like the mixing of colours.” (WINDER 2004, 63) Complex emotions derive from the mixture of different basic emotions (e.g. admiration derives from the mixture of amazement and compliance. (MEYER/SCHÜTZWOHL/ REISENZEIN 1997, 128f.)

Robert Plutchik (1962) picked up this approach and developed a similar model which compares eight basic emotions. These eight inherent emotions (basic emotions) consist of four contrast couples

- happiness and sadness;

- fear and anger;
- disgust and acceptance;
- surprise and expectance.

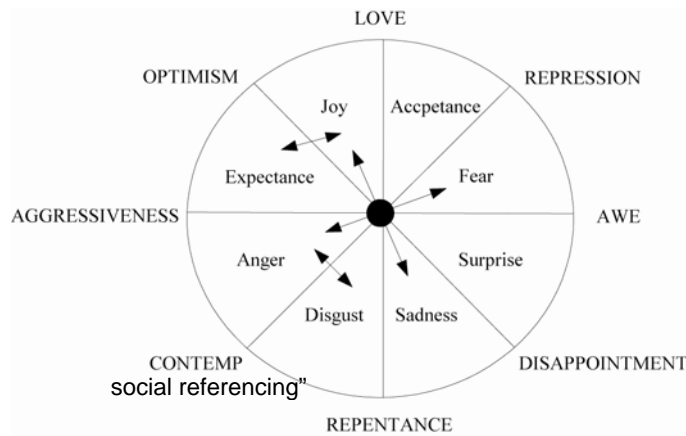


Figure 1: Circumplex Model of basic emotions by Plutchik (vgl. MEYER/SCHÜTZWOHL/REISENZEIN 1993, 152)

Figure 1 demonstrates the mixture of basic emotions. „For example: love is a mixture of happiness and acceptance and awe is a mixture of fear and surprise.” (ZIMBARDO 1995, 444) The sociology of emotions describes the function and the influence of emotions in areas like working place, handling of money and politics. (FLAM 2002, 118) From the social constructivistic view emotions are a „social constructive syndrome”.

The characterisation of emotions as syndromes expresses that emotions are the sum of different elements which can be described either from a biological, social or psychological view. For verill (1980, p. 307f.) a syndrome is a formation of connected behavioural elements (physiological changes, mimic and gesture, behaviour). Some of them have a biological basis (e.g. blush of shame in case of a rage attack), but the way of how all these elements are combined are chosen socio-cultural, not biological. (EISELEN/SICHLER in SCHREYÖGG/SYDOW 2001, 51)

This approach is strongly built on the idea of the symbolic interaction. Emotions and interactions are interrelated and depend on the culture. The process of interaction helps the individual’s emotional orientation (“**social referencing**”) as well as to regulate own feelings. Literature describes social referencing as a process by which a person seeks information from others to make sense of an event that is beyond a person’s own appraisal process. This may induce observing various communicative responses to the situation.” (ANDERSEN/GUERRERO 1998, 86)

Furthermore the approach postulates a ,self’ that is able to experience feelings, to reflect and to manage them. Emotion and reflexion are interacting and are dependent on special signs, vocabulary and norms.

Arlie Hochschild formed the term “*displayed rules*”, which decides at what time emotions are accepted and at what time not. „These products of emotional socialization involve a learned response that modifies spontaneous emotional displays to be socially appropriate.” (ANDERSEN/GUERRERO 1998, 54)

In the context of project management and therefore of the systemic-constructivistic consideration, emotions

- are temporary. They have a clear start and end.
- are directed at objects. A specific reason is given. This reason could be related directly to a

situation or could be situation spanning.

- are intensive reactions and have different qualities (positive/negative)
- could be classified into primary and secondary emotions (see figure 1)
- have a social context. They depend on the specific role and situation/interaction, in which one self is. Emotions are incorporated in interactive situations and dependent on culture, which offers specific signs, vocabulary and norms. Therefore
- are social constructed syndromes. Emotions consist of different elements like physiological changes, expression by mimic and gesture and behaviour). Central part of the Ph.D is to observe the facial expression and gesture as well as verbal communication.

Emotions are ,in' people, ready to be studied. "What matters is how our sensations, thoughts and feelings are labelled and displayed, and that has everything to do with the social and cultural contexts that provide the rules and vocabularies of emotion. Emotions, therefore, are intersubjective, a product of the way systems of meaning are created and negotiated between people (Parrott and Herré 1996; Griffiths, 1995)." (FINEMAN 2000, 2)

The contribution of behavioural research, especially for project management, has been ignored for many years. A turnaround began as many failures in project management happened. After many years of „hard facts” in project management, the time began to focus on „soft facts

## Emotions in projects

Projects are temporary organizations for performing a relatively unique, short- or midterm process of a medium or larger scope. This consideration makes it possible to perceive projects as social systems which can be clearly differentiated from their environments and at the same time have relationships to these environments. (GAREIS 2003, 52ff.)

In this way projects can be perceived as complex tasks, temporary organizations and/or social systems. (see GAREIS 2002, 10)

To manage projects professionally, an adequate design of the project organisation has to be established. The organisational structure of the project organisation and the relations between the

project roles are visible in the project organisation chart.



Figure 2: Project Organisation Chart / Empowered project organisation (GAREIS 2002, 24)

It is possible to differentiate between individual and group roles. Project related roles for individuals are, for instance, Project owner, Project manager, Project team member and Project contributor. Project related group roles are Project owner (as committee), Project team and Sub-teams.

In project the potential of emotions is higher, because projects are more **complex** as well as more

**dynamic** as tasks in the line organization. There is more energy needed from the different project

related roles. Also **time pressure** and **limited resources** are typical for projects.

Emotions depend on the specific role and interaction situation. Therefore we have to focus on specific situations / triggers in projects.

### Emotions in the project assignment and project start process

Two employees from Austria Airlines said that “the most emotions have their origin before the project start”, at pm days’04: Projects & Emotions, in Vienna. Typical emotions in and before the project start process are happiness, because there is something new and interesting, but also insecurity, because not all project objectives are clear, or anger because the team members are overworked anyway and now they have to do additional work in a project. Sometimes the project team members are proud to be part of the project.

Especially the team building and integration work is important in this process. To motivate the team members the mutual getting to know, should be supported in the start work-shop. It is important that the team members (therefore also the project manager) stick together during the project process. The basic trust has to be built in and before the project start.

The project manager has a key position in the team building process. It is the job of the project manager to acquire project team members which are a good fit. “An effective project team leader is a ”social architect” who understand the interaction of organisational and behavioural variables, can foster a climate of active participation and can minimise dysfunctional conflict. To be effective, the team leader must identify major issues associated with three dimension. These are team related with emphasis on behavioural aspects such as team structure, trust and respect, or barriers to team development and so on; project task and resource related such as goals and objectives, planning and scope management; and organisation.” (VERMA/WIDEMAN 2002, 5) There are five things that members of a successful team need from their leader (the project manager):

- Expectation (Tell me what you expect of me)
- Opportunity (Give me an opportunity to perform)
- Feedback (Let me know how I am doing)
- Guidance (Give me guidance when and where I need it)
- Reward (Reward me according to my contribution)

### Emotions in team work

Where human beings are working together there are emotions. Fear, anger, sadness and happiness

mostly occur in interaction situations. Strong triggers of emotions in project team work are

- control
- power / authority
- conflicts and
- abuse of confidence.

Project team members need their individual scope to be able to go own ways and to make own

failures. To keep control in the role as project manager, control has to be given up. It is similar to a steersman: he knows that the use of the steer is causing a flow resistance and slow down the ship. Therefore he has to handle the steer sophisticated and gentle.

The idea behind the concept of the “empowered” project organisation (*figure 2*) is, that individuals, teams or organisations, who bear responsibility become more efficient. They are able to make their own decisions within their sphere of activity, develop their own ideas and concepts and have the power to realise these ideas and concepts.

In many “project-oriented” organisations the line organisation has a strong impact on the project organisation and the project organisation is far away from “empowered”. In these cases the project team is confronted with hierarchy and power plays.

“Power is a kind of social impact on or social control of others. Power makes activities more possible – sometimes also against the will of others. Conflicts may occur because of different allocation of power and exploration of power. Conflicts in projects can occur because the project manager is not accepted in his/her role or there are different views on the project targets.



In projects the pressure of the project owner or clients is often given further to the project manager, who itself forwards this to the project team members. If such a situation happens again and again the project team members(s) begin(s) to strike. Also bad feedback could be a reason for a conflict situation. Mostly conflicts occur because of misunderstandings. It is important to talk to each other, especially if communication is unclear or angering.

In a master thesis of the PMG (AUIINGER 2005) there is a ranking of project management conflict sources. The common sources are

- incompatible project targets,
- less resources,
- communication problems and
- individual differences.

### Stress and Burn out

Project management often means stress. Especially short before a milestone or a project controlling meeting, the pulse is higher. It is important that the project manager cares about calmer times after stressful days.

Individual has to work in a “flow”. Flow means that there is a balance between capabilities and challenge. Is the challenge in projects too high or too low for the capability of an individual he/she is outside the flow.

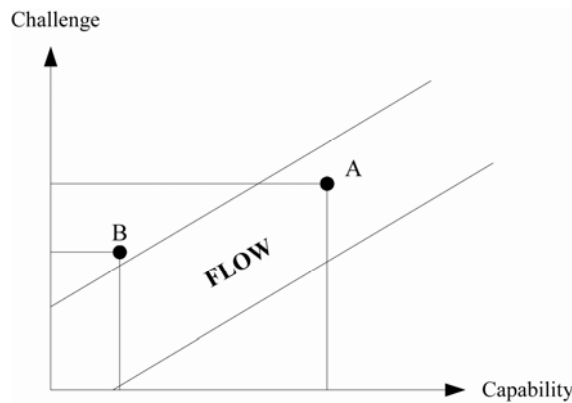


Figure 3: Person A is in the flow, B not: the challenge is higher than the capability.

Is the challenge higher than the capability individuals burn out; is the challenge lower than the capability individuals are falling down in the dumps, become tired and demotivated.

The “burn out phenomenon” is a situation of emotional exhaustion which ends in a reduction of personal capability. Burn out often occurs because of high time pressure, insecurity of the success, less support, problems in interaction, etc.. (GAREIS 2003, 137) Burn out is a phenomenon before milestones, short before or in the project close down.

### Emotional competence (as part of social competence)

In projects social competences are required for the cooperation in the different team structures (project team, sub-teams and project owner team). The organization of team meetings and workshops, the achievement of agreements in the team, etc. require social competences such as knowledge and experience in presentation and moderation techniques, in negotiation techniques, in feedback and reflection methods, in taking minutes, etc. In regular project communications no “emotions” occur.

The existence of emotions defines specific communication situations.

To manage emotions in projects in addition to the traditional social competences “emotional competences” are required, by project managers but also by the members of the project owner team and by project team members.

The “emotionally competent” project manager is aware of the meaning of emotions in the communication in projects. The “emotional competence” of the project managers is characterised by

- an emotional self-consciousness, meaning a consciousness that emotions can influence the success of the project,
- an understanding of ones own emotional position, meaning an understanding for ones own feelings and thoughts in a particular project situation,
- the ability to perceive the emotions of others and to analyse them, and
- the ability, to plan and implement appropriate activities, to manage emotions.

## Management of emotions in projects

Social systems like individuals, teams and projects as temporary organizations, have emotions. If these social systems want to handle their emotions, they are only able to influence this autonomy. A system control from outside is not possible. But the realisation of the external context in which the system is integrated, is necessary. This context sets the general framework like „options and restrictions, chances and risks, free space and enforcement.” (WILLKE 2000, 37)

The constructivistic approach assumes that the individual is able to experience his feelings, to reflect and to manage them. (FLAM 2001, 127) He is able to work on his feelings through changing the intensity and quality of these feelings.

The approach postures a specific influence on feelings, similar to the latest construct, named „emotional intelligence” (Goleman 1996), whereby the reflection of own and alien emotions should lead to successful action. (RASTETTER 2001, 115)

Teams are also able to reflect and manage their feelings. Therefore the team has to be able to observe itself, to challenge itself and to reflect. One method therefore is, for instance, the „Reflecting Team.” (GAREIS 2003)

There are different methods of handling emotions in projects: Reflexion, communications and symbolic management. In the full paper the author will go into detail concerning these methods.

## Objectives and thesis

Following objectives are due to the problem description:

- Definition of “emotion” from the view of the systemic-constructivistic approach
- Consideration of emotions in the different project management sub-processes.
- Description of strategies and methods to handle emotions

The key question of the Ph.D. as well as of this paper is:

Which emotions are shown in projects and how are these emotions handled?

The following thesis has already been formulated.

1. The handling of emotions is a success factor in projects!
2. Emotions are social constructions which require communication!
3. Individuals and teams in projects can have emotions like anger, fear, happiness, surprise, disgust and sadness!
4. The dynamics in projects and the different sub-processes in project management could be the reasons for emotions in projects!
5. The handling of emotions is a task in project management which has to be considered from individuals and teams in projects!
6. The project manager is able to cause emotions. The “emotionalism” is a function of leading to move energy in projects!



7. Individuals and teams in projects need emotional competence. The emotional competence is part of the social competence!
8. Methods to handle emotions are e.g. to give feedback, reflexion, coaching and the establishment of rules!
9. Coaches and external consultants could be authorized to handle emotions! The main objective is to give recommendations concerning the management of emotions in projects and to sensitize the readers for the field.

### **Theoretical framework and it's limits**

The doctoral thesis will be based on a systemic-constructivistic research approach. This approach is based on the following paradigms:

#### **Radical Constructivism (GLASERSFELD 1992)**

The radical constructivism is a philosophical theory of perception and knowledge. It discards the belief in an observation-independent, objective reality. It is impossible to describe an absolute reality, only a subjective reality can be constructed by communication.

#### **Social Systems Theory (LUHMANN 1995)**

Organizations are perceived as self-referential social systems according to Niklas Luhmann. The term „social systems” includes interactions, organizations, and societies. An important characteristic is the development of organization-specific structures as values, rules and relations to the environment. These exist relatively independent from the system members, and create the identity of the social system.

#### **Qualitative Social Research (LAMNEK 1995)**

Methods of qualitative social research mainly used are: case studies, qualitative interviews, dairies and participant observation.

The characteristic part of the case study is that a single element is chosen as research object. The aim of the case study is to gain an insight into the interaction of a variety of factors in order to find and work out typical procedures. Qualitative interviews „serve as analysis of social systems”. (FROSCHAUER/LUEGER 1992, 35)

The qualitative interview can be described as verbal and face-to-face kind of survey, whereby not predetermined information can be measured. Dairies are being used to get a measure of everyday life's and extra ordinary phenomenons. (KIRCHLER/HÖLZL 2002, 80) They allow analysing the interaction between the individual and the environment.

Participant observation is used in naturally situations of the individual who is observed. The researcher takes part at the everyday life of the person he is interested in.

### **Limits of the research approach**

The Ph.D. neither asserts one's claims to reflect the reality nor to give a truthfully effigy. It makes a contribution to construct the reality in sense of the radical constructivism. The quality criterion of emotions in project in the different project management sub-processes (start, controlling, discontinuity and close-down) and methods of handling emotions can only be assessed by operating in the reality of project management. The dissertation contributes a possible way of viable reality constructivism. However the special challenge is to combine the systemic theory of Niklas Luhmann and theories of emotions. In fact, emotions don't play an important role in Luhmann's literature. BAECKER (2004) reasons this disregard of emotions as follows: Luhmann adheres that a theory of feelings is based on the theory of consciousness and is maybe the initial point for a structural connection to the organism, in which the consciousness is situated. But it is not describing the communication of feelings. Only this communication of feelings could be a theme of sociology, not the feelings itself (Luhmann 1984, 370).

The possibility to describe feelings as a „connection medium” is given (Luhmann 1984, 302f.), but not finalised. The ambivalent role of feelings from management of fulfilment and frustration to expectations is also given but not finalised.

It is incontestable that interpersonal „interpenetration” (BARALDI/CORSI/ESPOSITO 1999, 85ff.) is possible only through communication. Interpenetration is a systemic term and includes verbal and non-verbal communications.

Similar to Luhmann, Maturana compares emotions with a kind of medium of connection. Emotions (in social systems) are always existent; the kind of feeling marks the relationship. What we comprehend as a social system in everyday life is the area of relationships, which is built up from the participants of the social system. (ALMOSLECHNER/TASCHWER 3/98, 18) Social systems do not consist of psychical systems, but they are an important part of a social systems’ environment. Furthermore they are built up by elementary operations. These operations are communications, not from psychical systems, but from social systems. (LUHMANN 1984, 346) In short: Luhmann never used the word „emotion“, but some other terms like „interpenetration” and „communications” medium” which refer to „emotion”. That means for the research that social systems and individuals do not have emotions, but they are able to make emotions visible through verbal and non-verbal communication. Therefore and following the social theories, especially Luhmann’s theory of social systems, the communicative interactions between individuals are the object of consideration, not the processes within one individual.

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