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Projects in Academic Institutions: Between Bureaucracy and Post-Bureaucracy

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Abstract

Modern bureaucratic organisations are characterised by hierarchical structure, control and accountability. Post-bureaucratic organisations, which are widely established in the postmodern world, encourage empowerment, initiative, creativity and responsibility of their members while transferring control functions to the corporate culture and a clearly defined and comprehensible mission of their organisation. Despite the fact that the postmodern, or post-bureaucratic, type of an organisation that came into being in the 1960s is being increasingly integrated in various aspects and areas of society, including public institutions and universities, the question whether this type of organisation gains ground over the modernist type is still yet to be answered. This paper has been written on the basis of the materials from 3 focus groups, representing administration and faculties of one university, that summarise their seven-year experience of EU Structural Funds project management. The paper presents insights into the issues arising due to the interplay between different corporate values and cultures and considers alternatives of solving these issues.

Keywords: projects, bureaucracy, post-bureaucracy, social capital, university

1. Entrepreneurial vs. Hierarchical Structure

Currently, as many organisations tend to adopt a more entrepreneurial culture instead of a hierarchical structure, a project is becoming a prevalent work form (Rajan, Wulf, 2006). Introduced in late 1950s in the US defence and aeronautics industries (Harrison, 1981; Winch, 2000), project management was later integrated into the fields of heavy industry, engineering, IT, finance, insurance, banking, publishing, pharmaceuticals, health care, media, advertising, state authorities etc. The reasons of this shift are regarded controversially. On the one hand, it was noted that post-bureaucracy emerged due to the fact that rigorous bureaucratic organisations were incapable of coping effectively with rapid technological, economic

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and social changes (Castels, 1996; Heckscher, 1994; Perrone, 1997) and that “established bureaucratic controls have been found insufficiently responsive and adaptable to intensifying competitive pressures” (Alvesson, Willmott, 2002: 620). On the other hand, the post-bureaucratic discourse is treated as a part of “fast capitalist story” including competition, globalisation and speed of change (Grey, Garsten, 2001).

The paper addresses issues of bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy, as well as social capital and empowerment in order to frame theoretical perspectives for interpretation of empirical evidences from 3 focus groups at a university, which discussed its seven-year experience of EU Structural Funds project management. The empirical material is provided in the following 4 sections of the paper. The qualitative study revealed tensions in one organization, identified as matters of control, work-pay and responsibility which could be treated as areas where broader conflicting attitudes of employees are expressed. The paper is concluded by discussion referring to theoretical framework provided initially.

2. Bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic styles of organisation

What is post-bureaucracy? How does it differ from bureaucracy? Post-bureaucracy is usually described as opposite to traditional bureaucracy, Weberian “iron cage”, different from “the creaking, paper-driven, inflexible and inefficient bureaucracy” (Hodgson, 2004:83). Predicting the “demise of bureaucracy and hierarchy” (Kanter, 1989: 351) also implied the emergence of an organisational form, flexible and adaptable, “that lead by persuasion and incentives rather than commands; that give their employees a sense of meaning and control, even ownership” (Osbourne, Gaebler, 1992:15), “in which everyone takes responsibility for the success of the whole” (Heckscher, Donnellon, 1994: 24). A post-bureaucratic organisational form is said to liberate employees from inevitably dysfunctional hierarchical constrains (Adler, 2001). C. Heckscher (1994) proposed dichotomic model summarizing features of the both - bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic - organisational types (see **Table 1**). They all give us a clear concept of the two ideal types, and two of the features might be of a particular importance for an academic setting: 1)the division between the emphasis placed on rules and regulations and the emphasis placed on the organisational mission, which actually gives freedom for action in a clearly defined and known-by-all frame, and 2) monopoly of information versus shared strategic information.

Table 1. Characteristics of Bureaucratic and Post-Bureaucratic Organizations.

| Bureaucracy | Post-Bureaucracy |
|---|---|
| Consensus through acquiescence to authority | Consensus through institutionalised dialogue |
| Influence based on formal position | Influence through persuasion/personal qualities |
| Internal trust is immaterial | High need for internal trust |
| Emphasis on rules and regulations | Emphasis on the organisational mission |
| Information monopolized at the top of hierarchy | Strategic information shared in organization |
| Focus on rules for conduct | Focus on action-guiding principles |
| Fixed (and clear) decision-making processes | Fluid/flexible decision making processes |
| Community spirit/friendship groupings | Network of specialised functional relationships |
| Hierarchical appraisal | Open and visible peer review processes |
| Definite and impermeable boundaries | Open and permeable boundaries |
| Objective rules to ensure equity of treatment | Broad public standards of performance |
| Expectation of constancy | Expectation of change |

Source: Heckscher, 1994.

The shift in the mode of control over employees is an additionally defining feature, as the new type of organisations gives birth to new forms of control: “indirect and internalised control, including cultural and ideological control” (Heydebrand, 1989: 345), or control through culture, norms and trust (Grey, Garsten, 2001). Some authors even treat post-bureaucracy as breaking the old dichotomy of direct control or responsible autonomy by a more effective regime of ethico-moral control (Hodgson, 2004), “the creation of shared meaning, which obviates the need for the principles of hierarchy and explicitly rule-governed behaviour” (Sewell, 1998: 408), while building “a culture of learning within the organization” (Raelin, 2011:137), “learning leadership” (Senge, 1990), horizontal communication and mutually therapeutic relationships (Tucker, 1999). While new technologies or increasing government regulation could reduce the importance of hierarchical control (Applegate, 1999), modes of control are extended by peer control and by the routinization of procedures (Alchian, Demsetz, 1972; Mintzberg, 1979; Gold, 2001). The consent is achieved through winning employees’ “loyalty to the firm’s ideals” (Friedman, 1977), thus reconstructing their identity in line with requirements of the management (Elmes, Smith, 2001; Hardt, Negri, 2000). Others note that post-bureaucracy and bureaucracy are not mutually exclusive and that new modes of control have to be introduced in the existing bureaucratic systems resulting in hybrid types of control combining bureaucratic logic and increased autonomy of action (Hales, 2002; Harris, 2006; Fournier, 1999). In the case of scientific or administrative projects in academic institutions, the monitoring and control is implemented from outside, e.g. from funding organizations, whereas the employees involved in the project are controlled internally within the organisation.

D. E. Hodgson (2004) argues that the concept of project management is internally ambivalent. Having been rooted in the 19th century, due to the preoccupation with comprehensive planning and tight managerial discipline, it has surprisingly become promoted as an ideal mode of organisation in post-bureaucratic structures and is particularly seen as compatible with the ethic of professional autonomy and self-discipline (Hodgson, 2004: 86). Project management is promoted as offering ability to cope with the discontinuity, flexibility and fluidity of work roles, the constant change without sacrificing the discipline, predictability and control of the traditional bureaucracy. But the originality of project management is to deliver specific assignments within strict time and budget frames which relies on thorough planning and control of the resources, schedule, evaluation of risk, and monitoring of quality. Thus, despite the rhetoric of empowerment, autonomy and self-reliance, project management is based on a bureaucratic system of control, following its classical principles of predictability, accountability, surveillance and supervision, which is expressed in formal procedures and repeated reporting. It would be especially difficult to implement co-ordination and control of the activities conducted by highly skilled “knowledge workers” (Blackler, 1995) without a bureaucratic superstructure. Once set, the work breakdown structure of a project actually dissolves the autonomy, which traditionally was exercised by an expert employee, as D.E. Hodgson argues (2004: 87).

There are other assumptions that the shift in bureaucratic style comes in parallel with the change in proportions of most valuable capital (Sorenson, Rogan, 2014): traditional bureaucracy successfully deals with financial capital and machinery; however, the raise in importance of human and social capital requires a different approach. Increasing importance of and participation in webs of partnerships makes control “as much a function of social capital as it is personal supervision” (Raelin, 2011:139) because responsibility in teams devolves to the competent ones (Baird, Griffin, 2006). The theoreticians raise the question of the ownership of social capital: does it belong to organisation or employees (Sorenson, Rogan, 2014)?

3. The Ownership and the Control of the Social Capital

The notion of social capital suggests that as far as social relations are concerned, there is value that is not implied in contracts. In theorising organizations are commonly anthropomorphised, for instance, in terms of relationships or trust between organizations. So-called inter-organisational relationships are, in fact, interpersonal interactions (Sorenson, Rogan, 2014). The question of the ownership of social capital implies another question: who – the manager of organisation or the employee – is able to control the relationship and who can benefit from it (Becker, 1964; Grossman, Hart, 1986; Milgrom, Roberts, 1992)? It is not as simple as in the case of human capital, which always belongs to the individual.

The findings of research are contradictory. Although some studies on impact of the employee on the survival of organisational relationships found no relationship or even a negative one (Baker et al. 1998), several of them found a positive impact, while withdrawal of individuals would result in the loss of inter-organisational relationships (Seabright et al., 1992; Beatty et al., 1996; Broschak, 2004). Studies reported on cases when a pharmaceutical company was more interested in the ideas and skills of a particular professor rather than the prestige of the university or its laboratory equipment etc. (Allen, 1977; Freitas et al., 2013); when clients of advertising firms followed creative directors to other companies (Broschak, Block, 2013) or basketball fans followed their favourite players to the new teams (Ertug, Castellucci, 2013). Research on consumer loyalty has found that it depends more on interpersonal relationships than on the connection with the selling organisation (Doney, Cannon, 1997; Macintosh, Lockshin, 1997; Palmatier et al., 2007).

Despite the situations where inter-organisational relationships and trust are created largely by personal investments, conflicts related to social capital can also occur when interests of individuals and those of organisations diverge. Some researchers have found that sellers offer higher discounts to their friends or relatives (Kollock, 1994; Uzzi, 1999; Uzzi, Lancaster, 2004; Sorenson, Waguespack, 2006). Moreover, social capital can be overestimated as suggested by Goldberg's (2007) research on law companies: the loss of partners and their clients increased the profit of a company probably due to overpayment for partner-client relations. A possibility that clients would be loyal to an advertising firm after the account manager has left the company can be increased by organisational investments in client-specific systems and technology (Biong, Ulvnes, 2011).

What about academia and its project activities? How much do projects in an academic institution rely on human and social capital, on ideas, skills, abilities and network of particular scientists? Do scientists work in projects exploiting institutional infrastructure for their own benefit? To which extent their social capital is considered to be the property of an organisation and can be subject to its hierarchical control? Would scientific projects "leave" together with their initiators? A study carried out to explore experiences in project management has revealed tensions which can be scrutinised both from the concept of social capital, difficulties to decide on its ownership, and from the ideal types of bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy, possibilities to monitor and control scientific and administrative projects in academia.

4. Data and Methodology

The data that we are going to refer to was collected in February-March, 2014 in a university located in Lithuania in order to evaluate the experience of project management during the Structural Funds Period 2007-2013. In total, three focus groups were conducted with: (1) seven heads of the divisions of university administration (duration - 2 hours); (2) eight representatives of the faculties who were responsible for project management (mainly vice deans for faculty development) (duration – 1.5 hours), and (3) five heads

of faculties (duration - 1.3 hours; all recorded and transcribed). Selection of faculties was based on activeness in projects' implementation.

In Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2, the following issues were discussed: impact made by the projects, the efficiency of the project management system as well as its advantages and disadvantages. The main questions raised in both groups were as follows: 1) what benefit did the university get from the projects of structural funds? 2) What challenges have projects of structural funds raised for the main activities of the university? 3) At the university, every employee can initiate a project and get financial support for its implementation. What are advantages of this system? 4) What problems did you face while implementing this attitude? 5) Projects' teams are formed on the bases of competences needed for the projects and with the aim to integrate projects into the current system of the university. What problems did you face while applying this attitude? 6) What are relationships between project teams and the university administration? 7) Is the payment for work in projects appropriate? 8) During project implementation risk and failures are necessarily faced. Does the project team or its member who faced risks, did not manage them and experienced failure, have to be punished by applying administrative procedures?

Focus Group 3 discussed solutions to the problems that had been highlighted by Focus Groups 1 and 2, as proposed by R.A.Krueger and M.A.Casey (2000). Participants were provided with the summary of problems highlighted by the two previous focus groups and their proposed solutions. Additional questions raised in the last focus group were the following: 1) The load of work in projects distract lecturers and scientists from their direct responsibilities. Would be useful to divide subject-matter and administrative project management? 2) Are the university project work salary rates (both subject-matter and administrative) satisfactory?

5. The Results: Tensions between the academic staff involved in the project implementation and the university administration

First of all, one should note the huge impact that projects make on the performance of university. As it was stated by the focus groups, projects enable university to implement their key functions of research and studies, since the amount of budgetary allocation is only sufficient for salaries, while "all the rest [equipment, materials, student activities, scientific research – authors] can function only thanks to these funds" (from the focus group No 2 with representatives of the faculties). As far as the benefits from the EU Structural Funds projects were concerned, the representatives of the faculties mentioned the renewal of study programmes, the increase of internationality, the improvement of infrastructure of research and education (e.g., a new library building, two research centres, renovation of the premises, laboratory facilities, equipment and materials, subsidies for undergraduate and postgraduate research, subscription to the resources of international databases). Thus, the problems that threaten the initiation or successful implementation of projects simultaneously present a risk to the key activities of the university.

5.1 *The first tension: is the project work too little or too much controlled?*

Problems that primarily arise **in faculties** in the process of project implementing include a huge burden of its administration, the relevance of which may well be questioned in many cases, and inappropriate salaries that do not correspond to the time and responsibility required to implement the project, due to which the university staff are unwilling to undertake new projects. In other words, the project initiators and managers perceive the current system of project management as imposing too much control and discouraging; it does not provide the staff with any opportunities to act in line with the post-bureaucratic spirit of entrepreneurship. Double control – internal institutional control and external control from the funding

organisations - is applied to project administration. During the discussion, these particular issues were perceived as threats for activities of the university; it was emphasised that the requirements "were imposed by the agency [that monitors the project implementation]" (Focus Group 2, representatives of the faculties). For instance, there is a formal requirement for a successful project stating that all students enrolling at a faculty would successfully graduate from it. However, the common practice at the Faculty X shows that about a half of the enrolled freshmen are "kicked out during the first year" of the university in order not to retain poorly performing students (FG 2).

Due to the fact that monitoring agencies impose numerous, confusing, niggling and illogical requirements, the burden of project administration seems unbearable:

"it won't be possible to do any other work"; "this is total mistrust <...> when you write documents for weeks because of three cents"; "we had a long discussion over just a couple of manometers and their specification"; "he has to send tons of information to my e-mail about his correspondence, his purchases, about this and that...and then – oh, you took a train at this station, but not from that one" (FG 2, representatives of the faculties).

The agencies are focused not on the nature and purpose of the project, but on the justification of its every single step (why were chemicals purchased? Why were batteries purchased?). "There are no established regulations defining what the agency may require from us and they require anything they like" (FG 2): different employees within the same agency apply different requirements. The public procurement procedures that are subject to national law are so much time-consuming:

"it takes us a year to purchase the reagents. The duration of the project is two years, and the Swiss are shocked: "What are you doing there, in Lithuania?" How could we explain them our procurement procedures?"; "...the key problem is public procurement. The procedures are too slow, <...> sometimes you might even need to rewrite the technical specifications as they become outdated" (FG 2)

Furthermore, some bureaucratic requirements that have already been abolished by the agency are still valid within the university:

"in some projects, they require a detailed, daily...well, describe what you did. So, how much time you waste <...> well, actually, we need to waive this requirement <...> as earlier the agencies required this, but now they don't indeed" (FG 2)

When problems occur in a project, the position against the agency is lost, as there is no unified outlook or support from the administration:

"the procurement office says that the agreements are correct, so if you don't like something, go ahead and start litigation. The [project] manager is left alone against the agency <...> it's desperate." (FG 2)

The administration representatives also stated that project administration is especially bureaucratic due the requirements imposed by the monitoring agencies:

“it takes a lot of time as the structural funds have a variety of pretty odd requirements”; “to justify two hundred litas, they would push and pull me for several... two or three months”; “when entering a structural funds project, over 90 per cent of information we write about every person, in my opinion, is absolutely irrelevant” (FG 1, representatives of university administration)

As well, there is a need for a more constructive way of representing the interests of the university outside the organisation, not just a spontaneous reaction to the arising problems by individual attempts of communication with institutions that supervise the project implementation (*“he [n.a.: the project manager] absorbs the issues of that accounting process with external bodies”*, FG 1) or when receiving sanctions for violating the requirements of the amendments on Law of Public Procurement. A more active involvement of scientists is needed to express dissatisfaction. All the initiatives taken to simplify procurement procedures are immediately regarded by Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania and Transparency International as attempts to increase corruption. However, the current conditions are becoming unbearable, it is not possible to work, and the staff of Public procurement division emphasise that *“our task is not implementation of Law on Public Procurement; our task is science and studies”* (FG 1).

However, it is not the excessively bureaucratic procedures that were defined by the university administration as a threat to the university activities rising from projects. On the contrary, the threat is perceived as coming from the aspects of administrative “managing” of projects, such as the number of projects and competencies that are required for project administration. Additionally, the increase of administration workload due to amendments on laws that require increasing control, for instance, when implementing procurement procedures, was defined as yet another *“uncontrolled threat”* (FG 1). In other words, the main problems rise due to the confusion incurred by the projects and lack of discipline. Project administration requires increase of workload; for instance, in the Finance Department, project documentation accounts for the one-fifth of the total workload, while in the Department of Studies and in the Human Resources it adds up to approx. 30-40 percent of the total workload. There is a lack of staff in the field of public procurement and personnel. Administrative staff in faculties, that is not involved in the project administration, also experience the increase of workload (for instance, signing off the project invoices).

The **administration representatives** stated that at the stage of project development there should be a certain evaluation filter (*“someone has to say whether we need this project or not”; “whether it is strategically important”*, FG 1), which should work on the level of the department or faculty, but not on the level of the university administration. Having initiated a project, the faculty should compensate for the administrative costs imposed on the administrative staff of the university and these should be compensated either from the project budget or the budget of the faculty. *“Cost-benefit analysis”* (FG 1) of the prospective projects should be conducted in order to evaluate their threats and benefits, as well as internally available resources and compliance with the strategy of the institution. Otherwise, chasing after the funds brought by a project has a big price to pay (in terms of labour costs, workload or rejecting participation in other projects). It was also stated that risk management and monitoring of the projects should be enhanced (*“lenient project monitoring to be improved; as for the risk management, we don’t have it here. No-one puts any effort to spot the risk, to mitigate it”*, FG 1), which, however, should not impose additional bureaucratic burden (*“you will need to write a weekly report”; “it will mean additional workload and more signatures”*, FG 1). Following an example of other European countries, it could be possible to invite project managers to an informal meeting to speak about problems and the ways they solve them.

However, **the representatives of the faculties** had a negative feedback towards any kind of internal monitoring body to be introduced due to the following reasons: further increase of bureaucratic

procedures ("and now we'll need to write reports to these ones"; "let's have more own controllers here", FG 2), and necessity for trust in employees ("*just have some trust in people and let them work*", "*it is a western principle – people need to be trusted*"; "*I believe that it is risk management that is a usual activity of a project*", FG 2). Control is more of a burden and hindrance to work ("*here, everything, absolutely everything is about control, supervision <...> It is an inverse phenomenon; on the contrary, the fewer supervisors we have, the smoother, better and more reliable the process is*", FG 2). Monitoring could be limited to the supervision of compliance of project activities with the calendar plan ("*there's some project calendar plan, so the development department may definitely take a look if this plan is being complied with*", FG 2).

It seems that in the case of projects that actually should represent post-bureaucratic working culture, the bureaucratic "iron cage" is not a single, but a multi-layered phenomenon, like a *matryoshka* nesting doll; and due to recurrent after-project audits, the continuity of its existence over time not only is short, but is indefinitely and unlimitedly long. The project implementer, like a servant of many masters, disappears from view of direct administration; thus, projects incur confusion that a hierarchical structure is neither able to manage in a timely manner, nor is it able to incorporate the results of the projects. The administration of the university is by no means homogeneous; cases of self-reflections that can be perceived as attributes of post-bureaucracy have been observed: the participants of the discussion emphasised that the project implementers are not allowed to make a bank transfer; neither do they have access to databases. Thus, if project implementers were entitled with more rights and the control was shifted to them, the problem of administrative workload and salaries would disappear.

5.2 The second tension: is the pay for work in projects too little or big enough to be shared with university administration?

From **the administrative staff's** point of view, work required for implementing projects remains unpaid ("*more workload, not even a single litas added to the salary*", FG 1) and, in most cases, the staff involved in projects are not directly employed in these projects (in compliance with the project regulations). A situation, when a minor number of staff is employed in the project (e.g., 10-30 per cent of public procurement staff) while other staff is not employed but have to do project-related jobs for the service pay, leads to dissatisfaction among the staff and tension in the departments (for instance, during the procedure of assigning bonus payments). Even if project staff involved in finance- or personnel-related work lack experience, they turn to the administrative staff who either teach or actually do the work (e.g., manage time-sheets, issue orders, conduct procurement procedures) for the inexperienced colleagues. Yet, according to the representatives of the university administration, the project money remains in the faculties.

It is interesting to note that a process of specific language formation is developing among the university administration. For instance, for the administrative staff, the term project added value has a meaning of additional funds for the administration, but not (only) benefit for the university as a higher education institution ("*not only a project manager and a financier can benefit from a project*"; "*such projects don't have added value*"; "*what if the faculty doesn't even care? If not a single person uses the project results?*", FG 1).

Meanwhile, from the perspective of **the faculty staff**, salaries of both project administrators and project implementers are insufficient, demotivating, given the administrative workload and assigned responsibility:

"the ratio between the time costs and the pay one receives is inadequate"; "I offer this job to a staff member, but he says, "No, I don't want it. You are welcome to take these five litas"; "...especially,

in projects where high-skilled professionals are needed, and it is so hard to convince a person to join the project, as the pay is not impressing at all. Let's say, an IT person will earn three or four times more if he chooses to work at a business firm"; "we had such people who could perform very well but left for a Y [research centre] where their pay rates are 3 times higher. We lost them. This way, we cannot make them stay", (FG 2)

Such low pay rates are defined within the university, not by outside bodies:

"the wage ceiling taken from those tables, remember? <...> at the following stage [of funding], it looks absolutely unimpressive"; "as long as we have such low rates, we won't have any good scientists or administrators. But I don't know what the university says, why did they set this wage ceiling?", (FG 2)

Institutional pay rates for project-related work set according to the logic of a hierarchical structure do not take much into consideration the fact that the importance of accumulating human and social capital is much higher. The payment for project administration is too low:

"this is that administration staff, actually ...usually without a PhD, so these 12-15 litas are not adequate for those...for that work conducted, as it is routine work"; "man, if you don't have a degree, you are paid peanuts, so that later...you are, kind of, you understand, a person ...working in several projects and earning very little, so for a head of faculty it is, sort of, not proper to push such an employee, as he doesn't make a bundle in that project. Actually, the work in projects is mostly... I don't know, based on idealism"; "[projects] are definitely a source of added value for the university. So, why don't people who are involved in the project benefit from it too? They just get a lot of work and a little money", (FG 2)

especially taking in consideration the fact of losing a degree qualification:

"the administrator belongs to the same department, so she puts her heart and soul into this work. Then, there is a tender, accreditation - but, that's bummer-all...such a disadvantage for the person <...> she may be demoted because, quite obviously, she didn't manage to write a journal article at that particular time. Thus, there has to be some financial satisfaction, after all", (FG 2)

The university procedures for staff employment in the project are too bureaucratic: there are many contracts for a small work load; the duration of a contract is under 12 months; there are delays in signing employment contract, and employees sometimes get unpaid for a month or two:

"you don't need to have, let's say, four or five employment contracts, one for 0,1 FTE, another for 0,15 FTE. <...> or that you get a miserable pay according to those few hours"; "that fixed-term employment up to the end of the year is some kind of principle of the university <...> he doesn't get paid for a month or two while they are trying to agree on everything there. This is absolutely unacceptable attitude. Towards that person", (FG 2)

Projects are notably capital-intensive in terms of human and social capital, i.e. not every employee has a relevant competence for generating scientific ideas or communication skills to build up a team in order to implement them. However, competent employees refuse to participate in projects under unfavourable terms:

"people are unwilling to engage in all this any longer"; "just a few staff managers stay involved, and they are the ones who are mostly interested, as they want faculty to survive"; "the manager, who is mostly also a scientist <...>, is overloaded with paperwork and looking for so-called networking possibilities for social cooperation so that he lacks time for his scientific work"; "we keep losing scientists. Here, three researchers left the field of science and are now working with projects only";

„Why suffer if you can leave and it is cheaper to be in business... you earn more, do simpler jobs and sleep peacefully... <...> have no such responsibility"; "people don't want to work if this does not change. This will rely on individual, let's say, initiatives of separate people <...> on separate groups", (FG 2)

One cannot acquire relevant competences within a short time:

"She got her bachelor's degree, then master's degree, then a doctoral degree. She worked for 10 years and only then became a manager who is able to bring together super-companies, only then", (FG 2)

Both representatives of **the administration and faculties**, therefore, suggest reconsidering the pay system. The administrative staffs need to be paid for project-related work (they need to be employed in projects in the same manner as public procurement specialists are employed or need to be paid extra from particular funds assigned for the faculties or other funds allocated for the directorate for this particular purpose). Due to heavy workload, it would be helpful to employ staff part-time, for instance, 0.5 FTE. The managers of the faculties suggest adopting the experience of advanced European countries. Project management has to be regarded as a full-time job. It has been proposed to increase the salary rates of non-degree administrative staff (*"those who suffer most are the administrative staff that has no academic degree <...> it's their salaries that need to be mostly increased. That ratio, that difference should decrease",* FG 3, heads of faculties) by not associating salary rates to an academic or teaching degree (*"those should be dissociated from a degree",* FG 3), but by graduating salary rates according to the level of complexity of a project or assignments undertaken.

However, the attention was drawn to the fact that, in the first place, the attitude of the administrative staff toward project-related work should be changed. Work within a project is not only a bonus to be paid, but should be considered as a regular assignment that needs to be accomplished along with the direct responsibilities of an employee. It was emphasised that the issue of salary of administrative staff rises due to poor work organisation, which, in turn, depends on *"our attitudes, salary, loyalty, individual philosophy and moral norms"* (FG 3). Is it possible to develop and implement a project that is only beneficiary for oneself, as the administrative staff of university presuppose? This is an unlikely situation: after all, all projects are selected on a basis of competition. According to the heads of faculties, a faulty opinion that projects are important only for the individuals that implement them should be changed:

“there is that attitude that <...> you are a bad guy and you are in charge of that project as if you do it just for your own benefit <...> after all, everything is for the university and belongs to the university. Thus, this attitude has to be developed somehow; it’s not that I need that project most”,
(FG 3)

The discussion regarding salary for project-related work reveals the existence of different basic and self-evident assumptions of the university staff. The administrative staff shares a modernist attitude when both work and payment for it was guaranteed and secure. One does not need to compete for work, create their own job or continuously try to perform better than other competitors. From this perspective, the faculties have additional cash flows that university administration staff also administrate, however, without getting paid. Meanwhile, those who “take” this money face high costs of unpaid work (developed project applications more often are rejected than selected), high qualification requirements, extreme bureaucratic control on project performing and relatively poor salary set by the administration that has underestimated the assigned responsibility and competences of an employee involved in a project.

5.3 The third tension: all parts involved are avoiding responsibility

One of the key moments in projects is responsibility. While rigorously controlling the progress of projects, the monitoring agency does not take responsibility for the ultimate results of the project; it is the project manager who remains in charge against EU audit:

“Actually, the agency apart from all that niggling monitoring does not take any responsibility. They keep checking everything, they don’t accept the documents, but eventually it is the project manager who is to blame. <...> even if there is an auditor from Brussels...then the agency says, „No, we have nothing to do with it, it is the project manager to blame”, (FG 3)

Meanwhile, the external control of the project continues after the project is completed, which requires further resources of the university. For instance,

“the library building project was first audited by the [monitoring] agency, later – by the State Control, then – by the agency again, so employees need to work repeatedly for the basic service pay”. In addition, “you cannot involve these people in other activities <...> best and most competent ones keep working on this paperwork”, (FG 2)

The issue of responsibility remains unresolved within the university, too. **The representatives of the administration** expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that distribution of responsibility is vague (“someone has all the rights, while others have to take responsibility”, FG 1): the faculties are granted with various rights, but the university administration has to take responsibility in case of failure or inaccuracies, keeping in mind that the administration was not involved in the project application. For instance, the Maintenance and Service administration was not involved in the project on the construction of new centres; however, it has to comply with the requirements following the completion of the project which was never thought about at the project development stage, like a requirement to establish day centres that allow access to the purchased equipment; there are no funds for growing electricity costs of the new buildings or the maintenance of the recuperation, heating etc. systems of the centres; exceptional power supply that is

required for the supercomputers was not attended to. Further use and installation of the project products was not planned: *"the project is completed, and what do we need to do with it?"*, (FG 1).

The heads of faculties, in turn, stated that it is a common and popular practice at the university to declaratively emphasise the benefits of projects; however, on the other hand, any responsibility is avoided while transferring it to the faculties or even to individual employees that are involved in project development and management:

"so, if we declare that these projects are important for the university, which is indeed the case, then responsibility should be taken in the field of administration and management, and resources should be looked for. <...> I tend to transfer some responsibility to the central office, not just to the faculties ...it is kind of popular here ...first, dump responsibility on the faculties and then take everything from them", (FG 3)

In particular, **the representatives of the administration** highlighted lack of internal communication:

"as a university, we have not agreed about many things among ourselves"; "I learn about many things happening at the university only when I come to Brussels", (FG 1)

There is a lack of communication among the administrative departments (for instance, the information about calls for proposals does not reach the Finance department, due to which they are not able to plan workload), between the university administration and the faculties (when projects are being developed, the administration or the public procurement office is not consulted with; no agreements are made regarding the procurement plan, so there is not enough time to complete procurement procedures; if there are problems with the project, they are directly solved with the agency, while the university administration is addressed only when the project is already "burning"), or among separate faculties (same products and services purchased twice by separate faculties) and within the same faculties (for instance, the dean learns *post factum* about a submitted project application; in some cases, the administrative staff knows more than the project manager, for example, that the employee is planning to leave etc.)

Traditionally, in a hierarchical organisation of the university (*"we follow an order, it tells us what we need to do"*, FG 1), it is hard to comply with the requirements set by the project, which actually calls for efficient team work and prompt action within a short period of time. At the university, as in a hierarchical organisational structure, vertical communication links work in a proper manner, whereas horizontal communication, which is necessary in order to face the challenges of project management, is poor. In a hierarchical organisational structure, it is more difficult to plan, take and manage project-related risks (e.g., it is impossible to foresee how many applications will win; there are cases of deduction due to human error.)

Paradoxically, none of the institutions involved in project development and monitoring shares a post-bureaucratic attitude regarding an individual's responsibility for the success of the team or lives on the principles of flexibility, trust and empowerment. While applying a classic form of rigorous control, these institutions do not take responsibility for the results, as if hierarchical organisations were to adopt post-bureaucratic principles, they would be eliminated. Maybe, is it a typical feature of post-totalitarian bureaucratic institutions that are able to freely improvise on the topic of the principles of post-bureaucratic organisations and adopt the mechanisms of foreign working methods, but not their essence? If so, it would

confirm that the development of post-bureaucracy as a global phenomenon is uneven; this process is inevitably path-dependent and influenced by existing forms of national institutions (Whitley, 1999).

5.4 Structural and other amendments proposed

The representatives of the administration suggested improving administrative skills of the staff in faculties in order to share responsibility. To this end, project administration groups should be established in the faculties (following an example of a single faculty that already has such a group); thus, a major part of project-related issues would be solved within a faculty and not transferred to the administration. Such groups may be paid from the project funds. This is a common European practice: people who have experience in project administration “change hands” (FG 1) while in Lithuania it is not popular to adopt and make use of the best practice of the experienced staff; thus, new, inexperienced, people get employed and learn to manage projects by a trial-and-error method.

Delegating the process of project management to faculties, however, does not mean that it will become absolutely decentralised. A more effective communication among the university administration and faculties needs to be ensured; informal communication is to be encouraged: “*the mechanism of self-regulation would start if people communicated more*”; “*they feel abandoned now*” (FG 1). During the process of writing project applications, managers of the administration departments should be kept informed and involved in the writing of the applications that are directly related to the field of their activity, i.e. project applications on infrastructure development should invite input from the infrastructure department; applications in the field of studies should be discussed with those in charge of studies. All information regarding projects can be stored in a database which can be used in the project development and adjustment stages, and later – to inform whether the application has been granted financial support. Everyone, or at least the faculty managers, should have access to the information about the conducted purchases: “*how can we know if they are buying the stuff we already have. And how much it is used?*” (FG 1). Thus the administrative staff of the university proposes to shift responsibilities of project administration to the faculties, but at the same time to enhance centralized control over each particular project.

The representatives of the faculties suggest strengthening the institutional response against the external control of the university projects by establishing a project administration centre as a subdivision (“*one would like to have support from the university, decriminalise the scientists and give them time to work*”, FG 2), which will improve communication among faculties. They also suggest standardising and computerising routine activities in order to reduce administrative workload. This would enable the administrative staff to manage special cases:

“in case of special, unclear, I don’t know...break through projects <...> we need to have such mobile staff <...> but then, indeed, we need support from the central office so that we don’t have to spend half day or all day there” (FG 2)

It was also suggested that the administrative staff should be certified in a way that is similar to the assessment of the academic staff. The managers of faculties approved the idea of establishing a project management centre which would take on projects management and inform the project staff in the faculties about changes. Faculties, at the same time, should also have project administration centres and people who have experience in project management as well as expertise in the field of the faculty:

“there even could be a university centre for project management and its satellites in the faculties”; “there should be certain people in the faculties who <...> perhaps have a better understanding of these things”, (FG 3)

The heads of faculties identify a possibly more significant role of administration in initiating projects that are relevant for the university as a whole; for instance, projects on publishing scientific journals and their search system; purchasing e-books and access to them; purchasing or developing a system of computerised project management. During the discussion, the importance of strategy, vision and priority setting was highlighted:

“projects on infrastructure should be included in the strategy, strategic plans that are approved by the university; they should be reflected or at least their general trends would be reflected <...> after clear evaluation of our capacity and what the university is planning to do in the future. Especially, in coherence with science and studies. And then, it should be stated: we are going to expand up to this and this level”, (FG 3)

due to the fact that maintenance of the premises, the heating costs are increasing, while the number of students is reducing:

“those gigantic research centres are being built, but who’s going to work there? Is there any strategy? Of course, the faculties will move to the new premises, but the new centres are supposed to cause a breakthrough in science and business”, (FG 3)

One should search for ways to maintain a stable number of students (*“something has to be done so that it doesn’t decrease. Keep a certain number that is stable”, (FG 3)*). The development strategy of the university should be built by means of public debate:

“it doesn’t mean that two or three people should take these decisions. Instead, there should be an open discussion, during which we would explicitly discuss and define the limits for the infrastructure development of the university”; “I would like the strategic questions of the university to be clearly communicated to the university community. So that we could know that, let’s say, within the next three years the university has the following priorities for infrastructure, such priorities for the field of science, and such - for the studies”, (FG 3)

In a similar fashion, the faculties should as well have their strategies:

“we can discuss about certain priorities within the faculties <...> regarding the labour market, work activities, maybe about some projects”, (FG 3)

Thus, the representatives of faculties are looking for ways to live with the chaos projects create and give it some direction. Here they see the possibility to strengthen the leading role of the administration of the university: the administration could take responsibility to initiate and implement the projects which are needed by the whole university, it can also lead the discussions in the community on strategy and priorities, and create a subdivision which would coordinate all the projects and cumulate experiences.

6. Discussion

Which proposals are the best? What solutions could improve the situation? Open-minded discussions as a segment of post-bureaucratic culture proposed by psychologists (Tjosvold et al., 2014) can hardly help in such a case since the conflicts include not just the two parties who express their views and feelings searching for compromise, but several multi-level institutions; thus, subjects of the conflicts might constitute long lists depending on definitions (in this article, we have discussed only several of them). The conducted focus groups regarded by some participants as a positive practice and dialogue have revealed the main problem: the parties involved have different attitudes based on their experience and might be not aware of the basic values of the opponents (i.e., administrators working as part of hierarchical system follow modernist logic, however employees who initiate and implement projects have developed the culture of entrepreneurship). To conclude, even more, the community members of the same organisation live in or balance between two different social times and are not aware of it.

The problems in question reveal dissonance between two merging systems of organisation, hierarchical and egalitarian. Egalitarian work culture that should serve as a base for any project activity has not yet been put into practice in any institution involved in the projects, although its manifestations are present on all levels of the university. A fairly abstract attempt to look at the participants of the research through a bureaucratic/post-bureaucratic prism (Heckscher, 1994) shows a huge gap between the attitudes of the administrative staff and those of the representatives of the faculties (see **Table 2**). The attitudes of the faculty representatives possess, at least to some extent, a majority of post-bureaucratic features. This might have been determined by the selection of the participants, as only the most active project staff members were invited to the focus groups for the research. In order to ensure smooth work, they miss a clear university strategy, openness, atmosphere of trust and a more consistent empowerment. Meanwhile, the attitudes of the administrative staff can be characterised by having features typical of bureaucratic type. Most of the representatives of the administration would prefer more discipline, control and clarity in action.

Table 2. Attitudes of the representatives of the faculties in the perspective of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organisational types.

| | Features of Bureaucracy | Features of Post-Bureaucracy |
|--|---|---|
| Attitudes of the administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus through acquiescence to authority Influence based on formal position Internal trust immaterial Emphasis on rules and regulations Information monopolised at top of hierarchy Focus on rules for conduct Fixed (and clear) decision making processes Communal spirit/friendship groupings Hierarchical appraisal Definite and impermeable boundaries Objective rules to ensure equity of treatment Expectation of constancy Direct control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on organisational mission Self-criticism (Need for) informal horizontal communication |
| Attitudes of the representatives and managers of the faculties | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus through institutionalised dialogue Influence through persuasion/personal qualities High need for internal trust |

| | Features of Bureaucracy | Features of Post-Bureaucracy |
|----------------|-------------------------|---|
| | | Emphasis on organisational mission (Need for) strategic information shared in organisation Focus on principles guiding action fluid/flexible decision making processes Network of specialised functional relationships Expectation of change |
| Mainly lacking | | Open and visible peer review processes Open and permeable boundaries Broad public standards of performance Indirect internalised control |

Source: the authors.

In this case, what would serve best for the organisation? How could management resolve these problems? This dichotomic model suggests two trends. On the one hand, if changes in the post-bureaucratic direction were to be chosen, it would be worthwhile developing a strategy and communicating it clearly, reducing internal control and encouraging other egalitarian changes. In this case, the whole institution would gradually shift from a hierarchical submission towards a culture of trust. On the other hand, in order to achieve a smoother bureaucratic functioning, process management and discipline, it would be possible to centralise and strengthen the control of the projects by inculcating "idea filtering", giving top-down directions for initiating projects, increasing internal accountability etc. However, the question is to what extent such an organisational phenomenon would be viable considering how much it ignores the principles of project work and the importance of human and social capital? Could project work as an element of post-bureaucratic organisational culture be involved in and survive in a traditional bureaucratic work culture?

It cannot be denied that real life provides more choices than just this simplified dichotomy. D.E. Hodgson (2004:98) draws attention to the fact that the development of an organisation from bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic is not necessarily smoothly linear and that there are cases when "bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic technologies blend seamlessly together". We do not learn about the consequences of such "regress" and whether employees who accustomed to working in a culture of trust and independence would long tolerate the altered work conditions and not quit their job etc. In other words, is this just a management mistake which should be avoided? Researchers forewarn that social capital in team- and project-based structures is critical to knowledge creation, so the exercise of unified hierarchical control "may be no more than an illusion in which control may only apply to superficial measurable indicators of performance" (Raelin, 2011:145), thus stimulating work imitation.

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