PARTICIPATIVE PERSONAL PROJECTS -A CHANCE FOR MEANINGFUL AND FULFILLING OCCUPATIONAL LIFE? WORK RELATED PERSONAL PROJECTS ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Although research on employee participation is of interest to many managers, psychologists, sociologists and organizational scientists, studies on psychological aspects of participation are not satisfactory. This paper presents an alternative approach to examining organizational participation by using personal projects perspective which allows to examine psychological aspects of the individual person acting together with others in the organizational context. The results imply that participative projects lead to self-realization more often than non-participative projects as well as they are more controllable and perceived as more likely to end with success

Keywords: participation, participative management, job satisfaction, Personal Project Analysis

Introduction

Employee participation has been in the scope of interest of organizational researchers for a long time. Glew, O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin and Van Fleet (1995) find elements of scientific reflection on participation in the book of Munsterberg (1913) and reports of Hawthorne Studies (Mayo, 1933; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Prokopowicz, Stocki and Żmuda (2008) date the presence of research on participatory management in the organizational research mainstream in the fifties. Since then employee participation has been of interest to many managers, psychologists, sociologists and organizational scientists (Heller & Yukl, 1969; Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Harrison, 1985; Wagner & Gooding, 1987a, 1987b; Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengnick-Hall, & Jennings, 1988; Vroom & Jago, 1988; Cotton, Vollrath, Lengnick-Hall, & Froggatt,1990; Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990; Pierce, Rubenfeld & Morgan, 1991; Cole, Bacdayan & White, 1993; Wagner, 1994; Cheney, 1995; Glew et al., 1995; Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Wagner, Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1997; Cheney et al., 1998; Heller, Pusić, Strauss, & Wilpert, 1998; Vandenberg, Richardson & Eastman, 1999; Forrester, 2000; Seibold & Shea, 2001; Perotin & Robinson, 2002; Summers & Hyman, 2005). Despite the fact that research on participation can be found in almost every field of contemporary psychology (see: Cheney et al., 1998; authors present other scientific disciplines where studies on participation are also present, including sociology, political science, economy etc.), it is hard not only to find conclusive results on what the conditions or effects of participation are, but also what participation is. The need for adequate and conclusive studies on participation is growing even faster as we are entering the time when many different companies around the world achieve extraordinary

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results implementing total participation management (the term was used first by Graham and Titus (1979)). Companies like Semco, SAIC, Harley Davidson, SRC Holdings Corp. and many others can hardly count on support from the scientific field. The practice of participative management seems to be a way ahead of theoretical reflection and scientific research.

Defining participation

There is a whole spectrum of different approaches to organizational participation that stem from different assumptions, use different measures and postulate different outcomes of participation. Heller et al. (1998) write:

Definitions of participation abound. Some authors insist that participation must be a group process, involving groups of employees and their bosses; other stress delegation, the process by which the individual employee is given greater freedom to make decisions on his or her own. Some restrict the term 'participation' to formal institutions, such as work councils; other definitions embrace 'informal participation', the day-to-day relations between supervisors and subordinates in which subordinates are allowed substantial input into work decisions. Finally, there are those who stress participation as a process and those who are concerned with participation as a result. (p. 15)

Participation is not always even labeled as 'participation', sometimes scientists use the term employee involvement, work democracy, empowerment or self-directed work teams (Cooper, 2002). The most popular approach uses participative decision making as a synonym of participation (Locke & Schweiger, 1979). The latter approach very often excludes delegation, although some scientists include it in their definitions (Heller, 1971; Cotton et al., 1988). Dachler and Wilpert (1978) proposed four different orientations towards organizational participation: production and efficiency, democratic, human growth, development and socialist. Summers and Hyman (2005) divide employee participation into two groups – financial and work-related participation. Financial participation involves distribution of shares to employees or organization members and "concerns flexibility of pay, where an element of remuneration varies with profitability or other appropriate performance measures" (Summers & Hyman, 2005, p. 2). Authors divide work-related participation into two forms - individual vs. collective and direct vs. indirect. Apart from these forms, participation can also be task-related or strategic and then ordered into communicative, consultative or negotiative types. Heller et al. (1998) analyze informal-formal, direct-representative and financial participation. Apart from the form of participation, the range of issues is taken into account (IDE, 1976 after: Heller et al., 1998). These issues can be categorized according to time perspective (short-term, medium-term and long-term) and to subject matter (work/social conditions, personnel and economic).

Disagreement among researchers starts with the question whether participation is a "value-in-itself" or should be treated instrumentally as a means to a certain end (Heller et al., 1998). The majority of scholars claim the latter statement is true. Locke and Schweiger (1979) state that the role of participation is to contribute to organizational efficiency. Employees' job satisfaction, self-realization and goal commitment are also treated as a means to achieve organizational goals. The reason why it is hard to achieve consensus and advance research on participation is probably that most of research focuses on organizations and not on people, on organizational effects and not on psychological aspects.

Heller et al. (1998) agree that it is logical in organizational research to take an assumption that participation serves as a "means" to a certain "end", however we have to remember about other "ends" participation serves. These "ends" according to Heller et al.

(1998) are the fundamental anthropological individual and social functions. Lafferty (1979 after: Heller et al., 1998) writes:

Participation is a basic well-being. […] Not to participate in decisions which symbolically control the emotional value (status, legality, worth, etc.) of my action world is quite simply to choose a lesser degree of humanism […] for both myself and community. (p. 10)

Similarly, Allport (1945 after: Heller et al., 1998) stresses the importance of participation: […] people have to be active in order to learn…to build voluntary control…unless (a person) is in some areas ego-engaged and participant, his life is crippled and his existence a blemish on democracy […]. (p.127)

Participation can be treated as a realization of human nature as it was understood in philosophical anthropology of Wojtyla (1985) described in details in Prokopowicz et al. (2008). Wojtyla (1985) writes: (Participation) is the person's transcendence in the action when the action is being performed "together with others" - transcendence which manifests that the person has not become altogether absorbed by social interplay and thus "conditioned," but stands out as having retained his very own freedom of choice and direction - which is the basis as well as the condition of participation. (p. 333)

Therefore the concept of participation that has grown out of the Wojtyla's theory and focuses on psychological aspects of participation is more useful for our paper. In this paper we would like to focus on a person acting in social (organizational) context and for that matter we need a psychological definition of participation.

Wojtyla's definition of participation mentioned earlier points out some crucial aspects of participation. First of all, it emphasizes the person as the subject of participation, then participation is defined as "transcendence in the act". Then, as Żmuda, Prokopowicz and Stocki (mimeo) point out: "we have two important forces of participation – one is the act being performed "with others" and possible absorption and social play which may condition the person; on the other hand, the second force is the freedom of choice and direction". Authors propose the definition of participation that goes from anthropological terms into psychological ones:

Participation is the process of the person's individual development in social interaction which is conditioned both by social meanings (cognition) and voluntary (conative) acts of the person.

This definition is very useful for this paper and we will use it in the context of organizational participation, with one exception however. The implication that participation is a process of the person's development may lead to conceptual confusion and make it impossible to falsify hypotheses derived from the definition. If we define personal development as a condition of participation, we will never be able to prove that participation may have any negative consequences – if something goes awry it is not participation. Although we agree that participation is strictly connected with personal development, self-realization etc., we would rather treat these phenomena as effects of participation, and the relationship between participation and personal development or self-realization should be treated as a hypothesis (H2), not a definition. For that reason we will exclude the clause: "the process of the person's individual development". We would also like to make it more coherent with Ryan and Deci's (2000) concept of self-determination closely related to participation which is connected with both autonomy (full sense of choice) and reflection. Therefore, we propose that participation takes place whenever:

A person performs actions oriented towards common good in the social context (with others) with the highest level of reflection and guaranteed freedom of expressing one's will.

From this definition and the definition by Wojtyla, a number of basic participation conditions arise. Firstly, there must be a person – an agent that decides to participate or not. Common good condition requires that an action is oriented on achieving balance of individual and organizational goals. There is also a social context – other actors, institutions etc. – that may encourage or discourage and even make participation impossible. Participation is always an act "performed with others". The agent's will, although crucial, is not enough to participate, to some extent he or she is limited by the environment. It does not mean that participation is possible in participative environment only – people tend to break their limits and for that reason can participate even when the environment is hostile to participation. Some of such behaviors were described by Landy and Conte (2007). Also Wojtyla's authentic attitudes of protest and solidarity are examples of participation in hostile environment. To participate considerable knowledge is required about what, how and why something is to be done. It cannot be a matter of reaction or unconscious behavior but one that is based on understanding the situation. That is what reflection stands for. The freedom of expressing one's will means that a person is given an opportunity to act on his or her own without being forced to do something. There must be considerable amount of autonomy included, which is similar to Deci and Ryan's approach to self-determination. The definition we propose can be easily applied to every field of human social activity – family, school, politics and, of course, organizational life.

Goals and Personal Projects

In Kelly's personal construct theory every person is a "lay scientist" who observes events, puts forward hypotheses (named personal constructs) and always tries to anticipate the future (Pervin, 2002). Through personal constructs individuals view themselves in their context (Little, 2000b). The goal of every person is to develop as adequate theories of the world as possible and people do it by revising their personal constructs in the light of their experience. A human is active, self-creating and exploring the world around him. Although Little (Little, 1999a) agrees that humans are scientists he claims that they are somewhat selectively scientific. They are "specialists" who display different attitudes towards different ecological domains and objects. Some domains are more important than others and people are more affectively, cognitively and behaviorally engaged in some than in others. In his personality theory, Little prefers using personal projects as analytic units instead of less dynamic personal constructs. Personal projects are "extended sets of personally salient activities in context" (Little, 2006, p. 423). As Little (2007) explains "extended" refers to the fact that projects are not momentary behavior but are extended temporally and spatially. Personal projects are not single actions but rather their interrelated "sets". Projects are personally salient because the person defines them and is the "owner" of the projects. "Activity" points out the conative aspect of projects, and finally personal projects are always performed in the specific "context" - physical, cultural, social, organizational, historical etc.

Personal projects can range from trivial pursuits (e.g. preparing supper) to great and long term plans (e.g. build civic society in my country). They can be self-initiated or forced by someone else, solitary concerns or shared commitments, isolated and not important or complex and connected with the core of our life (Little, 1989). Personal projects are described by Little (1987a, 1989) as "natural units of analysis for a personality psychology, that chooses to deal with serious business of how people muddle through complex lives". It is significant for Little that every person when acting is a "subject" to many different influences of both intentional and contextual nature. Personal Projects are the way that people deal with various influences (biological, cultural, environmental, social etc.). People plan and act to succeed in

well-being. The content and the way people build their personal projects tell us not only about somebody's peculiar views, skills and thoughts, but also tells us a lot about the specific environment a given person is embroiled in. Personal projects allow to understand human behavior and attitude without distortions caused by traditional methods. In Personal Projects Analysis (PPA) people are treated like experts on themselves and the role of the researcher is to cooperate with subjects instead of treating them like the "objects" of investigation. PPA ensures that human behavior is analyzed in the specific context it occurs. Personal projects are explicitly conative – they are volitional undertakings and pursuits that have the meaning for individuals. PPA takes into consideration the fact that we are not only managing one project at a time, but the whole set of them. In that way we may be able to analyze effects of participation on what people do, plan and think in the organizational context.

Personal projects in organizational life

As Grant, Little and Phillips (2007) write: (Personal project) serves as a conceptual carrier unit and as a measurement unit that inherently links persons and contexts. At work, the personal project connects individuals to their groups and organizations by examining individual pursuits that occur in conjunction with, are directed toward, and are enacted on behalf of other individuals, groups, and the organization as a whole. That is, personal project captures cognitions, affect, and behaviors that influence and are influenced by the contexts in which they take place (Little, 2000a). (p. 223)

Another important advantage of personal projects is that they are able to capture personal saliency. Task, jobs and other organizational requirements are something external to the acting person (Taber & Alliger, 1995 after: Grant et al., 2007). Personal projects represent those actions that are created and performed by employees and therefore are the most relevant to employees' experiences. People in the same organization and on the same position may significantly differ in defining what specific activities their jobs consist of (Morrison, 1994). Examining participation in the level of job assignments or certain tasks may not detect relevant and important issues. Grant and his colleagues write: Because employees can identify the same actions at different levels, and reshape their tasks and jobs, assessing an employee's experience on the basis of an external definition of a task or a job may not accurately capture the employee's activities, pursuits, and experiences. Conversely, a focus on the personal projects of employees highlights the activities and pursuits that are the most salient in their work experiences. (p. 226)

It is important to emphasize that organizational systems and climate are very strong environmental factors and, as a context to the persons' actions, affect them in a significant way. Therefore it is much easier to be engaged in the participative personal projects in a participative company, although it is not necessarily impossible to have participative projects in totalistic organizational environment. As Grant et al. (2007) state, it is possible to use personal projects to better understand organizational climate.

Authors emphasize the fact that personal projects are the best known compromise between simplicity and accuracy. It allows to examine the internal structure of actions performed in the workplace which are less general than whole jobs (and therefore it is more accurate) but more general that tiny tasks (and that is why the method is more generalizable). Personal projects "aggregate employees' experience into personally salient chunks" (Grant et al., 2007).

Weick (1999, 2004 after: Grant et al., 2007) states that the way projects are formulated has important implications for the meaning (sense) they are making of their jobs. Weick (1999) described the case of firefighters who lost their lives while being on duty because they

could not switch from "suppressing the fire" project into "escaping the fire". Grant et al. (2007) argue that it is a set of personal, not formal projects that shape the meaning of employee's action. It is important to discover what makes the employee's projects meaningful and therefore what makes his or her work meaningful as a whole.

Personal project analysis may contribute to one of the most important questions in organizational studies in the last decade – what the conditions of job satisfaction are. The social ecological model answers that well-being depends on sustainable pursuit of core personal projects (Grant et al., 2007; Little, 2000a). The basic well-being was proven to correlate with project control, efficacy and absence of stress (Slack-Appotive, 1982; Yard, 1980 after: Grant et al., 2007). Other factors that are said to influence well-being, directly or indirectly, are goal importance, goal personal importance, success prediction, goal commitment or competences.

When it comes to productivity it has been suggested that employees were more productive when they saw productivity as a path towards achieving their own goals, and projects that were leading to the productivity were salient and important to them (Georgopoulos, Mahoney & Jones, 1957 after: Grant et al., 2007). Probst et al. (1998) discovered that residents and staff members who perceived that their organization supports their autonomy and achievement of personal projects were more effective in teaching. When people are given freedom and can make real decisions about their job, their projects become more manageable (controllable) which constitutes the basis for one of our hypotheses (H4). Other factors that may lead to higher performance is projects significance, excitement and commitment.

Effects of participation

Despite the amount of research on participation, the data regarding psychological effects of participation are not satisfactory. Research shows some impact of participation on job satisfaction (Miles, 1965; Heller, 1971; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981), general well-being (Stocki & Bielecki, 2007), motivation (Mulder, 1977; Deci & Ryan, 1985), different aspects of personal development or fulfilling the high-level needs (Mendel, 2001). Inconsistent and very frequently contradictory effects of participation have been shown on self-realization and self-fulfillment (Drehmer, Belohlav, & Coye, 2000; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Wagner & Gooding, 1987b; Leana et al., 1990). Interesting research on effects of perceived subjectivity (not the employee subjectivity per se) was conducted by Daniecki (1998). Results show that perceived subjectivity may influence productivity work in a different way depending on employees level of education, hired on different job positions. The only consistent conclusion was that the more people know about the company they work for, the more they are willing to cooperate and have lower tendency to confront.

The results of Cotton et al. (1988) show that different forms of participation may lead to different outcomes, very often inconsistent but generally positive. Their research found positive influence of different forms of participation on job performance, productivity, job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, identification with organization and so on. This research was however criticized by Leana et al. (1990) starting a discussion that "challenged the very core of the meaning of participation" (Glew et al., 1995; p. 396). In a similar way Wagner (1994) reanalyzed the Cotton et al. data and failed to reach similar conclusions. There is no agreement supported by contradictory results of different studies about outcomes of participatory management. Heller et al. (1998) summarize research on participation with the claim that it has been shown to have neutral or slightly positive impact on company. As Summers and Hyman (2005) write, there is plenty of research that found no association or

even a negative association between the company performance and participatory management (ex. Kelly & Kelly, 1991; Ben-Ner & Jones, 1995; Voughan-Whitehead, 1995 after: Summers & Hyman, 2005). Not only cannot the causal direction of the relationship be discovered (Cooper, 2002) but there is also no simple answer to the question how participation works, and the discussion on motivational vs. cognitive explanation is still in progress (Wagner et al., 1997).

Again, such discussion is strictly connected to the different views on whether participation is a "means" or an "end". It is not the goal of this paper to decide which approach is more relevant but to show that different assumptions may move the scope of research to very different issues. Some scholars will be then interested only in the organizational effects of participative management while others may want to focus on the person and individual effects of participation.

For this study the results obtained by Latham and his colleagues are especially relevant (Latham & Marshall, 1982; Latham, Mitchell & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Saari, 1979a, 1979b; Latham & Steele, 1983; Latham, Steele & Saari, 1982; Latham & Yukl, 1975b, 1976). Latham and Yukl (1975b) proved in an experiment among uneducated loggers that participatively set goals were achieved more often than goals assigned by supervisors. It led authors to conclude that participatively set goals lead to higher goal acceptance and commitment. In this study we would like to check whether this will also be true for participative projects employees pursue in their organizational life. We will examine to what extent participative projects are more important for people (H3), and are perceived as more likely to be completed successfully (H5).

The effect of high performance presented in the described studies was probably caused by the higher, more ambitious goals set in the participative groups. The connection – the higher the goal, the higher the performance – was proven in both laboratory (Locke, 1968) and field experiments (Latham & Yukl, 1975a). In another study Latham and Yukl (1976) found no significant differences between performance, goal acceptance or difficulty levels. No differences on goal acceptance or satisfaction between participatively set and assigned goals were found by Latham et al. (1978). To summarize, most of Latham and his colleagues studies showed that although participatively set goals can lead to setting more difficult goals and higher levels of performance of employees, the effects on performance are very often no different from non-participatively set goals that are also difficult, specific and accepted by the employees. Locke (1968) suggested that participation can be effective only to the extent it affects a person's goals. If any other means may lead to setting, accepting and commitment of specific demanding goals, participation is irrelevant (Locke & Schweiger, 1979).

We agree with the statement that participation may be effective to the extent that it affects personal goals. Contradictory results obtained by Latham and his colleagues may be a result of a limited understanding of participation they apply in their studies. The participants of their experiments could only participate in setting behavioral goals (levels of performance) not the more general goal itself, the way it should be conducted, not to mention the influence on more crucial aspects of organizational life. As Glew et al. quoting Wagner (1994) write: limited participation gives limited effects. The reason is that people in most of organizations do not participate in every aspects of its functioning. Although there are some organizational systems that support participation, others do not, and even if a system is participation-oriented, not everybody in the organization participates. People have different attitudes and different work-related goals that are different from those listed in a job description. For example somebody can be responsible for a customer service and has a lot of more specific tasks, but all of these tasks are then processed by an employee who sets specific, personal

salient goals or projects. The approach that focuses on organizational outcomes or treating partial participation as if it were the ultimate participation, ignores the fact that everything - organizations, job descriptions, sets of tasks - is just an environment for the acting person. That is why organizational studies on participation fail to understand its real nature, ignoring an individual person in the research process.

It is also important to clarify that although it is possible that in a given time and circumstances a person can participate in every aspect of organizational life on a regular basis (total participation), it is also possible that a person participates only in some aspects of organizational life while not in others. In a similar manner it is possible that in organizations that support participative acts some people will not participate as well as it is possible that in totalistic organizations some people may find a way to participate. From that statement our first hypothesis (H1) arises - people at the same time are engaged in actions or projects out of which some can be participative and some non-participative regardless of what organizations they work for. Organizations and people acting within their borders cannot be treated as if they were either 100% participative or 100% non-participative. It is the acting person in the specific context who participates in some aspects of organizational life and does not participate in others. Therefore the most adequate approach is the one that allows to examine psychological aspects of the individual person acting together with others in the organizational context. Brian Little's perspective of personal projects and personal projects analysis (Little, 1983, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b 2001, 2005; Little, Lecci & Watkinson, 1992; Little & Ryan, 1979; Little, Salmela-Aro & Phillips, 2007) that grew from an attempt to integrate Kelly's (1955) theory and his view of people as "scientists" with ecological perspective on personality development seems to be the best suited to our assumptions.

Hypothesis

After defining participation as actions oriented towards common good in the social context, with the highest level of reflection and guaranteed freedom of expressing one's will, and taking into consideration the described characteristics and links between participative character of personal goals and their psychological outcomes, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1. People will be engaged at the same moment in both participative and non-participative projects.

H2. Participative projects will lead to self-realization more often than non-participative projects.

H3. Participative projects will be perceived as more important for the person than non-participative projects.

H4. Participative projects will be perceived as more controllable than non-participative projects.

H5. Participative projects will be perceived as more likely to lead to the success than non-participative projects.

Method

Participants

13 people (out of 44 invited) from different companies took part in the study. The basic demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic structure of the sample

Demographics	Category	Frequency
Gender	Female	7
	Male	6
Age	<25	3
	25-26	5
	>26	5
Education	High school	3
	MA	10
Tenure	<1 year	3
	1-2 years	7
	>2 years	3

Measures

Modified Personal Project Analysis (PPA-M) inventory (Little, 1989, 2007) was applied during the study. It was, such as in the original version, divided into four main phases: 1. Project Elicitation Lists; 2. Project Rating Matrices; 3. Phrasing Level Analysis; and 4.Cross-Impact Matrices. The list of modifications includes new dimensions reflecting our study purpose. The dimensions are described below. Participants rated their project on these dimensions on the scale from 0 to 10 and each project rated as 6 or more was categorized as participative, as well as each project rated as 5 or less was categorized as non-participative.

Participativeness of personal projects

According to the definition of participation we accepted earlier, we will measure the participativeness of the project using the scales consisting of autonomy, self-efficacy, reflection, responsibility and common good (oriented at the person's and company's good). Projects are participative when all of these conditions are fulfilled (score 6 or more on the 10-item scale in each condition), and non-participative if at least one of them is not fulfilled. Below we describe how each of these aspects was measured.

Autonomy

As autonomy we understand the autonomy of choice of a certain personal project. It is measured by the answer to the question "To what extent did you make the choice to be involved in this project on your own? Are you willingly engaged or does somebody else want you to do this?". Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "I'm conducting that project only because of another person or for another person" to 10 – "I'm conducting that project completely on my own free will".

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is strictly connected to the possibility of doing something, performing an act, having an influence. In this study it is measured by the answer to the question "To what extent did you decide yourself what, when and how to do when conducting this project?". Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "All decisions were made by someone else" to 10 – "I completely decided about the realization of this project".

Reflection (Big Picture)

Reflection in our understanding is similar to the concept of Big Picture which is also connected to the general knowledge about consequences of somebody's action. It is measured by the answer to the question "To what extent do you possess knowledge about where to place the particular project in the "Bigger Picture"? Do you know why you are involved in it, what are the effects for others and the company, what is going to be done with the effects of your efforts and who will be responsible for that (even if you are the main beneficiary)? Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "I don't know anything about it" to 10 – "I have complete knowledge about it".

Responsibility

Responsibility is directly connected to efficacy and reflection. A person can be responsible for something if he or she is conscious of the consequences of an action and can really decide about what and how he or she can do. It is measured by an answer to the question "We are dealing with responsibility only when we have both complete knowledge and decision-making powers to perform a certain action. In other cases responsibility disperses or disappears. To what extent are you responsible for conducting each project?". Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "I'm not responsible at all" to 10 – "I'm completely responsible for this project".

Interests achieved – subject and the company

Every work related project serves some interests – personal, organizational or both. Subjects were asked two questions. 1. "To what extent does the realization of this project serve your own interests?" (answers on the scale: 0 - "This project doesn't serve my interests at all", 10 – "This project serves my interest to a great extent"), 2. „To what extent does this project serve your company's interests?" (answers on a scale: 0 – "This project doesn't serve my company's interests at all", 10 – "This project serves my company's to a great extent"). If the answers to both questions were 6 or higher, we classified it as a "common good" achievement, if it is high on personal interests and low on company's interests it is "individualism". The opposite situation is "totalism". When both scores are low it means that such a project is either nonsense or has more in common with a play than a job.

Importance for the subject

Importance is one of the most common dimensions in PPA. It was measured by the question "Some personal projects are very important for us, while others are almost not important at all. How important is a particular project for you?" (answers on the scale: 0 – „This project is not important at all" to 10 – "This project is very important").

Control

Control over the project is measured by the question "We control some of our projects in 100%, while others are not controllable at all – it may be the case of coincidence or some constraints made by others. To what extent do you control each project?". Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "I do not feel any control over the project" to 10 – "I feel complete in control over this project".

Success prediction

Perceived probability of finishing the project with success was measured by the question "Even at the beginning of the project or on the level of planning it is possible to

predict its chances for success. In your opinion, will the project result in success?". The subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "I'm completely sure the project will not end with success" to 10 – "I'm completely sure the project will end with success".

Difficulty

Perceived difficulty of each project was measured with the question „Personal projects range from very easy to very hard. How difficult is each project for you?". Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "This project is not difficult at all" to 10 – "This project is very difficult".

Self-realization

Self-realization connected to each projects was measured with the question „To what extent do you self-realize yourself as a human being conducting particular projects? Subjects were answering using a 10 point scale, from 0 – "Conducting the project I don't self-realize myself as a human being at all" to 10 – "Conducting the project I completely self-realize myself as a human being".

Procedure

Subjects were asked to fulfill the modified version of Brian Little's Personal Project Analysis Inventory. In this study we have provided participants with an electronic version of PPA in the form of a MS Excel spreadsheet. It turned out to be a very difficult task for the subjects – it required reflexivity and a great deal of mental effort as well as from 1 to 2 hours to fill out the electronic questionnaire that was sent via email. As a result only 13 out of 44 participants sent back filled questionnaires, which made a significant part of data useless and forced us to reconstruct measures. During the research participants were provided with an instruction on the nature of personal projects, additionally, every question in the questionnaire had a short instruction and an explanation. Participants received information that it is advisable to fill in the whole document during one session, if not possible to save the document and come back to completing it as soon as possible.

During the Projects Elicitation List phase participants were asked to list up to twenty work-related personal projects. Subjects were asked to focus on the work domain and were given freedom to generate projects that are connected with their current job and occupational life. In the second step subjects were asked to pick six projects that would be the best for anyone interested in understanding their situation in organizational context. In the second phase of the PPA participants rated projects they had selected in the first phase on different dimensions that are valid for our study. Respondents were asked to rate each project on a scale from 0 to 10 for each dimension.

The third phase was Phrasing Level Analysis. The goal of this module of PPA was to discover the inner context of the projects. Personal projects can vary from very simple (at molecular level – like "wash my hands") to very complex and important ones (at molar level – like "encourage people to be better for others"). Naturally, most of the projects occupy the middle level between these two extreme ends. In that method it is done by left and right "laddering" procedure. Starting with the project from the list generated in the first phase, respondents are asked "Why?" they are engaged in a given project. They write the answer to the right of the project description. This is the first step of the ladder. Then we keep asking "why?" until respondent will tell us that he reached the core value. In the same way we could ask the question "how?" but that element of the procedure was not used in our study.

The fourth phase – Cross-Impact Matrices is the last part of PPA and concentrates on discovering the outer context of projects. Respondents may rank whether a given project has positive or negative impact on other ones (using scale from -10 to +10). Due to confusion this part of the method resolved on the subject and it will not be used in further analysis.

After the whole procedure subjects received an information with a request to send the Excel spreadsheet back via email.

Results

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1

According to the score on six scales - autonomy, self-efficacy, reflection, responsibility, personal interests and company interests – participative and non-participative projects were identified. Projects that scored 6 or more on the 0-10 scale on each scale included were labeled as participative, those which scored less than 6 on at least one scale included were labeled non-participative. From a total number of 72 projects (11 people picked 6 projects, 1 person picked 4 projects, 1 person picked 2 projects) 23 can be classified as participative and 49 as non-participative. As we present it in Table 2, only three participants are engaged in non-participative projects only, ten other participants evaluated some of their projects as participative and some as non-participative. The sample size used in the study is insufficient to draw general conclusions from, but it suggests that participants indeed can be at the same time engaged in both participative and non-participative projects. For complete list of participants' personal projects see Table 3.

Table 2. Participative and non-participative projects among participants

Participant	Number of participative projects	Number of non-participative projects
1	0	6
2	2	4
3	4	2
4	0	2
5	1	3
6	2	4
7	4	2
8	2	4
9	0	6
10	2	4
11	2	4
12	3	3
13	1	5
Sum	23	49

Table 3. Complete list of personal projects

Participative projects
finish my application; be a good lawyer; be more effective; read carefully all emails worth reading; organize closed case folders; spend more time on learning; take part in the students contest of data bases and XML; read and process "Thinking in Java" book; take part in more trainings; take part in the project concerning methodology of X*; design own analysis connected with different scores; use own ideas to make most of the educational data; deepen experiences with Java EE platform; strengthen the knowledge on programming and coding; study; go to England; work on my English; not to act impulsively; increase professional qualifications (ACCA); learn English (B2/C1); finish my postgraduate studies; self-development in data processing;
Non-participative projects, common-good oriented
pass the examination; read more expert literature; understand QTP better; test current project; cooperate with universities; promote exact sciences among young people; write technical specification; get promoted; get a rise; work in department of X* - to get new ideas and more money; gain extraordinary experience in Agile methodologies; assemble didactic materials; create language exercises database online; participation in conferences for teachers; work out the skill of conducting difficult conversations; get a managerial position;
Non-participative projects, totalistic
take care of educational needs in the company; improve and finish the project; recalculate scores weekly; design research, analyze data and write reports; present data concerning X*; do desk research; translate;
Non-participative projects, individualistic
finish my PhD dissertation; set up the publishing house; earn more money; move to X* and find a better job there; collect more information on how to set up a company; publishing market analysis; change my job; move; educational program for students interested in informatics; pass CAE exam; use more of the company's social funds (sports); take part in project X; balance work and personal life; learn Italian; find additional job; double up earnings; work on own development path; find alternative position in the company; find alternative position outside the company; change the job;
Non-participative projects, non-sense
get promoted for a position of contributor and then senior developer

* removed to ensure anonymity

Hypothesis 2

The means and standard deviations of the self-realization in participative and non participative projects were $M = 8.91$ ($SD = 1.12$) and $M = 6.96$ ($SD = 2.87$). A two-tailed t-test showed that this difference was significant ($t(69) = -4.14$, $p < .001$), Levene's test indicated unequal variances ($F = 12.05$, $p < .001$). It is noteworthy that although participative projects lead to self-realization in a more significant way, the mean for non-participative projects is also high. Detailed scores are presented in Table 4 and 5.

Table 4. Self-realization and participative and non-participative projects – means and SD

Projects' participativeness	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
No	49	6,9592	2,86472	,40925
Yes	23	8,9130	1,12464	,23450

Table 5. Self-realization and participative and non-participative projects – means and SD

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	12,052	,001	-3,149	70	,002	-1,95386	,62041	-3,19123	-,71649
Equal variances not assumed			-4,142	68,567	,000	-1,95386	,47167	-2,89493	-1,01279

Hypothesis 3

The means and standard deviations of the importance for the person in participative and non participative projects were M = 7.96 (SD = 2.05) and M = 6.86 (SD = 2.68). A two tailed t-test showed that this difference was not significant (t = -1.911, p = .061). Detailed scores in Table 6 and 7.

Table 6. Projects importance and participative and non-participative projects – means and SD

Projects' participativeness	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
No	49	6,8571	2,68483	,38355
Yes	23	7,9565	2,05555	,42861

Table 7. Projects importance and participative and non-participative projects – t-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1,584	,212	-1,737	70	,087	-1,09938	,63295	-2,36175	,16299
Equal variances not assumed			-1,911	55,137	,061	-1,09938	,57517	-2,25198	,05322

Hypothesis 4

The means and standard deviations of the control over the project in participative and non participative projects were M = 8.61 (SD = 1.27) and M = 6.31 (SD = 2.39). A two-tailed t-test showed that this difference was significant ($t(69)$ = -5.328, p < .001), Levene's test indicated unequal variances (F = 6.01, p = .017). Detailed scores in Table 8 and 9.

Table 8. Perceived control over the project and participative and non-participative projects – means and SD.

Projects' participativeness	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
No	49	6,3061	2,39099	,34157
Yes	23	8,6087	1,26990	,26479

Table 9. Perceived control over the project and participative and non-participative projects – t-test.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6,011	,017	-4,330	70	,000	-2,30257	,53181	-3,36323	-1,24191
Equal variances not assumed			-5,328	68,808	,000	-2,30257	,43219	-3,16480	-1,44034

Hypothesis 5

The means and standard deviations of the success probability of the project in participative and non participative projects were M = 7.91 (SD = 1.56) and M = 6.91 (SD = 2.38). A two-tailed t-test showed that this difference was significant ($t(62) = -2.112$, $p = .039$), Levene's test indicated unequal variances ($F = 7.28$, $p = .009$).. Detailed scores in Table 10 and 11.

Table 10. Perceived success probability and participative and non-participative projects – means and SD.

Projects' participativeness	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
No	49	6,9184	2,37905	,33986
Yes	23	7,9130	1,56417	,32615

Table 11. Perceived success probability and participative and non-participative projects – t-test.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	7,277	,009	-1,825	70	,072	-,99468	,54504	-2,08173	,09238
Equal variances not assumed			-2,112	62,137	,039	-,99468	,47104	-1,93624	-,05311

Discussion

Organizational aspects of participation are a subject of scientific inquiry more often than its psychological outcomes. The literature on participative personal projects is not existent, thus our discussion will have more general character.

The PPA method seems to be very promising in research on participation. Surely there is a need for more in-depth research on a larger sample that would allow to conduct analysis on the level of "set of projects" (person), not the project itself. It would make it possible to compare employees according to their education, tenure, business branch etc. The study suggests that people, no matter whether they receive support from organizational systems or culture or not, can conduct participative projects (assumed in hypothesis 1). Such approach is useful to explain inconsistent and very often contradictory results of studies on participation. It would also explain why only fully participative organization can produce effective and efficient work environment as some studies suggests (Summers and Hyman, 2005). When we perceive organizational systems in the variety of manifestations including job descriptions and certain tasks assigned to employees as an environment for an acting person, we can understand why limited participation (focusing on the narrow area) may not result in improving employees condition.

Research on participation was very often focusing on limited participation only. If we give employees freedom to set performance goals as it was done by Latham and his colleagues (Latham et al., 1978), it does not mean that employees' personal projects become more participative. There might be other factors and organizational systems that still keep the employees focused on their individualistic or totalistic projects. In a similar manner our settlement helps to understand the psychological basis for total participation management success (Stocki, Prokopowicz, & Żmuda, 2008), which consist in the fact that creating participative organizational environment in the highest possible scope enables employees to set and pursue larger number of participative projects.

Thanks to engagement in personal projects that are participative, employees self-realize themselves in a significant way. There is not enough data to determine whether self-realization in a given number of projects leads to self-realization of the whole person. That issue should be examined in next studies. We can assume that in the same way as engagement in meaningful core projects leads to well-being, certain set of work-related participative personal projects lead to self-realization and personal development.

Orientation toward common good (personal and company's interest at the same time) is a definitional condition of participation. Even if somebody pursues a project in the organizational context that is characterized by reflection, autonomy, responsibility and self-efficacy but is oriented on personal interest only or company's interest only, it is not participation, it is individualistic approach (maximizing my own good) or totalistic approach (maximizing community good) described by Wojtyla (1985). So the question is not whether participative projects are oriented on the organizational interests, but how effective they are in achieving them. Again to completely test such a statement we would need a bigger sample and examination of sets of personal projects, not the separate personal projects. It is, however, possible to predict effectiveness of participative personal projects according to results connected with hypothesis 3, 4 and 5 and research of organizational personal projects described earlier. Participative projects are perceived as more important for the person (although the difference is not statistically significant), more controllable and more likely to end in success and what was described earlier are meaningful. It means that employees are (1) engaged in the projects and activities that they understand, can decide what and how to do to complete them, (2) perceive these projects as important, (3) exercise control over these

projects, and (4) believe that these projects will be successful. All of these together lead to intrinsic motivation and job engagement through which both personal and company's success can be achieved.

Conclusions

The results of the study show that the direction of research on participation focused on work related personal projects analysis can be fruitful. The results imply that people are able to conduct participative projects no matter if they receive support from organizational systems and culture or not. We may assume that the more participative work environment and organizational systems are, the easier it is to conduct participative personal projects. To examine that assumption further investigations on a larger sample would be advisable. Such study should control more variables, including level of participativeness of organizational systems and culture and should make it possible to examine psychological effects of certain "sets of projects" as well as compare individuals according to their education, tenure, business branch etc. Other results of the study suggest that participative personal projects lead to self-realization more often than non-participative projects as well as they are more controllable and perceived as more likely to end with success.

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Abstrakt

Pomimo faktu, iż obszar partycypacji pracowniczej jest obiektem zainteresowania wielu menadżerów, psychologów, socjologów czy też przedstawicieli innych nauk o organizacji, badania tego zagadnienia wciąż nie są satysfakcjonujące. W poniższym artykule prezentujemy alternatywne podejście do badania partycypacji opartą o koncepcję projektów osobistych. Podejście to pozwala na analizę partycypacji w wymiarze indywidualnym poprzez skoncentrowanie się na osobach działających wspólnie z innymi w kontekście organizacyjnym. Wyniki wskazują, że projekty o naturze partycypacyjnej prowadzą do samorealizacji znaczeni częściej niż projekty niepartycypacyjne. Dodatkowo, projekty partycypacyjne postrzegane są jako łatwiejsze do kontrolowania i bardziej prawdopodobne jest zakończenie ich sukcesem.