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## **Exhibition enterprising – project management issues in six European cases**

Based on a study of six European case studies, this paper discusses the effects of the aesthetic on management of exhibition projects. It also discusses general project management theory within business studies in comparison to findings from the case studies. General project management theory makes assumptions that are not present in aesthetic enterprising and projects, and therefore there is a need for a development of a theory of aesthetic project management. The paper presents differences between assumptions of the characteristics of project work in general project management theory, and evidence from the empirical studies underlying the paper. It also presents some of the characteristics of exhibitions as a medium and as an aesthetic good, as well as some characteristics of the professional contexts in which exhibitions are realised. These characteristics and contexts of exhibitions influence the management of exhibition projects.

### ***Introduction***

Exhibition realisation is an old practice, related both to the production and display of artworks, and to scholarly or other collections of artefacts. Temporary exhibitions of various types of artefacts and for religious or profane reasons have also been common throughout European history. In the last two decades, large industrial expositions with an element of international or national competition have emerged. Today, the three main professional groups engaged in exhibition realisation and curating are museum curators, academic free-lance curators and artists. These three professional groups all use the exhibition as a form of communication in their professional work, but their understanding of exhibitions differ from each others, due to their specific and traditional professional relationship to exhibitions.

What conditions the management of exhibition projects and enterprises?

This question was addressed in a study on exhibition enterprising, where six case studies of exhibition realisation projects were studied.<sup>1</sup> The point of departure for the studies were the following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> Lindqvist 2003.

- How does this reinvention of exhibitions, as medium and form, and as intellectual endeavour and material *gestalt*, through actual exhibition realisation, take place and shape?
- What kind of enterprising is exhibition realisation?
- Where does it take place?
- What kinds of people are engaged in it?
- Are there different ways of realising exhibitions?
- And what is actually realised when an exhibition is produced?

In this paper, I will address especially the question of management of exhibition enterprises and projects, and I will also compare conclusions from the study to contemporary general project management theory. It turns out, general project management theory makes a lot of assumptions and suggestions about project work that does not seem to hold within aesthetic projects and enterprises.

### The studied exhibition projects

*In Visible Light* was a photography exhibition shown at the Museum of Modern art in Oxford between 16 March and 6 July 1997. The concept for the exhibition was developed by Russell Roberts, who also curated the exhibition. The exhibition was shown in all the five galleries of the MOMA, covering approximately 520 square metres.

In spring 1997 the exhibition *Collected*, curated by artist Neil Cummings, was shown in various places in central London. The exhibition consisted of works and installations displayed at the Photographers' Gallery, The British Museum, The Wallace Collection, The Royal College of Surgeons of England, The Hunterian Museum, Habitat, Selfridges, the Paul Smith Shop in Covent Garden, and a private apartment in Soho. The size of the exhibition space in the Photographers' Gallery was 140 square metres, whereas the additional spaces of display varied depending on venue and space accessible.

*Divers Memories* is a series of loosely coupled exhibitions, curated by Chris Dorsett, artist and Research Fellow at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle. The last exhibition was shown in a border village in Hong Kong in 1998. There were seminars, talks, and guided tours arranged in connection to the exhibitions. The exhibition was held in a residential house with three floors and a roof terrace, altogether comprising approximately 100 square metres.

*Vita rockar* was a travelling exhibition produced by and first shown at the Museum of Work in Norrköping in spring 1998. The project and exhibition were initiated by the research team at the museum in 1994. The project was jointly developed and funded in co-operation with three trade unions within the care sector in Sweden. The exhibition displayed at the Museum of Work was 350 square metres, whereas the touring part of the exhibition was took up approximately 50 square metres.

*Framtidstro (Facing the Future)* was joint exhibition project initiated by the Swedish Association of county custodians of antiquities (alias county museum directors) in 1997. The project linked exhibitions and event programmes in 27 museums in Sweden thematically around a common topic. The exhibitions were officially opened

in September 1999, and the project continued until the mid of 2000. The sizes of the various exhibitions depended on the sizes of the exhibition spaces allocated at each museum, but the exhibitions were often the major exhibition displayed at each museum. Regional museums vary in size from rather small to medium sized, in comparison to the national museums. The Framtidstro exhibition at Nordiska museet, which was the largest of all exhibitions, was 1,000 square metres, whereas the exhibition at Kulturen in Lund was 105 square metres.

*Expo.02* is the name of the national exhibition in the three-lakes-district in Western Switzerland. The national exhibition was open to the public from mid May to mid October 2002, and was spread out on four fixed sites and a mobile one. They together contained approximately forty exhibitions and a vast events programme during its five months of existence. The national exhibition was initiated by Swiss politicians in the early 1990s, and was realised by an autonomous limited company under the supervision of an association formally given the task to realise the national exhibition. There were 37 exhibitions plus a number of additional experiences and events of the four fixed sites at four towns, covering an area of approximately 250.000 square metres.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Exhibition characteristics***

Exhibition enterprising can be described as the realisation or materialisation of ideas, in the specific form of an exhibition. This realisation or materialisation of ideas implies consideration of (at least) two aspects of such practice; the qualities of the end product, the realised exhibition, and the broader environment and context in which the individual exhibition enterprise is undertaken. It firstly implies some specific characteristics of exhibitions, characteristics that discern them from other types of phenomena. These characteristics are that of the exhibition as a medium, and that of an aesthetic entity or good. The effects of these characteristics on the realisation of exhibitions and the management of exhibition enterprises will be analysed in the first part of this chapter.

Secondly, exhibition enterprising takes place in a field with norms and traditions giving frames of reference for each new exhibition project. The contexts in which exhibitions are realised affect the conditions for work on an individual exhibition, from the generation of ideas, through concept development, to realisation in a physical space. In the second part of this chapter, we will take a look at how social science researchers have described the field of aesthetic production and developments within industrial organising in contemporary society.

### **Medium**

An exhibition can be described as a medium. A central characteristic of a medium is that there are two levels of what is conveyed; the content, i.e. the informational basis of the message, and the form, or the shape that the message takes. An exhibition then, to borrow terms from semiological vocabulary, is the totality of signifier and signified, as other coded communication.<sup>3</sup> But all elements of an exhibition are not

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<sup>2</sup> *Expo.02 Media Guide*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. Barthes 1957.

semiotic, i.e. structured like a language.<sup>4</sup> Like other media, such as film, or printed publications, the exhibition consists of elements that are mediated through the form of the exhibition. But unlike mass media, such as film and printed publications, exhibitions are usually made only once in a specific constellation. This depends on the specific characteristics of the exhibition as medium and entity.

Exhibitions as media have the following central characteristics:

- immaterial and material
- three-dimensional
- temporary

By museum studies researchers, exhibitions are generally understood as a medium for presentation of museum collections and as an educational tool.<sup>5</sup> Exhibitions are within museum studies understood as a medium for museum presentation, for the display of their collected artefacts as a communicative act, with an understanding of them as a mix of scholarly endeavours, physical constructions, and artistic work. Exhibitions convey something abstract, ideas, through material artefacts, about cognitive sharing, about putting us as individuals and citizens in a larger context. But it is also about the expression of a subjective attitude, of assuming an attitude.<sup>6 7</sup>

## Aesthetic entity or good

Exhibitions can, together with a few other types of entities or goods, be characterised as aesthetic. What then, makes an entity or good qualify as aesthetic?

Among the characteristics of aesthetic goods are the following:

- not a means<sup>8</sup>
- symbolic<sup>9</sup>
- non-functional development<sup>10</sup>
- unique<sup>11</sup>
- attemptive production<sup>12</sup>
- interpretive consumption<sup>13</sup>
- multitude of organisational forms<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Debray 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Cf e.g. Belcher 1991, Dean 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Stránský 1978, Wajda 1978, Vergo 1989, Belcher 1991, Viel & De Guise 1992, Kaplan 1995.

<sup>7</sup> An important reason for engagement with the display of artefacts is according to Luckhurst “the desire to ‘show off’”, i.e. selfdisplay, but he also notes that this is not by itself enough to make an exhibition. Luckhurst 1951: 10.

<sup>8</sup> Kant 1790, Mossetto 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Kant 1790, Pareyson 1991, Mossetto 1993, Barrère & Santagata 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Mossetto 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Trist 1981, Groys 1992, Mossetto 1993, Chiapello 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Pareyson 1991, Chiapello 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Pareyson 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Chiapello 1994.

In summary then, exhibitions can be described as three-dimensional, temporary media, in which ideas are materialised in physical form, in other words they are symbolical entities. Furthermore, exhibitions can be described as aesthetic entities. Aesthetic entities lack instrumentality, and are unique and ambiguous. The production of aesthetic entities is commenced without any clear ideas of the end result.

### ***The contexts of exhibitions***

The contexts in which aesthetic entities are produced have certain characteristics that influence individual exhibition enterprises. Such characteristics are that peers play an important role, as do social and professional norms. Aesthetic or cultural production takes place in two fields, which both complement each other, the field of restricted and the field of large-scale cultural production.

The field of cultural production, or the culture industry, consists of a transaction-rich nexus of self-employed people and small firms, who interact with larger institutions and organisations. Personal contacts and networks are crucial, since people choose working partners whom they like to work with. Furthermore, part of the activities relating to the realisation of aesthetic goods can be described as either core or support art activities. The distinction is aimed at pointing out which activities are considered to be directly related to the aesthetic qualities of the product, and which are not.

Networks consist of a cluster of individuals and organisations, continuously changing in number and character, adapting to changed conditions, depending on which contributors exit and enter the network. This type of organising can be said to describe activities in the creative industries and artistic production, but also of other types of industrial production. This type is flexible and allows adaptation to changed conditions of activity quickly.

Institutions play an important role in exhibition realisation projects. Institutions can be described as large social actors. They have been given the authority to speak or act on behalf of other actors or forces. Therefore, their actions and statements also gives more weight and visibility to a smaller actor being able to work with an institution, than would this actor be given if it (or her or him) acted on its own.

### **Recurrent and unique work tasks and projects**

In a book on strategies for renewal in contemporary companies and organisations, Ekstedt et al. offer a categorisation of different ways in which projects are related to different types of organisations in contemporary business and public life.<sup>15</sup>

Ekstedt et al. distinguish two main types of work tasks, recurring and unique, or flow-process (routinised) operations,<sup>16</sup> and projectised operations, but furthermore two

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<sup>15</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999. For interesting analyses of the development of the organisation of work in general and creative work in particular, cf. Castells 1996 and Lash & Urry 1994.

<sup>16</sup> The difference between projectised action and flow-process or routinised action, according to Ekstedt et al., is that for projectised action there are no ways of acting that are defined in advance, no predefined procedures that are to be followed. The flow-process or routinised action is established according to certain functions, in order to secure continuous action, and is therefore also more difficult to change.

different types of projects: recurring and unique.<sup>17</sup> Recurring projects are projects that roughly follow the same type of procedure from one project to the other, and where the staff or professionals managing the projects can rely on their experience of similar projects for the realisation of a new project. They can manage the new project with skills accumulated from executing other similar tasks.<sup>18</sup> In unique projects, previous experience cannot directly be implemented. Instead, unique projects require development of new strategies for the execution of the task.

Whereas the realisation of recurrent tasks tends to be managed through isolation from environmental disturbances (sic), unique projects are realised through an openness towards the environment. In unique projects, rhetoric is also important, because of the higher level of uncertainty and ambiguity compared to recurring project tasks. Because of this, unique projects are also difficult to evaluate.

Recurring projects are mostly run by project professionals, i.e. staff that have an experience of this type of tasks, whereas unique projects are generally run by non-project professionals, by people who have been commissioned for their task for other skills they possess than that of being project professionals. In the management of unique projects, in the solving of unique tasks, the persons involved feel that they do not manage on existing knowledge. New knowledge is required to execute the task, to manage the project.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Four types of work organisation**

Ekstedt et al. distinguish four main types of organisational forms to correspond to the four main modes of organising in flow-process or projectised work. Industrial companies and public services is the ideal type of organisation where permanently employed staff perform routinised operations. Manpower-leasing companies offer temporarily employed staff that likewise perform different types of routinised operations. Commissioned companies on the other hand, has permanently employed staff dealing with recurring project type work tasks, for example within the fields of construction or management or IT consulting. Finally, there are individual professionals or practitioners, who on a temporary basis are employed to perform unique projects in other organisations, or on their own.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Professional strategies**

Important for individual professional practitioners in increasingly out-sourced or externalised production, as in the cultural field, is according to Ekstedt et al. to build up a reputation. Reputation is based on a demonstrated ability of some sort that is not similar to that of other practitioners in the field.<sup>21</sup> The professionals need to be demanded for what they do in the way they do it. This condition of developing one's

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<sup>17</sup> The difference between recurring and unique tasks has also been pointed out by Packendorff. He describes projects procedures that are more or less standardised as repetitive, even though the task or object of the project is unique. The repetitive project he differentiates from unique projects, in which neither object/task or procedure are standardised. Packendorff 1992: 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999: 65.

<sup>19</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999: 113, table 5.2.

<sup>20</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999: 211, table 9.1.

<sup>21</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999: 215.

originality, is paralleled by a high demand of autonomy in relation to commissioners.<sup>22</sup>

There may be rather a distance between the persons who are permanently employed by an organisation, but who work with commissioned professionals in an individual project. This has to do with the differing focus of permanent staff participating in a project besides handling routine tasks, compared to that of professionals employed for a specific project. In an organisation where work is projectised, there are shorter but perhaps more profound relations between people working together. Team members build a professional fellowship and team spirit on basis of the individual project. This in turn, according to Ekstedt et al., leads to strong commitment to and identification with an individual project.

Combining our experiences of the characteristics and contexts of exhibitions and exhibition realisation, we can conclude that exhibition realisation is a process and an enterprise that develops in the tension field between what we can call an aesthetic restricted field of production and a large-scale field of production, where exhibitions are seen as educational tools for a general audience. Depending on the individual curator, exhibition concept and venue or context of display, the emphasis is on either end of this tension field.

### ***The impact of characteristics and contexts of exhibitions on exhibition management***

The characteristics and contexts of exhibitions influence the way individual exhibition enterprises are undertaken. The management of an exhibition enterprise needs to be undertaken as a balancing act between the conditions posed by the exhibition form and the context of realisation, the personal visions of the initiator or curator, the wills of other contributors, and accessible resources.

### **Aesthetic medium**

Exhibition realisation enterprises are instances of the shaping and materialisation, i.e. the *gestaltung*,<sup>23</sup> of ideas. Exhibition enterprising is something that starts with ideas, but without any clear plans of how the end result is going to appear, or how the project is going to be realised. The means for realisation are part of the enterprise itself, propelled by desire and visions.

### **Quality not possible to secure (high risk activity)**

The quality of the outcome of an aesthetic project cannot be foreseen by the level or quality of the resources available for the realisation of the project. The quality of the

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. e.g. Dubin 1987 for a discussion on 'labour' versus 'own work', and motivation for artists in labour-market oriented public art schemes.

<sup>23</sup> The Swedish notion *gestaltning* has no direct English equivalent. The verb *att gestalta* means to give form to an idea. The German notion *Gestaltung* used here is well-known, and has approximately the same meaning as the Swedish word, but has more material connotations.

outcome rather depends on the quality of the idea and its execution. A masterpiece cannot be commissioned. This is why aesthetic production is defined as high-risk activity. The outcome of aesthetic work may be of low quality, even though the resources and conditions for production were good, and vice versa.

## Context

### **Portfolio careers**

Artists and creative professionals are often self-employed, or combine individual creative work with work within educational institutions, or other part-time employment.

### **Few professional managers**

People engaged in exhibition realisation are not or seldom professionally trained managers. They are managers in practice, through the work or projects they lead. Management is something that is practiced in exhibition projects, but have until now seldom been taught as an academic topic in art schools or at Arts programmes at universities.

### **Institutions act vicariously**

Institutional objectives, demands from funders and various stake-holder groups condition the work of institutions. A free-lancer is not bound to these objectives and demands, and is free to act according to own interests. The external objectives and demands that condition the work of institutions leads to a higher level of acting and thinking on behalf of or with respect to other people; to vicarious acting. This means that institutional staff cannot only act according to own interests, but need to relate their own interests to the perceived needs and demands of others.

### **Professional training and identity influences approaches to exhibition realisation**

As shown in Chapter 2, the professional identity and professional aims influence how the exhibition as a means of communication and as entity is perceived. The contexts and systems in which the three professional groups presented in the historical overview are based, also influence the way exhibitions are approached, beside individual experiences and ideas.

### **Exhibitions are both unique and recurring projects**

In a single project, there may be parts and/or contributors that engage in an exhibition for the first time, or in a completely new way, and such that have been used or have participated in the same form before. Exhibition realisation seems to be a recurring type of project, as regards their form, for institutions and institutionally employed people, whereas artists and to some extent probably also academic free-lancing exhibition curators see projects as unique. Permanently employed staff at museums or art venues rather quickly gathers experience of production of quite a number of exhibitions, which they have not necessarily curated themselves. This experience,



together with a concern for the future public of the exhibition, makes them perhaps more focussed on effective design than on experiments as such. Curators who make an exhibition for the first time, or who develop their very own exhibition projects, on the other hand seem to want to develop their exhibition according to what they feel is necessary for precisely the specific exhibition.

But the fact that staff at institutions has a more routine approach to exhibitions does not mean that they want each exhibition to look the same. On the contrary, the wish to vary the design of exhibitions is central to exhibition production at institutions. And as we can see from the cases, the institutionally developed projects were all elaborated in relation to the exhibitions made earlier, upon which the development of the current exhibitions were based. The initiators of the institutionally developed exhibitions clearly stated that the aims of their specific project was not to create exhibitions that copied the structure and design of those preceding exhibition projects that made them want to depart from the same model. Instead, they stressed their ambition to do something new, different, compared to the earlier projects (apart from the obvious change of topic), even though they wanted to use project models they had tested before, and had deemed successful. The new projects initiated by the Museum of Work, the directors of Swedish regional museums, and the Expo managerial group, were to be bigger, more complex etc, or otherwise developments of project models used in earlier realisations.

Institutions such as (Museum of) Modern Art Oxford, the Photographers' Gallery, the Museum of Work, or the Swedish regional museums, can be described as organisations performing both routinised and projectised operations. The core staff at these institutions is generally permanently employed, whereas part of the projectised operations are performed by temporally employed professionals. Other organisations involved in the realisation of the exhibitions in the cases were established only for the realisation of the exhibition(s). Examples of this are Expo.02 and in a way also the Museum of Site in Hong Kong, where the Divers Memories exhibition was shown (even though the plans were not only to establish it for this only this exhibition).

## Projects and enterprises defined

The term enterprise is closely related to the notion of a project. Projects can be defined as plans or schemes,<sup>24</sup> drafts, suggestions or ideas for a method to achieve a certain (larger) result, but also as action emerging from imagined future states of the world.<sup>25</sup> In other words, projects are visions, sometimes leading to material and visible effects in the form of action. The terms project and enterprise both suggest some sort of risk or uncertainty as regards the possibility and outcome of the action triggered by a conception or image. Both terms also refer to courses of action oriented towards realisation of some kind. Something that extends in time, and may not have been not done before. The project can be described as relating more to a mental image or vision, and the enterprise as relating more to the undertaking and action involved in

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<sup>24</sup> *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 1995, Noreen & Warberg 1944, *Nationalencyklopedins ordbok*, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Sartre 1943, Christensen & Kreiner 1991.

the efforts to realise this vision. In this way, the enterprise can be said to be that machinery which is put into play for this attempt at realisation, and includes such resources that are needed for whatever is pursued.<sup>26</sup> The project then, can be said to forego the enterprise, but the enterprise entails the project.

### Projects as defined by project management research

An area within business studies research that tries to handle the question of unconventional ways of performing a task in organisations is project management research. According to most project management literature, a project is defined as “a given plannable and unique task, limited in time, complex in its implementation and subject to evaluation.”<sup>27</sup> Central factors for the project mode of organising is an evaluable, specific aim, a time limit or deadline, that a specific or special team and specific or special resources are needed for realisation, and that some sort of transformation occurs, creating a different state of affairs when the project is realised compared to before its initiation.<sup>28</sup> Lundin defines projects as temporary organisations.<sup>29</sup>

The project mode of organising is generally connected to an impossibility to solve problems or perform a task with existing routines within an organisation. The uniqueness of the task is therefore stressed, and the project form of organising is the mode of solving this type of task within an organisation. Projects are therefore also seen as exceptions to “normal” organising, defined as routine procedures.<sup>30</sup>

A few writers on project management, such as Porsander, clearly separate the project as ideas or visions from the project mode of organising work.<sup>31</sup> Porsander differentiates between projects as ideas, and temporary organisations created in order to administrate the realisation of a project idea. She defines the project as the idea core of the whole action related to the temporary organisation that is established to manage the realisation of this idea.<sup>32</sup>

If the traditional meaning of the word project is that of plan, vision, scheme, or idea, how come we have ended up with the understanding of projects as modes of organising or as a specific type of organisation in business studies research?

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<sup>26</sup> Danielsson 1975, Guillet de Monthoux 1978.

<sup>27</sup> Packendorff 1995: 320. Cf. e.g. Nickson & Siddons 1997 for the hand-book type of project management book. Engwall 1995 lists several of the characteristics of projects as defined by project management consultants. Cf. also Lundin & Söderholm 1995, Packendorff 1995, Lundin 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Lundin 1998: 197, Lundin & Söderholm 1995: 438ff

<sup>29</sup> Lundin 1998.

<sup>30</sup> Packendorff 1995, Lundin & Söderholm 1995, Sahlin 1997, Dobers & Söderholm 2000. Many researchers mean that projects are becoming more and more prominent in the organisation of work in companies and organisations, in order to cope with a more and more unpredictable environment and future. Christensen & Kreiner 1991, Lash & Urry 1994, Midler 1995, Engwall 1995, Castells 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Porsander 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Porsander 2000: 98, 144ff

## **Outlines of aesthetic project management**

When we compare the characteristics of aesthetic work and the notion of projects, we find that they have certain similarities. Both centre around an element of uniqueness. The elements of unpredictability and uniqueness are central in project management.

Exhibition production and much of artistic work seem to be undertaken in project form, where projects are succeeding each other, or even taking place simultaneously. Does the theory of projects as something non-normal, non-ordinary work correspond to what we have experienced in the field of cultural production? When we look at the assumptions of the contexts in which projects are undertaken, we can see that they do not resemble these contexts by far. What happens to the basic assumptions of project management theory if we find a field where projects are the *ordinary* form of organising? What is not addressed in general project management? What aspects of the exhibition projects and enterprises encountered in the case studies do not fit into contemporary general project management theories? What occurrences do we find in contemporary cases of exhibition realisation, that cannot be satisfactorily answered by theories of project management today? What questions and observations should form the basis for project management within the aesthetic domain?

## **Projects the normal mode of working**

The general definition of a project within project management research is the execution of a unique task under a certain limited period. Within museums and art venues, however exhibitions are a recurring task. Here then the unique task, the project, is normal procedure. How are we to explain this paradox? We can try to identify which parts of an exhibition that are recurring, and which not.

Exhibition enterprising can be both a unique project for parties involved in the realisation of an exhibition. But the individual exhibition may on the other hand as well be only one in a number of exhibitions produced subsequently. So the individual exhibition enterprise may be a unique project, but it may as well be one in a number of subsequent projects, and thus be a routine or recurring activity.

Ekstedt et al. define projects as forms of organising for renewal of some sort. This perspective on projects however only makes sense in an environment where routinised operations are considered norm. In the context of exhibition production, projects are the normal way of organising, simply because work in general deals with creating something new. There are no or few routinised tasks in aesthetic or cultural production. There are routinised tasks in institutions such as museums and art venues, but these tasks are linked to the public commission that these organisations have, and are often linked to the permanent character of the organisation, and the conditions for receiving public grants. Aesthetic production in itself is not routinised. The reason for this has been discussed in connection to the section on artistic and scholarly ways of working.

### **No parent organisation**

Firstly, the organisation within which the project or temporary organisation is to be launched, does seldom exist.<sup>33</sup> Rather, there are individual professionals pursuing their own careers as free-lancers. Only within the museum or art organisations do we find a context similar to that indicated by project management literature.

Nevertheless, in these organisations, the projects are not the exemptions to ordinary work, but at the very core of the ordinary work of these organisations.

### **Idea driven projects**

Secondly, the initially defined task or goal and time frame do not exist. This is because the ideas (apart from clearly defined objectives for exhibitions within museum or art organisations) have often not been commissioned, but have developed autonomously, whether within or outside institutional domains.

### **Resources are not given**

The importance of access to resources is not addressed in contemporary project management research. Perhaps this is because projects are assumedly undertaken within existing organisations. The question of access to resources is quite different if a project is undertaken outside a going concern, compared to if it is undertaken inside a permanent<sup>34</sup> organisation. This is obvious when we analyse the conditions for the curators in our six case studies. Not even projects within an organisation can be assumed to have the question of resources solved before the start of a project, as is clear in the case of Vita rockar.

### **The impact of personal style**

Some early decisions often have important effects on the end result in terms of style. Since the art and museum worlds are rather small systems, the choice of persons with which to work is important.<sup>35</sup> And since each artist and even curator has her own style (conscious and unconscious), the choice (and acceptance) of persons to include in an exhibition as commissioned artists, curators or co-curators or similar, brings their particular styles to the end result. The choice of persons and institutions with which to work, is very important for the end product, even though the end result at the stage of choice of collaborators is not yet known.

### **Motivation of external partners primary concern**

Most project management literature stresses the importance of internal motivation, i.e. motivation within the project team. But most of the problems in our project cases seem to have been not with organisation-internal motivation, but with motivation of potential partaking external organisations.

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<sup>33</sup> Whereas project management researchers seem all to assume that projects are initiated within or at least with reference to existing long-term organisations, Porsander in her study of Stockholm Cultural Capital of Europe 1998, could find no organisation that had materialised to handle a recurring realisation of a Cultural Capital of Europe. Rather, the notion of the Cultural Capital was to be reinvented and reinterpreted by each new town that received the privilege, whereas the organising forms (as well as interpretations) of earlier towns and years could be studied and learnt from. Porsander 2000.

<sup>34</sup> From a historical perspective, organisations are of course not permanent. A few organisations have survived for several centuries, but most organisations have much shorter life-spans.

<sup>35</sup> As proposed by Lash & Urry 1994.

In the case of Framtidstro, the concern for motivation of the contributors to the decided theme is much more stated than in the other projects where the active work of creative professionals play an important part in the creation of the exhibition. In these projects, motivation is not discussed with reference to team members towards the predefined theme of the exhibition, but instead with reference to how the contributing creative professionals and organisations can be tempted and attracted to participate in the project.

The point of departure when motivation of team members is discussed in project management literature is that the team members are already included in the project organisation. In our exhibition cases, motivation is focussed on how to make autonomous actors in the form of interesting persons and organisations, to become motivated to work with the particular exhibition.<sup>36</sup>

### **Slow starts: the task becomes clearer underway**

If we define projects as project management handbooks do, we would only recognise the projects in the cases from the point where the *kunsthalle* or museum goes in with their staff to realise the exhibition according to the concept developed by the curator. The process of developing the concept would not be recognised as part of the project. This is because the definition of most project management books assume a clear task, handed to the project organisation from outside, for solution or execution. But when we try to recapitulate a process from a later point in time, find out that it is often very difficult to say exactly when it all began. This in turn is because the realisation in the form of an exhibition of a line of thoughts may not even be thought of at the start of such a process.

In all of the externally curated cases (the British cases), the exhibitions were developed over a longer period of time, and seemed to be crude when presented for representatives of possible enablers at art venues and museums. Through discussions with the curators of the institutions, the external curators were able to elaborate their concepts into a shape that was more concrete and realisable. Thus, project management theories cannot help us understand the processes that exhibition projects are made up of, only the phase of execution, and only at an organisational level. We understand exhibition project better if we assume the older meaning of the term project, as that of ideas, plans, sketches.

### **New ventures do not have organisational origins**

Ekstedt claim that projects generally emanate from permanent organisations, and that the new type of knowledge firms are established as off-shoots of already existing industrial companies.<sup>37</sup> However, this does not seem to be the case in aesthetic production. In the case of artists and other similar aesthetic professions, individuals often establish themselves as self-employed after a formal degree within their domain. The individuals then work in projects with other self-employed people, and raise money for a project jointly. Or they are commissioned by an institution or similar to contribute to a project.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf Guillet de Monthoux (1978) for a discussion on motivational factors among on one hand project initiators and developers, and on the other hand people employed to be part of a project machine.

<sup>37</sup> Ekstedt et al. 1999: 25.

### **Aesthetic entrepreneurship results in new projects, not new organisations**

In entrepreneurship research, new ventures are often assumed to grow after their initiation and establishment, resulting in new organisation. But in the field of aesthetic production, most people work as self-employed, and institutions function as a more long-term platform on which to display the results of work in different forms. A new venture does not then result in a new organisation that continues to exist on a going concern principle. Instead the professionals embark on new projects and enterprises, making use of won experiences and new or old networks and connections within an existing array of institutions and venues. Artist run spaces and similar are also established, but the scarcity of funding in this field often encourages collective ventures.

### **Summary**

If we are to summarise the characteristics of use of project forms within artistic and cultural or aesthetic production, we note firstly that projects are the normal way of organising. The project form is combined with resources linked to organisations who handle certain routine aspects connected to this field, such as exhibition space or funding. Thus, project tasks are part of the everyday work within such organisations.

Experience of different projects is important for skilled contributors to projects within the cultural, or artistic, or aesthetic, field, but it seems that many interesting projects get realised without such experience. But on the other hand, experience of projects is considered important. It seems experience of project management becomes important if the potential contributor is not contributing with special skills (such as exhibition concept in the case of curators, or style in the case of artists).

Secondly, projects seldom have a specific starting date, but often a more stressed end date, and more importantly, an opening date for the exhibition. Projects in this field seem to take a long time to develop, and therefore the beginning is more difficult to pinpoint than the end date of the project. Opening dates seem to be changeable at an earlier, more immaterial phase of the project, where costs are not yet depending on delays in realisation etc.

A dividing line between tasks undertaken in project form and ordinary form is, according to project management researchers and researchers of organisational learning, the possibility to use existing knowledge and skills within the (mother) organisation.<sup>38</sup>

There is then a need for a description of the outlines of project management of the aesthetic or cultural field, which in several respects differs from the assumptions of industrially based project management theories.

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<sup>38</sup> March 1991.

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