Emotions in Leadership in an IOIS Project

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Abstract

This interpretive grounded theory (GT) study describes and analyzes emotions in leadership in a Nordic inter-organizational information system (IOIS) project which spanned four user organizations, two suppliers, one national organization, a research organization and a Ministry. This study shows how GT can be used to gain significant insights into a case study, and generate new concepts. We identified Certainty, Significance, Connection and Contribution as important selective codes that make up the Emotions category. The paper focuses on leadership issues in the emotion category. The paper concludes by discussing how some of leadership issues could be attributed to emotions issues and considers some theoretical and practical implications.

1. Introduction

One of the urgent interests in the Information Systems (IS) field is how project team members collaborate and experience leadership given that IS projects fail at an alarming rate and are accompanied by penal organizational consequences [22]. Most of IS development and implementation failures are known to occur for human and organizational reasons [17], [44]. The most common reason for failure of large projects has said to be organizational and political resistance to change. Therefore, a manager’s ability to work with people and organizations is as important as technical awareness and knowledge [32].

The management of emotions is acknowledged as an important and vital aspect of project work. Fisher [10] claims that a project manager who recognizes this and acts accordingly, is more likely to conduct their project successfully. It is also argued that when the emotional side at work is managed well, people are more productive because they feel more positive about each other [16], [43]. Thus maintaining a positive environment is one of the most important issues in IS development [20], [25]. Because of the transient nature of project organizations, project managers do not normally exercise direct line management responsibility. Consequently it is claimed that managers need to manage the emotions of a group of people over which they have little or no control [10].

The emotional experiences within IS projects have not hitherto been explored systematically in IS research, unlike other research into leadership where the emotional experiences have assumed greater primacy and emotions, among others, are said to be an essential part of understanding the leadership processes [45].

To date, literature about IS projects largely ignores substantive studies of emotions [26]. The research described in this paper contributes to that body of knowledge. In the IS discipline, it is acknowledged that traditional research on emotions has concentrated on purely cognitive aspects of human action and intentional behavior [26]. McGrath [26] highlights this by narrowing human agency to its cognitive dimensions making is impossible to consider the totality of human capacities that are either positively or negatively engaged with IS innovation processes.

In this paper, we were particularly interested in how emotions might occur in the context of leadership of an IOIS project. The research question addressed by this research paper is as follows: How important are emotions concerning leadership in project work?

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section we present a summary of the literature relevant to this study. The third section outlines the research methodology. The fourth section gives some of the complex project case background of the study. The fifth section presents the findings of our Glaserian GT analysis. The sixth section discusses the implications of our findings, and we conclude our study with a brief summary of our contributions.
2. Literature review

This section briefly considers literature which we consider to be relevant to our research problem. First, we discuss the role of emotions in leadership. Second, we discuss different aspects of leadership both at the personal and organizational level.

It should be pointed out that because this is a GT study, the literature review supplied here is what [41] would call a ‘non-committal’ or preliminary literature review, to avoid concepts being imposed on the data during the coding process. Hence, we are not using a theoretical lens in the way that, for instance, Levina and Vaast [24] do in their MISQ article.

2.1. Emotions

Defining emotion is a complex task [18], [38]. It is even questioned if emotion is knowable [38]. Emotion is the word which is used to describe the kind of phenomena which have also been cited variously for many concepts like feelings, moods, and behavior etc. [38].

The terms feeling and emotion are often used interchangeably. Fineman [9] distinguishes these concepts (feeling and emotion) and emphasis that feeling is what is felt, and emotion is what is showed. Hereby feeling is classified as a subjective experience and emotion is emotional performance where social conventions have a key role. Fineman [9] accentuates that feelings are more difficult to recognize. Emotions have been under discussion for a long time. Since antiquity, emotions have been studied in many ways for example by philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato. In some contexts, emotions have been considered personal, private and even too personal to research [5]. Similarly emotions have been considered to be unpredictable and uncontrollable [11].

Emotional support provided by a leader is seen as a key factor in projects. During the past three decades, emotional and value-based elements have been under-researched in the organizational literature [10], [45]. It is argued that most leadership theory and most organizational theory deal with the topic of emotion only tangentially [33] and the literature remains vague about emotion [10]. Some studies based on leadership behaviors have examined the issue of the management of group emotion but not in depth [33].

Pescosolido [33] argues that the focus of behavioral theories has been on the aspects of ‘relational’ and ‘employee-oriented’. Leaders should be able to set the ‘emotional tone’ for the group and be able to influence how group members will interpret and react to events that impact the group. A group may also require different behaviors from its leadership over time, not to mention how two different groups even in very similar situations might require different treatment from their leaders. Fisher [10] stated that the ability to manage the feelings arising from conflicts will help the people that are on your side to deliver work packages successfully.

Many studies show that a leader affects the emotions of group members at some level e.g. [6], [12]. While this kind of ‘emotional link’ between leader and group exists, it is argued that ‘the behavioral theories of leadership do not directly address the management or influence of group emotion as being a necessary action for group leadership’ [33]: 585.

Trait-based theories of leadership have focused upon the promotion of positive feelings and cohesion within the group and the control of the expression of negative feelings. Charismatic theories of leadership highlight emotion, values, and the importance of leader behavior in the communication process between followers. However, none of these theories poses the question of how the group leader affects the overall group emotions and what kind of consequences they have upon group processes and performance [33].

2.2. Leadership

Complex issues of leadership have been discussed extensively both in the IS area [2], [21], [24], [27], [29], [31], [35], [36] and in the leadership literature during the last few years. Leadership has been defined in many different ways in the literature [33], [45]. While much significant research has been done for more than 100 years in the area of leadership [33] a universally applicable definition of leadership seems impossible.

Leadership has been examined through many lenses in the IS area. Common perspectives have included both the area of organizational work and personal traits of leader and a combination of these elements [2], [20], [21], [27], [31], [35], [36]. Recent research has highlighted the difference between executive involvement, exercise of formal authority and informal leadership. Since IT projects in organizations have become more complex, they require more independent tasks and rely more on distributed expertise. Hence traditional directive leadership based on hierarchical control and formal authority is being replaced by decentralized, collaborative, and empowering leadership styles [8].

Karahanna and Watson [21] have stated that: ‘Information systems leadership sets directions, creates commitment, mobilizes institutional, political, psychological, and other resources, facilitates action, and adapts the IS unit to fit a changing environment such that it adds value and achieves shared objectives’.
Major difficulties for leadership include such things as encountering uncommitted and uninvolved users/management and having no control over external resources. Such values as reciprocity, confidentiality and trustful relationships have been highlighted in IS area [2], [27], [36] and furthermore, in the literature on global virtual teams, project managers have a crucial role in achieving effective performance [24], [36]. It is argued that leaders who know how to exercise their authority properly are respected more [37].

The project leader has seen to be one of the most critical factors in project success [20], [30], [36]. Leadership capabilities such as an ability to form common goals and communicate them, being an instrument of goal achievement and sensitivity to the political realities in the organization have been highlighted [19], [27].

It is also claimed that personality has a significant role in a leader’s work. Personal traits that make leaders easy to get along with include: being calm, presenting a positive attitude and generally being likeable [27], professional and personal integrity [27], [37]. These are all considered to have an important managerial influence on team members. Professional integrity includes behavior and leadership in the work environment, while personal integrity includes behavior outside the work environment. It is believed that team members see the professional integrity of project managers as including such characteristics as truthfulness, following-through and assuming responsibility [37].

Napier et al. [27] have argued that personal integrity has not been discussed in the literature on IT project management skills notwithstanding how important it is to team members. Conversely, traits such as a know-it-all, bossy, argumentative and too forceful personality is considered to be negative features of a leader.

3. Methodology

This study is an interpretive study using Glaserian GT for data analysis and theory building [14], [15]. The GT method is very suitable for research areas where there is little existing theory. This is the case here as there is little existing theory in IOIS projects and especially their implementation area.

This research studied 8 organizational project teams and 2 IO project teams, in a large, three year long IOIS development and implementation project. The IOIS project studied was a Nordic public sector organization collaboration.

Data collected in the project ranged from in-depth interviews (250 pages of transcripts), to observations of project meetings (20), diaries (80 pages of notes), 48 memorandums of project and steering group meetings, and e-mails (over 700) containing messages project members sent to each other during these years.

14 active project members were interviewed. Among the interviewees were managers from the steering group, representatives of suppliers, members of the research organization (Epsilon) associated with the project, and users active in the project. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to two and a half hours.

This research tracked the whole IS project and it had a unique approach – no framing questions were used, the focus was entirely on the experience of the project member. To our knowledge, no other research in information systems has had either this focus – the lived experience of the project member – or has utilized such a unique approach.

The open nature of the interviews enabled the interviewees to explain their deep feelings about the project that would not have surfaced otherwise. It is claimed that through narrative stories we are able to get close to people’s experiences [4].

In this study, a ‘Glaserian’ GT technique was used as the method of analysis. Since 1990, GT has evolved into two distinct versions [39], [40], [41]. This followed the publication of Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) book which is a distinct departure from the classic ‘discovering of theory from data’ in the seminal book of Glaser and Strauss [13] which introduced GT. The 1990 book helped popularize GT; however, it has also been described as rather formulaic and overburdened with rules [23]. From our perspective, the Glaserian version has the twin advantages of being closer to the classic version of GT, and exhibits greater flexibility.

Most researchers agree that there is no right framework for GT method [7]. There is more to grounded theory method than ‘Glaserian versus Straussian’. Glaser [14] presents coding families and it is presented as a ‘family of methods’ e.g. [3].

We followed the Glaserian GT coding stages – open coding, selective coding and theoretical coding. According to Glaser [14] the open coding is the most important building block of GT method. At the open coding stage, the interview data, field notes and e-mails were analysed line by line, and the project memorandums were analyzed paragraph by paragraph [39], [40]. As the project memorandums were secondary data, it seen as appropriate to code at a paragraph or page level [40].

During selective coding and through an iterative process, we discovered our emergent categories. The
preponderance of emotions – how people felt about the project – was particularly striking, and is the focus of this paper. This category is discussed, together with the leadership context in the findings section. Next we provide some background to the project.

3.1. Project background – PreViWo project

Here we give some of the complex background of the IOIS project, to help with interpretation of the findings. All the names (personal and company) are disguised in this paper.

History of the project: ViWo was preceded by a pilot project called PreViWo. PreViWo was implemented in three steps (specification, interface pilot and planning) in the years 2002-2003. The aim of the PreViWo project was defined as ‘to specify and implement a pilot IS to support a process, its actors and task performed by them’ (Project card, March 8, 2002).

The pilot project was influential in framing the organization of the larger project we studied (ViWo), and it could also be seen that the history of the pilot project influenced the perceptions of the participants. Alpha was the leading organization for the pilot project as the organization which applied for and received funding for the project. PreViWo was a complicated project, because it entailed two consortia (Lambda and Kappa), and two software houses (Theta, Iota). Table 1 contains the actors in the pilot project.

3.2. Main players – ViWo project

The goal of the IS project was that an IOIS, named ViWo, would be designed and taken into use by several organizations (finally in 21 organizations) of the same type. The ViWo project (2004-2006) aimed to carry out a pilot test of the IS in four user organizations before establishing the system at the national level. The development of ViWo involved electronification of a work process to facilitate office work, consolidate information across organizations, and manage key activities.

As the project management and research organisation, Epsilon headed the project. The user organizations consisted of Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. User organizations were the members of Kappa. Kappa consisted of 21 organizations, and it would be these organizations that would eventually use ViWo. The organizations collaborated with the relevant Ministry, suppliers and consultants. Table 2 contains the actors in the pilot project.

### Table 2. Organizations Involved in ViWo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Ministry responsible for funding the IOIS project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kappa</td>
<td>Consortium of 21 user organizations (the Virtual organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The basic function of Kappa was to promote and develop locally, regionally, and nationally the utilization of IT and to enhance IO collaboration in multiple research-related issues and administrative practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta</td>
<td>User organizations in the project. Alpha was the fund holder for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon</td>
<td>Organization responsible for project management and research objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta</td>
<td>Software company that supplies the software solutions for the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eta</td>
<td>Part of the national research network that develop research and IT based services for the needs of research and education, and the supporting IT administration. Acted as an expert advisor. Withdrew from the project before it ended.</td>
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A difficult question was who would be the ViWo project manager. ViWo was perceived to be a demanding project, and an experienced manager would be needed. Matthew, the Project Leader of Epsilon, suggested to Lucy (Alpha) and her colleagues from Beta and Gamma that Epsilon could take the responsibility of leading the project. This suggestion was approved, and so the project manager changed: in PreViWo she was from Kappa. When it came to the choice of software vendors, Matthew’s argument was that Zeta would deliver a useful system even in the hard situation.

As mentioned, Eta eventually withdrew from the project: ‘We realized that we could not continue in this way. This was probably because we received a role that was more demanding than the one we pursued in the initial discussions and negotiations…’ (Jack, Supplier, Eta).
4. Findings

Governance, power and emotions are core categories which emerged through the GT analysis. The higher level of abstraction, the scaling up process [42] produced one core theme ‘emotions of control’. This paper focuses on emotions category and links with any other categories are not shown, so the scope of our theory building is limited in this paper.

However, this study shows how GT can be used to gain significant insights into a case study, and generate new concepts, so we have provided a contribution to theory building in this paper. That said, the discussion session is more strongly engaged with the existing literature. We have understood that the aim of the grounded theorists is to put the findings into the context of the extended literature review (theoretical integration).

This section discusses leadership issues in the emotion category in detail. The paper presents both the emotions of leaders and emotions of subordinates. One of the strengths of GT is its tie with the data. For space reasons, our findings concentrate on some of the representative players.

We identified Certainty, Significance, Connection and Contribution as important selective codes that make up the Emotions category. These selective codes manifested themselves in an interesting and even contradictory way in the project. The reader will notice that there are some ‘polarities’ or ‘dualities’ in open codes. That is why there seem to be paradoxes as well. This paper illustrates how emotions occurred in the context of leadership of the project - in other words this paper does not discuss all emotions aspects of the project. Table 3 shows the composition of the category and the selective codes and their open codes are discussed in turn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open codes</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing actors, Control, Fear</td>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views about people’s presence, Importance, Blame</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation, Seeking the bond of belonging, Affirmative emotions</td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of work, Frustration, Improving/ Learning</td>
<td>Contribution</td>
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4.1. Certainty

In the experiences of project members, the selective code certainty emerged. We identified three open codes (changing actors, control and fear) which contributed on the certainty selective code.

Organizers sought certainty when organizing the staff for the project: there were many reasons why organizers wanted to change actors for the ViWo project and adopt a different pattern of organization. Matthew (Organizer, Epsilon) for example highlighted that: ‘We chose Zeta because it will deliver the system that the client needs, even though the client is not able to express what it needs…’

Lucy (Organizer, Alpha) was concerned that some members of Kappa might have interpreted the launching of the ViWo project as an indication of lack of confidence in them. Lucy sought certainty that people who were leading the previous project (PreViWo) did not understand reorganizing as mistrust.

Unsure feelings about achieving some goals caused quite a lot of controlling behavior in the project. For example Ruth (Project Manager, Epsilon) complained that the decisions were not axiomatic although the decisions were made at previous project meetings.

There were also power struggles to resolve who the ‘real’ leader was. Some members felt that IS project leadership proved to be very challenging because of this power struggle. The next quotation which was ended by a smiley describes the situation where some people wanted to control each other: ‘That seemed to be a sensitive thing… as the pressure increases, the surface of the balloon becomes thinner, too… But, getting back to business, I saw Ruth yesterday and during a corridor chat Ruth mentioned it. Ruth’s interpretation was that suppliers had been chosen, so there was no risk. In [the] quality group [it] had clearly been discussed that the ineffectiveness of a supplier was a big risk… but don’t worry, be happy…’ (Thomas, Email 3rd Nov 2004).

Fear manifested itself in the project regarding on leadership. There were feelings like fear of change, finding other members as a threat and insecurity. Lucy (Organizer, Alpha) also had a fear of whether the project manager Ruth from the organization Epsilon could cope with the new task: ‘The biggest doubt was caused by the fact that the new project manager was geographically far away.’ (Lucy, Organizer, Alpha). The organizer pointed out however that after having met the intended project manager her doubts subsided.

Some project members felt that Kappa members were a threat to the project. It was felt that they effectively held an informal veto due their involvement in PreViWo.
4.2. Significance

In the experiences of project members, the selective code signification also emerged. This selective code includes for example a lot of issues concerning mutual social relationships and the conceptions what project members had about each other.

The ViWo-project was launched by two organizers, Lucy (Organizer, Alpha, User Organisation) and Matthew (Organizer, Epsilon, Research Organisation). The words of Lucy ‘Help! Are we stepping on somebody’s toes?’ (Lucy, Organizer, Alpha) reveal that the organization of the project evoked strong reactions concerning various arrangements and choice of personnel.

The open code views about people’s presence contributed to significance. It describes how project members experienced their own and other peoples’ presence in the project: how significant it was. The views were very contradictory. Matthew (Organizer, Epsilon) pointed out that the new organization was chosen because of dissatisfaction with experiences in the previous project (PreViWo). There were also discussions about the possible roles in the project and John (Supplier, Eta) felt that it was hard to find a good contract.

Thomas (Epsilon, Research organization) saw the intention to form a well-functioning multi-professional group as a reason for employing members of PreViWo. Yet, he was not convinced of the significance of his own role in the project. The project organization, too, was discussed among the project group. Project manager considered it unnecessary to employ two people from the background project (PreViWo).

The representative of the supplier (John, Eta) claimed that they were engaged in the project because of small-scale ‘blackmailing’. However, Jack, the other representative of supplier Eta thought that the project group was formed in this way to obtain an interesting research case.

Thomas pondered the absence of user-representative of one organization (Gamma) from the project. He wondered why there was no representative from the organization in question, at least at the moment. He thought the reason was one person’s (Matthew, Epsilon) participation in several previous projects and possible negative history in human relations.

The open code importance describes how it became evident through GT analysis that the project members wanted to feel that they are somehow unique and they have a special meaning for the project.

Thomas (Epsilon) also criticized that some things which were presented to the steering group by the project manager were wide of the mark. Thomas suspected that ‘The steering group’s understandings resulted from how the project manager presents the matter to them…’ Many comments of project members highlighted the meaning of the interaction process in achieving the common view.

Blame: Thomas (Epsilon) thought that the project organization got in the way of achieving goals and the project manager blamed project members if something didn’t work: ‘Just to make sure, everyone was blamed for the lack of progress in matters…’.

4.3. Connection

In the experiences of project members, the selective code connection also emerged. In the experiences of project members there were feelings of separation, lack of co-operation and lack of motivation to collaborate for many reasons, for example, the project was not the ‘main work’.

Separation: When the project work started, one user (Sophie, Delta) raised the question whether the organizers in charge of the project were aware of the existence of another similar project. User thought that the PreViWo and ViWo were ‘same’ project. Another user from different organization (Beta) viewed this as a possibility to start with a clean plate.

Several representatives of the user organizations (Alpha, Beta, Gamma) met at the beginning stage of the project (in March 2004) and the diary notes of the researcher indicate that they would not have wanted to continue using previous specifications. One user (Gamma) summarized a discussion by stating that they must get ‘rid of them’ (Kathy). One user stressed that PreViWo imposed pressures on the current project in the sense that an element of competition became involved in the project work. The situation was confusing.

There were some feelings of separation evident regarding leadership in the project. The project manager felt that it was different aims that caused this separation: ‘…I have had the feeling that we all are not pulling together… I have had the feeling that people try to find disadvantages about me, and that people approach what I have or haven’t done with a predominantly negative viewpoint. Well I know very well that I haven’t done things as they’re presented by the books…’ (Ruth).

Project members wanted to feel that they were an important, worthwhile part of the project. It was evident in the project how project members sought the bond of belonging with the project manager: ‘A skewed relationship developed between us and the project manager, where the project manager assumed we could do much more [than] we were able to do…’ (Jack)
Affirmative emotions: It is important to note that there were positive emotions exhibited in the project. For instance, Ruth (Project Manager, Epsilon), said it was very important to respect others’ work, and she was optimistic: ‘Now I know, we will get that system…’ It is important to note that some project members compared their feelings to the project manager’s feelings: ‘I have a positive attitude, but I am sensing that our project manager has not...’ (Lisa, User, Alpha).

4.4. Contribution

The selective code contribution also emerged through our GT analysis. We identified three open codes (division of work, frustration and improving/learning). Division of work: One good example of that is when the project management people felt uncertainty about the suppliers’ attempt to avoid commitment and responsibility. The field notes indicate the following, for example: Ruth said (field notes 12.11.2004) that Matthew (Organizer, Epsilon) and Ruth (project manager, Epsilon) had been in the Eta organization discussing agreements, and the result of the discussion was that Eta does not want to be responsible for anything. Jack (Supplier, Eta) thought that project manager wasn’t conscious about their (Eta) resources and expected that they could do more work on some tasks. Also Thomas (Research organization Epsilon) pondered: ‘...one big problem of [a] matrix organisation is the situation, in the case I’m referring to, where the project manager’s ability to have an influence is almost nil... so it gets to a situation where people are concentrating on who is the king in decision-making...’

Dissatisfaction on division of work was also evident in situations where project members expected more from the project manager. Some project members (Sarah and Sheila, Kappa; Jack, Eta) for example thought that the project manager didn’t inform them early enough about tasks they were expected to do. Another example is the situation where supplier Eta was asked to finish some tasks and it wasn’t evident they would complete the tasks. The project manager felt she was ‘under the spotlight’ all the time and she was expected to be perfect.

Jack (Supplier, Eta) thought that project manager wasn’t conscious about their (Eta) resources and expected that they could do more work to some tasks. Jack felt that ‘The project manager of ViWo didn’t understand that although we sign contracts that do not mean that employees will immediately fly in as if sent from above. We then have to go through a recruitment process...’.

Thomas also highlighted that in a project group (1st Nov, 2004) that ‘it is worrying that the project manager is talking about the resource problems of Eta... The bigger concern to her seems to be that the project is some weeks late...’

How frustration manifested itself regarding on leadership issues was for example when the organizer of Alpha (user organization) commented on the one appointment as follows: ‘Ruth [Project manager, Research organisation] was appointed in the middle of the clearing phase. She must have been confused at the beginning of this chaos. How could she have known this background history...?’ (Lucy, Alpha).

The project manager (Ruth from Epsilon) pointed out the difficulty of managing her project group was hard: ‘It has been hard to get the project group to work in a constructive spirit and I thought they might not necessarily learn how to at all. I felt it was not so important to work in a project-oriented way, but more important was to come up with a system which works...’ (Ruth)

Improving/learning: There was one interesting example about ‘learning’: Ruth (project manager) said in some phase in the project that she has learned that this is a project of Kappa: ‘In terms of the separation of ViWo and PreViWo, these projects are going to connect to each other; although attempts have been made to separate them from each other, I have learnt that this is Kappa’s project and I am just working in that project... and I think there has also been a change in the way of thinking in the steering group...’ (Ruth, Project manager, Epsilon).

But interestingly enough, in the final report, the owner was not Kappa: ‘I didn’t make this a Kappa project in the final report. I have had discussions with Walter a couple of times and I have to note that I am not envious of him...’ (Ruth, email 25th Jan 2007).

A very important and remarkable decision was made at the end of the project. Regardless of what the interviews and emails have brought out in this study, the final evaluation of the project in the steering group was that: ‘This was administratively a good experiment’.

In the steering group they discussed the concluding report of ViWo at the end of the project: ‘This is truly a successful project’ (27th Nov, 2006). The notes of project manager (29th Jul 2006) emphasize how ‘The project has been successful and it seemed like this is the first project ever that has been a success, where everything goes as planned and the output is satisfactory’.
5. Discussion

The findings of our study provide an interesting illumination on emotions in leadership in an IOIS project. Specifically, this paper argues that emotions are an important component affecting the way a leader/manager will act but also that emotions affect the subordinates of the leader. It has been stated in previous studies that leader(s) affect the emotions of group members at some level [6], [12]. Certainly, in this case, how people felt about the leader had a negative effect on the IOIS project. If we set some of the findings in the context of leadership, it was clear that colleagues did make statements about leadership.

As stated earlier we identified Certainty, Significance, Connection and Contribution as important selective codes that make up the Emotions category. The reader may wonder that there is not theoretical background to justify why select these four open codes as the composition. The reason was explained in the chapter 2 that we are not using a theoretical lens but our approach is much more that of a preliminary literature review.

The certainty consisted of three open codes: changing actors, control and fear. The organizers changed actors in order to achieve goals. Control manifested itself, for example, in the way that some people wanted to restrict others’ possibilities to affect decision-making or willingness to control what others thought about issues.

With regard to the significance code it was evident that project members viewed peoples’ presence in a very different way, and they had contradictory views about personnel.

The open code importance was linked with democratic leadership. Thomas, for example criticized that the project manager presented issues just from her perspective. These uncertain feelings about leadership underline how difficult the concept can be, as different project members respond to different styles of leadership.

Connection: In this selective code, we could observe the bond of belonging with leader, leader vs. affirmative emotions vs. achievements but also that a leader’s emotions had an impact on subordinates.

Contribution: In this selective code, it could be seen that due to a lack of authority in leadership – both real and perceived – how people felt about the work distribution was a major issue. It was emphasized that leadership was hard because of the fact that the responsibility was shared. The experience about democratic leadership became evident in that selective code: John also speculated that ‘Although [the] project manager feels that this is her project, there is a big problem because it’s possible that she won’t get support from her own manager who is sitting in a steering group – support which she’ll need if she is in a bad situation...’.

Jack for his part criticized that the project manager trusted Eta’s expertise too much. According to Jack ‘We can just see Eta as merely a tool for the project, but there has to be someone who has a leadership role, so that it is not possible to shift responsibility to the supplier’.

Some members claimed that the project manager did not look for alternative solutions for problems, but made decisions based on position or time i.e. it was the fastest way to get something done but not necessarily the best one.

Some members also stated that project manager tried to go too fast and tried to show, for example, how the project progressed well. But it became evident that measurement was an issue. Jack (Supplier Eta) commented critically: ‘The project manager was more worried about these schedules and that certain matters were taken care of rather than clarifying social issues… or that we understood why certain issues didn’t work… and there were a lot of things that weren’t handled professionally...’.

There seems to be contradictory views on leadership styles, depending on the task and stage in the project. This IOIS project was a very complex one by nature, and it required a lot of independent tasks and relied on distributed expertise [8]. It is also evident that all leadership styles included conflicting views which shows how a group may also require different behaviors from its leadership over time [33].

It was evident that emotions were many and varied at the project level. Emotions in the context of leadership can be seen, as a double-edged sword: the dilemma seems to be between ‘association’ and ‘dissociation’ i.e. the challenge is that team members and leaders could try to view situations ‘objectively’. Consequently, it is easy to agree with Fisher [10], that in this respect, managing the emotions of others and one’s self is no different. So, it is important to manage relationships and conflicts with others by understanding their feelings and communicating in accordance with them at appropriate levels.

It is clear that projects need emotionally aware project managers who are strong in interpersonal skills. They should know how to create an environment where people feel valued and motivated to contribute to their maximum potential [43]. Experiences in this project suggest that when feelings are ignored, people are not as committed to do things as they could be, and they are not so motivated in their work [10], [16]. The expression and management of feelings in a leader’s work is a significant issue and we need more research on leadership that investigates directly a leader’s...
management or influence of group emotions [6], [12], [33]. Teams need to understand their emotional reality at the project level. Teams often change their behavior after they have recognized their emotional reality [10]. We would go as far to say that, in IOIS teams, feelings are the basis of action (power) and that emotions easily trump the intellect.

6. Conclusion

Our research raises many important issues related to research on leadership and emotions in the IS area with respect to the management of IOIS teams. This research contributes by providing an understanding of emotions in leadership in IOIS projects. This research was a unique project from two perspectives: First, longitudinal studies of IS projects are rare because it is often difficult to study complete projects from beginning to end [1] – this research tracked the whole IS project (three years). Secondly, it had a unique approach – no framing questions were used in interviews, the focus was on the experience of the project member. To researchers’ knowledge, no other research in IS has had either this focus – the lived experience of the project member – or has utilized such a unique approach. As such it makes a unique contribution to international IS research.

This research has also unique qualities – it has a unique and large data set and the methodological approach is similarly innovative. Many organizations are now learning for example from the past by conducting retrospective studies [28], [34] and this research fits into that category.

Our results show that the leaders are engaged in behaviors which affect the emotions of team members at many levels. We urge IS researchers to explore how leaders manage or influence group emotions, and how this is connected to performance. There are many questions for further research such as: are some issues gender-related? Is there a connection between negative team emotions and failed systems? Are there connections between ‘good’ leadership styles and positive supportive emotions, and ‘good’ outcomes? In some circumstances is an authoritarian style better than a democratic one and if so under what conditions?

7. References

[10] E. Fisher, “Manage feelings in your project well, and you are more likely to deliver your project successfully”, APM Risk SIG Conference, London, 2008, 9 pages