The temporary society and its enemies:
Projects from an individual perspective

by

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Abstract

From the perspective of the individual, projectisation of society has implied important consequences for work and life. In increasing number of people spend their working days in different kinds of project organisations, and even more people are involved in projects as a part of their otherwise routine-based employments. Besides being organised into all kinds of projects during work hours, there is also a tendency to perceive processes at work and in life in general in terms of projects. Given this position, the aim of the paper is to critically analyse the consequences of project work for individuals – both at work and in life in general. From a classification of project work situations into four different types (project-based work, renewal project participation, temporary work an independent entrepreneurship), project work is discussed in terms of time limits, creativity, careers and personal development. It is also investigated what kind of life form consequences the project work form might have; projects imply flexible work hours, which in its turn has reshaped the conditions for family life in contemporary society. It appears that projectisation implies increased self-responsibility and individual risk, and that stability (rather than flexibility) is what many individuals try to achieve through conscious action. In many ways, the enemies of the temporary society are the individuals that construct it – the very same individuals that we thought to be its proponents and its beneficiaries.

1. The individual in the projecticised society

Since the middle of the 1960's, it has been repeatedly claimed that our society – and thus also our lives – is becoming increasingly projecticised, i.e. organised in terms of time-limited sequences of action and interaction (Miles, 1964, Bennis and Slater, 1968). This development was expected to imply an increased use of the project work form, but also an increasing tendency to view ongoing processes as limited in time and scope. When discussing reasons for this development, authors usually referred to a general increase in the speed of change at all aspects of society in combination with an increased complexity. For organisations, the solution to a reality in which most relevant factors changed and interacted at the same time was to organise the flow of events into discrete projects, limited in time and space.

As a trend in the development of work organisation, projectisation is usually expected to imply increased task focus, better conditions for learning, renewal and flexibility, less

bureaucratic forms for management control etc (cf Ekstedt et al, 1999, Berggren and Lindkvist, 2001). In complex settings, a project-based leadership strategy is often said to be preferable over classic, all-encompassing ones (Lundin, 1990). Even though there are some dangers of projectisation – such as short-term thinking strategies and increased de-coupling of organisations (Blomquist and Packendorff, 1998) – this trend is mainly perceived as a positive one for contemporary organisations. The basic reason for this perception seems to be that the project – viewed as a task specific and time-limited form of working – is perceived as a way of avoiding all the classic problems of bureaucracy, inertia and rigidity with which most "normal" organisations are struggling (Pinto, 1996). In that sense, project-based work is a part of the wave of 'new organisational forms' that has entered most industries during the last decades (cf Kerfoot and Knights, 1998).

In many industries and companies, the project is now the normal work form. This is obvious in cultural life, advertising, consulting, R&D, IT etc, but also in several large corporations who executes numerous projects both externally and internally. Given this trend, one might assess that work life for many people is becoming increasingly "projecticised", i.e. that substantial parts of individuals' work lives are spent in projects and similar temporary forms of organising. This is especially evident where individuals working in "project-based firms" are concerned, i.e. firms where almost all operations take place in projects and where the permanent structure fills the function of administrative support.

What hamper this development are the taken-for-granted views of industrial organisations as dependent on routines, hierarchies and technologies rather than flexibility, teamwork and customer orientation (Ekstedt et al, 1999). Still, just a small portion of contemporary organisations actually organise work with both decentralisation and organised knowledge development in mind (Karlsson and Eriksson, 2000). Many of the calls for new organisational forms and a strengthened civil society can be analysed in a similar manner – if people are liberated from their structural chains, they can create wonders together (cf Kidder, 1981, Grantham, 2000). Most research on individual work satisfaction and commitment also support these claims (Karlsson and Eriksson, 2000).

The silent proponents of traditional industrial organising should thus be the enemies of the temporary society, failing to see the necessities of projectisation at all levels of society and business. Or are they? Let us ask the alleged victims of the old industrial society and the intended beneficiaries of the new projecticised one – the individuals. Is it really so that projectisation has implied better working conditions, increased possibilities for personal development, and more freedom in choosing individual lifestyles? Is the projecticised society the solution to the problems that inhabitants of the bureaucratic society experienced?

The chapter starts out with a discussion of what project work means – as compared to "traditional" work forms -, and a classification of different 'project workers' is presented. In the next sections, we meet different individuals from these different 'classes', and some important consequences of project work are discussed through their narratives. Then, we turn to the question of how project work affects life in general, more specifically what kinds of life forms that are constructed by project working individuals, again through the narratives of the individuals. The paper ends by a discussion on what kind of society that people working and living by projects construct together – could it be so that the enemies of the temporary society are the same people that created it.

2. Project work from an individual perspective – a typology

From the perspective of the individual, the development toward projectisation has implied important consequences for work and life. More and more people spend their working days in different kinds of project organisations, and even more people are involved in projects as a part of their otherwise routine-based employments. Besides being organised into all kinds of projects during work hours, there is also a tendency to perceive processes at work and in life in general in terms of projects (Kunda, 1992, Blomquist and Packendorff, 1998, Lindgren et al, 2001). While there are theoretical expectations of different kinds in the literature, there are actually few empirical studies made on how individuals handle a projecticised reality. The project has usually been viewed as a planning task, and large parts of the project management literature are in fact just as de-personalised as organisation theory once was. Moreover, if individuals have indeed been studied, they have exclusively been project managers, a category that is actually just a small portion of the total population of project workers. Moreover, this line of research rests upon quite a weak empirical base; while there are a lot written about how project managers should behave, there are very few descriptions of their actual behaviour (Perlow, 1997, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2001, Rapp Ricciardi, 2001). Given this position, the aim of the paper is to critically analyse how individuals construct projects – both projects that they are organised into and projects that they construct themselves in their everyday life. In this analysis, examples of individual narratives on projects and projectisation will be included, individuals working in the IT sector, in the cultural sector, as entrepreneurs, as consultants, and even as voluntary community workers.

The problem of this kind of general reasoning is that there are many different project work situations. Formally organised projects that individuals are organised into, i.e. perceives as necessary parts of their work life and careers, appears in most organisations. Project work is actually not just one homogenous work form, however; it means different things depending on what situation in which it is performed. The necessity of identifying different types of projects and thereby different work situations has also been widely acknowledged in literature during the past decade (cf Turner and Cochrane, 1993, Packendorff, 1995, Ekstedt et al, 1999).

In the same way as there are many different types of projects, there are thus also many types of project work situations, ranging from 'perfect projects' where the individual works full time for one single project and can devote all her time to that, to all sorts of 'imperfect' project work situations where life is more complicated. We will therefore look closer into different sorts of project work situations from two different dimensions, dimensions that have been important in understanding the narratives of the individuals interviewed:

1. To what degree the individual's work situation is tied to the temporary project or the permanent organisational context
2. To what degree project work is routine or exception to the individual

The question if the individual is actually representing a project or an organisation in her work is not always that easy to answer, but individuals often tend to make such narrative separations (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2001). If you are employed in a firm and work by projects, you are of course primarily to be regarded as an employee. From time to time, you will also act as primarily being a project member. Like the project manager, who always has to represent her project in relation to colleagues, other projects and stakeholders, project team members must also quite often view themselves primarily as project members. Often, there is

a matrix problem behind this – i.e. that the individual serve two masters and have double loyalties.

A second dimension of importance in this discussion is if project work is routine or exception to the individual. Projects have always been described as unique once-in-a-lifetime-events, far away from everyday repetitive boredom. Consequently, project work has also been seen as something unique and exciting, where the individual will perform new and different tasks in the pursuit of ambitious and innovative goals. The project thus becomes a kind of temporary system, in which you can work unusually hard, have unusually fun, being unusually creative. Against this, one might depict a modern reality in which projects are not only repetitive, but also the work form around which the entire operations of firms are built. As mentioned above, the project-based firm is an increasingly common phenomenon, and many individuals spend their entire working days in different projects. This does not mean that all projects are identical, but that they are executed using standardised procedures – every product is still unique, but the process of 'assembling' the product is the same.

From these two analytical dimensions, it is possible to identify different types of project work. It can be everything from work situations implying repetitive project work for an organisation, to situations where projects are unique and independent of all other work. To this, we can also add work normally not labelled projects, but functioning like projects in practice – such as renting episodes for employees in staffing firms. The main types of project work – and thus project workers – should thereby be possible to describe in the following way:
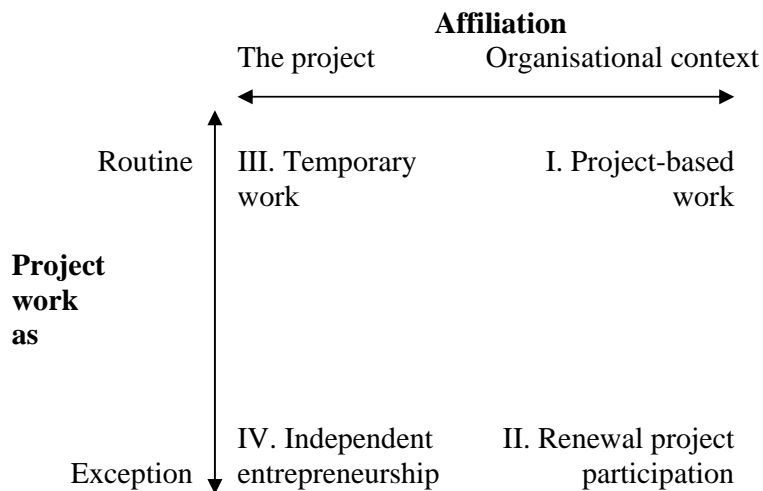

Affiliation

	The project	Organisational context
Routine	III. Temporary work	I. Project-based work
Exception	IV. Independent entrepreneurship	II. Renewal project participation

Project work as

Fig 1. A typology of project work situations

In the upcoming sections, these four types of project work will be discussed more in detail, and analysed through narratives from individuals.

3. Project-based work (type I)

This is what most project working individuals do most of their time, and it implies that the individual spends all or most of her time working in different projects within a stable organisational framework. Since the project form is well accepted in the organisation, each

single project is not that unusual to the individual – it is rather a natural part of an ongoing employment relation. The individual thus also views herself mainly as a representative for the organisation rather than the project – something that from time to time also can be said about the project manager. Project work in this form may be contract based customer projects, but many R&D operations are also organised in this fashion.

For the individuals constantly working by projects, work means 'starting over again' all the time. While the respective project managers focus on their respective projects at hand, the individuals working by projects experience a long-term trajectory consisting of a long series of projects. The conclusions one might draw from viewing each project as a separate entity are thus not always the relevant ones from an individual perspective. One consequence of this is that projects are rarely designed taking previous experiences and workloads of the individual into account:

> "...even though I was not as interested from the beginning, since I was still very tired from the previous project. I felt quite apathetic, I must say. I didn't feel fun, not new or anything. Then we ran into some problems on the road that we had not expected at all. It was a bit hard for me to do something about those problems. I knew exactly how to do most things, but I was too tired to commit myself. Otherwise, I am very committed – let's do it, damn it!" (Carl, systems expert)

While the project form of work rests upon the assumption that team members shall be committed and motivated from the start of each project, individuals often feel that not all projects are interesting enough to awake a sense of commitment. A related problem is that there is hardly any time for reflection and learning between projects due to over-optimistic time schedules and a constant shortage of resources:

> "In May and June we worked long evenings and weekends in order to finish the project. Then it was not finished anyway, and we postponed it into the autumn, when the next project was supposed to start. And now during autumn, we worked in the new project during daytime and went over to the old customer company in the evenings. The project was miscalculated from the beginning, it became much larger than we had expected." (Matthew, computer programmer)

Usually, most projects are quite interesting despite the time strains, since each new project is always different from the previous ones in at least some dimension. What happens is that many individuals start to wonder about their professional development and what kinds of careers that they might be able to pursue. The 'reward' for committing oneself to a demanding project is often expectations on an even higher degree of commitment to another demanding project. In their current occupation, the future is perceived as an endless row of new projects, and it is not unusual to find young people who want to leave the project-based operations (i.e. the revenue generating activities of the organisations) for 'strategic' and often less profitable tasks:

> "Between us, I've told my bosses that I have now been project manager for eight years, and that I find it damn boring. I don't want to do this full time, anymore, so we have been discussing another tasks. And one task is projects. Another task is knowledge development, quality development, methods development, coaching junior consultants and so on." (Edith, project manager)

If conceived in an unrealistic manner, each project becomes an urgent matter for the team members. The team members, whose main responsibility is to deliver the project according to specifications, must then find ways to speed up the project process (i.e. by working more hours per day). In some consultancy companies, consultants are also responsible for generating a certain income, i.e. by charging the customers a specific number of hours per year at a fixed hourly fee. If the market price for consultancy hours falls below that fixed fee, it means that consultants will have to add free hours in order to generate the same income. The result is often a vicious circle, where urgent situations are resolved through heroic action, and heroic action becomes the taken-for-granted solution to urgent situations (cf Perlow, 1997). No one questions why the urgent situations appeared in the first place.

In order to enhance project-based work for the individual, most people point at the importance of realistic expectations on each new project and the necessity of working with one project only at the time. The task should be interesting and stimulating to the team and also important and wanted in the project environment. Moreover, projects should not be too large and/or too long, and the individual should be able to control her own working hours. In addition, finally, someone else than the individual and/or the project manager should assume some responsibility for career development and other long-term issues, getting an overview of the individual's entire work situation. Most HRM procedures have been designed for permanent organisations where each individual has a position, not for project-based organisations where positions are non-existing or are changed all the time (ECOSIP, 1993).

4. Renewal project participation (type II)

Except for the 'ordinary' repetitious project work (type I), it is also increasingly common that individuals are involved in all sorts of renewal projects in and in between organisations. For the participant, these renewal projects are often unique efforts that are something different as compared to the everyday work situation, and usually the intention is that the organisation is to be brought to a higher and better level through a temporary process (cf Blomquist and Packendorff, 1998). Renewal projects often emerge from some sort of intentional strategy to improve the functionality of the organisation, often inspired by current fashion in the management-consulting sector. Examples of such are TQM projects, quality certification projects, BPR projects and Balanced Scorecard projects. In addition, there are also renewal projects emanating from the eternal need to adapt the organisation to new external circumstances, such as merger projects, training projects, re-organisations and closedowns. What are common to all these episodes is that they are a part of the everyday work in the organisation and that only a few individuals represent each project. For some managers, the incessant handling of such projects may lead to a work situation resembling the one in Type I, i.e. a situation in which most of the time is spent implementing renewal projects (cf Lundin, 1990).

The usual point of departure for the individual that becomes a participant in a renewal project is that she should be able to perform her ordinary job while temporarily committing herself to the project. For the individuals that are attracted to the renewal effort by interest, this is easier than for those who are automatically involved due to a certain position in the organisation. In any case, there are always time conflicts between ordinary work and renewal project participation:

> *"Well, my priorities are with curing the patients, but on the other hand the management control systems must be redesigned, so... Lately, I have been working 150%, which is not good, you can't take it for too long. I have green clothes on me, I might be called to surgery any minute. I always work with the management control system in the morning, but then I am on emergency duty. Sometimes I sit at home working before the evening duty, so I hope that this management control project can be finished some day, so that everything works again. Its though, for everybody." (George, clinic head)*

Of course, there are also several advantages for those who participate. One important such advantage is that a renewal project is an opportunity for the participant to widen her competence and show her abilities to others. In that way, these projects can become both learning experiences and career steps:

> *"Concerning my managerial work here at the clinic, I have had the worst three months ever. Nicole, my administrative assistant, was headhunted to a private company in the health care sector, and suddenly I had to do everything myself. But I'm happy for Nicole. She was an ordinary nurse when I employed her in the re-organisation effort, and she then proved to be an excellent clinic administrator. Now she is country manager here in Sweden for a Danish firm. Luckily, I have now been able to find a new assistant." (Barbara, clinic head)*

A problem with renewal projects is that it often tends to become too many of them in contemporary organisations. In complex organisations such as health care, many parallel renewal projects with different 'senders' often end up on the middle managers' desk at the same time, and for non-managerial participants it might look like the organisation is just processing an incessant flow of new change projects that never becomes as revolutionary as they are supposed to. The 'good renewal project', from an individual standpoint, is based on an important cause and well planned from the beginning so that participants can make the necessary adjustments in their ordinary schedules. It is also a project that actually ends in a manner that can be subject to evaluation, and it is important that all participants feel recognised for their efforts. Voluntary participation is, of course, an advantage, but it often leads to problems for the renewal project manager:

> *"One of the main problems is that I have the duty to implement this project, but I have no authority to force anyone else to participate if they don't want to. If Sophie says that she has to take care of a sales conference instead, I just have to accept that. It does not happen all the time, but there are some clear drawbacks with voluntary participation. What I can do is to be damn nagging. As the project goes on, I just become increasingly nagging and persistent. Everyone else have something else to do, this is not their main concern, so to speak." (Bill, public relations manager)*

The individual is thus often left on her own balancing between the ordinary job and the renewal project. Unlike the case of project-based work (type I), there are often no clear indications from management on how to behave in these situations, and many individuals feel that they are never prioritise the right things. For some, this dilemma is temporary by nature, since renewal projects tend to fade out after a while. However, those who are recognised for good performance in renewal projects are usually those that are asked anew when new reforms are initiated.

5. Temporary work (type III)

'Temporary work' refers to a work situation in which the individual works in and by similar projects on a regular basis, but where the organisational context is less important or even non-existing. For example, this is the case for many self-employed and/or free-lancing individuals who assume responsibility for temporary assignments – consultants, journalists, actors etc. In this category we can also include 'temps' (here used in the sense introduced by Garsten, 1999); individuals who are not necessarily involved in projects, but who work with temporary assignments in their ordinary work. This means that they have some formal organisational affiliation to some sort of consulting firm, but that they spend their whole time in different customer organisations as temporary employees with routine assignments. Many temps work mostly by themselves without being surrounded by a team, and they are not expected to become permanent members of the customer organisation, which means that they keep/are kept at some distance (cf Garsten, 1999, Lindgren et al, 2001). This kind of projecticised work is not usually subject to deadlines, but it is still limited in time and implies a high degree of social discontinuity for the individuals. In this type, project work is still routine-based, since the individual learns how to handle new projects and perhaps builds up long-term relations to some customers and project owners (i.e. makes the situation more similar to type I).

Even though the most obvious example of temporary workers are those who only get temporary jobs or those who are permanently employed in a staffing firm but temporarily "rented out" to customer companies, there are also many others that are mainly affiliated to projects – such as consultants spending all their time at the customers offices. While project work in this respect shares many of the attributes mentioned above, there are also some specific ones for this kind. One important such attribute is the lack of organisational affiliation, implying a kind of loneliness and shifting social contexts at work:

> *"Loyalties are a bit moved there. Concerning the big telecom company, it's an old account that we have been building up since three years, and we have not switched people there often enough. We cannot have the same people in the same customer's office too long, because then they start to identify themselves with the customer's organisation. We had one guy who quit, he is still there but he is not with us anymore. Now, we have taken care of that problem – half a year with the same customer is the upper limit." (Douglas, project manager)*

Except for a lack of close relations and friendship at work, not being a permanent member of an organisation also means a lack of expectations on long-term contributions to the organisation. They are not expected to be present for a long time and they do not expect that from themselves either – the result is a temporary, detached, superficial organisational membership episode. Temporary workers are there to fulfil a task or deliver a project, and it is up to them to handle their own competence development and find career opportunities. In addition, aside from the lack of social affiliation, temporary workers with temporary employment contracts are also exposed to an economic precariousness:

> *"It depends entirely on their status, who they are. There is a proletariat of unemployed actors with very little to do. At least where live theatre is concerned, there is always a lot of movies and commercials produced. But in live theatre, it's sad – of course you can live on it, but you have to work with contacts everywhere, do commercials et cetera." (Stephen, theatre director)*

Among temporary workers, it is not unusual to strive for a situation where permanent employment contracts and/or affiliation to a permanent organisation can be achieved (i.e. type I). Alternatively, the individual may try to develop a specific competence that she can bring to the market herself, i.e. moving towards independent entrepreneurship (type IV). It is hard to do both things at the same time, since it means combining short-term execution of income-yielding projects with long-term networking and competence development. In that sense, temporary work as it has been described here is not a stable mode of work for the individual (which is also the case in renewal project participation, i.e. type II). This is also something that many employers of temporary workers, such as staffing firms, have realised:

> "…a lot of those who we rent out are employed by the companies to which they are rented out, and suddenly they realise something. This is actually not that bad, you can try two or three companies during a year and then you can feel for yourself if you would like to work for that company or not. You learn how the company works, you broaden your network, and then you might be offered employment. Then the employer and the employee have tested each other, it becomes like a mutual test employment during the renting period. Then you become employed and everything is fine." (Neil, staffing firm employee)

6. Independent entrepreneurs (type IV)

Independent entrepreneurs, finally, are often also working as consultants for customer firms, but they can also be specialists or artists who do temporary work for others on a self-employment basis. People that voluntarily commit themselves to different sorts of non-salaried work or community work are also to be found in this category. Since the tasks can vary a lot, each project is an exceptional one, and requires a lot of experience and creativity. The free-lancing entrepreneur can fill a usual consultant role, but he/she can also serve as sub-contractor to larger project organisations. They lack any organisational affiliation; instead, they commit themselves to each project and build a professional network of other individuals in their "industry". This means a high degree of social discontinuity, and usually also deadline-related stress and an "invoice pressure" to generate enough revenues to keep the personal economy going even during periods between projects or in competence development. Their life is flexible and full of exceptions, and it can sometimes be hard to combine with a routinised private life. In a way, it resembles the classic entrepreneurial life path, but with the exception that they do not always start firms (cf Kupferberg, 1998).

> "I think that I've always did that – if I had no money, I just took any job I could get. I worked during holidays in some ski resort or distributed newspapers in the mornings and things like that. So there are always jobs available if you want some money. I think like that now also, with my new company, that if I get no assignments I could always jump in as schoolteacher or so. There are plenty of jobs that I could have for a while – not until I'm 65 of course, rather to make sure there are some money." (Sheila, consultant)

The main motivator for independent entrepreneurs is usually a burning desire to make an idea come true. If it appears that it is not possible to transform the idea into a real project within the boundaries of permanent organisations, the individual feel that the wisest thing to do is to do it outside these boundaries. The project itself may have deadlines as identified in funding application procedures or seasonal target market variations, but the main restriction is often

the time and the resources that the independent entrepreneur can put into the endeavour. Consequently, the progress of the project is usually a result of the individual's ability to organise scarce resources in terms of money, time and (often voluntary) human resources in her social network:

> *"When first came to this school with my daughter, this old feeling came over me from the time when I went here myself. The house, the classrooms, the old-fashioned pedagogy. I did not want that for her, so I decided that I just had to contribute something to the school. I am a doctor, and I have worked with drug problems for many years. So, I became a board member of the parents association and initiated several projects. Right now, it is not easy, because I have a lot to do at work and I also have this 'prom project' where a group of parents try to organise and attract sponsors for the best student ball ever. But then, I will start again with the drug issues. It is just something that I have to do, since the school cannot make it on their own." (Claire, parent)*

As a professional career, independent entrepreneurship do not imply a predictable, straightforward path – it is rather to do like the nomads (Cadin et al, 2000); to do what seems interesting and get increasingly immersed into relevant social networks that can provide some sense of belonging and economic security (cf Jones, 1996). One consequence might be that the individual is offered a somewhat permanent position based on her experience and previous performance, a position that can always be left if something else appears:

> *"I have always worked by projects, except for my new firm – so far at least. Somehow, I think this is a consequence of starting my professional life in the cultural sector. You don't get much permanent jobs there, rather short assignments. Therefore, I have just slipped into different ventures from time to time – events, exhibitions, business advising, regional development, and voluntary work. I actually enjoy working in ventures where I know that my effort is limited in time – I cannot imagine working at the same place until I am 65 years old. In a way, my career is thus a result of my personality. It is satisfying to see the results of you actions, but I am often anxious when we are approaching deadline – what am I to do afterwards? There could be a transitory period before the next project starts. I often think that I should actually enjoy a permanent position if the work content was the right one – if you don't like it, you can always quit." (Sheila)*

7. Project work forms and life in the projecticised society

Given the multitude of projects to which modern individuals are exposed, one might ask if this is "just" a work form without connections to life in general. No, it is not. One reason for this is the temporal connection between work and private life. Projects must be delivered on time, and the individual must therefore be ready to allocate the necessary time to them – time that must be taken from somewhere else, usually from private life (Eaton and Bailyn, 2000).

Another – more subtle – reason is that projects have become a figure of thought, implying that life can and will consist of a number of temporary efforts, critical incidents, adventures etc, that are stimulating and sometimes leads onwards and upwards. The individuals construct these temporary efforts in order to increase the ability to affect their life paths in desired directions, and they often become milestones in their subjectively constructed life stories (Lindgren et al, 2001). Examples of experiences thus subject to projectisation are

employments, organisational affiliations, moves, holiday activities, episodes in the raising of children or in the marriage, social activities etc.

These life form implications of project work are of course not always evident. Establishing a narrative connection between long working hours and a lack of time for family life is easier than claiming that a projecticised work situation implies a tendency towards viewing everything in life in terms of temporary sequences of action. It is also not often possible to relate different forms of project work to different sorts of projecticised life forms, since many of the consequences of project work to private life is the same. In all four types of project work discussed above, individuals are exposed to time limits (urgency) and increased demands on generating own income (self-marketing). The work situation thus becomes a result of the individual's own priorities, made in an often ambiguous context (self-responsibility). What is different is how different individuals handle these work characteristics in relation to life in general, but before going into that question, we will briefly return to our narrators concerning how urgency, self-marketing and self-responsibility affects their life forms in general:

Self-responsibility means flexible working hours. A common experience of many project-working individuals is that it is up to them to decide how to allocate their time and efforts – the individual in the workplace is becoming increasingly de-contextualised. In the traditional debate about industrial working conditions, this has been depicted as an ideal to strive for, but for many project workers this is actually a problem. The individual is always under the command of one or several project managers naturally wanting the best for their respective projects, and there might be other managers demanding attention for different tasks. Often, there are no one else but the individual herself that monitors her entire work situation, and she must thus be able to negotiate against a number of superiors with sometimes fuzzy and conflicting claims while still giving the impression of being ambitious and career-oriented (Eaton and Bailyn, 2000). Since that is not always possible – even in a rather non-hierarchic country like Sweden – the individual is often left on her own to prioritise between different tasks and allocate time to them, respectively. In the end, this usually means flexible working hours, i.e. a flexibility to work extra hours when someone else needs it.

Flexible work hours mean flexible family hours. Working extra hours, often on short notice due to urgencies, also means that these hours must be taken from somewhere. Since most individuals need a fixed amount of sleep, the extra hours must be taken from the time that would otherwise have been spent with families and friends. In the traces of such a behaviour, divorces and an eroded social network follows. In addition, since the individual spends most of her time working, work also tends to occupy the mind – even when home with the family, the individual reflects upon work and discuss it with her spouse and friends.

> *"...the important thing at my previous job was that when the new legislation was issued, the projects should be delivered. There, I led some small projects and also a project big as hell with a large budget and a team of 16 people. That broke me down, I could say, because I worked 65 hours and six days a week. And that was about the third time that I had no friends left – you loose them, because you are not very outgoing when you are always at work." (Edith, project manager)*

Flexible family hours imply a need for family projects or a need for nothing. Given the quite unpredictable and often short time periods that many project workers can spend with families and friends, there often evolves a deeply felt urge to make as good use as possible of the few

precious hours actually available. Otherwise, time will just pass without being devoted to something special, something that could at least partially make up for the usual absence. And what is the best way of achieving something special given a short amount of time and a stream of everyday routines that can easily consume all the time available? To organise projects, of course!

One – quite evident – alternative to create family projects as a response to work projects, is to do nothing. Constantly being under a high and complex workload may deprive the individual of the energy and creativity needed to initiate something special in her private life, and off-work hours will thus be spent relaxing and recovering:

> *"Mostly I spend time with my family, with my spouse and our kids. Those outside that... I see my brother occasionally, some close friends now and then, but they don't get much time, they are in the outer layer. But all our acquaintances have small children, they know how it is [laughter]. When you come home you are so damn tired of order, planning and structures, you don't want to accept that at home. You cannot be a project manager at home also." (Douglas, project manager)*

Single life and non-employment – ways to handle flexible work hours? Among our project workers, a substantial portion seems to have realised that it is quite hard to combine project-based work with traditional life forms such as the core family. Earlier, one individual could usually support a family, that was taken care of the other parent during work hours – i.e. the traditional life form combination of salaried work practice and housewife practice (Jakobsen and Karlsson, 1993). Today, this life form has changed into a dual career practice in which both parents pursue professional careers while at the same time trying to find time to raise children and preserve the mutual love that once was the basis on which their family was founded (Andersson, 1993). If one or both are also then involved in work practices such as project, work, this might be too hard for many to handle with satisfying results. Instead, individuals choose alternative life forms in order to escape the strains. One such life form of growing importance is single life, i.e. life without a partner:

> *"I live as a single downtown – I like to be out, see people, read, take pictures, going to the opera. When I work I am totally into it, I cannot do it otherwise. Then there are some things that have to be put aside, and that is not so damn funny. Smart guys don't fall down from the sky [laughter]. But this is quite acceptable. Of course there is always hunting season, and I am a part of that, to find the right guy. But living as a single is not that strange anymore, quite accepted, actually." (Edith)*

> *"A colleague of mine in another authority, Jenny, she has told me what has happened there as the workload became even heavier. Couples with children actually divorce, because then they know that they will at least have every second week available for work only!" (Mary, project leader)*

An alternative life form is to choose family life over professional life, establishing a non-costly life that do not presuppose high and always increasing incomes. This is sometimes the case among independent entrepreneurs, who find their life form outside established career practices:

> *"Our house was a cheap one, and we have almost no debts on it. And a very old, very cheap car. And when my husband was to start his company, we did not calculate on how*

much he could earn. We calculated backwards; how much did we need each month to keep the family going? We also realised that we could skip some costs – we did not need any childcare since we were both to work from home. Things like that, counting on a life style, sort of." (Sheila)

8. Who are the enemies of the temporary society?

The basic question discussed in this chapter is if projectisation of society has implied a better life for individuals, at the workplace and in life in general. What is clear is that work has changed – not for all, but for many. The range of different ways of employment and work organisation is wider than ever, and project-related work forms are just one aspect of this development. What is also clear is that changes in work practices has implied new possibilities for individuals to re-construct their lives, even though the remaining institutional structures in society has made such re-construction a marginal phenomenon so far. However, it is also clear that these changes are not making life easier for the inhabitants of the temporary society – unless they make conscious efforts to escape them.

From the empirically informed discussions above, we can identify some features of life in the temporary society from an individual perspective. First, in its clear-cut form, temporary society will imply an increased de-coupling of the individual from her context. Both work and life in general will be episodic by nature, and there will be an increasing lack of permanent structures, organisations, core families, bases for social identity construction etc – parts of the context will disappear in its current forms. Second, the temporary society will be more open, less predictable, and thus more risky to live in. To an increased extent, the individual will assume responsibility for personal success and failure herself, which points towards an increased inclination to view life as a risky path that must be analysed and calculated. Third, the remaining permanent structures in society will require even more co-construction by individuals and organisations in order to survive – structures that we still want, structures that provide a sense of security and belonging. We still want organisations, families, old friends – all which makes life somewhat habitual, not only changing. In this defence of permanence, organisations of today are not always supportive when designing working conditions for individuals. If they do not want to become temporary phenomena themselves, they should be.

When Karl Popper wrote his essay "The open society and its enemies" (1945), he challenged Plato's philosophies and Marxism by disputing their scientific claims and advocating a society where free individuals changed things stepwise in interaction. Of course, neither Plato nor Marx could directly be seen as enemies of the open society at that time. Rather, the enemies were those who fought for their – according to Popper, totalitarian – ideas in the allowing comfort of the very society that they wanted to do away with.

The individuals behind the narratives quoted in this chapter have chosen different ways to work and live, and they have different experiences of living in the temporary society. At the same time, they all find projectisation problematic. While work seem to have become partly more stimulating and individualised, it has also colonised the lives of individuals ad left them on their own. In many ways, the enemies of the temporary society could be the individuals that construct it – the very same individuals that we thought to be its proponents and its beneficiaries. It is as if we like the idea of leaving the hierarchical mass society behind, without wanting to live with the consequences of its alternative. Just as in the classical conflict between 'open' and 'closed' societies, the temporary society cannot win without

loosing its attractiveness. To individuals, projects imply a lot of hardship but also something different, exciting and entrepreneurial. But we do not want that all the time, do we?

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