POWERED BY GPM

Berlin 2025 | IPMA® 34th World Congress

SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH PROJECT MANAGEMENT

60 YEARS | IPMA® international project management association

WELCOME

to the 34th IPMA World Congress

worldcongress-ipma.com

UNLEASHING AUTONOMY – INSIGHTS FROM AGILE TEAMS

Judith Armbruster

Max Miteinander

We work best when we learn from each other and can openly discuss mistakes.

Silas Sicher

The team is my safety net, but I prefer to make the decisions myself.

Zoe Zukunft

The team should give me input and feedback, but not restrict my creativity.

Pia Potenzial

Everyone has their strengths. When roles are clearly defined, everything runs like clockwork.

Karl Konsequent

I enjoy working in a team as long as everyone has their own tasks and I know who I can ask.

“Freedom to do something”

vs.

“Freedom from anything”

AGILE PRINCIPLES

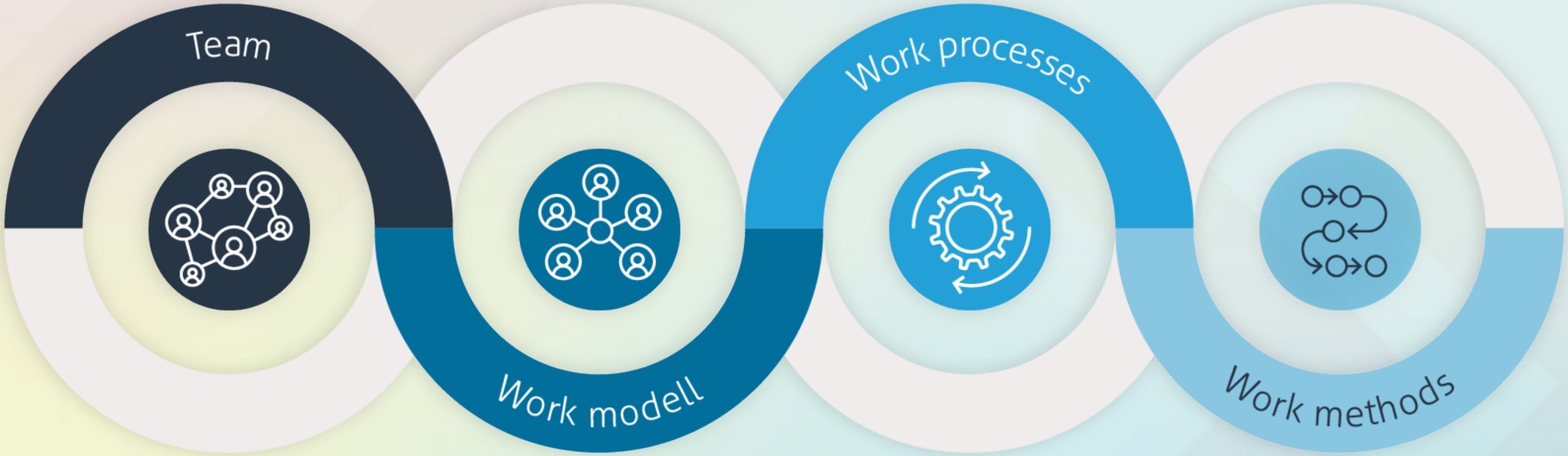
Turning results into tangible experiences

Set focus

Interdisciplinary teamwork

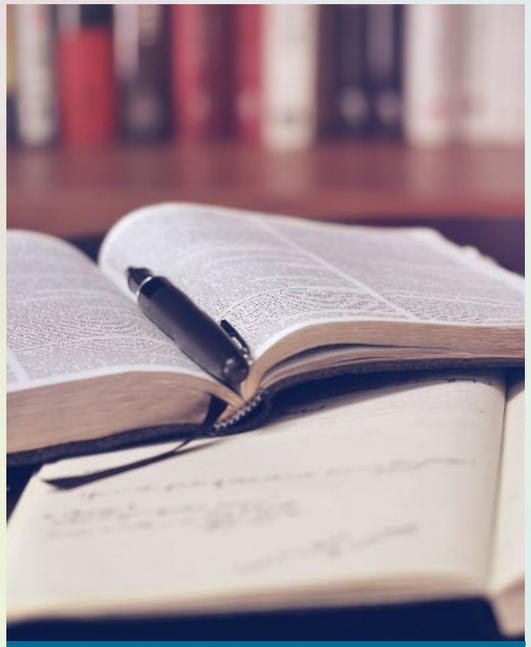
Collaboration on eye level

COLLABORATION IN AGILE TEAMS



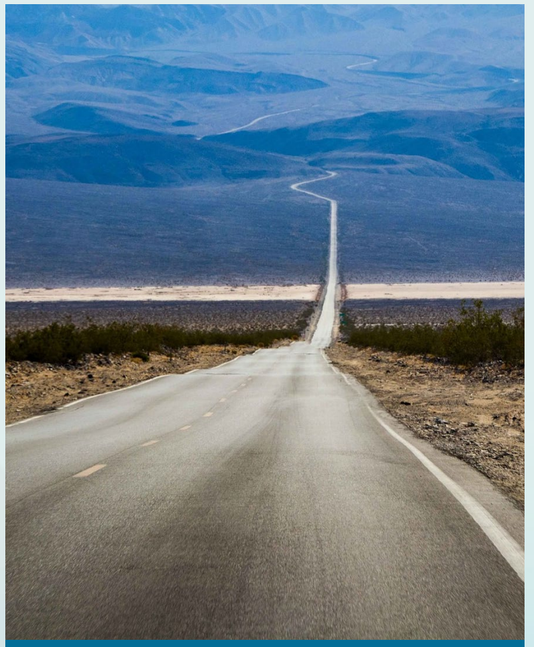
WHAT MOTIVATES US

Need for autonomy



Need for competence

Need for relatedness



Need for purpose

PARADOX OF EXPERIENCED AUTONOMY

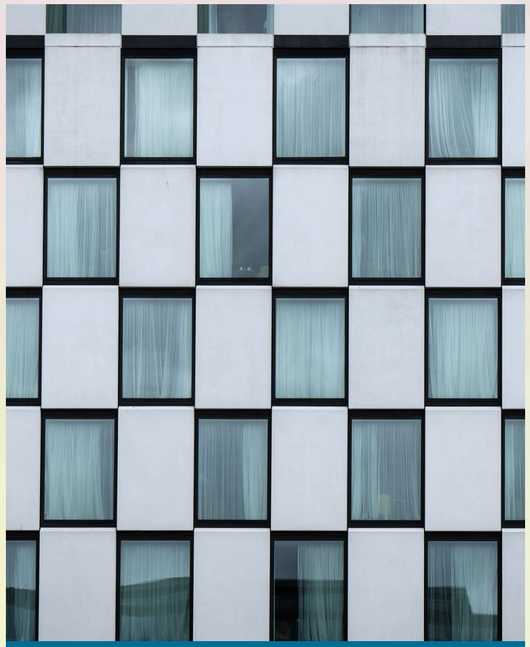
Empowerment and enablement: Rethinking the duality of autonomy and control

Paradox of experienced autonomy: individuals as independent agents who are simultaneously commited to the team.

More than a given area of individual control: autonomy as an individual experience

?

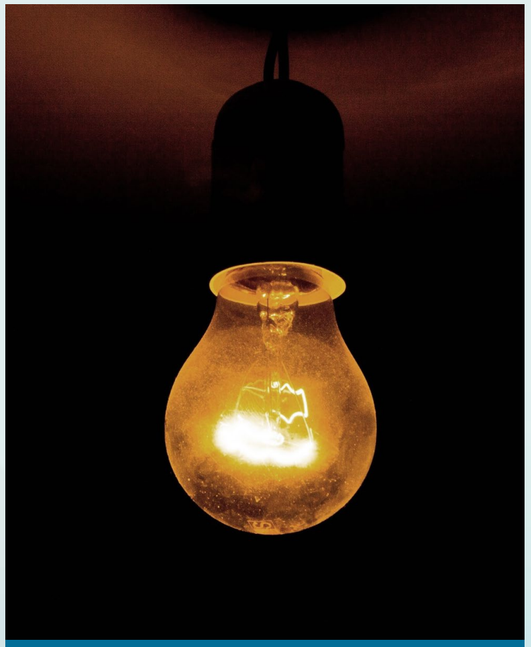
WHAT INFLUENCES EXPERIENCED AUTONOMY



Organizational structures

Leadership

Team



Individual

#1: Team-oriented perspective

Collaborative approach with shared knowledge and collective development

#2: Clarity-seeking perspective

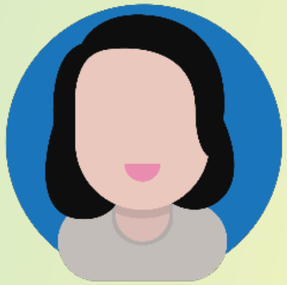
Individual clarity with situational support

#5: Task-centered perspective

Structured independence with task-level control

#3: Innovation-driven perspective

Maximum individual flexibility and innovation



#4: Resource-oriented perspective

Practical efficiency and organisation of team processes in support of team goals

HOW WE EXPERIENCE AUTONOMY

„I need guidance because I feel insecure when I work autonomously and don't know whether what I'm doing makes sense.“

- Organizational structures emerge as the most **polarizing factors**
- Team level has medium to strong influence across all perspectives**, different understanding** of how individuals support the team and how the team supports individuals
- Leadership level is **least perceived as a motivator**
- Individual level is particularly important with **a different focus in framing**

#1: TEAM-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE

“I feel most free when we make decisions together as a team and everyone contributes to success.”

How autonomy is experienced:

- Autonomy arises **from contributing to team goals** and collective goal achievement
- Reinforced by **continuous improvement**, constructive feedback, and team reflection
- Dependencies are seen as **natural** and beneficial (such as joint risk assessment)
- Individual freedom less relevant than autonomy on team level

How we lead this perspective:

- Focus on **team boundaries** and appropriate team size
- Support **team self-regulation** instead of external control
- Enable **collective decision-making** processes

#2: CLARITY-SEEKING PERSPECTIVE

“I need clear guidelines and boundaries, then I can work independently.”

How autonomy is experienced:

- Autonomy through **clear individual freedom** and understanding of others' expectations
- Reinforced by **reducing dependence** on others and strengthening self-confidence
- Appreciates necessary permissions with minimal disruption
- **Individual support** is more appreciated than complete freedom

How we lead this perspective:

- Build trust with team members and offer **focused support**
- Create **clear expectations** and transparent boundaries
- Enable **structured environments** with defined frameworks
- Support **individual development** with clear framework conditions

#3: INNOVATION-DRIVEN PERSPECTIVE

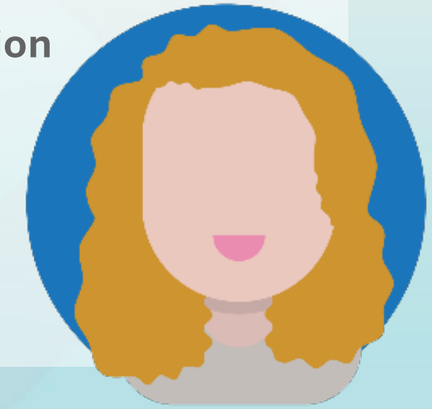
“Tell me what needs to be achieved—but let me decide when, where, and how I work.”

How autonomy is experienced:

- Autonomy through **personal choices** in work arrangements (time, place, method)
- Reinforced by **experimentation** and new approaches
- Motivated by **progress and contribution** to overarching goals
- **Freedom from predetermined tools** or strict processes

How we lead this perspective:

- Create an atmosphere of trust and set a **strategic direction**
- Enable a **high degree of individual choice** without ‘strict supervision’
- Support **innovation and experimentation** over established procedures



#4: RESOURCE-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE

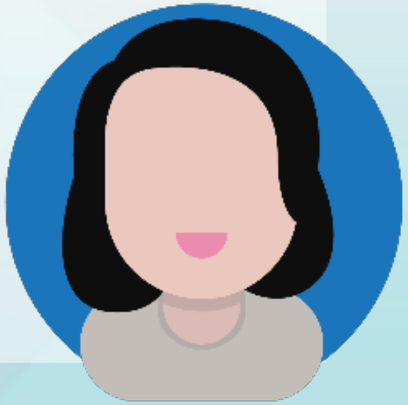
“Give me the right tools and a functioning team, and I can work efficiently.”

How autonomy is experienced:

- Autonomy through **team atmosphere** and organizational alignment
- Reinforced by **clear team goals** and progress tracking toward goals
- Supported by the **right tools and permissions** for effective work
- Less emphasis on experimentation, more on **structured efficiency**

How we lead this perspective:

- Ensure **clear structures** and coordinated responsibilities
- Ensure **resource alignment** between capacity and goals
- Create and maintain a **positive team atmosphere**
- Provide **necessary tools** and permissions



#5: TASK-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

“Explain the framework conditions to me in detail
—then I'll find the best way to solve the problem.”

How autonomy is experienced:

- Autonomy **through control over task execution** and flexible sequencing
- Reinforced by **open communication** and understanding of whom to ask for assistance
- Supported **by clear task descriptions** that provide implementation frameworks
- Focus on practical problem solving via **visibility of progress**

How we lead this perspective:

- Provide **clear task criteria** and frameworks for implementation
- Enable **transparent team boundaries** and clarify limitations
- Support **open communication channels** for problem solving
- **Minimize hierarchical dependencies** and formal influence

AT A GLANCE

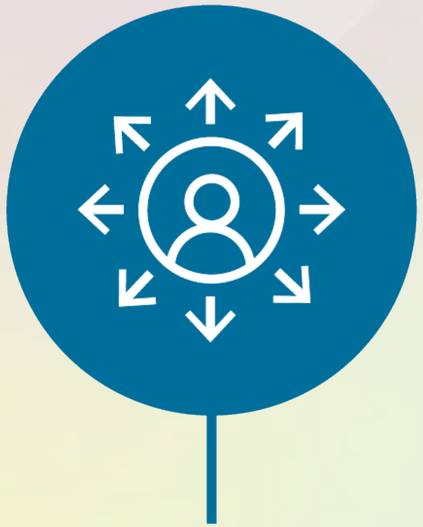
What remains the same from all perspectives?

- Trust is fundamental
- Clarity creates freedom
- Support is essential
- Goals provide orientation

What is different?

- Focus on autonomy
- Need for structure
- Decision-making level
- Desire for flexibility
- Willingness to experiment

FOSTERING POSITIVE AUTONOMY



Recognizing the diversity of autonomy

Designing the team as a developing space

Maintaining focus on basic factors

Leadership check:

Is this my view,
or an individual's perspective?

Am I establishing an autonomy that I deem appropriate?
—or is it actually motivating?

PARTICIPATE NOW:
PROCEED RESEARCH PROJECT

Your project. Your experience. Your career.

PROCEED study for new insights into project careers

Scan the QR code to take part in the study.

The questionnaire takes about 15 minutes to complete.

Further information:

projectcareer.net

WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

partly financed by

IPMA®
international project management association