

The communicative role of environmental professionals in construction: Nag or anchor?

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Abstract

The overall purpose of this paper is to create an understanding on how environmental aspects are communicated in construction projects. Communication is set in relation to social practice and organisational structure in construction projects under the assumption that these are manifested and reflected in text and talk. Specifically, the *role and positioning of the environmental professionals* are explored. A profession that besides being rather new in construction also due to raised corporate environmental responsibility is increasingly important. The paper is based on observations made in several interview studies of environmental management in project-based organisations carried out between 1998 and 2007. The results show that due to different organisational aspects and social practices the expected communicative role of the environmental professional often is hindered. For example by not being part of communities of project practice, their fuzzy professional identity and status, their lack of influence and authority in the organisation, the different time-perspectives and the divergent communication cultures where the perception of environmental communication as bureaucratic nit-picking hinders the meaning creating process of why environmental issues shall be considered. The study discern four interrelated aspects that need to be considered; authority, professional identity, visibility and the facilitation of meaning creating processes in the project context and by the project members. It is argued that environmental management practices must be aligned with project practices. Coherence between these practices would not only facilitate environmental professional's work, it would also raise the status of environmental issues. Increased status might contribute to more focus and resources being placed on improving the environmental performance of the product, e.g. greener buildings, roads and facilities.

Keywords: Environmental professional, project-based organisations, construction projects, organisational context, social practices, communication, environmental information

Introduction

Within the construction industry, a common mode of organizing projects is by de-coupling activities from the main organisation and delegating responsibilities. The result is organisational divergences, which impedes communication, for example environmental information between the top organisation and the project organisations. A challenge in project-based organizations is

therefore to align permanent structures of the company, e.g. management systems, with the temporary organisation and operational activities performed within projects. This alignment between the temporary and the permanent has been documented to be connected with problems; for example concerning knowledge management (Styhre *et al.*, 2004), organizational change processes (Bresnen *et al.*, 2005), management practices (Labuschagne and Brent, 2005) and adoption of innovation (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). All these examples affect how the permanent organization's long-termed environmental strategies and goals are implemented and realised in the projects as well as how these are interpreted and managed in the project settings.

To manage this problem many companies have appointed specific persons who, often in addition to other tasks, are expected to take on the communicative role as carriers of environmental information. Currently these environmental professionals select and filter the environmental information and knowledge to be transmitted in the organisation. Studies show that in this role they are in a position that they may determine the environmental sustainability standard as well as set environmental norms in the project organisations (Gluch, 2005). Moreover, top management as well as members in the project organisation often expect them to be an anchorman/woman for the organisation in terms of environmental issues. However, previous studies show a discrepancy between expectation and reality (Gluch, 2005).

I have over a period of ten years been studying environmental management in construction projects. During these studies I have met and interviewed many environmental professionals, such as environmental managers and coordinators. Many of these interviews has ended up in a situation very much like a therapeutic situation, with me listening to problems related to their work situation and them having the opportunity to talk to someone that listens. Many of the stories I have listened to have mediated large frustration of not being able to communicate the environmental message to the other members of the project organisation; i.e. to do their job. Instead of anchor, a dedicated environmental professional is often perceived as a nag. The environmental professional is thus confronted with situations where his/her environmental values conflict with other, often time and productivity focused, interests, which may hinder pro-environmental behaviour.

The overall purpose of this paper is to create an understanding on how environmental aspects are communicated in construction projects. Communication is set in relation to social practice and organisational structure in construction projects under the assumption that these are manifested and reflected in text and talk. Specifically, the *role and positioning of the environmental professionals* are explored. A profession that besides being rather new in construction also due to raised corporate environmental responsibility is increasingly important. The paper is based on several interview studies of environmental management in project-based organisations in the construction industry carried out between 1998 and 2007. Based on these empirical observations this paper provides the reader with some suggestions on how companies facilitate so that environmental professionals in construction avoid being the nag without losing their dedication.

Studies on organizational structure and social practice

Environmental performance of a product does not solely depend on technology but is also influenced by on-going acts of organising, e.g. the management of technology through for example management practices (Baumann, 2004). From an environmental perspective, the objectives in institutional theory are to create an understanding of how the natural environment enters the business agenda and how the environmental challenge is embedded into decisions, management practices and organisational structures (Scott, 1998). In the context of environmental management, this means that researchers explore mechanisms for greening and the greening of industry is regarded as a constantly on-going process of institutional change. The institutions are in turn created by people that interact within them. Institutions thus provide a pattern for behavioural norms that is often seen as so obvious that nobody questions them. The theoretical assumption made is that greening of industry is a process where people constantly are involved in the act of organising.

A basic assumption that unites institutional theories is that ideas are institutionalized through a process where individuals collectively create meaning of them based on their previous understanding set in relation to their social context. In this process, notions of for example the natural environment are verbalized and translated into objects that in turn are translated into action. The interpretation and translation of the natural environment is dependent on contextual organisational factors such as corporate identity and how the corporations have legitimated environmental aspects (Sharma, 2000). In that context individuals create meaning based on their own personal interests and cognitive limits through a social process where new environmental information must compete with beliefs that people already hold (Eagly and Kulesa, 1997). Since any collective action towards environmental sustainability entails that individuals, engaged in business, behave and make decisions that independently are pro-environmental. Knowledge on environmental issues plays here an important role for how individuals act (Kaiser *et al.*, 1999). Diffusion of knowledge is dependent on communication (Bresnen *et al.*, 2003). Co-ordination, in time and space, of multiple activities, highly distributed work practices, and a great number of involved persons, influence and put demands on communication in construction projects (Styhre *et al.*, 2004). Being a social process, the ability of project members to handle the rhetoric of the project organisation is very important, if one wishes to influence or govern it (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). In order to make project members understand and apply new insight and knowledge to their own context it is important to develop a shared meaning (Bresnen *et al.*, 2003). As suggested by researchers (e.g. Stenberg and Räisänen, 2006; Häkkinen *et al.*, 2002), communication and information are crucial aspects for a corporation to manage environmental aspects in the construction industry. For construction projects, poor communication has in fact been recognized as a major cause for the construction industry's inefficiency (Kadefors, 2004). In the context of construction projects, individuals are highly dependent on timely and accurate information since they continuously make decisions that very often cause or may cause environmental impact. The communication of environmental information and knowledge is therefore a critical factor for environmental management.

Bresnen *et al.* (2005), comment that new management initiatives, such as environmental management, often are deployed to challenge and reorganise organisational structures and practices. Kadefors (1995), in turn, discovered in her study of implementation of quality management practice that the construction process and the occupational roles were heavily institutionalised, and that changes in established practices were met with great resistance. Several researchers have pointed out that the construction industry relies on strong project professional (e.g. Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000). Regarding each project as a collectivity where individuals are united by an endeavour to realize a project goal, the personnel employed in the project coheres to project practices that are set in the community rather than for the firms as a whole. As such, these collectivities are composed of sub-cultures in which practitioners have their own orientations, which influence their understanding.

Setting the scene: Structure and social practice in project-based organising

Construction projects are characterized by being a combination of human capital and material-input, coordinated at a specific site. The primary task is to erect a construction, with a strong focus on production. For now there is still a prevalent notion that a successful project is the one that has achieved the highest quality with the lowest input of financial resources in due time. In construction projects, individuals are therefore highly dependent on timely and accurate information since many of their actions may cause environmental impact. Communication of environmental information underpins environmental behaviour which in turn is affected by communicative practices within a project and across project boundaries. The empirical observations reveal that there are several in-built tensions between how the project is organised and how environmental issues are organised (Gluch, 2005; Gluch, 2006; Gluch and Räsänen, in prep.). The main findings from the analysis of the studies are summarized in Table 1. These tensions between how the environment respectively the project is organised in a project-based organisation will in the following be analysed in relation to the communicative role of the environmental professionals.

Table 1: Summing up empirical evidence from previous case studies

		Organizing the Environment	Organizing the Project
Organizational structure	Inter-organizational relations	Decoupled from the project organizations	Loosely coupled with the permanent organization
	Intra-organizational relations	Loose couplings between members (network)	Tight couplings between members (team)
	Organizational control	Centralized	Decentralized
	Organizational dependency	Interdependent	Autonomous
	Power and authority	Knowledge based	Position based
Social practice	Professional practice	Under development	Institutionalized
	Work practice	Standardized through EMS	Experienced based and trouble-shooting
	Communication mode	Text-based	Face-to-face
	Time perspective	Long-termed	Short-termed
	Performance focus	Strategic policy making and continuous improvements	Resource efficient production (foremost financial)
	Environmental scope	All-embracing and reciprocally interdependent on societal changes	Contextual and focused on targeted topics and embedded in project specific standards and norms
		The isolated environmental challenge	The isolated project

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In their role as agents and specialists in the organization, environmental professionals have to be keen and open to societal changes as well as organizational needs. However, many of them being decoupled from where the production takes place express being torn by a situation where they, due to limited time-resources, are set in interdependence. As illustrated by the following quote by a foreman at a construction project, the organizational distance between the environmental organization and the project organizations make the environmental organization impersonal which hinder a smooth communication between the parts.

Sure, I can call some environmental dude on my division, I don't recall his name, but there are many that call him and he does not have time helping us. (foreman)

Being unfamiliar with the environmental unit, members of the project organization instead address inquires to persons that already were among their established personal network. As a consequence, inquires are addressed to people who might not have the most solid knowledge within a specific

area. The members of the environmental staffs are also often placed at different locations which not only decoupled them from the project organizations but also made them loosely coupled with each other, which did not nurture networking and the creation of a fruitful experience sharing community.

A majority of the medium sized and large construction companies within the Swedish construction industry have implemented environmental management systems (Gluch et al., 2007). Maintaining the environmental management system needs extensive administration which is carried out by a kind of environmental professional with a pure supporting role but on a more operational level in the organization. This way of structuring the environmental work in the organization creates a satellite network of environmental administrators working rather independently from each other. The administrative environmental task is on this level also often combined with other administrative tasks, for example quality, safety and purchasing. Thus their tasks are often fragmented into tasks of varying character concerning for example time frames. The environmental professionals on operational level has however higher visibility in the organisation than the centrally positioned environmental professional. He/she has also access to sources of environmental information available in three relevant settings, in the project, from the construction company and with the client. The environmental professional is therefore expected to act as support and filter of the environmental information to and from the project. What complicates this role is their lack of ability to enforce action in the project. Although their position on an operational level their tasks are not operative in relation to production but rather administration. Since the environmental professionals have neither an influential authoritative position nor formal responsibility in the organization their role and their possibility to take action are undermined. This way of organizing also make these environmental professionals on an operative level loosely coupled from both the central environmental unit and the production focused project organization.

Due to different organisational structures and social processes of the involved parties, grounded on different ontologies and work-views, there is a lack of coherence concerning the status and definition of environmental activities. Rather than being anchors, the environmental professionals often perceive themselves, and were indeed perceived by project members, as “nags”. Since the environmental professionals often wield no power, they have little ability to influence managers or workers on site.

“One disadvantage with this job is that you sometimes are regarded as a nag and as difficult because you make demands. You say: ‘You cannot use this product.’ ‘Yes I know but only for this time, we are in a hurry, we have a deadline to meet’ and, well, sometimes you have to turn a blind eye to it, but at least you try to make them think ahead so that it is not regarded as ‘oops do we have to do that as well’.
(environmental professional)

“it’s not the most fun job. There is too much lecturing and that is not so popular [...] They [construction workers] are very focused on the actual production and would gladly skip this environmental stuff” (building engineer)

As also indicated by the quote above environmental professionals have to deal with situations in which their personal beliefs and ideology conflict with the production-focused and time-pressed

agenda of the construction project. Handling this balancing act between personal and professional convictions and fulfilling project-goals according to cost and time specifications, could put undue pressure on these officials. That they also perceive themselves in the profession as environmental to be rather isolated in the project milieu.

SOCIAL PRACTICE

Being the establisher of a new environmental practice in a world of a heavily institutionalized project practice (Kadefors, 1995) is a challenge of magnitude, which put pressure on the environmental professionals. This pressure does not always match with whom holds the position as environmental professional in the organizations. The environmental professional are often someone with a longer university degree, younger than average in the company, often rather newly employed in the organization, sometimes also with a non-engineering background and often a women. All factors that contradict with the traditional norm of construction project members, which complicate their professional identity as well as their authoritative position.

Being few in the organisation, sometimes even the only one working with environmental issues professionally, also put them in a position of somewhat ambiguous role as being both generalist and specialist. Many of the interviewees perceive the situation as they were carrying out a balance act where on one hand they had to manage the difficulty of combining a strategic, policy-based, all-embracing and long-termed perspective relevant for the companies' whole business and on the other hand they had to gain profound expertise within a targeted field of knowledge. Not being part of the project organisations hierarchical chain-of-command and having a rather lonely position the environmental professionals have to build up a knowledge advantage in order to gain power and authority in the organization. In order to do so the environmental professional need to be persistent in their role, which unfortunately not always are the case since the profession often lack clear career patterns why many move on to different jobs before gaining necessary knowledge advantage.

Especially construction has a business culture that by long tradition is decentralised where business relations preferably are made with persons that are familiar (Eccles, 1981). Out of this perspective the EMS governance are perceived as an unconventional move that is met with a certain distance. Relying on a top-controlled EMS as guidance for the project members to act pro-environmentally requires that environmental routines and procedures are standardized. The standardization of the environmental work signals to the project members that the environmental issue is controlled from top with very little room for flexibility. This not only contradicts with the experience favouring and trouble-shooting culture of construction (Knauseder, 2007) but also pinion the environmental professionals' opportunities to be innovative and creative in their work. EMS is also developed under the assumption that communication is a linear process that involves a message (e.g. environmental information) that originates from a sender (e.g. environmental experts) and sent to a receiver (e.g. practitioners). With this rather mechanic albeit traditional perspective on communication, the complexity of contextual factors involved in environmental

management in construction is overlooked, which means that for example social and cognitive processes, i.e. meaning creating processes, remain invisible. A consequence from not considering these less tangible aspects is that environmental concern become pin-pointed to a few targeted issues rather than the complex and multifaceted environmental situation that the construction industry are faced with (Gluch, 2005). In order to create meaning and understanding of environmental issues, individuals interpret and translate the environmental language with respect to their personal pre-understanding, context and action (c.f. Dammann *et al.*, 2002; Dobers and Strannegård, 2001; Bergström and Dobers, 2000; Joerges and Czarniawska, 1998). The practitioners have been accused by environmental experts, such as researchers, of not understanding the environmental discourse and thus has suggested that it need to be translated into the familiar language of money (c.f. Yudelson, 2002; Sterner, 2002; Bartlett and Howard, 2000). On the basis of my empirical findings I would rather argue that there is a lack of a congruent *use* of the environmental language. The appropriation of information, time and the resources at hand, and if the information was communicated in a language that is aligned with the language used in a specific project situation are all important for the way communicative tools are used. For example, some construction project members had problems separating issues that concerned the natural environment with safety issues because occasionally these issues overlapped, for example concerning handling of chemicals, but also due to the fact that safety affects an individual's personal, immediate well-being and thus may be perceived as more tangible on a personal basis. This meaning creating process needs to be recognized when appointing the tasks of an environmental professional. By appointing him/her with dual tasks of for example environmental and safety aspects this will implacable also signal to the project members that these issues are interrelated and therefore might be mixed up.

The use of EMS as a governing instrument demand extensive reporting which require a text based communication culture. This, however, is found to often be conflicting with the oral face-to-face communication that often is the most common and preferred mode of interaction in construction projects (Styhre *et al.*, 2004). Organising environmental work through a standardised EMS also marginalizes and bureaucratises environmental work, which also corresponds to observations made by other researchers (e.g. Emilsson, 2005). As such environmental work was perceived as necessary administrative routines for maintaining a level considered as hygienic, and efforts other than the minimum were considered as a burden. For the environmental professional this often resulted in them being characterized as paper tracing bureaucrats, which the following two quotes by two construction managers witness of.

It feels as there is too much that is foisted on us, checklists and demands and other things, 'now you have to check that and that', Sometimes I perceive it's only as a showcase, especially if you know that you will not be able to fulfill the demands set on you. (...) I mean, we do not only work with green issues, we also have to produce something and make money.

She came running and after quite a lot and persistent nagging she eventually got some papers from us. If nobody runs and nags the environmental professional will not receive any papers either. It is not more difficult than that.

The problems of perceiving environmental work as an administrative burden is further emphasised of the common practice of bracketing projects. To comply with stated project goals the project organisation tends to isolate itself from its context. Temporary bracketing of the project decreases the risk of interventions and unwanted disturbances (Kreiner, 1995). Bracketing projects provide the project with an identity and by isolating project members it allows them to focus on their task by minimizing any disturbance to plans or other threats to achieving their pre-defined tasks (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). However, as has also been pointed out by (Christensen and Kreiner, 1997), bracketing means that the project manager only can be held responsible for the project's efficiency and not for its relevance since the effects from the project often appear after the project's 'closure'. Striving to be as efficient as possible, requirements other than the minimum requirements, for example preventive environmental actions, are considered by the project members as an obstruction. Also changes in environmental routines, irrespective of its influence on efficiency, may be regarded as a 'burden'. So, on the one hand the de-coupling of a project provides a good foundation for creating a project that meets its in advance stated goals. On the other hand, the bracketing in time and scope jeopardize its possibilities to cope with contextual changes (Kreiner, 1995). Even though environmental impacts caused by the construction process may exceed the project closure, the environmental boundaries often are mentally restricted to the time span of the project. That is, in a project the environmental problems are regarded as 'momentary', i.e. they occur during the project time and when the project is finished, they are considered a closed chapter. This means that the project members' commitment to environmental issues is constrained by the project's time and space boundaries. As a consequence environmental concerns are often subject to tensions between the long-term strategies and goals of management and the short-term, time-pressed reality of projects (Gluch, 2005; Labushange and Brent, 2005). When communicating environmental information the environmental professional has to deal with both the project defined perspective on project success and the long-termed perspective on environmental effects.

The second quote above also emphasise the importance of visibility. By "running and nagging" the environmental professional is visible for the organisation with the result that the environmental concern also is visible. With more centrally placed environmental professionals, which are the most common way to structure the environmental work, the visibility might be restrained. However, although physical absence of environmental professionals in the project setting, high visibility of environmental concern could be facilitated through artefacts; e.g. highly visible documents. An example of a document that contributed to higher visibility of environmental concern, found in a couple of cases studies, was a separate environmental control program. This written document, which were client initiated and project specific but related to long-termed goals of the project and project settings, was a living document in the sense that it continuously had to be revised in accordance with societal changes. Stipulating contractual arrangements and demands the document yielded large authority in the project. The flexibility and level-setting of this document contributed to a meaning creating dialogue concerning the projects' environmental challenges as well as the level of undertakings relevance for the project. This document became actors in the project, with nicknames and frequently recalled in conversations.

The practice of prioritizing pure production task on behalf of other issues limits the project members' incentive for devoting energy and time to environmental development and innovations unless earmarked resources are allocated by the client. In addition, environmental issues crucial for the project's accomplishment, and thus closely related to production, were often not considered by the project members as environmental issues. So, what is the problem with that, one may think? The issues receive attention, and are hopefully also handled properly in the project. No, the problem is rather on a motivational and authoritative level, which largely influences the work situation for the environmental professional. By rhetorically detaching environmental issues that are defined as 'important' for production, this way of itemizing also sends signals that what is left is not. This marginalises and labels the 'remaining' environmental work as work added on the regular work, i.e. work that one preferably would be excused from. This biased notion on environmental issues made the environment a side issue not highly ranked by the project members, simply a detail that can be negotiated. This fact put the environmental official on site in an awkward position where he/she had to go in defence for the interest of environmental issues against the more powerful interest of accomplishing the project with as little interaction as possible.

Conclusions - four aspects to consider

Present paper has argued that due to different organisational aspects and sometimes contradictory practices the expected communicative role of the environmental professional often is hindered. For example by not being part of communities of project practice, their fuzzy professional identity and status, their lack of influence and authority in the organisation, the different time-perspectives and the divergent communication cultures where the perception of environmental communication as bureaucratic nit-picking hinders the meaning creating process of why environmental issues shall be considered. The unequal relation between organising the project and organising environmental concern give rise to a mismatch between not only practices but also between two professions, a strong and rather institutionalized construction project management profession and a weak and still developing environmental profession. Today this ends up in an unequal power struggle where the environment most often is the loser. Due to the way project-based organisations are organised there is a distance between the person that possess environmental knowledge and who is actually and actively making decisions that might cause environment impact (see also Stenberg, 2006). So what can be done to create a better balance between these two? From the above description of empirical observations made in several interview studies on environmental management in construction project it is possible to discern four aspects that affect the environmental professionals role as communicator of environmental information; authority, professional identity, visibility and the facilitation of meaning creating processes in the project context and by the project members (Figure 1). A conclusion made in this paper is that in order to create an active environmental work in project-based organisations these four interrelated aspects need to be provided for.

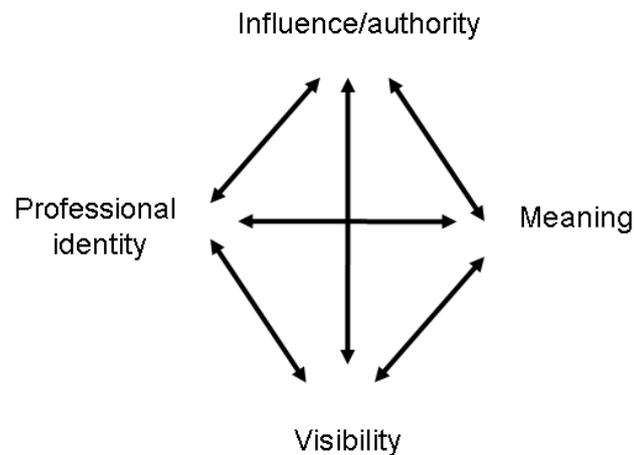


Figure 1: Four aspects that affect the communication of environmental information in construction projects: Authority, professional identity, visibility and the need of meaning creating processes.

If organisations rank environmental issues as a top priority and also want this to be reflected in the construction projects, the position and role of the environmental officials need to be *authoritative* within the project organisation. In order to avoid that the meaning of environmental issues is negotiable it is important to create equality between the actors that possess environmental knowledge, i.e. environmental professionals, and the actors that make decisions concerning the final outcome of the construction project. Strengthening the identity and status of the environmental profession would facilitate environmental concerns receiving legitimacy within the whole organisation.

The discussion on the importance of authority leads to the need for the environmental professionals to also have a *professional identity* in the project setting and in the organisation. In this paper I have spoken of an environmental professional, although still developing, as a certain position in today's organisations. In fact the qualifications, education, work tasks, agency and organisational position of an environmental professional are still rather indefinite and vague. Observations made in the interview studies were that environmental professionals instead of being important actors for organisational and collective learning were regarded as "nitpicking nags". This was found to partly be a consequence of their lack of influence on the project. In order to gain hearing in the project organisation, which is in line with Wallström's (2004) findings, the environmental professionals either had to be an established actor in the organisational context or at least familiar with the 'rules of the game' as well as with the 'language' used in construction. Bresnen *et al.* (2003) similarly found that the success of new management functions depended on interpersonal and cultural aspects more than on technological and procedural mechanisms. Thus, the way environmental issues are managed in construction, which in turn has an effect on the final construction, partly depends on how well environmental issues are imbued with legitimacy in the construction project. A way to enforce environmental issues in construction projects is to strengthen the position and role of the environmental professionals in construction project. As it is

today, it seems as persons assigned administrative environmental work in construction projects, due to the complexity of environmental issues need to have a strong organisational identity as well as integrity so that when needed they have the authority to oppose current project practices in order to handle their environmental assignment.

It is also important that the environmental concerns as well as the environmental professionals are made *visible* in the project. A strong, united and more visible position would strengthen the environmental discourse in the organisation, and lay ground for a common understanding and less apart meanings of what green building is and why it is necessary to build green. This visibility of the environmental professional as well as the environmental concern is restrained by the today's isolation between the project organisation and the permanent environmental organisation. To strengthen the visibility it is necessary to find ways where environmental management and project professionals can team up. The top management can encourage the establishment of communicative interdisciplinary communities and strengthen their vitality by supporting the project organisation members' participation in the learning and knowledge developing communities of practice, which has been described by Wenger (2000). Top management can also nurture the creation of these communities by offering communicative arenas where people can meet and exchange information and knowledge. To do this it is important to consider the communicative culture of the organisation so that fruitful and open discussions can be held. People in the business like to talk so why not use that and create communication spaces that encourage and facilitate talk. Even though this seems time-consuming, it might save many work hours if experiences could be shared more systematically. Top management also needs to support the creation of heterogeneous professional communities. Equality in the discussion requires however that the authority of environmental professionals belonging to these communities is powerful enough so that environmental issues are made visible and legitimised within the organisation.

The fourth aspect that needs to be provided for is that the information that is communicated creates and has *meaning* for the project members in their everyday work and situational practice. Through on-going organizing processes and departing from their specific situation individuals create patterns, practice and meaning of their environmental work. For someone this means safety and for another it means climate change. I have previously pointed at that today's project practice override today's environmental practice which may hinder an engaged environmental work in construction projects. The way environmental issues been organised has led to a perception that environmental work is costly and bureaucratic paper work added on top of the ordinary work. The consequence is that environmental professionals are set in situations were they have to conciliate between a weak environmental practice and a dominant and institutionalized project practice. A situation the need authority, visibility and a clear professional identity, which many environmental professionals today do not have. To legitimate environmental concerns in the organisation it is also necessary that communication means and mechanisms for environmental information provide opportunity for a meaning creating process where the environmental issues and their complexity are set in relation with project and situational practice. A good example of that was the "living" environmental control program.

In conclusion, even if corporate staff categorises environmental concerns as a top priority in environmental policies, this does not become a fact for the organisation until all organisational members are convinced that it is a top priority. This they will only do when they perceive environmental concerns as relevant to their everyday work situation (Füssel and Georg, 2000). To convince members of construction projects that environmental work are important and of meaning I argue that environmental aspects, professionals as well as environmental management tools need to be made visible and that their status are raised in the organisation. To make this happen environmental management practices must be aligned with project practices. Coherence between these practices would not only facilitate environmental professional's work, it would also raise the status of environmental issues. Raised status might contribute to more focus and resources being placed on improving the environmental performance of the product, e.g. greener buildings, roads and facilities.

This paper shall be seen as a contribution within an emerging field of research that focuses on social practice and the role as environmental professionals. A role, that due to increased societal emphasis on environmental sustainability has meaning, but yet has to develop a professional identity, visibility and an authoritative position in the project-based organisations.

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