Who is colonizing whom? Intertwined identities in product development projects

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abstract

Despite the considerable number of studies on workplace identities in the organizational literature, the project management area of research is relatively de-personalized. In seeking to develop this research, this qualitative, longitudinal study of a product development project in the automotive industry focuses on how individuals use the project as a resource for their own identity construction while at the same time the project colonizes their identities. The study reveals that the identity construction processes of the project leaders and of the project are closely intertwined and co-constructed. The project leaders face a paradoxical situation: their identities are colonized, regulated, and controlled by their company (or car, or project), and yet they believe they make their choices voluntarily. However, the core values of projectified society are 'hidden' in the identity work that an automobile company consciously uses to develop cars associated with specific emotions and values.

Introduction

In describing projects in the 1980s at Apple Computer, Inc. (now Apple, Inc.), Sculley and Byrne (1987) tell the story of the Apple T-shirt slogans. When a new project at Apple started, the T-shirts from the last project with the slogan 'Working 80 hours and loving it' were replaced with new T-shirts with the slogan 'Working 90 hours and loving it'. This story, from the new era beginning in the 1980s when projects became an important part of our organizing practices, shows how projects tend to invade and even take over people's lives. It is now possible to talk about a projectified society (Lundin and Söderholm, 1998; Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002) where projects regulate and, at some level, even control human existence (Deetz, 1995).

The projectified society means that more and more organizational members are being redefined as project workers and project managers (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006), which has an effect on their identity. Enterprise logic, that is, initiative, energy, self-reliance, boldness, willingness to take responsibility for one's actions, might even become a major element in their self-identities (Storey et al., 2005). However, because project management focuses on structure, activities, and control, identity issues in project settings have been relatively unexplored.

Project management has become one of the most influential management fashions. Management research tends to surf the same fashion waves by both confirming and criticising ideas that are of practical interest and application (Andersson, 2008b), but project management research, despite some recent contributions (e.g., Packendorff, 1995; Sahlin-Andersson and Söderlund, 2002; Hodgson and Cicmil, 2006), contain too few critical voices willing to examine the effects on workers of this trend toward project work. It is necessary to refocus on the work and the people in project research (cf. Barley and Kunda, 2001).

The traditional view, which characterizes projects as flexible and permanent line organization departments as stable, has become more and more nuanced and is now often described as subtle and multi-layered (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002). There are even contradictions where projects are promoted as examples of de-bureaucratization that are, in fact, examples of re-bureaucratization that generate complex responses from employees (Hodgson, 2004). As a result, people have to construct their own identities in a tension-filled setting where they find themselves oscillating between the allegedly exciting and dynamic project environment and the supposedly tedious and static line organization. In product development projects people are simultaneously involved in constructing at least three other identities in addition to their own: the *product* itself, the product development *project* and the *brand of the company* that produces the product.

These intertwined and complex identity processes do not in themselves explain why people are willing to work 80 or 90 hours a week. Several studies argue the explanation lies in the colonization of people's identities by modern corporations (Deetz, 1992) where the regulation of people's identities produces 'appropriate individuals' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and controls their psychic identities (Deetz, 1995). We claim that the colonization processes extend beyond corporate influence. Certain people actively seek these demanding positions, recognizing that there is something to be gained from such work. These project leaders tend to aspire to the core qualities of project work and thereby also to the discourse of enterprise (cf. Storey et al., 2005). The identity work performed in project is to a large extent membership work, that is, work proving that you are a competent project worker (Jönsson, 2002). The project discourse thereby enables enterprise discourse to shape people's self-identities.

In this study, our aim is to describe the complexity of identity processes in projects and especially focus on colonization aspects of these processes.

Taking the 'identity turn' in the project management field

We view identities as processual, situational, and relational because they change over time, vary in different contexts, and are established in relation to other social entities on the same and/or different levels (Andersson, 2008a). Given this understanding, human life is an ongoing process of identity construction where the individual tries to make sense of, understand and define him-/herself in relation to different social situations (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007). There are influences on the aggregate level (e.g., gender identities and professional identities) and different discourses provide identity

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templates (Watson, 2001), social-identities[1] (Watson, 2008) or institutionalised identities (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007). Individuals elaborate on and work with these aggregate identities by trying to integrate them into their self-identity (Watson, 2008). This implies that, for example, professional identities may be characterized by homogeneity on an aggregate macro level (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000) and by variations on a micro level. However, the macro discourse forms the contours and contexts that guide the construction of the local discourse (Kuhn, 2006).

There is a reciprocal dependency between the self and the context (Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001), which is illustrated by the concepts of identity work and identity regulation. The two concepts constitute two different roles that discourse has in identity processes (Kuhn, 2006). The separation of the processes, however, takes place on a conceptual level. In reality, it is difficult to distinguish between the processes (as difficult as it is to sort agency from structure in the social sciences). Identity work has been defined as 'forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003: 1165). In this definition, identity work consists of the interpretive activities of reproducing and transforming self-identity. Identity regulation is defined as the discursive practices that condition identity processes (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Identity work and identity regulation influence self-identity (the organized narrative of the self), but self-identity can also induce identity work. Identity processes are thus constituted by the interplay between self-identity, identity work, and identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Identity work means that the actor uses discourse as a tool, while identity regulation ties people to social structures through, for example, roles and scripts. At the same time, discourses can regulate identities and can be used in identity work. The processes are complex and intertwined, as Alvesson and Willmott (2002) emphasize when they explain that the most sophisticated forms of identity regulation are 'hidden' in people's identity work. Consequently, colonization can enter both identity regulation and identity work processes. The colonization that comes from identity regulation is more direct and explicit, while colonization through identity work is more implicit, but also stronger.

Project work and project discourse as means of colonization

Projects are identity processes in themselves, but we focus on projects as arenas and resources in the formation of people's self-identity. We think a collective vision, such as a project identity, is interesting primarily because of its influence on people's identity construction (cf. Alvesson et al., 2008). Processes of co-construction may occur when notions of project work and individual identity construction confirm and/or disconfirm each other in a situation (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007). This result may trigger both identity work and identity regulation processes on the individual level.

A projectified society means that more people work in different kinds of project organizations and that people in permanent organizations are more involved in projects

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[1] They are called social-identities in order not to confuse them with social identity and social identity theory that constitute another theoretical frame.

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as a part of their normal work. As project management discourse becomes more established in many organizations, even as it competes for attention with other discourses (Green, 2006), such project management discourse has strengthened. Lindgren and Packendorff (2007) describe four different discursive constructs that are central to the project management discourse: state of emergency, loyalty and professionalism, organized chaos, and 'war stories'. The state of emergency construct means that project workers are constantly exposed to economic and/or political threats that jeopardize their futures. The loyalty and professionalism construct refers to the assumed high levels of ambition, commitment, and responsibility that project members bring to their projects. The organized chaos construct defines projects as sequences of planned action, allowing for the possibility that anything may happen. The 'war stories' construct refers to the narratives of project hardships that result from people's high professional investments in terms of long working hours and chaotic private lives, but also to the narratives of the satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment people experience during project work. The values represented by project management discourse are very similar to what other researchers (e.g., Storey et al., 2005) refer to as enterprise discourse (i.e., initiative, energy, self-reliance, boldness, willingness to take responsibility for one's actions).

Project management discourses provide social-identities on different levels that both constrain and enable action; therefore, these discourses have significance beyond their focus on the regulatory aspects of social-identities. In most instances, actors have the freedom to choose among a number of identity templates (Llewellyn, 2004; Andersson, 2008a), but some specific social-identities are most promoted or preferred (Rose, 1989), which greatly limits the 'freedom' of choice. Intertwined processes of identity work and identity regulation are in effect at all times, so the choice of identities is by no means 'free'. Instead, the choice has the character of 'either you are in or you are out' (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007: 362).

Since identity construction processes are dependent on the social situations individuals find themselves in, to understand project work it is important to recognize its influence on individuals' self-identities. Yet there are actually few empirical studies that illustrate how individuals handle a projectified reality (Packendorff, 2002).

Although stand-alone projects often are presented as offering an escape from the bureaucracy of permanent organizations, there are actually more similarities than differences between such projects and such organizations. Projects may even reflect re-bureaucratization and a high level of discipline (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a) even though they are presented as de-bureaucratization devices (Hodgson, 2004). Projects do not mean the abolition of hierarchical organization, but rather permit the re-construction of some aspects and confirmation of others (Clegg and Courpasson, 2004). Because projects vary greatly, project work is not a homogeneous work form (Turner and Cochrane, 1993; Packendorff, 1995). Packendorff (2002) recognises the heterogeneous nature of project work when he creates a typology of different project work situations, based on the following two analytical dimensions: 1) the degree to which the individual's work is tied to the temporary project or the organizational context; and 2) the degree to which project work is either routine or exceptional for the individual. Product development work, in general, is characterized by the typology called 'Project-

based work' where the project work is routine and is performed in the organizational context (Packendorff, 2002). Since the new car projects that are the focus of this study may be categorized as project-based work, this typology is therefore our main interest in understanding its influence on individuals. The typology of project-based work requires that individuals spend most, if not all, of their time working in projects in a stable, organizational framework. Project work is accepted in the organizational setting as a natural part of the individual's employment (Packendorff, 2002). Since such project work implies that temporary organizations exist within more permanent organizations, where people directly or indirectly relate to both groups, projects create arenas of intertwined identity processes. These processes create multiple targets of identification and de-identification on the individual level (e.g., Kuhn and Nelson, 2002; Pratt, 2000).

Projects often have overly optimistic deadlines as well as constant shortages of resources, both of which limit the time available to project workers for reflection and learning (Packendorff, 2002). Even when people have time for such reflection and learning, they are often reluctant to use it and instead jump to the next project (Evans et al., 2004). As they move from project to project, the repetition of procedures generates a type of professionalization. Yet project managers seem ambivalent about their 'professional identity'; they both aspire to it and resist it (Hodgson, 2005). Because of the lack of opportunities for reflection and learning, project workers often seek higher positions in future projects as their reward, with the result that their careers become a series of endless projects requiring increased responsibility and commitment (Packendorff, 2002). Emergency situations and problems that arise owing to these time and resource constraints are resolved by heroic actions that gradually become taken-for-granted solutions. Such solutions combined with the discursive constructs of 'working a lot' and 'choosing the project over private life' have significant implications for project workers' work/life balance.

Projects and work/life balance

Project work requires committed project leaders and project workers who to a large extent connect to the logic of enterprise (Storey et al., 2005). Since projects must meet deadlines, project leaders and workers often have to take time from somewhere else, which usually is their private life (Eaton and Bailyn, 2000). Project-based work is perhaps one of the best examples of the new and evolving forms of work psychological contracts where people agree to work as long as it takes to complete their tasks, but in return expect greater flexibility and autonomy in choosing their working hours (Vielba, 1995). Watson and Harris (1999) note similarly that managers in particular (including project leaders) tend to regard their formal or informal contracts as 'doing whatever it takes' rather than as 'working x hours a week'. 'Doing whatever it takes' is a very abstract commitment that is hardly measurable (Andersson, 2005) since basically it is a social construction dependent on the project leaders' sense of duty and the external pressures for heroic actions. The dark side of this commitment means long working hours with the inevitable risk of burnout, stressm and work/life balance difficulties, all of which may lead to problems with health, general well-being, and family life. The potential damage is as real for the project workers as it is for their organizations.

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Furthermore, in many work organizations, especially organizations characterized by project-based work, long working hours are part of the culture that separates the committed from the non-committed workers (Kunda, 1992; Watson, 2001). The work culture that values working a lot, regardless of the sacrifice to individual and family life, is associated with the manager identity (Andersson, 2005) and may be even more identified with the project manager identity (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007). Clearly, the level of normative pressure and discipline is high in some organizations (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006a). For women, who often have the greater share of home and family responsibilities, a reasonable work/life balance in such a work culture is difficult to achieve (Marshall, 1995). Additionally, the project management discourse promotes masculine identities (cf. Hodgson, 2003) and tends to reinforce characteristics typically considered masculine, such as rationality, efficiency, control and devotion to work (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006b). Consequently, organizational control exerted through normative pressure is only one reason why people fail to maintain their work/life balance (Hochschild, 1997). The normative pressure extends beyond the organization and is connected to the projectified society, which means that project work and project discourse colonize people's identity processes from several levels.

Case background and methodological considerations

We will use some empirical extract to illustrate our theoretical claims. These empirical extracts emanate from a longitudinal qualitative study performed in 1998-2001 and 2007. The data collection in the intervening years (2002-2006) was characterized more as simply staying in contact with the studied organization. We agree with Cicmil et al. (2006), who argue that longitudinal studies are essential in project management research since they permit descriptions of processes such as colonization. Furthermore, a qualitative study allowed us to approach the studied phenomenon closely.

We studied projects managers who were jointly running new car projects at Volvo Car Corporation (VCC). In addition to direct observations, we video-taped 100 hours of project management meetings and audio-taped individual interviews with all participating project leaders. Our combination of observations and interviews allowed us to observe the practice and everyday lives of the project leaders and to discuss the observations with the interviewees. Thus we were able to observe the project practice closely (Cicmil et al., 2006). In 2007, we interviewed some people from the initial round of interviews who still worked in new car projects. Using this wealth of empirical material, our focus here is on the multi-layered aspects of identity regulation and identity work, especially in terms of colonization, in the studied setting.

The VCC new car projects were led by people with considerable internal status and high formal rank in the company (Wickelgren, 2005). Taking on the role of a project leader in the new car projects made one something of a company hero – so long as the projects were successful commercially. This semi-mystification of the corporate hero was a reflection of the 1990s trend in personalizing the image of the powerful 'large-project leader' (Womack et al., 1990) or the 'heavyweight' development teams (Clark and Wheelwright, 1992). In the world of new car production, the project culture was one of

glorifying action orientation and the hard, often hectic work required to meet the tight deadlines.

Project leaders work a lot – part of the identity and a consequence of priorities

In many work organizations, working long hours is an important part of the organizational culture that separates the committed from the non-committed workers (Kunda, 1992). Consequently, working a lot and making sacrifices, such as in one's family time, are consistent with the expectations and demands of such organizational cultures. This project culture, with its project identities, is pervasive in new car projects. As one TPL explained:

> I work all the time! Weekends, evenings…Before Christmas I picked up my husband at a Christmas party in the evening, and then I went back to work and stayed there until midnight. Still, I met a colleague on Saturday morning and was able to do some more work before we left for Christmas. That is typical in my work. I haven't time for the simplest things in my private life. (Ophelia, TPL)

For two reasons, this TPL worked seven long days a week. First, owing to her area's activities in the overall project, her job as a TPL required long hours and many working days. Second, and perhaps more in line with Kunda's observations (1992) on the prevailing cultures of engineering organizations, a high-level project leader is simply expected to work a lot. If a project leader could limit his/her workweek to 40 hours, while delivering the expected results, peers, subordinates, and superiors would still question his/her contribution to the results. At VCC, where the project leaders are constantly monitored during projects, it would be a major break with the generally held view of the project leader's role if he/she did not work long hours on the project. Since the product and the project come first, and people come second, the vast amount of work on projects is regarded as normal. Everyone is expected to do everything possible to ensure the success of a project, and any project leader who works only 40 hours a week would be severely criticized if there were any project failures. The perception is that a project leader who works only 40 hours a week lacks the dedication for such a position. A double work effort is the standard required of project leaders, as one BPL explained:

> The period between projects is tough. It takes time to come down. In the beginning it is hard to accept that working 40 hours a week is not the same as having a half-time job, but that is the feeling. […] I have accepted that there are no interesting jobs where you work 40 hours a week, but I think it might be possible to stop at 60 hours a week… (Richard, BPL)

This reflection by an experienced project leader of large new car projects at VCC suggests his final surrender to the logic of product and project first – people second. This subordination of the human element to the constructed products seems to require thinking of these products as more than inanimate objects – the conceptualization of cars as social objects (Harré, 2002). Since people do not want to be mastered by things, their subordination to products in this way is a humiliating and demoralizing experience. An alternative strategy might inflate the constructed products in some way (Harré suggests a narrative) that would make them more than material objects. This

strategy could be the result of a process of mutual and simultaneous identity creation where the product, the project, and the individuals serving them all lend and borrow bits and pieces from the others' evolving identities. Thus, the different entities meld and create intertwined identities while simultaneously supporting each other.

Parallel identity construction – product, project, and individual project leader

Project leaders' career paths are related to their influence on the new cars. The car is in focus and the identity of the project is closely linked to the car, but the car is also linked to the project leaders' management of the projects. In talking about former projects, the project leaders talked about the car models, for example, the 850 or the V70, or they talked about 'Richard's project' or 'Adam's project', that is, using the project leader's name to identify with a specific car model. The close link between the project, the car and the project leader is almost an emotive one. This linkage is well illustrated in a documentary film that was made on the new car projects in this study. In the film, the interviewer and a BPL visit a car exhibition where the interviewer points to a Mercedes-Benz and asks: *Can you imagine yourself building that car?* The BPL responds:

> No, it is hard to build cars that you don't like…I mean, it's an excellent car, but I couldn't do it. I wouldn't do a good job… it just isn't me.

As this statement suggests, from a project's origin, the identity processes of a car, a project, and a BPL are intertwined.

Project leaders are also chosen as members of the new car project management teams based on their individual identity and the expectations for the product. The HR director who was involved in the selection of individual project leaders for the new car management team commented on one of the choices:

> [Seamus] was, along with his competence regarding car development, chosen because he was an almost perfect customer targeted for the V70. He was a loving father of two small children, who was seen carrying his two child car seats between the different test vehicles he was driving on a daily basis here at the company. He lived the life of a typical projected V70 customer. He was highly educated, had an interesting and challenging job, and a wife with similar background and job circumstances. He lived with all the many expectations that come from parenthood, owned a house, and had a great passion for sailing. He drove his kids to their soccer training, and did the shopping on his way home. On weekends he packed his car with his family and the gear for sailing trips. Putting him on the management team of the new car project gave him an opportunity to develop the perfect car that satisfied his lifestyle, and the company got the intended car developed. We also used him as an example of our projected customer in a part of our marketing campaign for the V70. (Norman, HR director)

When the selection of the management team takes into consideration the lifestyles of project leaders, the identities of the individual, the product, and consequently, the project, is almost totally intertwined. This co-construction of identities highlights the colonization process. As well as seeking employees trained for and skilled in certain tasks, the employer looks for people whose private lives qualify them for work assignments. Thus, family situations and leisure activities are factors given consideration when assigning people to some of the more desired company positions.

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The project leaders' primary task was to translate the VCC corporate values into tangible products. In performing this task, they became the main interpreters of the core (and long-lasting) values that were reflected in the products they hoped consumers would buy in the next seven to ten years. This translating task was not one of merely following instructions since the institutional structures in which these project leaders worked could not provide solutions for each and every problem. There was no manual for how to be a project leader. The VCC people created the existing structures, but these structures could be changed as a consequence of the project leaders' initiatives and decisions. Owing to this management style in organizing product development projects at VCC, we assert that the project leaders in this study acted as active agents who could make choices and could exert their independence in their identity work.

However, in a strictly Deetzian (1992) sense, it can be argued that VCC colonized the project leaders of our study. They surrendered to the dominant structure of the company because the company was so much more influential than they were in the roles as individual project leaders. Even if these leaders had collaborated, they could not have resisted the power of the VCC structures. While the VCC project leaders worked hard and completed their tasks, even when the time and resources for the projects were limited, as project leaders they had to comply with the governing circumstances and rules of the game that were set by VCC.

Nevertheless, taking a less strict interpretation of the projects and the project leaders, it is possible to ask if the project leaders had free will in their situations. An alternative interpretation of the project leaders' actions is that they were addicted to their work and their positions in the new car projects. In this interpretation, it is arguable that their commitment was more self-imposed than company-imposed. At the start of the work, each project leader focused on obtaining the desired leadership position, but once he or she had achieved that position, the desire to keep it had almost a narcotic effect. The project leaders developed addictions to their work, and could not escape. Their only solutions were surrender, collapse, retirement, or death, whichever came first. The self-imposed commitment was the way they more or less consciously subordinated themselves to the rules of projectified society (Lundin and Söderholm, 1998; Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002), which colonized their career aspirations and made them work even harder to achieve company goals (Packendorff, 2002).

A third interpretation of the project leaders' situation was that they had no choice, either in their work or in life in general. However, we claim not that they had no choices, but that their choices were limited by different restrictions. Identities are not created in a vacuum – they are influenced by other people's perceptions and expectations. Identity templates can be elaborated on to a certain extent, but they have regulating aspects (Rose, 1989). Even when you can choose between different identity templates, some are certainly preferable, or even inevitable, if you want to be at the centre of a project. From an identity perspective, the project leaders had to make their own personal set of choices by balancing the different expectations on them. Each project leader had his/her own expectations of what to do, and how to do it, both as professionals and as private individuals. For simplification, we highlight here only two kinds of expectations that

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faced the project leaders: expectations from the company and expectations from people in their private lives (immediate family, friends, neighbours and relatives). Both expectations created structures that influenced the choices made by the project leaders. The impact of these structures was different for the different project leaders, and thus they made different choices about how they performed their tasks, how many hours a day they worked, and where they worked. The general opinion held by the project leaders and the company was, however, that the project and the products were priority number one even if exceptions were made for the importance of weddings, births, funerals, and other private events that the project leaders prioritized. In that sense, they had all accepted enterprise as a major element, or even *the* major element, of their self-identities (cf. Storey et al., 2005).

It is also important to acknowledge that the project leaders themselves wanted to put significant effort into the projects. For reasons of personal interest, they wanted to work with cars, and in the new car projects they had the unique possibility to affect future products in a way people outside the projects could not. The company used this interest in appointing project leaders who could be 'one with the car'. The expectations on the project leaders required them to work long and hard hours, but even in the absence of those expectations, the project leaders would still have spent considerable amounts of time at work for the sheer pleasure of working with what interested them most. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002) conclude, the strongest identity regulation is hidden in people's identity work. For the project leaders in this study, this was very true. Their interest in cars was consciously colonized and used by the company with the result that the project leaders prioritized the project over themselves.

The project leaders' interest in cars has another dimension: the intertwined identities of the people, the product, the project, and the company. Because of their genuine and strong interest in the automotive product, the project leaders wanted positions where they could exercise influence over the products in the early design phases. They avoided positions where the decisions taken on product issues were indistinguishable from overall company policy decisions. Such product issues for new car models are totally intertwined with overall company decisions as far as brand, resource allocation, and company image are concerned.

Conclusion

The identity processes at the organization (the VCC brand), the new car projects, the project members, and the new car models are so closely intertwined that it is almost impossible to separate them. Because of these intertwined identities, products are developed that represent the core values that are central to the company's history and reputation. The project members think VCC, feel VCC, breathe VCC; they simply are VCC. Nevertheless, because of the enormous work commitment required of them, the price the project members pay is high in terms of stress, long hours, demanding deadlines, and personal sacrifices.

Deetz (1992) concludes that modern corporations colonize most entities they come in contact with, including their own employees. A straightforward interpretation of this

idea is that the project leaders in our study are the subjects of colonization. They are absorbed by the projects, and their identities are regulated in order to manage the often uncontrollable product development process. Identity regulation is thereby used as a form of organizational control (Deetz, 1995; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) for the purpose of attaching emotions and value to the brand.

However, even if Deetz's conclusion illuminates certain parts of the colonization phenomenon, we cannot fully understand the identity processes viewed only from the perspectives of colonization and identity regulation. The multi-layered identities that are constructed and co-constructed (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007) in such an intertwined way and that result in a situation of inseparable identities also reflect aspects of personal choice. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) claim that the strongest identity regulation processes are hidden in people's identity work, that is, people are regulated, but still believe that they have free will. In our study, VCC actively used the project leaders' interest in cars to link their individual identity work to the identity work of the car and the brand. The attachment of emotions and value to the brand and the car became possible by 'hiding' it in the project leaders' identity work. To some extent, the project leaders knew they were subjects of control, colonization, and regulation, and yet they chose this career path with full recognition of the consequences for their work/life balance. Their choice meant accepting long workdays and potential emotional and psychological damage in exchange for professional status, job fulfilment, and high compensation. The colonization had consequently moved beyond organizational control and corporate influence. The project leaders were colonized by the projectified society, a situation which made them aspire to the core constructions of the project management discourse: state of emergency, loyalty and professionalism, organized chaos, and 'war stories' (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007). The project leaders subordinated themselves to the discourse with a belief of 'free will', which is as far as a colonizing process can go.

The new car projects at VCC are associated with the attributes of movement, development, and a future-orientation, which are strengthened by a project discourse characterized by constructs such as states of emergency that increase the sense of rapid forward movement. People who want to be a part of such an environment must be loyal (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007) and must be aligned with the project and its values (Jönsson, 2002). Working long hours makes a statement: I am committed to the project! In that sense, a project's leader is colonized by his/her project. Despite this colonization, as long as project leaders are aligned with their projects, they can take advantage of the future-orientation aspect of the projects for self-development. When a project develops at a rapid pace, its project leaders develop and grow rapidly as well. Consequently, there is a co-construction of movement and development in project leaders' identities and the project work/project discourse. The reality of this mutual growth is evident when project leaders jump from project to project, each requiring more commitment and increasing responsibility, in ever more complex circumstances.

The project leaders in this study are in a paradoxical situation because of their colonized, regulated, and controlled identities that they partially chose themselves. On the one hand, they have been directly colonized by the company (or product, or project). On the other hand, they have co-constructed their identities in an exchange with their

organization. They are simultaneously subjects of voluntary identity regulation (Andersson, 2008a) and users of the projects as a platform and resource for identity work. However, projectified society is always hiding in, and thereby regulating and colonizing, their identity work.

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