

Organisation und Führung
auf Kleinbaustellen

Organization and Leadership
on small Building Sites

English Summary

Kurzbericht zum
Abschlußbericht Januar 1991

Mit Förderung des Bundesministers für
Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau

erarbeitet von

WEEBER + PARTNER
Dr.-Ing. Hannes Weeber
Dr. Sylvia Greiffenhagen
mit
Professor Dr. Ulrich Bauder
Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Tonne

Organization and leadership on small building sites

Occasion and objective of the study

An important part of building production takes place on small building sites and is of major significance, both in terms of the economy and of the quality of life.

The widespread and lasting dissatisfaction of those involved in minor construction projects, from builder-owners through planners and supervisors of works to the individual contracting firms, is what prompted this paper.

The most frequent accusations are: Faulty procedures caused by incompetence in professional and organizational areas, but also in general business aspects.

The working hypothesis is: What those involved in small building sites need are things in common which take an organizational and motivating effect. They need a common view of the project and the necessary cooperation on the way to the finished building. They also need more to see themselves as colleagues in a joint effort, with a common sense of quality anchored in their professional ethics. Starting from supervisors and the senior staff of the construction companies, these conditions could change if a new style of leadership is found for the building sites.

The extension of the study to involve other domains, especially the inclusion of industry experience, promises to expand the awareness of problems and the horizon for possible solutions.

Low-cost building - the economy aspect

On the one hand, it is always a question of money and measurable payback. On the other, it is also a question of give and take in its idealistic component, where values must be upheld and encumbrances carried. On both the credit and the debit side, material and idealistic reasons for action and judgement mix. This applies to every involvement in its own field. For this reason economy in its conventional sense need not necessarily provide sufficient reason for getting involved in a building project.

Small building sites

Small building sites in the sense of this study are ones in which there are small orders and, nevertheless, complex procedures with regular quality requirements, in which the costs for the trades and for project management do not seem to be covered.

Small building sites which simply do not have the production resources are not the subject of this study. What the study will deal with is the improved use of resources - improvements especially where they are only possible using improved information and human conditions rather than by perfecting technical and logistical procedures. It should be clear that these information factors have far greater consequences on small building sites than on large ones.

Minor accidents and problems on small building sites

When mistakes are made they can always be put down to the fact that performance does not match expectations. Mistakes can be caused by two main categories of trouble:

- They can be based on lacking or lost objectives.
- They can be caused by failure in trying to reach the objectives.

For these troubles to produce objectively noticeable mistakes, however, there has to be a certain lack of response on the part of those involved in the building project. Conflicting relationships and expectations also result from the coincidence of a problem with a lack of response.

Motivation and integration as objectives in industry and management and as ideals for building sites

Motivation: Quality-consciousness cannot be imposed on the company management or staff from the outside, but must come from the understanding and inner attitude of each worker. Motivation also thrives on the personal relationships with those who represent the objectives of the work and with whom one is connected in the common working environment.

Integration is brought about in connection with the above motivation. An important factor in this is a specifically horizontal group structure, a large extent of equality among all members of the group – something which is indispensable to flexibility in work procedures. Integration is thus also the basis of co-operation and co-management, aimed at reinforcing both individual and group responsibility.

From integration to self-organization

Participation will not improve the quality of the planning process simply by means of a small relevant planning horizon (clarity), but also requires improved specifications and corrective options (agreement). The group and the individuals become capable of deciding on and implementing all activities, including changes in organization, under their own responsibility. Once these capabilities have been developed, the competence for cooperation will also be available if the individual or group sees common work objectives endangered beyond his or its own area of operations.

It becomes evident that a new and differentiated understanding of leadership on the building site must be introduced:

1. Differentiated "leadership level": leadership takes place on all levels.
2. It refers not only to real factors of production, but also to human factors.
3. Leadership lives off and at the same time promotes information and communication.

It will then be of particular interest to see how motivation and integration relieve and replace the organization and leadership of the supervisors at the point where they meet the limits of their practical possibilities and economy. This means decentralization. The information and communication are then the most important requirements for providing and maintaining a workable structure; its special feature is its capability

of self-organization.

The use of didactic materials for purposes of integration and self-organization.

- Builder-owners, building agents,
- architects, supervisors,
- heads of construction companies,
- their site supervisors, foremen and workers

are the target groups for conveying these issues. They are only achievable by different methods – unless implemented on the building site. With the exception of the builder-owner, these target groups should be candidates for incidental learning – the workers will be almost exclusively.

The subject matter with which this examination is concerned is partially abstract and refers to idealistic values. It is therefore difficult to address in direct form by building people in everyday situations.

Which media for what kinds of information?

Multipliers – people who forward information at their own commitment – can be very much more effective than other media.

Posters, stickers

These are well suited to conveying short messages.

Leaflets, booklets, texts on posters

Things that can't be said in very short form or perhaps not so directly, i.e. things which mainly require more text, can still be conveyed in a graspable and attractive way by these means.

Blackboard and diagram board on the building site

A decisive factor in good cooperation and communication on the site is transparency, i.e. the visualization of the tasks and procedures involved.

Check lists

These are actually more of a work resource than an educational item. For practice purposes, explanations would have to be specifically incorporated.

Sandwich course

An important supplement to these materials would be a distinct "training" course providing a real chance for changing attitudes, values and behaviour on the building site. For example, interactive "training on the job" or a "sandwich course" (theory – practice – theory etc.).