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What is This?

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Abstract
In this article, we study emotional processes associated with the project management discourse. Employing a constructionist approach where emotions are experienced within an ordering discursive context, the study identifies four distinct emotional processes associated with the invocation of the project management discourse in daily work practices. From a study of theatre and opera house employees, we suggest that the project management discourse tends to normalize feelings of rigidity and weariness in project-based work, while emphasizing projects as extraordinary settings creating thrill and excitement. Moreover, we argue that this discourse is invoked in ways that lead individuals to internalize emotional states related to chaos and anxiety, while ascribing feelings of certainty and confidence to external organizational norms and procedures. The study highlights how employees construct project-based work as a promise of exciting adventures experienced under conditions of rational control, but also how the negative and suppressed aspects of project-based work are constructed as inevitable and to be endured. Through these emotional processes, the project management discourse is sustained and reinforced.

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Introduction

In this article, we study emotional processes and their association with project management discourse, in order to contribute a conceptual framework of these processes and their consequences. Project management is a strong, rationalist, managerialist and cross-disciplinary professional discourse, with roots in project management and operations management, that is more or less inevitably drawn upon in project-based work across industries and societal sectors. It is a normative and performative discourse promoting certain views of what project work and project management is about, and it is currently in a process of institutionalization as globally accepted standards and certifications are being implemented in many countries (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007). Accordingly, in the research presented here, we ask: how is this normative discourse mobilized by project workers in their daily practices, and what are its emotional dimensions? While the existing research on emotions in project-based settings has focused either on the instrumental use of emotions in pursuit of project success (see Clarke, 2010) or on emotional processes particular to specific industries or professions, here we explore how project workers experience emotions in an ordering discursive context related to a mode of organizing – the project management discourse. Based on a constructionist view of emotions in organizations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Coupland et al., 2008; Fineman and Sturdy, 1999) and considering that subjective experiences of organizational elements, such as mode of work organizing, are closely related to the discourse that is socially held on these elements (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000), the aim of our study is to explore the emotional processes that take place in project-based work, to understand in more detail how project-based work is typically experienced, and to show how the project management discourse is then invoked.

The study brings forward the discursive tension between adventure and control in these work settings, and the negative aspects of project-based work that tend to be suppressed in the dominant project management discourse. Through the development of a conceptual framework, our study also reveals how the project management discourse is invoked in ways that normalize certain emotions and extraordinize others, thus sustaining an ambiguous conception of project-based work. Project workers' emotional experiences of their work reaffirm the dominant discursive emphasis on projects as stimulating adventures within the bounds of confident managerial control, but also express aspects of precariousness, anxiety, claustrophobia and weariness that have to be endured.

We also argue that the discourse is mobilized in ways that make certain emotional states the worker's problem and responsibility (internalization), while constructing other states as emanating from the organized context (externalization). By extraordinizing and externalizing the dominant discursive aspects while normalizing and internalizing the suppressed negative ones, our study shows how the project management discourse operates – and even more, how it is reinforced and sustained.

Our contribution is addressed to both existing research on emotions in post-bureaucratic settings and critical project studies. The first stream (see Ashforth and Kreiner, 2002; Coupland et al., 2008; Fineman, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2008; Sieben, 2007) attended mainly to the mobilization of industry- and profession-specific discourses in work practice. Addressing this tradition, we would suggest that our framework explains the specific consequences of invoking the project management discourse and illuminates the consequences thereof in terms of how workers construct normality and locate the source of emotions. In the emerging stream of critical project studies (see Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Hodgson, 2002; Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Rehn and Lindahl, 2011), emotional processes have been given scant attention. Addressing this literature, we would suggest that our framework adds a critical understanding of how the project management discourse is present in project workers' subjective experience, thus reinforcing project management practices and discourse. Our study also adds to earlier studies (see Gill and Pratt, 2008; Rowlands and Handy, 2012) on how individuals working in industries and sectors employing project management as a mode of work organization become attached to, and justify, their continued attachment to, work situations characterized by time pressures − responsibilization of individuals and close managerial control.

Project-based work and the project management discourse

Project-based work – the organization of work into distinct, complex tasks limited in time and scope – has become a common feature of contemporary economies during recent decades (Ekstedt et al., 1999; Hobday, 2000; Söderlund, 2011). By framing specific work tasks as projects, these tasks are transformed into manageable items that can be separated out from the constant flow of the daily routine and thus subjected to rational planning, monitoring and control (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995; Rolfe, 2011). Hence, substantial parts of peoples' contemporary work lives are now spent in projects and similar temporary forms of organizing (Grey and Garsten, 2001; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Rowlands and Handy, 2012). This development is supported by international standards, professional certifications and rapidly growing global associations for practising project managers (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007).

The increase in project-based work is based on a widespread project management discourse in society, sustained by practitioners, consultants and academics (Cicmil et al., 2009). It is a reifying and performative discourse, invoking a series of unexamined assumptions derived from the project management discipline every time a work task is framed as 'a project' (Pellegrinelli, 2010). Based on the modernist, technicist and rationalist views of management that came to characterize the social sciences after the Second World War, the dominant project management discourse centres around the issue of planning and controlling for the successful implementation of unique and exceptional tasks. Project managers and their team members are supposed to identify specific goals, plan a sequence of actions and execute them in a well-coordinated manner – usually by means of a set of standardized tools and techniques derived from project management and operations management (Packendorff, 1995). Hence, the project form is increasingly being

applied to any kind of task in any kind of environment as an adequate and legitimate solution (Ekstedt et al., 1999). Project management is constructed as a distinct and rational field of scholarly and practical knowledge, and as a necessity for the efficient execution of complex economic activities limited in time and scope.

Project-based work is also discursively framed as a stimulating experience, as an opposite to bureaucratic forms of organizing (Cicmil et al., 2009). According to this aspect of the project management discourse, projects are what modern and desirable jobs are all about (Gill, 2002; Grabher, 2002), with success and joy being built on passion and dedicated teamwork (Colwell, 2005), and where individuals are unleashed from the iron cages of bureaucracy and tradition and can build their interpersonal relations on trust, loyalty and shared values (Grey and Garsten, 2001). As noted by Sahlin-Andersson (2002), the project has thus become a performative promise of both controllability and adventure, which in turn implies that project workers may perform a multitude of emotional responses when invoking the project management discourse – disciplined yet playful, cautious yet enterprising, and neutral yet passionate. Our interest in the emotional aspect of subjective experiences of work in project-intensive settings should thus be seen against the backdrop of this discursive ambiguity.

Given the discursive emphasis on project management as a rational and technical practice, it is not surprising to find that research in project studies employing emotional perspectives and concepts has mainly been concerned with how project workers' emotions can, if properly managed, be instrumental to project success (Clarke, 2010; Colwell, 2005; Druskat and Druskat, 2006; Sunindijo et al., 2007). These studies thus mirror the general tendency in managerialist literature on post-bureaucratic organizing to dissolve the limits between professional and personal spheres, (re)introducing the importance of bringing social relations, personalities and emotions into the workplace in the pursuit of effectiveness and success (Grey and Garsten, 2001). With their focus on prescription and success, they do not significantly further our understanding of the emotional processes that occur in project-based work.

Emotional processes in project-based work settings have also been studied within the general field of emotions and organizing. For example, there are several empirical studies on various consultancies, professional service firms and media organizations (Bergman Blix, 2007; Harris, 2002; Kaiser et al., 2008; Lively, 2002; Sturdy and Wright, 2008) – which typically employ projects in their daily pursuit of customer satisfaction and employee career-building. There is also a series of studies on emotional labour performed in 'creative industries', relating emotional states and developments in employees to industry-specific circumstances, such as public exposure, short-term work and job precariousness (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, 2010; Townley et al., 2009). However, these streams of research have not focused on the topic of emotions in work, as it relates to the discursive notion of project management as a reified and performative work form. Instead, the usual focus has been on emotional labour (i.e. emotional performance as a part of the labour process) and its links to specific professions or industries. We do not claim that such issues are irrelevant to the analysis of project-based work presented in this article, but our focus here is to analyse the emotional consequences of a general managerialist discourse, rather than departing from the artistic, professional and organizational particularities of a certain industry or sector. At the same time, we remain highly

aware that employees usually draw upon several, even mutually antagonistic, discursive resources in constructing their work experiences and identities (Clarke et al., 2009), and that such invocation takes place within local language practices and moral orders that regulate what can be felt and expressed (Coupland et al., 2008; Lindebaum and Fielden, 2010). The general project management discourse may well both support and contradict extant professional or sectorial discourses (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007).

Extant studies of how the project management discourse is invoked in work settings reveal that the discourse is not only ambiguous in its emphasis on both adventure and control (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002), but also that there are several suppressed and problematic aspects to the way in which it is drawn upon in daily practice. The emphasis on rational control implies that other aspects of project-based work are suppressed and removed from the picture. This stream of research has pointed at a widespread neglect of power and political processes − for example, in understanding project outcomes (Fincham, 2002; Sage et al., 2013), human costs resulting from the responsibilization of project workers (Hodgson, 2002), and the framing of project work as 'martial law' episodes where enterprising selves incessantly pursue both project goals and increased employability (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006).

While these studies provide valuable insights into the subjective experiences of project workers and the consequences of the project management discourse, they do not employ emotional perspectives and thus do not attend to the importance of feelings in understanding the organizing of project-based work. What is specifically absent is what legitimate and illegitimate emotional responses are performed when invoking the discourse (Coupland et al., 2008) and the problematic consequences thereof, such as harassment, bullying, violence, stress or exploitation (Fineman, 2004). Building on the premise that project workers and their organizational and discursive contexts are integrated aspects of social processes, the aim of our study is to explore the emotional processes that take place in project-based work in order to understand in finer detail the workers' experience of project-based work, and to reveal how the project management discourse is invoked in the construction of this experience.

Emotions, subjective experiences and project-based work

In the broad field of organization studies, rationality and emotionality have tended to be constructed as a duality (Dougherty and Drumheller, 2006). After having been associated with irrationality and neglected in favour of rationality (Domagalski, 1999), emotions have latterly been recognized as a legitimate and integral part of working life in general. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that the topic of emotions in organizations has been emphasized increasingly over the past two decades in organization studies (for an overview, see Fineman, 2006). However, the study of emotions is characterized by a variety of disciplinary perspectives (see Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Callahan and McCollum, 2002; Domagalski, 1999). Emotions have at the same time been studied both from psychological and sociological perspectives (Callahan and McCollum, 2002), with both instrumental and critical aims (Sieben, 2007) and with both essentialist and interpretive approaches (Fineman, 2005). Our study is located in the critical interpretive approach to

emotions, which is influenced by social constructionism and is thus concerned with subjectivity and social interplay.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) have advocated for what they have called a 'middle ground' interpretivist approach to the investigation of emotions in organizational settings – an approach based on the notion that emotions are understood subjectively and embedded in a social context in which certain emotions are appropriate and legitimate (Fineman and Sturdy, 1999). As Sieben and Wettergren (2010: 7) have underlined, 'the ways in which emotions are experienced and displayed are "coined" by understandings, valuations and social structures that are themselves historically and socio-culturally grounded. In this sense, emotions are tied to and shape relations of power and interdependence'. It is thus on this interpretivist agenda that we build our study of emotions in project-based work. Such an approach is built on the premise that emotions have an important place in organizing processes, both as being experienced by people while taking part in these processes and as influencing these same organizing processes (Fineman, 2004; Fineman and Sturdy, 1999).

This stance is well established in theory, as current developments emphasize collective emotions and the importance of social norms in emotional labour (Rehn and Lindahl, 2011). Still, the legacy of individualism is not easy to escape: the individual still tends to be treated as the primary unit of analysis, as a source of emotions against a contextual backdrop of cultural constructs. The same goes for the legacy of contextual determinism – that emotional display at work is the result of organizational control and that individual actors cannot resist or counteract managerial demands (see Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Our main interest in this study is thus not individual emotions per se, but rather how emotions are part of the construction of a specific 'ordering social context' (Rehn and Lindahl, 2011) that provides employees with a sense of what is appropriate and legitimate in different settings (Coupland et al., 2008; Fineman and Sturdy, 1999). By viewing the project management discourse as such an ordering social context for work-life experiences, we are able to analyse emotions as a process of co-construction of self and context, where,

> . . . [e]motion categories are not graspable merely as individual feelings or expressions, and nor is their discursive deployment reducible to a kind of detached, cognitive sense-making. They are discursive phenomena and can be studied as such, as part of how talk performs social action. (Edwards, 1999: 279)

As previously mentioned, the project management discourse sustains a view of projects as rational activity systems that can be improved by means of operations management-inspired tools and models. When subjecting this dominating discursive notion to critique, several scholars have pointed out the need to understand projects from the subjective and inter-subjective perspectives of employees and to emphasize suppressed or conflicting views (Cicmil et al., 2006, 2009). The perspective taken in this article relates closely to this critical tradition, aiming at conceptualizing the hidden, repressed and (potentially) disturbing notion of emotions in project work. We thus suggest that managerial attempts at suppressing and mastering the world in a rational and functionalist manner are, per se, highly emotional (Vince, 2006). Also, by analysing emotions in relation to the work context in which they are felt and understanding them as intertwined with the organizing processes that led to their experience (Coupland et al., 2008), we can

understand in finer detail both employees' experience of project-based work and how the project management discourse operates.

Project management: Emotional aspects of adventure and control

Much the same as the dominating approach in project management studies that often aims at normative advice on how to achieve project success (Packendorff, 1995), extant studies of project-based work tend to instrumentalize emotions, transforming them into states that can be put to use by project leaders and managers (see Clarke, 2010; Druskat and Druskat, 2006; Sunindijo et al., 2007). However, a small number of empirical studies relate the subjective experiences of project work to the specificities of project-based organizing as a setting in which the project management discourse is drawn upon and invoked. Similar to studies that show the presence of project management discourse in producing and reproducing concepts such as gender, professionalism, time orders and power relations (see Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2009; Hodgson, 2005; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014; Sergi, 2012), these studies indicate that projects are often constructed as stimulating and exciting experiences, but also as multi-faceted social processes where stress and conflicts abound, where identity, honour and shame are ever-present factors – that is, as highly emotional work episodes (Gill, 2002; Kunda, 1992; Lindebaum and Fielden, 2010; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007; Rehn and Lindahl, 2011; Rowlands and Handy, 2012). These studies have pointed towards what kind of subjective experiences one might expect to find in project-based work settings and the kind of discursive resources that are drawn upon.

A first theme in the critical project studies literature that relates to emotional experiences is the notion of 'labelling'. By 'labelling' we intend that by naming something as a 'project', a number of discursive expectations on the work process are brought from the general project management discourse into the local situation by project participants (Pellegrinelli, 2010). Projects are usually expected to be controlled and distinct episodes of passion, dedication and commitment – as meeting places of pragmatism and passion, as arenas for flexible action and task-focused social relations, and as strictly coordinated and enclosed activity systems (Bechky, 2006; Nocker, 2009). They are also constructed as exceptional work episodes, as temporary 'states of emergency', where danger and urgency prevail and everyday norms and rules do not apply (Lindahl, 2007; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006) – and, hence, as unique places for extraordinary emotional work. When something is labelled 'a project', it is not only expected to imply certain unified and consensual work procedures (Räisänen and Linde, 2004), but also a legitimation of certain attitudes and skills (Hodgson, 2002), and certain actions and emotions (Rehn and Lindahl, 2011). The inherent performativity of the project concept (Pellegrinelli, 2010; Sage et al., 2013), with its emphasis on rationality and controlled passion, can thus be expected to be an important aspect of the construction of emotions.

A related theme of what subjective experiences to find in project-based work is the discursive understanding of project episodes as 'windows of opportunity', temporarily open to the fulfilment of dreams and hopes. Projects are often constructed as opportunities to change and achieve something (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002) and then return to the world with something new and astonishing (Lundin and Söderholm,

1995; Sahlin-Andersson, 2002). In this sense, projects may become instances of intense identity work through individual reflection and exposure to new and different social settings (Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). They may also be constructed as temporary utopias, where the extraordinary can be lived for a short while (Miles, 1964), where play and improvisation is possible (Styhre and Börjesson, 2011) and where, for a while, the aesthetic fulfilment of individual, technical or managerial desire is within reach (Rowlands and Handy, 2012). However, this view also has another, less visible, side in the form of the emotional risks involved in case of failure and disappointment (Hodgson et al., 2011; Lindahl and Rehn, 2007): the risk of obsession and of ending up in situations where heroism and sacrifices are seen as legitimate and appropriate ways to rectify situations where planning and control models have collapsed (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Packendorff and Lindgren, 2014).

A third theme in the critical project studies literature of relevance to this study concerns projects as instances of professional emotional display, that is, that project management is invoked in the process of appearing as professional, reliable and loyal (Hodgson, 2005; Nocker, 2009). To be able to perform superiorly in project management, to appear as passionate yet in control, and to subjugate oneself to the specific demands of project-based work becomes increasingly important among a number of professionals, such as creative industries professionals (Bechky, 2006; Kunda, 1992; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007; Rowlands and Handy, 2012), computer programmers (Case and Piñeiro, 2009), financial services staff (Hodgson, 2002) and product development engineers (Andersson and Wickelgren, 2009). In the context of the emerging project management profession, projects also become objects of professionalism, honour and pride (Hodgson, 2002; Rehn and Lindahl, 2011). Each project embodies the possibility of being hailed for excellent professional display, but also the risk of being subject to scandal, humiliation and unemployment – in a work life characterized by 'Warhol moments' and a constant pursuit of employability: 'you are only as good as your last project' (see Rowlands and Handy, 2012).

As noted by several scholars, project management discourse contains an inherent duality or contradiction, a discursive promise of both adventure and control (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002), closely linked to the confident mastering of complex situations, and the thrills involved in creating new and astonishing things (Ekstedt et al., 1999; Lundin and Söderholm, 1995; Packendorff, 1995). A problem with the project management discourse is therefore this inherent ambiguity, that is, the notion of project work as both adventurous and strictly controlled. Overall, projects tend to be framed as positive experiences, both for the organization (by referring to its controllable flexibility and to the innovation and changes that can be brought through them) *and* the individual (alluding to well-planned stimulation and adventure) (Gill, 2002; Grabher, 2002). They are also viewed as distinct unique experiences, as compartmentalized exceptions from normality (Cicmil et al., 2009), which implies notions of unpredictability, experimentation and individual flexibility while requiring careful planning and preparation.

However, such a framing suppresses some aspects of project management – many of them identified in the emerging critical research literature on projects (see Cicmil et al., 2009; Hodgson et al., 2011) and current research on creative industries (see Rowlands and Handy, 2012) – which include negative and detrimental emotional consequences.

Adventure may just as well imply chaos and precariousness, in the same way as control may imply feelings of monotony, claustrophobia and boredom. It is this wide range of emotional experiences, as lived in project work and stemming from invoking the project management discourse, that is the focus of our study. In line with this, we explore several interrelated issues: how is the normative and general body of project management knowledge drawn upon in the daily practising of project work? What kind of discursive tensions between dominating and suppressed aspects are there in project work? How are contradictions and competing discourses expressed in project work? What emotional reactions and displays are seen as legitimate and appropriate in such a context? These issues will be explored through analysing interview data from employees involved in project-based work in theatres and opera houses.

Research design

This study is based on data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with project-working individuals from the performing arts sector, mainly from a theatre (a small co-owned improvisation theatre company identified as IMPRO) and an opera house (a large government-funded house, here named BOH). The choice of fieldwork settings was based on our aim − to explore the emotional processes that take place in project-based work, to understand in more detail how project-based work is typically experienced, and to show how the project management discourse is then invoked. This implied a setting in which project work was indeed an integral part of everyday work, but where the discursive notion of project management has not been explicitly invoked and drawn upon until recently. Theatres – and theatre projects – appeared to be suitable settings for the study as project management is currently being 'imported' into the sector from traditional industrial settings, while at the same time everyday work has been organized as temporary teamwork sequences for decades (Lehner, 2008; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007; Styhre and Börjesson, 2011). We also preferred settings where emotional labour is seen as vital to everyday work, enabling us to elicit more 'emotional' stories on project-based work than would have been possible in other contexts. Being passionate about work and being highly involved in one's work are currently valued in many organizational settings, and are presented as dispositions to be stimulated and encouraged by management (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Kaiser et al., 2008). At the same time, different employee groups may have quite different attitudes to the idea of emotions at work, as well as to the idea of themselves as emotional subjects – for example, it may be that professionals articulate and ascribe greater value to emotions, while managers/administrators suppress and downgrade them (see Coupland et al., 2008).

Fieldwork approach

Both organizations were approached as a part of a larger critical study of work life in project-intensive settings, presented to the organizations and the respondents as exploratory research on work-life conditions. In both cases, a specific project and project team was chosen as the focus of study in order to avoid a multiplicity of various project experiences as backdrops to the experiences studied. By having interviewees referring to the

same delimited work episode, the differences between them in the construction of every-day experiences became much clearer than if stories from people without a common project experience had been analysed. The projects were to be 'just another project' – not one of the extreme success or disaster stories that tend to be the rule rather than exception in project management literature. We also wanted projects that were in their closing phase, still not formally evaluated, as formal project evaluations often tend to create an 'official story' about a project in organizations that obscures the subjective experiences gained during the process (Fincham, 2002).

Access was gained by the first and second author of this article through the theatre manager at IMPRO and the project producer at BOH. After identifying the two projects, the core team members – that is, the ones viewed as such by the involved staff – were interviewed in depth, some of them on two occasions over a period of six months. Both organizations had provided basic management training for their theatre managers, directors and stage managers, including project planning – BOH employees even had access to project management software. In addition to these two case studies, we have also used material from an in-depth interview made in conjunction with the case studies with a former musical theatre manager, Toby. Thirty-eight years old at the time of the study, Toby leads a project-based government organization in the cultural sector, but he is also often brought into seminars and workshops to share his experiences on project work in musical productions. The main characteristics of the theatres, the projects and the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner at the respective theatres by the first and second author of this article. All respondents were asked for their story on both work and life in general during the specific project. Interviews lasted for two to three hours with each person and were audio-recorded and transcribed in detail by the researchers. Given the basic question on how the project management discourse is invoked in everyday work experience, each interview revolved around a number of themes derived from the earlier studies discussed in the previous section (see Appendix for the list of themes that guided the interviews). Examples of such themes are: the view of the project concept in terms of labelling and content; how individuals related to specific discursive notions of project work (definition, roles, time, deadlines, technology; see Strauss, 1988); the commitment of individuals to projects and the leeway for creativity and newness; how individuals described themselves in relation to work and established identity bases; and the role of aesthetics and feelings in project-based work (Kaiser et al., 2008; Rowlands and Handy, 2012). Although the interviews were thus framed by a number of theoretical themes, the respondents were also encouraged to raise and pursue emergent aspects salient to their experiences.

Data analysis. Our analysis of the transcribed data mobilized Boje's thematic analysis (2001), which he describes as departing from both deductive and inductive approaches. In this case it has been a combination of these two approaches, in which the general notions of rationalist project management discourse and projects as (potentially) highly emotionalized settings formed a framework for the inductive extraction of specific stories on emotions in theatrical project work. We took a special interest in respondents' descriptions of emotions, and also in contradictions and competing discourses in their stories on project-based work (Clarke et al., 2009). We draw on Coupland et al. (2008) in

Table 1. Summary of the two case studies.

	Improvization theatre (IMPRO)	Baltic Opera House (BOH)
Organization	Co-owned private theatre in a major town, established as a for-profit firm in 2002. Performances, courses and theatre projects for companies. Seven full-time employees, 29 of whom part-time.	Government-funded public opera house established in 1974 in a medium-sized town, with in-house symphony orchestra. Performs operas, concerts and ballets. Ninety full-time employees, 3 of whom part-time.
Project	Presenting a new improvised play.	Presenting an opera play.
Project results (according to team)	Tested new ways of improvised narrating, learned a lot. Well received by audience.	Well-known Italian opera for a large audience. Performed on the first night as planned. Well received by audience.
Team composition	Most staff have a background as professional actors, though some have business experience from other sectors instead. Teams interact on most on-stage and off-stage issues. Producer works with both administration and marketing in collaboration with the theatre manager; director leads rehearsals and participates in marketing. Actors design costumes and sets, rehearse and perform together with single musician and a lighting improvisator.	All staff are professionals with relevant university degrees and long-time work experience. Team members have different and distinct responsibilities, but help each other out when necessary. Producer works with administration, director leads rehearsals together with costume manager, set designer and orchestra conductor. Stage manager acts as project coordinator. Actors rehearse and perform.
Interviewed team members (fictious name, age, role)	- Nathan (m), 37, theatre manager - John (m), 43, actor - Patrick (m), 42, director - Ursula (f), 31, producer - Sarah (f), 35, actor - Anne (f), 34, actor	- Rosalind (f), 45, producer - Barbara (f), 41, costume manager - Roger (m), 48, scenic artist - Tom (m), 41, stage manager - Mary (f), 33, orchestra violinist

the sense that we view talk about emotions as social performances in which people articulate – to themselves and to others – aspects of project-based work. Following the discussion in the previous section, conceptions of projects and what they enable and restrict were of central interest, as were ideas of professionalism, appropriateness and legitimacy in emotional performance in social interaction.

The authors independently read the transcribed interviews and performed an initial thematization in which the focus of interest was on spoken emotions in relation to projects, project work and project management procedures. The initial thematization of the interview transcripts revealed a multitude of emotional states in the empirical material

– as subjective experiences, projects were constructed in terms of burning passion and desire, but also in terms of negative emotional experiences. These emotional experiences were then ordered along the idea of dominant and suppressed aspects derived from critical project studies (see Cicmil et al., 2009) and the discursive tension in project management between creative adventure and rational control (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002). In a second stage of the analysis, these emotional aspects were related to the ways in which the project management discourse was invoked and the consequences thereof, that is, the notion of project management as necessary for the rational and efficient pursuit of complex action (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007) and as a central mode of justification of passion, individual sacrifice and short-sightedness in contemporary society (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002). Critical management research aims not only to understand how various modes of work organization are applied and what they produce, both for organizations and individuals alike, but also to propose transformations that can improve working conditions (Spicer et al., 2009). It is then crucial to acknowledge the subtle ways through which these modes impose themselves and are experienced. It appeared that the interviewees were involved in simultaneous processes of justification of their subjective experience (Clarke et al., 2009) – indeed normalizing the extraordinary in the sense introduced by Ashforth and Kreiner (2002), but also extraordinizing the normal. Furthermore, some aspects of their emotional experience were justified as purely individual, while others were explained by reference to organizational and professional conditions. We illustrate these observations in the next section.

Findings: Emotional experiences of project-based work in a theatrical setting

In this section, we explore how emotions are elicited and amplified in project-based work, and describe where the ambiguities of the project management are located. The analysis of our respondents' subjective experience revealed that each of the two central themes present in the project management discourse, adventure and control, involves both positive and negative interpretations of experience. Combining both dimensions led us to identify four groups of emotions, which we summarized in one emotion representative of the group: thrill, anxiety, confidence and weariness. These groups are bundles of discussed emotions that appeared through our analysis as being interrelated or similar to each other (hence their grouping under one keyword), characterizing the emotional experience of our respondents. These four categories reveal both dominant and suppressed emotional aspects associated with working in projects. Moreover, conceptualizing emotions as discursive phenomena performing social actions (see Edwards, 1999), we suggest that these groups of emotions are not mere reflections of what the individuals interviewed felt during projects, but are also intrinsic parts of the project management discourse. In this section, we explore the variety of emotions described by our respondents, and we show how these emotions tell us something about both the experience of working in projects and the larger, societal project management discourse.

Through the extracts we present here, we see that, for our respondents, project-based work was alternatively associated with different emotional experiences: *thrill* in relation to the passion generated by project-based work, *anxiety* from the stress of the work and

Table 2. Variety of emotional experiences in the cases of BOH and IMPRO.

Underlying theme	Dominant/positive dimensions brought forward in the interviews	Negative/suppressed dimensions brought forward in the interviews
Adventure	Main emotional experience: **thrill**	Main emotional experience: **anxiety**
• Project labelling a promise of uniqueness and extraordinariness	Excitement	Sense of risk
	Novelty	Sarcasm
• Projects as windows of opportunity, temporary utopias	Invigoration	Precariousness
	Movement, dynamism	Loss of control
• Display of professionalism in terms of creativity, invention and artistry	Discovery	Chaos
	Reaching one's full potential	Detached from context
Control	Main emotional experience: **confidence**	Main emotional experience: **weariness**
• Project labelling a promise of controllability and security	Certainty	Lack of control
	Predictability	Claustrophobia
• Projects as windows of opportunity, with a minimum of risk	Assurance	Monotony
	Reliance	Lack of enthusiasm
• Display of professionalism in terms of planning, monitoring, discipline	Calmness	Repetition
	Professional superiority	Rigidity

the risks borne by the respondents, *confidence* from the predictability stemming out of the formal aspects of the work, and *weariness* from the rigidity and repetitiveness inherent in the work. The first two of these emotional experiences are deemed positive and are openly displayed in organizational contexts (thrill and confidence), whereas the latter two are conceived of as negative and tend to be suppressed. In order to summarize and elaborate upon the respondents' emotional experience of project work in the two cases, we used the conceptual framework developed in the theoretical section, which was based on our critical notions of dominant/positive and suppressed/negative aspects, the inherent contradiction between adventure and control in project management discourse, and the themes derived from extant related literature, that is, labelling, windows of opportunity and professional performativity. The resulting systematization of emotional experiences can be found in Table 2.

Project-based work as a thrilling yet anxiety-ridden adventure

When describing the organizational setting of their project-based work, not only did most of the interviewees talk with passion about their work, they characterized it as a source of passion. Many of our interviewees used the word 'passion' to describe their feelings toward work, some going even further by saying that theatre work should always involve passion (see also Bergman Blix, 2007). The rationale for being a theatre employee

is consistently explained in terms of strong and positive emotional rewards, but not only from work as such. Emotional rewards are found both in the creative work content and in an organizational setting that allows them a certain degree of artistic freedom, combined with a somewhat stable and predictable organizational arrangement (see Gill and Pratt, 2008; Rowlands and Handy, 2012).

This idea of passion covers many dimensions and is based on several discursive resources. One such resource is the notion of professional theatre work as a creative adventure, implying the creation of something new − a letting go of established truths and practices. However, the way to secure such pattern-breaking courses of action is often to plan for them in advance, to construct the individual project as a structured attempt at conducting controlled experiments. By framing on-going operations in terms of a series of distinct projects, thereby linking artistic professionalism to project management (Hodgson, 2005), the danger of inertia and creeping artistic stagnation is intended to be kept at bay:

> We do not want to repeat things, get stuck in old patterns. During the last project we actively tried to avoid that by bringing in external impulses. […] I think it is necessary to be open in that sense, that you borrow external specialists that bring in fresh knowledge. You get a kick out of it, and hopefully you improve. Then you do not repeat yourself, since you have added something to your repertoire of expressions. (John, IMPRO)

The notion of projects as structured and distinct opportunities is emphasized by drawing upon the established project management discourse, in which the project form is described as an organizational resource that provides the creative adventures with boundaries and reason. The creative thrills of being part of a visionary project are thus accompanied with a sense of confidence and certainty – creative projects are leaps into the unknown, but it is also possible to master and enjoy the experience if the right degree of passion and commitment is there:

> I have always wanted to learn new things. You can be tired after a project, but when the director and the set designer give you new blueprints, you get yourself going again – it is a damned nice feeling! […] You have to be special to work in a theatre; work must mean something to you, and people can see if you are not paying enough attention. (Roger, BOH)

When asked to characterize project-based work, many of the respondents make reference to the discursive notion of unique temporary systems from which you may easily move on once deliveries have been made. Moreover, the discursive notion of projects as structural opposites to repetitive bureaucratic operations is emphasized in the sense of representing a series of adventurous accomplishments charged with emotions – yielding satisfaction, pride and aesthetic fulfilment. To initiate a project is to take responsibility for artistic and societal development in a controlled and thoughtful manner, far beyond the nitty-gritties of everyday repetitive work: 'Projects are good. They have a start, a work process and an ending. And when they are finished you cannot do anything more, they do not stick to your mind anymore' (Barbara, BOH).

The project form is not seen by the respondents as a guarantee for creative newness, but rather as a well-structured structural setting in which artistic freedom can be allowed and encouraged (see also Styhre and Börjesson, 2011). Belonging to a project is a sign of *belonging* to the theatre (not least for part-time employees and freelancing 'temps'), being *someone* at the theatre (a recognized participant in the centre of activity and attention) and doing what you are *really* supposed to do at a theatre (i.e. not administration, internal politics or accounting). It is thereby closely linked to professional aesthetics, the professionalism inherent in doing a good and beautiful job, in a manner characterized by the highest possible artistic standards, seeking the approval and admiration of both peers and the audience (Case and Piñeiro, 2009). Most of our interviewees thus embrace the idea of the project work form as enabling them to enact their passion for theatre, letting their creative energy converge, in a well-structured manner, into a successful opening night. Somehow, the boldness of the artistic vision becomes more tempting and acceptable if it takes place within a project:

> Sometimes, you must dare to do something as insane as we did when moving the Miss Saigon musical from one country to another. Not just playing safe all the time. Somehow, that is what project work is about. It is connected to an event, an opening night, to give birth to something new. (Toby)

Projects are therefore viewed and experienced as exciting and rich in possibilities, making each of them a special and thrilling endeavour. In this sense, the exceptional aspect of projects is amplified and celebrated. Passion is still a complex element in creative work, as it 'can lead to pervasive forms of self-exploitation through overwork and over-attachment to work, but it also displays a deep ethical concern with the quality of culture' (Lee, 2011: 483). Our interviewees often mentioned another aspect in relation to this sustained and intense involvement in projects: the subjective experience of having reached the limit of one's abilities − of sacrificing mental and physical health for the sake of project success (Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2009). Although the artistic ambitions and visions may be fulfilled, the working conditions were often described by respondents in terms of deadline stress, conflicts and the problems of upholding a meaningful private life. They described feelings of being deceived by oneself and others in the pursuit of the perfect project, of being overly committed to a cause that would probably have succeeded anyway:

> This project was extreme, by all comparisons. Such a workload cannot be combined with family life, not even with keeping up relationships with friends. After six months like that, you are history. I had sort of a mental hangover. […] I actually think that the project affected the whole year afterwards, in the sense that I became an introvert and lost my optimism. This hangover lasted very long, possibly even until today. You should warn people about this, I think. (Toby)

In other words, projects may be adventures, but they also come with the peril of losing control and, for the individuals involved, of having to submit to chaotic and seemingly inevitable circumstances. This is often expressed in various forms of 'war stories' (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007), in which heroic action becomes the main ingredient of risky project adventures. Invoking discursive notions of temporariness and

exceptionality, these 'war stories' serve as coping mechanisms helping individuals make sense of and justify the negative emotional consequences they sometimes suffered in projects. Hence, the discursive construction of projects as adventures with happy endings (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002) tends to persist, not in the least as some degree of chaos is not only inevitable, but even seen as wanted. A project is not bold enough if it runs smoothly: an implementation void of crises and disturbances is more a sign of dampened aims, excessive taking of precautions and re-use of existing knowledge. Some respondents explicitly mention deadline exposure and risk-taking as necessary preconditions of artistic creativity and professional performance, while suppressing more painful elements associated with control and planning:

> When there are three weeks left to the first night, nobody thinks there will ever be a performance. It's just chaos. It is always like that, that is how it is supposed to be in projects. If you had no deadlines, you could go on forever, which would be quite unsatisfying. Knowing that you will be ready and knowing that everybody is working toward the same goal, that is a fantastic feeling. (Rosalind, BOH)

When departing from their feelings about the setting in which they evolved, in response to questions on how they experienced project-based work generally, the respondents quite rapidly evoked another side to their participation in projects. Project work was described as not always living up to expectations, and often characterized by disharmony, hypocrisy and deception in pursuit of the unattainable perfect project. Enthusiasm and passion for projects and theatrical work often verges on obsession or indeed addiction (Rowlands and Handy, 2012), appearing in a variety of feelings relating to the intensity of commitment to work and the anxiety over the potential consequences of insufficient commitment. One such aspect of combining commitment and anxiety is the internalized notion of individual flexibility – a perceived need to be flexible to work even harder in the project when needed. For some, this is closely related to a sense of professionalism and pride – coping, enduring, but also remaining in control: 'I am really a flexible employee! And I must be one! New things happen all the time [in the project] and I must be creative and think in new ways. You must always adapt to the situation at hand!' (Barbara, BOH).

When related to circumstances outside the project experience, this flexibility is characterized as necessary and inevitable. Passion in itself is on display, as is also the professionalism of displaying a high involvement for the sake of artistic achievement and loyalty to the team (Nocker, 2009) – of letting the theatre come before everything else in life for a while. Artistry is here also connected to managerialism, in the sense that delivering the best possible performance on opening night is both a sign of artistic and managerial abilities (see Hodgson, 2002; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007):

> Projects tend to be very intense after a while. When the stage is available, when the décor shall be built, when the lights shall be installed – at the same time as we are rehearsing with the full cast – then there is no more flexibility in private life. We are talking minutes and seconds here. People – often women – who need to pick up kids at kindergarten cannot count upon a great deal of sympathy and understanding. (Toby)

For some of our interviewees, flexibility is not a major issue. They have made more or less conscious choices to devote their life to their work, and work usually comes first. Still, this can be a source of anxiety and regret, often expressed through irony, sarcasm or even self-contempt:

> How much I work [in this project]? Not more than 40 hours a week [laugh]. No, I never count the hours. I have kids, but I am divorced … but the kids want attention and that is good. When they are not staying with me it is more dangerous, it is much easier to stay here at the theatre. Instead of going home to my stinking two-room apartment I hang out at work. (John, IMPRO)

If this high involvement can be perceived both as a professional necessity and at the same time as a quality-of-life problem, there are several ways of explaining to oneself and others (in this case, to the researchers) why it is chosen voluntarily. One such feeling that is used to justify this ambiguity is individual indispensability, or that a project is a temporary outburst of action that will sooner or later meet the deadline, then allowing employees to return to normal circumstances. While our interviewees all underlined their passion for their work, they also revealed that such high involvement is not without risk, and generates anxiety. Not only is this emotional experience of project-based work negative, but it is also seen as an issue for the individual project workers to handle on their own.

Project-based work as a controlled endeavour: Confidence and weariness

Based on our interviews, the notion of project work as a linear progression through a series of phases is here applied not least to the final rehearsals, at which close surveillance, attention to plans and details, strict schedules and so forth are the governing mechanisms put in place to ensure that projects will be delivered on time. In these phases, project work is no longer just a structural form allowing for controlled creativity; it is also a well-established form for complex industrial deliveries in an almost Taylorist sense, based on predictability and the confidence that arises from such a certainty. However, such an organizational confidence requires full individual subjugation to work schedules, such as rehearsals.

If such a conscience ensures that project-based work in organization can be controlled and therefore reliable, the subjective experience of working to project deadlines is also referred to in terms of rigidity and of a loss of the sense of control that the project form was expected to deliver. Instead, deadlines are experienced as absolute, fixed and imposed by invisible organizational powers residing elsewhere, leading project workers to feel a sense of emergency, unpredictability and personal subjugation (Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2009; Kunda, 1992):

> I used to say that this [costume workshop] is both a production line and an emergency ward [sighs]. […] My formal work hours are 8 am through 5 pm, but then we have our project deadlines and everything has to be delivered on time. Then there is no choice other than to work overtime, and then there are rehearsals and performances in the evenings that you must attend. A lot of irregular work hours, indeed. (Barbara, BOH)

As Barbara's quote evokes, this combination of lack of control and pressure coming from deadlines creates a form of fatalistic acceptance, where the rigidity of project delivery plans takes over her life. The increasing organizational complexities of theatrical projects as they converge towards the opening night appeared a source of justification of long work hours. However, for our respondents, submitting to project schedules thus became a manifestation of loyalty to colleagues and to the organization as such (Nocker, 2009), especially during the latter project phases in which ideas of creativity and play are left behind. Through their accounts, the respondents revealed that they not only took part in these projects, but felt they had a personal relationship with the project they were referring to: they *invested* themselves in these projects, and they grew *attached* or indeed *addicted* to these projects, to their completion and to their overall success (Rowlands and Handy, 2012). They thus participated in the reification of their projects, ascribing to them an ontological status of independent existence, and being more or less impossible to change once up and running. Open and extraordinary from the beginning, project processes were experienced as increasingly closed, monitored and locked in as they went on. Yet, as such a situation repeats itself often from project to project, a form of weariness arises from project-based work, which appeared as a normal and expected counterpoint to the thrill that comes with and surrounds this mode of work organization.

Also evoked in many of our interviews were the negative feelings related to the need to maintain the functioning of the permanent organizational context while having to focus on individual projects. Organizational and bureaucratic ambiguities stemming from this double commitment tend to annoy and drain our respondents of emotional energy, ascribing negative subjective experiences to the 'permanent' organization that tend to interfere with project work from time to time (Hodgson et al., 2011). The discursive idea of projects as separate entities, temporarily detached from the organization, is visible in notions of managers and organizational rules as unwanted and disturbing obtrusions into the smoothly functioning projects. However, the consequences of these circumstances normally tend to be borne by the individual project worker without further ado, rather than used to redefine organizational arrangements:

> I like my colleagues, but then there are always problems that upset me; organisational matters that concern the whole theatre and not specifically my project. These things affect my job and make me stressed and confused. One such thing is all the unclear orders and rules that come from the theatre director. I try to protect my team from such disturbances. (Rosalind, BOH)

As mentioned previously, some of the people we interviewed transformed part of their negative emotional experiences in a way that made them closely related to heroism. Heroic action signifies that things are constructed as having gone wrong despite all the commitments and anxieties 'invested' in the project by the team members, and also that heroes are indeed needed but rarely acknowledged for their extraordinary sacrifices:

> My husband is one of the stage managers here, and I do not think that anyone in the organisation really understands how much he accomplishes. [...] The theatre manager does not understand how good it is to have such a hard-working man in the organisation, and when I jumped into his shoes when he caught the 'flu last fall I was not recognized at all for that extra effort. That's the

> way it is – if something happens you just have to let go of everything that you do and run away to fix it. The project is saved, but no-one thanks you. (Mary, BOH)

A final aspect of the darker side of projects also covers experience that some interviewees described as negative not being related only to a specific project – a sad emotional state that usually remains long after the project is finished. This sadness, the feeling that there is no way out and that there is no end to one's current state of mind can in fact be found in several statements made by our respondents. Projects are episodic by nature and (almost) always accompanied by parallel projects and followed by new ones – each project becomes a kind of 'critical incident' in the life of a theatre worker. As the following quote exemplifies, such statements may concern the mourning of a project that has 'passed away', but also a dejected expectation of the recurrence of the patterns involved in project-based work:

> My experience is that project work can lead to a projectified life, and that such a life is unhealthy. I felt that my friends and relatives did not accept that I became so consumed by the project, and they strongly objected to my priorities. I'm single, which makes this easier, and I try to always reserve some time for my friends. But the next time you enter a project, it will probably be the same. Many project leaders emphasize control over trust, and control often leads to a sense of stress and claustrophobia. (Toby)

In this section, we have shown that our interviewees ascribed some positive emotional experience to project-based work when talking about what and how they felt, expressed as predictability and reliability, and to the organization in which the particular projects occurred. At the same time, they also expressed negative experience of repetitiveness, lack of control, boredom and even sadness, as being accepted and normal emotions that are part of working in projects. In other words, our respondents linked their experience to discursive notions of project management such as planning, control, structured work and deadlines, while describing their subjective experience as related to both passionate and exciting teamwork and depressing/consuming emotions of stress and inevitability.

Discussion: Invoking the project management discourse

In this section we will elaborate upon our empirical analysis of the project workers' subjective experience into a conceptual framework that shows how the emotional experience of thrill, anxiety, confidence and weariness are related to the invocation of project management. We suggest that the discourse is constructed and maintained through the concurrent action of four emotional processes that, combined, simultaneously: (i) make what might be ordinary feel extraordinary; (ii) locate the anxieties of risks and creativity to the individual employee; (iii) locate the confidence that comes from control and routine to the organizational context; and (iv) normalize extraordinary emotional experience (see Figure 1). In addition to the individual characteristics of the respondents and of the specific projects they talked about, we argue that all of these elements could amplify the intensity of the emotions experienced in the context of project-based work organization, especially those that have a negative undertone. As our inquiry is founded on the idea
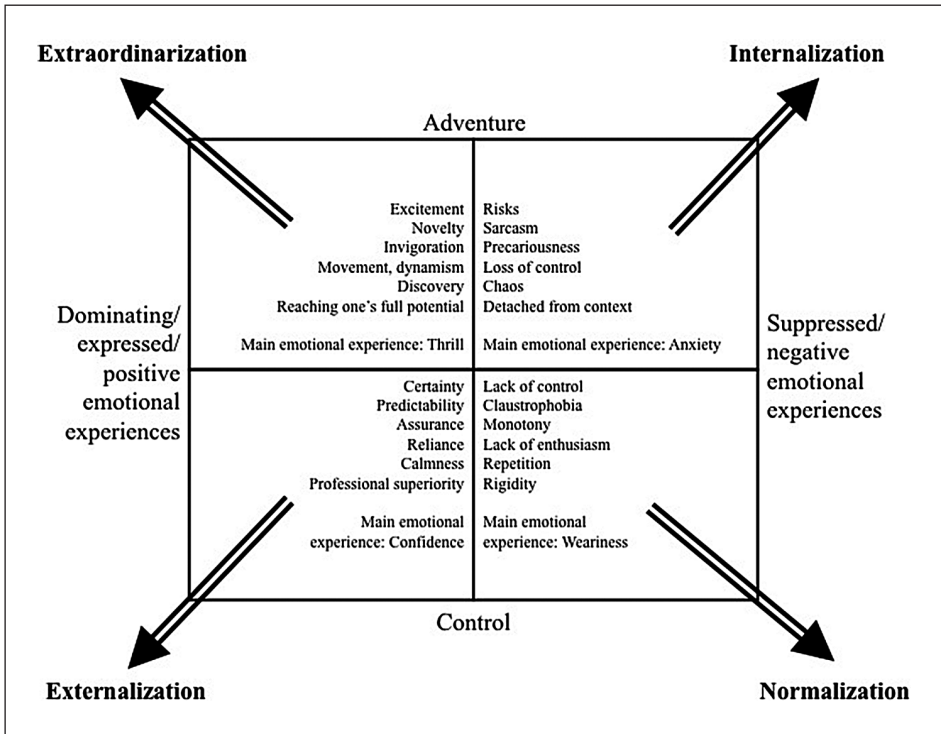
Figure 1. Processes of invoking the project management discourse in everyday work practices.

that subjective experience of organizational elements such as mode of work organization is closely related to the discourse that is socially held on these elements, the silencing of negative emotional experience should be understood as an effect produced by the project management discourse itself.

Generally speaking, the dominant project management discourse is the backdrop against which the co-construction of projects and emotions takes place: our interviewees draw upon the dominant discourse of their on-going subjective experience, and also partake of and reaffirm the discourse by conforming to expectations (Hodgson et al., 2011). This echoes earlier research on the regulation of emotional experience and expression in organized settings, emphasizing the means used in organizational settings to regulate both the experience and expression of emotions and reinforce norms of rationality (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). The presence of means such as neutralizing, buffering, prescribing and normalizing emotions contributes to protecting the construction of organizations as rational; even more, as emotions are attenuated, lessened or removed, the use of these means leads to an unbalanced and *over-rationalized* view of organizations. Such an over-rationalized view can also be viewed in the general literature on project management, where emotional dimensions are rarely considered.

When we relate the stories about project experiences with the dominant discourse on project management, a first discursive tension emerges − one revolving around the normalization/extraordinarization opposition. This opposition specifically evokes Ashforth and Humphrey's notion of *normalizing*, which is defined as the 'means to maintain or restore the status quo by: (1) diffusing or lessening unacceptable emotions, or (2) reframing the meaning of the emotions' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995: 108). In subsequent research, Ashforth and Kreiner identified normalizing – simply defined there as when 'extraordinary situations are rendered seemingly ordinary' (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2002: 215) – as a particularly potent means to regulate emotions, especially those that are not wanted or desirable in organizational contexts.

In our study, we find that there are indeed instances of *normalizing* of extraordinary emotions – reflected in the submission to monotonous and claustrophobic conditions (weariness) and the acceptance of chaotic situations (anxiety) and managerial control (confidence) as natural in project settings. As discussed, the project management discourse emphasizes projects as extraordinary and unique – as a form of organization distinctly different from 'permanent' and 'bureaucratic' settings (Cicmil et al., 2009). What is striking then is that work conditions were not framed as exceptional but rather as expected by the interviewees, as if they were 'normal' in project-based work (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006). Facing uncertainty and lack of clarity, experiencing conflicts and tensions, having to work under pressure and having to make personal sacrifices for the completion of the project are also included in the definition of what it means to be 'doing projects' in an appropriate, legitimate and professional manner. Normalization of such conditions also implies a normalization of emotions (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2002), in the sense that project workers are not expected to voice any surprise, discomfort or resistance to circumstances of which they were well aware.

Consequently, we also find that 'normal' emotions are made extraordinary, or *extraordinized* when invoking the project management discourse. For our interviewees, projects are part of their everyday professional life and most of the work they do is organized as projects. However, the invocation of project management implies that the classic thrills of theatrical life are located in distinct once-in-a-lifetime experiences that can be controlled by means of certain managerial tools, and that anxieties are dealt with through constructing the problems as isolated to the specific single project rather than as general characteristics of the project form or the organizational environment. By relating to the general discursive notion of projects as endeavours that are put in place to create a new and unique result – a new product, an event, a performance – projects are thus constructed as non-routines, charged with excitement, as events in themselves. This extraordinarization of the normal bears close resemblance to the usual megaproject dramaturgy in which risks, democracy and underlying needs are downplayed in favour of heroic deeds, mind-boggling results and symbolic values (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). The appropriate, legitimate and professional thing to do for project workers here is to partake in this extraordinarization, displaying the passion, the acceptance of risk and the confidence in project control systems that are expected from them (Kaiser et al., 2008).

Moreover, invoking the project management discourse also involves the intersection of the individual and the organization, in the sense that emotions – or indeed the source of them – are located by respondents at different places, which reveals the presence of a

second opposition. On the one hand, project management represents a confident promise that a carefully devised set of managerial techniques – if put to use in the prescribed manner – can and will contribute to resolve almost any complex issue in contemporary organizations (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007) and provide actors with a sense of existential certainty (Rolfe, 2011). The emotions arising in relation to this promise are thus often linked to the sense of certainty and reliance on procedures residing in the context to secure project delivery and success, reflecting a form of *externalization*. At the same time, the sense of thrill may also be part of this externalization insofar as the exciting project tasks come from somewhere else, as well as the weariness resulting from the experience of being unable to exert any influence upon the project work situation, that the notion of success and failure is a matter of politics and power (Fincham, 2002; Sage et al., 2013), and that issues external to the project cause disturbances and delays. In this sense, externalization implies not only that project workers should embrace and take for granted the project management procedures that are employed by the organization, but also that they must submit to the idea that project work is indeed aimed at delivering something to someone else under conditions of discipline, hard work and multiple external constraints.

Yet, in our conceptualization, project work is also in part an emotional process of *internalization*, where employees invoke the project management discourse as a requirement upon themselves to assume individual responsibility, take their own initiatives or indeed heroic action. The consequences of over-optimistic planning, unrealistic promises made to project sponsors, sudden changes and technical breakdowns are all to be borne by the individual employee (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006), as well as absence of creative ideas or indeed periods of hard and boring repetitive work – as that is what project professionals are supposed to be able to cope with. In that sense, invoking project management is a process of responsibilization of the individual (Hodgson, 2002), of a management-by-objectives-inspired stance according to which employees should figure out for themselves how to achieve the (almost) impossible under conditions of professional autonomy (Grey and Garsten, 2001).

At the same time as displaying high involvement and being committed are often identified as quintessential conditions for the success of any endeavour, they are apparently not without consequences for the individuals who involve themselves in such a strong way. The respondents all felt a responsibility toward their projects; and because they fundamentally cared about them, they felt compelled to make a number of personal sacrifices, and were willing to lose some of the balance between their personal and professional lives and to endure stressful working conditions (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Rowlands and Handy, 2012). If being arts professionals might predispose them to such an acceptance and internalization, in order to take part in the creative projects in question, we believe any worker involved in project-based work might be faced with similar emotional challenges (Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2009; Hodgson et al., 2011; Rehn and Lindahl, 2011).

Taken together, these two pairs of opposed processes synthesize how the project management discourse is invoked in everyday project work. Seen along the axis of expressed or suppressed emotional experience, these four processes should be understood as reinforcing this dynamic: indeed, negative experience tends to be internalized

and normalized, while positive experience tends to be extraordinarized and externalized. By invoking the discursive notion of project management, the performative aspects of extraordinariness, detachment, control and professionalism are linked to subjective experience involving ambiguity, stress, surveillance, heroism and addiction into a specific sense of 'normality'. Each new project is positively framed as a novel and challenging endeavour, in which high emotional intensity and strain are part of the artistic and managerialist professionalism to be displayed. If negative emotions are indeed not suppressed, they are explained by individual inability to carry out a professional performance or by interference by actors and circumstances external to the project (Hodgson, 2002; Hodgson et al., 2011). While a few of our interviewees pointed out possible detrimental consequences of project management as applied to theatrical work, most of them tended to see it as an inevitable and rational vehicle for simultaneous artistic and managerial effectiveness by which the extraordinary is made controllable and the ordinary is made adventurous.

Conclusion

In this article, we set out to explore the emotional processes that take place in project-based work in order to understand in more detail project workers' experience of project-based work, and to show how the project management discourse is invoked in the construction of this experience. Accordingly, a central implication of this study is its conceptual systematization of emotional experience in project-based work, and the identification of simultaneous processes of invoking the inherently ambiguous project management discourse in daily project-based work. Project workers are supposed to bring their passion to each new work episode, igniting over and over again (extraordinarization), and to accept sudden changes, delays and unplanned overtime as natural elements of project work (normalization). They are also supposed to accept and submit to organizational project planning, control and evaluation systems without further ado (externalization), as well as to accept individual responsibility for emerging problems with composure and equanimity (internalization). Through the processes we identified, we show how the project management discourse influences and shapes the workers' subjective experience of project-based work beyond industry- and profession-specific emotional constructs, owing to its construction of episodes labelled 'projects' as controlled, adventurous, extraordinary and compartmentalized. Combined, these emotional processes imply and sustain certain views of what is appropriate, legitimate and professional in project-based settings.

By departing from subjective experiences of project workers and exploring the relationships between their spoken emotions and the societal project management discourse (see Gill and Pratt, 2008; Rowlands and Handy, 2012), we contribute to articulating and linking together aspects of their work that may tend to be kept separated – such as professional identity, organizational control and mode of work organization. This articulation is a necessary step in developing a more precise acknowledgement of the mechanisms that keep these workers repeating the pattern of being highly attached to their projects, while also experiencing detrimental emotional consequences. Reducing this situation to individual choice and tolerance would obfuscate the role that the project itself − as an

ordering social discourse, a reified managerial device to organize work and an emerging professional identity base − plays in this process (see also Rowlands and Handy, 2012).

Our study also adds to the ongoing discussions on how certain emotional processes, such as passion, become legitimate in project-based work settings in specific and post-bureaucratic organizing in general. The contemporary notion of being passionate about one's work often tends to be framed as the only legitimate emotional response (Coupland et al., 2008); being passionate is equated with being motivated, active, autonomous, and even with being creative and successful. By presenting passion as something that ought to be developed and nurtured at work, as part of displaying not only professional but also managerial superiority, the project management discourse transforms it into a rational and effective state of mind and obscures its human consequences (see also Hodgson, 2002; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006). The legitimate emotional responses transform both the object of passion (the project rather than the cultural achievement as such) and the expected outcomes of passion (successful projects rather than creative experimentation). They also suppress the fact that a risk of failure exists (Rehn and Lindahl, 2011; Sage et al., 2013): if proper project management procedures are applied in a proper manner, passion can and will always be directed towards success and prosperity. Therefore, another contribution of our study is to show how the multidimensionality of passion in the case of creative project work is amplified, and is fuelled by the dominant project management discourse.

Our study also has clear practical implications. As we have shown, and as has been suggested elsewhere (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009), individuals involved in this kind of creative project are keenly aware of the risks and personal consequences of the work they do. Our study contributes to the nurturing of this reflexivity, since our descriptions can offer project-based workers a medium by which to reflect upon their own experiences (Bloor, 2004). There might be ways to continue to benefit from what the project form of work brings to individuals and organizations and yet modify the negative effects associated with their experience: one way to initiate this would be to recognize the recursive relationship between the project management discourse and workers' subjective experience, in order to break the underlying dominant/suppressed emotions dynamic.

Our findings suggest that the dominant view of projects implies that it is often up to each individual to manage him- or herself while working on projects, and that the practice of project management is seen as unrelated to the emotions that might be experienced, or to their sources. Constructing negative emotions as normal and located in the individual rather than in the organizational context may ultimately be hard, distressing or even harmful to individuals. Traditional HRM departments rarely follow employees into project work situations, as they are usually constructed to handle repetitive operations and industrial relations (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011). Moreover, they often exclude project leaders and project workers from HR practices, as they tend to be seen as purely task-oriented positions external to the formal organizational structure (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006). By requiring that the same norms and regulations concerning employee well-being and life-balance support should be employed both in projects and in non-project work, some of the negative and suppressed emotional processes brought forward in this study could potentially be better handled.

Given this study, there are several further lines of inquiry that would be rewarding. In line with Wright and Nyberg (2012), it would be relevant to continue to explore the standards of emotional expression in a variety of project-based work contexts in settings where the project management discourse is well established and where project-based work is mainly regulated by standards and certifications (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007; Räisänen and Linde, 2004). The ways in which actors draw upon both industry-specific and project management discourses in combination or opposition (Clarke et al., 2009) could then be subjected to further exploration. Also, what project workers allow themselves to express in their settings, and what is kept hidden, would require further studies. In this sense, real-life participatory research in which emotional reactions and experiences could be studied in situ could possibly yield even more in-depth empirical insights (Sergi, 2012). We thus believe that our findings and theorizing may stimulate other researchers to further explore not only how project management is invoked in everyday work, but also the emotional consequences of post-bureaucratic and managerialist discourses in general, and the possibilities for developing new forms of subjectivity.

Appendix. Interview guide.

Themes	Example of questions asked
Personal trajectory	Who are you? Your life history in a few sentences? Your work-life history? Education, major career steps/career episodes? Main accomplishments and failures/mistakes?
Role, tasks and responsibilities	Describe your role here at the theatre. Formal tasks and responsibilities? Actual responsibilities and work content beyond that? Your view of the relationship between formal and actual work content?
Relationship to creative work	What is theatrical work all about – as you see it? When do you know that you have accomplished something important? What is failure to you in theatrical work? What is the relation between artists and managers – is such a distinction meaningful to you? How do you judge professionalism? Can you characterize the ideal employee?
Experiences of project-based work	Tell us your story of [The Project]. Character of the project – unique/repetitive, routine/challenging? Main phases, incidents, crises, successes? How did you react to these issues? What was the workload? Who did you collaborate with? Your view on your collaborators? What was your formal and actual work content in the project? What is a project – can you define or exemplify that concept? What does the concept mean to you, what do you think about when hearing the word? Where does it come from – as you see it? What is it good for, bad for you? Is work in projects different from other forms of work? Why/ why not? How is project-based work related to theatrical work in general? Does the notion of projects add anything to theatrical work in general? Do different employee categories here at the theatre perceive projects in different ways? What are the most important issues to deal with in theatrical projects, as you see it?

Themes	Example of questions asked
Vision of project work and management	What is your level of competence in project management? What are you good at in project work, what can you improve? Have you received any formal project management training? What were your main insights/'lessons learned'? What was new to you, did it imply that you saw things in new ways afterwards? Do you use any formal project management methodology and/or technology, and if so how?
Consequences of projects	Based on your experience, what are the specific consequences of project work? Does it affect the ways you work with task definitions, work roles, work time and deadlines, the various technologies used? Does it affect the scope for artistry and creativity? Does it affect the approach to organizing theatrical work? What does project management enable and restrict? Are there consequences of project work outside your professional life? What about workload, flexibility, family time, holidays?

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