



## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Decision-Making between Line and Project - How does the Organization deal with “Program Doubling”?

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### Project management as part of bank programming

Today, the European banking sector is currently initiating a vast number of reorganizational projects in order to comply with changing regulation requirements following the *financial crisis*. Since then, regional state banks and private banks have striven significantly more towards equity capital and adhered to stricter regulations: “Few other sectors were regulated as much as banks in this period” (Müller). Besides *regulatory pressure*, banks are also suffering in general as a result of *low interest rates* and are rethinking *their product portfolio*. Additionally, banks are facing severe competition from *financial technology* (“fin-tech”) companies which are likewise forcing them to rethink traditional banking models. In an attempt to respond to these unprecedented changes, banks are undertaking reform projects. Hodgson’s notion that “(t)he linking of project management and change management has increased project management’s influence” also applies to the banking.

In this article, we want to shed light on the interplay between projects and line management using an organizational programming perspective. In order to analyze the relationship between routine and reform of programming, we develop a decision-theoretical framework. The interplay between line and project cannot simply be reduced to a pure technical relationship; a profound analysis requires a wide range of aspects, including political, inter-personal, social-interactive as well as cultural dimensions [1].

In our study, we adopt a *systems theory* viewpoint which observes projects as “goal programs” that are integrated into regular line management [2]. “A systemic view in studying projects can embrace both the technical and the social aspects of projects.” [3]. The purpose of our study is to analyze how public banks are able to conduct a fairly large number of change projects, while at the same time maintaining operational efficiency in its traditional banking activities. We focus, therefore, on the simultaneity of project and organization as separate organizational spheres of programming. This

co-existence of two distinct types of decision making is of particular importance, because projects are responsible for the definition of permanent tasks, although such tasks traditionally belong to line organization. Projects as “exploration rooms” and reforms act as precursors of both new and subsequent decisions following new decisions [4-6].

The selected German bank is faced simultaneously with several regulatory and strategic requirements and uses projects to address these demands. In a first step, we outline the organizational integration of the project from a theoretical point of view. From this, we introduce a systems theory approach using a) *programs* (organizational rules), b) *communication channels* (hierarchies) and c) *personnel* (recruitment, placement) as basic elements for decision making. The empirical case study will be used for illustrating the three perspectives (programs, communication, personnel) as well as the programming of project and line.<sup>1</sup>

### Temporary organization and its integration into the decision structure

As Lundin & Söderholm [7] postulate in their analysis of the “Temporary Organization”, one of the core features of projects is the temporary nature. Temporary organization is basically used synonymously with project-oriented forms: “Temporary organizations and projects represent a common and important

<sup>1</sup>We use the term “projects” when we talk about the mode of working defined in the following section, i.e. temporary arrangements, which are designed for specific purposes and require special resources. We use the term “project organization” or “project management” when referring to actual operations and the supervision of this type of arrangement, or when the interviewees use these terms in their descriptions.

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part of economic and social life today. Efforts to renew businesses and to change existing operations in business firms are often organized as projects" [7]. Precisely described task-related coordination can be understood as *programming*. Programming specifies *decisions*, especially regarding operational flexibility, language or facilitating the integration of expectations [8]. Given this, organizations determine under which conditions "decisions of the (organizational) system are accepted as factually correct" [9, 10].

Temporary organization does not necessarily address the whole organization, but that special tasks within organizations are only temporary – because the organization "survives its projects" [1] as long as the work of an organization consists of "sequences of projects" [1]. Organizations that have been set up only for projects do not display "sequences" but are characterized by "numerous auxiliary facilities (storage and transport, settlement programs etc.)", in short: "one-off-projects" [1] that define them as fully project-driven organizations. In this respect, projects are "complex (...) purposive programs" [1].

In the following, we shall concentrate on "project sequences" [11]. Projects are characterized by a variety of forms and an analytic mindset that is essentially shaped by business experience. The internal arrangement of projects is punctuated by an frequency of time frames including phases, milestones and briefings that rhythmize the project from the end backwards. Temporarily formatted organization is often preferred when organizational tasks cannot be performed in the established routinized processes due to high complexities, rapidness, interconnectedness or deadlines. In particular, the interaction between different decision-making groups with simultaneous ambiguities in *weakly structured* project spaces calls for a specific decision design, as Kühl [11] points out.

In our case a challenge is, how decision structures are negotiated between line organization and the newly established project units. According to Thompson [12], business and bank organizations are divided into a *technical core* representing the actual business activities and so-called *boundary-spanning units*, which surround the technical core. Boundary-spanning units help to buffer the core and reduce insecurities but are also subject to increased pressure to demonstrate their legitimacy. The organization may decide to delegate operative tasks (e.g. administrative center, human resources, project office too) back to the technical core, rendering the boundary-spanning unit redundant.

With respect to projects, a central boundary-spanning unit "project office/project department" has to legitimate itself by promising professional services for the organization. The project unit may therefore intervene in line routines and present itself as competent. If the project unit is too defensive, its use for line operations is going to be challenged ("paper tiger"). Conversely, if the project unit acts in a confrontational manner, it will provoke conflicts with line operations. In addition, organizational leadership may have a vested interest in having a strong project management unit which enforces standards and supervises local activities in line operations, which in turn may be met with reluctance among line employees. In summary, we can argue that additionally integrated units for projects, whose origins, human resources and budget have been taken from line operations, create an intermediary space or structure which results in an increased need to negotiate between the traditional management and the (newly) methodological experts.

### Organized social systems as decision systems

According to Luhmanns Systems Theory [13], *organizations* constitute – besides *interaction* systems and *societal* systems – special types of social systems (**Figure 1**). Organizations, as Luhmann later contended, in essence composed of decisions [1,14]. Although the decision focus is compatible with approaches of classical rational choice, a systems theory approach pursues different goals. A sociological and psychological "coloring" of economics, however, led to a "rather descriptively oriented research strand, which deals with decisions as problem solving behavior" [15]. In the systems theory perspective, decisions are an expression of *all* events in organizations. Whatever happens in organizations, it happens in a concatenation of decisions [16-18]; insofar "that any other communications can almost always be construed as decisions from which other decisions may follow." [18]. This is also called recursivity [18].

The Luhmannian organizational approach is originally anchored in the behavioral and decision-making theory of organization, especially in connection with the concept of "bounded rationality" [19]. From a systems theory perspective, decisions are not exclusively the result of deliberate declarations from top leadership. Decisions "mean not only the rare great decisions that come after careful deliberation, supposedly through a kind of internal jolt, but the continuously selective happening" [20]. Decisions in organizational social systems



Figure 1: System types of modern society in Luhmann's Theory [13].

are primarily a “special kind of communication” [2,17] and the “basal operation” [18], with which organizations “extract the message act for specifying follow-up operations” [18]. Thus, communicating means decision making in autopoietic organized systems. Autopoiesis means the ability of a system to reproduce and maintain itself by availing own means [2]. The system activity of the decision consists of facilitating the interconnection of following operations (self-references) in order to ensure the autopoiesis: “an organization is a system that generates itself as organization” [2,3] Organized systems “continue themselves by connecting decision to decision. Therefore, organizations can be designated as ‘decision machines’.” [14].

The organizational decision structure denotes the prerequisites of decision making within the organization. “The organization knows structures only as decision premises” [21]. Decision premises include *programs*, *communication* and *personnel* as well as the informal category organizational culture. System theory defines the term “culture” as undecided/undecidable processes of organization. Organizational culture may involve all formal premises equivalently in an informal way [22]. These bundle premises “do not determine decisions but they do influence them strongly” [8] (**Figure 2**).

**a) Programs** (e.g. guidelines, manuals, contracts, project order) include *rules* or *criteria* that can be used for evaluating the adequacy or tenability of decisions [2,9]. Programs organize the governed allocation of decisions and provide a frame, in which expectations are specified [10]. As a consequence, the programming of an organization can used synonymously with the term *organization* itself [9]. Programs are considered as “fundamentals” of the organization. Therefore, programs are not necessarily established, resolved or passed in a proper order. Rather, they grow incrementally, are continuously modified without dissolving former programs or proclaiming new ones. Baecker [18] speaks of the “maelstrom of decisions”. Decision programs “organize” the organization’s contingency, i.e., they reduce the complexity of the decisional situation. The organization can limit meaningful the “range of alternatives” [10] by choosing the most suitable decision. Programs also define the standards of decisions, they clarify “which actions in the organization are to be viewed as right, and which as wrong.” [22]. Program premises operate at

the core of organizations and therefore influence the other premises as well [9].

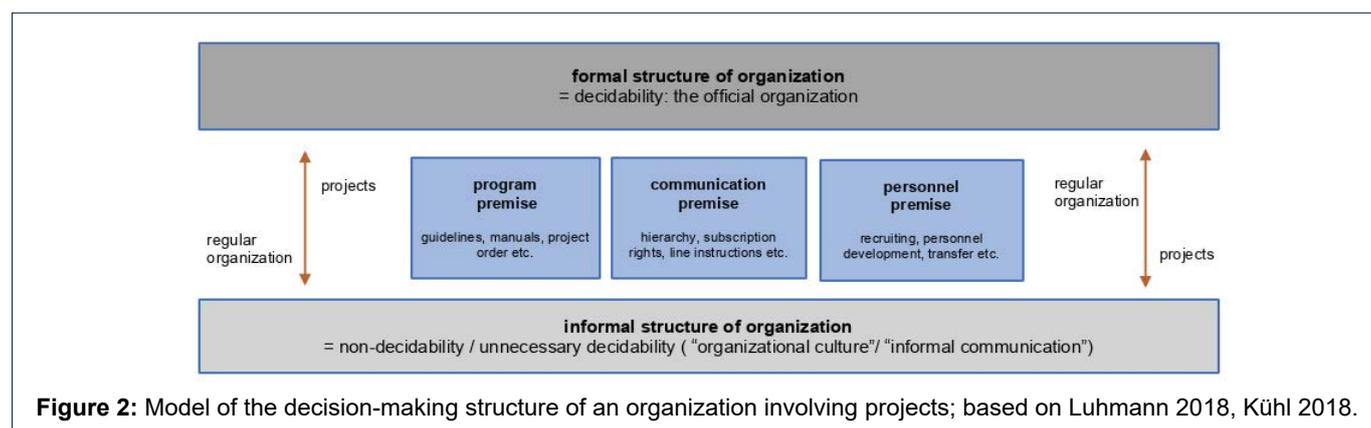
**b) Decisional options** are also limited by **communication channels** – e.g. hierarchy, subscriptions, line instructions, committees [2,9,22]. However, communication cannot be reduced to only the actual interactions – communications are in accordance with the hierarchy; they are used for preliminary decisions “how one can or must communicate in the organization” [11,22]. By the means of hierarchical structure, organizations are constituted as work-sharing systems. Internally, they develop “subsystems” [16], which results in a division of work and the local limitation of decisions. Projects also can evolve into subsystems; this happens when the project is able to generate a certain autonomy and complexity from its own resources.

**c) Members** are needed to make organizations “operational” [10]. The third limitation of decisional options results from **personnel** – recruitment, transfer, personnel development, termination – [2,22]. Persons as human beings (psychic systems) remain part of the organization’s environment [10], but personal characteristics (persuasiveness, charisma, reliability, stress resistance etc.) can influence the decisional options of the organization. The decision for specific decision makers unfolds for a variety of reasons: qualification, career type, contacts or „reputations that the individual has gained from his own experience and training.” [10].

### Methodology

As mentioned, the current changes in the bank organization emerged rapidly in the last few years and were experienced often as being unpredictable. Banks reacted to these regulatory and competitive demands by implementing new projects. In order to explore this new type of projectification within classical bank organizations, we utilized qualitative-interpretative research methods [23]. The aim was to find out how banks construct projectification within their decision programs.

Accordingly, the method should not become a cult or a corset – it should be useful and help to generate new insights. This requires the researcher to explore most creatively when they do not have too many predefined theories or concepts about the phenomenon, but nevertheless good reasons to believe



position	department	gender
project manager	project portfolio management / pp	m
project manager	project portfolio management / pp	m
line & project manager	financial office / controlling	m
line & project manager	IT regulation & services	f
line & project manager	controlling / supervisory registration	m
line & project manager	revision	f
line & project manager	risk office	m
line & project manager	services	m
line & project manager	project portfolio management / pp	m
line manager	registration office	f

The interviews (60 — 90 minutes) were audio-recorded and transcribed according to the agreement with the bank and with the interviewees (= informed consent).

Table 1: Personal data of the interviewees.

that there are ideas and elements worth discovering [23,24]. From the spectrum of qualitative methods available, we chose the *exploratory case study* [25]. Initial contact to the bank was established through one author. We decided to visit the head quarter, allowing us to immerse ourselves in the bank’s activities. In addition to that, project-related documents (presentations, project reports, forms, protocols) were analyzed. Of its staff the bank provided a list of names that had been increasingly affected by these projects.

In *semi-structured interviews*, participants were asked to briefly describe their background and their involvement in change project initiatives. Aspects such as work relationships, documentation, leadership, conflicts and dependencies in change processes were tackled during the interview. Further elaboration, prompts and follow up questions were used on an individual basis to dig deeper into relevant issues. The interview material was analyzed using an inductive approach to data analysis. In a first step, we used an open coding approach to identify concepts relating to challenges and dilemmas in the double structure comprising line and project. Based on this preliminary analysis, we used three decision premises – *program, personnel, communication channels* – to further structure the material. After all data was coded, we utilized several techniques to ensure that our categorization was trustworthy. In the following, we present interview sequences depicting the *interplay between project and line organization* using the three aforementioned decision premises.

## Findings

The public bank is a state bank with a broad credit portfolio. The government has influenced the bank’s business model for many years to focus primarily on corporate customers and the public sector/public services. During the financial crisis, the bank experienced large losses resulting from investment business. Today it is the declared goal of to rejuvenate its approaches. Nevertheless, the vertical line with hierarchies focusing on efficiency and stability is still persistent. The changes in the banking triggered new decisional elements and fostering *project work*; i.e. the bank seeks to combine – seemingly – new project-oriented features with its own historically-rooted hierarchical structure. The preliminary result of this development is the formation of a central *project office*.

## Programs

Programming concerns the decision-making framework of an bank organization. In this part we want to analyze relevant organizational requirements for project-oriented decisions within the bank. We used already the term “fundamentals”. In order to foster a project-oriented organization within the bank, the institute decided to establish a project management unit which would be responsible for supervising and coordinating project activities. The unit is also mandated to increase the transparency of project activities in the bank and to report on project progress to the board. In 2016, when the interviews were conducted, the project management unit consisted of only few persons. It is interesting to note that a bigger unit already existed in the past but had been dissolved. A personnel change in the managing board led to the re-establishment of a (smaller) project management unit. Although the unit is currently supported by the chair, the unit would prefer to become more independent and be recognized for its performance and benefits for the whole organization: “*Not all members of staff at the bank support our activities; some project leaders cooperate with the unit and seek advice; others block the unit and avoid contact, and some are really annoyed by the unit*”. The support of top management turns out to be ambivalent, although studies have argued that top management plays a key role in the success of projects. The fact that authorization from leadership is necessary, indicates the fragility of this unit.

In order to coordinate and supervise the bank’s project activities, the unit needs to have *access to the divisions*, thus impacting line management as well as its own decisional structure. Even though the unit should be as minimally intrusive as possible, it is nevertheless dependent on the respective divisions. Usually, the central project leaders act carefully to avoid resource conflicts and escalations. One stepwise approach to introducing project management is the *integration of line employees into project work* while also keeping them in their routine jobs. The idea behind this is to avoid conflicts with the historically rooted centralized bank structure and mentality. Nevertheless, the material reveals that some tensions arise in simultaneously fulfilling line and project tasks. One interviewee talks about the “*two worlds of project*”

*and line management*". Another project worker describes the tasks as very contrary: *"Switching from line tasks to project tasks and vice versa is tricky and challenging – after work I am completely exhausted"*. While line tasks are typically routinized (*run the bank*), project tasks are perceived to be difficult to structure and require creative thinking (*change the bank*). Also, the temporal requirements in project and line work are perceived to be very different. Change projects within the bank follow their own time logic, encompassing scope for experiments, feedback loops, prototyping, and also potential failure. In regulatory projects people often work under intense time pressure causing the bank to recruit additional manpower from external consultancies. Line managers can also influence the success of a project through active disruption or delays: *"Line managers always want to take a look at the project status, which can lead to massive delays ... they thwart all kinds of project activities"*.

Even though the number of projects has increased in recent years, projects are still the *"poor relative"* within the bank: *"The lines still dominate the 'conservative' bank"*. Another banker put it as follows: *"The vertical axis is still very strong; the matrix is rather weak ... so the degree of maturity of project management within the bank is still quite low"*. The changes foster a certain *dissolution of boundaries* between line and project when new tasks are assigned and supervised. However, some challenges remain. One reason is that line managers often have to share their employees with project managers which limits their available time capacities for line work. As a consequence, some line managers tend to shift projects to other units in order to avoid additional work. *"We try to be as good as possible, but our capacities are limited"*. Projects are often done on top of the normal job: *"You have to shoulder projects on top of your routine tasks, but you do not get the support you need – it's like 'sink or swim'"*.

In order to deal with the complexities, the organization introduced a so-called *"traffic light system"*. Using red, yellow or green flashing light indicators, the bank attempts to assess the risks of its projects. It is supposed to help decision makers and leadership to detect potential problems early on and introduce countermeasures. As several interviewees note, there is a tendency for decision makers (project leaders, board members, divisional directors) to prefer green, even though it causes problems for the project. One problem is the connection between target agreements and the traffic light system. If the project shows red, trust may be lower. Since there is a tendency to favor "green", the interpretation of the results is already relativized and expectations are lowered. However, the status indicator system is not intended to be a "controlling system"; rather it is informal evaluations, intuitions and experiences as secondary pillars that are necessary for assessing the project performance. The status indicator system provides an informative basis for further assessments.

### **Personnel**

In this category, we summarize our findings on human resources, including aspects on competences, development

as well as work and leadership practices of bank and project personnel. Because project staff are mostly recruited within organization, the bank often remain part of line organization which renders it difficult for line managers to manage the leave of absence during the project period. As a consequence, line and project have to compete for the qualified people. *"The projects depend on qualified people, but the division directors do not want to send their best people because they need them for line work."* Due to the lack of qualified internal employees for a variety of change projects, the bank has recruited consultants from outside. Especially the large regulatory or IT projects have been staffed with *external employees*, often recruited from consultancies. However, this recruitment strategy has become expensive for the bank. Besides costs, it has been quite challenging to integrate project solutions and knowledge developed by external employees into the internal organizational structure.

Another personnel related challenge is the recruitment of project leaders. As argued above, recruiting the same project leaders offers the bank more stability and security for complex and ambiguous project work. According to an interviewee, project leadership positions in the bank are frequently filled with the *"older generation"* or managers who could not be promoted any higher within the internal hierarchy: *"If further promotion was not possible, the bank tended to place them into project leadership positions ... with the result that the failed leaders became the new project leaders"*. This phenomenon has also been observed in other studies on projects. Internal transfers are generally practiced in organizations that have little opportunities for releasing staff due to labor legislation [22]. This obviously also applies to a well-established bank: *"They are good bank experts in their field, they also know the bank quite well, because they have a long work history at the institution; but they lack leadership skills"*. Even though some of the big regulatory projects resulted in severe time lags and costs, the responsible project leaders now work on other projects: *"They cannot suddenly be good managers if they were bad managers just a couple of months ago"*. This means, that the organization still adheres to the old values of a public authority with a so-called *"provider-mentality"*. One interviewee summarized: *"That's why this bank is still in the banking crisis"*.

Prior to our research project, the bank has started to develop a specialized *training* for internal employees interested in project management skills. After completing this training, the candidates should have better access to the variety of projects within the bank. While it has been common to recruit internal employees informally for the project, this new initiative seems to provide *more possibilities* for interested internal employees to get a taste of project management. Through formalized project training and broader access to project work, career promotion seems more achievable because project members establish contacts to other units and other hierarchical levels. Also, an officially implemented recruitment system may heighten general interest for project work. The *visibility of project work* is increased in an unobtrusive manner because potential

candidates can choose whether to participate in projects or not. Improved access to projects is, however, accompanied with some challenges that are not so easily solved. One interviewee mentioned that the increasing formalization of project management in the bank actually separates the two worlds of projects and hierarchy instead of melding them together. When people start working exclusively on projects, they lose contact with line work and possibly also their professional field. In addition, line organization increasingly withdraws from project business, *eroding the bridge between projects and line work*. Increasing formalization forces potential employees to decide and commit themselves quite early on to whether they want to be part of the project structure. This may in turn reduce the benefit of the former informal selection processes which also provided room for coincidences, acquaintanceships, and spontaneous interactions.

### Communication

The growing formalization of project management also affects communication channels among bank employees. Despite increasing effort to professionalize and formalize project work within the bank, *informal communication channels* seem to persist and even gain importance. When the project lacks qualified people, informal networks are activated. Several interviewees mentioned that informal relationships are still highly important for getting access to projects as well as securing the project's success in the bank. When *resources* are the essence, informal communication networks are more important than the formal chain of command: "*Under time pressure, you need to activate your network in order to speed up decision making*". In such cases, it becomes important to prevent further project slowdowns by all means by prioritizing contacts to those actors willing to accelerate the process over those who may block it.

Some interviewees welcomed the increasing formalization of project management but did not think it sufficiently warranted a project management structure within the bank. In their opinion, "*project success mainly depends on communication, assertiveness and informal networks, which are difficult to train*". While offering more formal ways to learn project management techniques, the bank simultaneously reduces informal ways of communication that are vital for the long-term success of projects. Another observer pointed out that the coffee bar is a central meeting point for informal meetings, coalition making and decisions. In former times, employees typically met on a Friday in the bar and enjoyed a "Bratwurst" together. This informal time is no longer available due to time pressures and project deadlines which is a problem particularly for younger staff who then focus on technical knowledge but underestimate the informal level of project work. At first glance, the formal communication channels promise security and transparency. Administrative standards raise the expectation that access to projects and development opportunities for project management will at least not deteriorate. Formalization seems to be attractive, especially for newly recruited staff who often need to start from scratch to build an own network.

However, potential candidates need to demonstrate ability and competence for project work which they have often not yet acquired. The abandonment of informal opportunities is also a side-effect of rising organizational costs.

### Discussion – change and program doubling: undecided space

The subject of this paper is the relationship of the (decision) program design of the project space and line organization. For this we have developed a decision-theoretical framing. Systems theory predicts that organizational changes can also lead to a new weighting of decision premises. "If a task (...) cannot be programmed in detail, the demands on the person of the decision maker rise almost automatically." [2,10,6]. The personnel premise obviously gained particular importance due to the increased relevance of projects within the bank. In our case, this is the result of the rather fragmented project structure.

After the banking house crisis, the bank faced two project-related challenges. Firstly, the bank has to conduct a project-like reform of their organization. This process is far-reaching because the bank has to take "decisions about premises of decisions" [13]. Secondly, the bank has to conduct many further projects to correspond to new regulatory demands. Besides external employees, the bank also recruits internal employees from their regular banking business who have to take over project responsibilities. These staff do not automatically possess the required skills for project work, and this presents a problem that cannot be solved easily or quickly and that the bank therefore has to more or less accept – at least in the medium term. The *inner expansion* of project work triggers the development of a "problematic reserve" in which people perform tasks they are not obviously qualified to undertake, or roles are given to people who were previously not promoted in their line jobs. The latter is a product of the personnel premise which is largely "immobilized" [26] in the bank's project management.

We focused on the empirical description of the *co-programming* of line versus project and we observed the current development of a project management unit. It turns out that there is a third level between project (program) and line (program): namely a weakly organized management. This interaction depends on rather cursory, associative, informal arrangements [27] and relies on line and project, but it can neither be programmed independently through one nor the other. Because this interaction of management cannot be completely defined and controlled by project or line, its handling is particularly unpredictable. At the same time, personal contacts between line and project continue to exist within this fragile structure. A characteristic of such interaction is that all participants need to come to a provisional arrangement with each other – even though it may not be in their personal interests. Another characteristic is the space of negotiation. In other words: interactions bind people. This negotiation promotes compromises and willingness to agree with the other side, and it also helps to keeping the agreement – as a form of self-binding and compliance through "entanglement in the process" [28].

This programming of projects *benefits from the fragmented state of project management* within the bank. The fragile structure causes dealings and provisional arrangements which may change from case to case. The fragile structure also leaves the relationship between project and line partially open and diffuse (compare Kuokkanen 2013) – which includes deciding not to decide on certain issues. It is this “non-decision” (according to systems theory, non-decision is “organizational culture”) that ultimately leads to a certain scope of informality.

The observations – doubling of decision programs/co-programming, competition between line and project, personnel shortages, fragile status of the project management unit, increased legitimation needs for project management within the organization, and a large number of projects – help us to understand project management as a “boundary spanning unit” [12]. As already described, boundary spanning units are not directly involved in the organization’s “technical core” business [12] but instead focus on internal processes, such as human resources, quality management or press office. They help to reduce complexity for organizations and to ensure ongoing business operations. “These structural components protect the core from environmental uncertainties and disruptions.” [29]. However, they face the challenge of being substituted, e.g. by outsourcing or a new internal division of work. As a consequence, such central units need to be legitimized. The project management unit/framework as a boundary spanning unit of the bank is on the watch in several respects: 1) with respect to *efficacy and results*; 2) with respect to contract planning to *external service agencies*; 3) with respect to *human resources* due to scarce capacities; 4) with respect to the *pressure to demarcate* the unit from the line while they simultaneously depend on the goodwill of the line. The last point is particularly noteworthy. On the one hand, the boundary spanning unit needs to demarcate itself from the productivity of line operations, but on the other, it has to find ways to be productive for the line. This – let’s call it – “connection by demarcation” seems very ambivalent. The boundary spanning unit has to avoid emphasizing its separation from the line too dramatically. This is without doubt a fine line to walk that is not easily communicated within the organization. A boundary spanning unit has to expect that its tasks are going to be restructured if the internal organization of line management is considered in need of improvement; for example if management decides that line operations can do its projects better without a separate project management unit: “Incorporating, stockpiling, buffering, smoothing, forecasting, planning are (...) forms that will be described for this management of uncertainties (...)” [29]. While such services belong to the typical program of a boundary-spanning unit, an organization is by no means obliged to leave it there. The core can substitute the boundary unit, but the boundary unit cannot substitute the core.

The “project management” as boundary spanning unit needs to be designed in a risky manner under the aforementioned circumstances. The project structure reflects its own limitations by anticipating them programmatically. Consequently, project

management not only faces the challenge of being substituted but also competes with other line programs that limit its autonomy and decisional abilities. As the program of the project may be of great importance for the organization but it is not clear how the program’s rank order is defined. In case of doubt, the project may be reduced to be an appendix of the line program, because line operations expect project work to be an internal service for the “technical core” (banking or credit management). The role as service provider may also prove to be problematic for the further professionalization of project management within the bank. Given these circumstances, it becomes difficult to enforce the professionalization of project management against the lines without causing distrust or reducing their willingness to cooperate. The people involved act “within eyeshot” to avoid scaring off the others.

The current state of project management within the bank proves – and this is the punchline – to be a *project itself*. It bears the potential for disorder and irritation. Project Management “can be viewed as a critical function of the organisation” (Drouin & Besner). The tentativeness of the project structures may lead to another (repeated) dissolution of the unit and the delegation of the tasks to the lines. But these are just a few speculative scenarios. The linchpin of the considerations is that the current fragile structure is beneficial because current tasks can be accomplished in a diplomatic manner which may even result in reflections and indirect changes or improvements within the organization of the bank. This may be fostered and supported by the intermediary “third” management. Since no direct managerial authorities exist, the people involved may at least partially act as coequal partners. This seems to be of particular importance: being on a par with the others, in order to exploit new opportunities. The disadvantage, however, is that this form rarely leads to fixed conditions or structures. Also, any attempt to strengthen one side may risk unsettling the prevailing policy of undecided space for deliberation disappears once certain decisions start to be taken.

It is obvious that this “driving by sight” depends on a repertoire of informal tactics. Following the notion of Koskinen [3] we argue that “projects needs besides utilization of technical competencies also abilities to integrate thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve outcomes valued in the context and culture of a project organization. (...) This is to say, socially adept people contribute strongly to the technically complex projects.” It may sound paradoxical, but it seems that the strong concentration and demands of the project premises – programming, communication, personnel – and the high dynamics of reform and regulation within the organization, leads to some sort of “appeasement” including facets that seem appropriate: conciliating, appeasing, communicating selectively, fading out. Goal ambiguities and perceived uncertainties may activate and foster project cooperation: “Good management, in this situation, depends heavily on the creativity and flexibility of the project participants, especially when knowledge about how, why, and with whom to interact is poorly understood.” [30]. Since research has already produced a broader body of knowledge on temporary structures (notably

projects) as well as on leadership *in* projects, we recommend also taking the co-programming of project and line organization into consideration. Program doubling sheds light on the challenge of co-aligning different orders simultaneously [31,32].

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