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DESIGN THINKING AND ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS

– tools for understanding and
developing organizational creativity?

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ABSTRACT

Organizations in both the private and public sectors need to find new, creative ways of handling challenges in the complex environments of global competition. Engaging creative professionals like designers and artists - with the aim of developing organizational creativity as a strategic tool - has attracted a lot of interest in different kinds of organizations. In our study, we followed a weekly intervention process led by an artist, within a trade union. The union wanted to bring change to its working processes, with the ultimate goal of increasing membership numbers. The study is based on qualitative methods inspired by ethnography. Creativity, design thinking and artistic intervention literature form the main theoretical framework. Between the members of the workgroup and the artist, we have noticed a lot of discontent and differences in ways of understanding business versus creative goals. We propose that knowledge of design processes, conceptualised in design thinking writings, can help to communicate what is going on during an artistic intervention process, thus narrowing the gap between different understandings. However, a certain amount of friction and conflict will be both necessary and desirable during a creative process.

INTRODUCTION

Artistic and designer interventions, as tools for organizational development in the hope of adding something new in order to improve work practices and raise the value of the company, have been receiving increased attention (Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011; Johansson Sköldbörg and Woodilla, 2013; Jahnke, 2013; Styhre and Fröberg, 2013). A number of firms ask for creative and innovative solutions by exploiting the skills and exotic mindsets of the creative professionals in order to stimulate idea generation amongst employees, thus generating economic profit and more efficient organizations, or at least attracting public attention.

Design management has been one of the fields associated with the strategic management of the creative resources and design activities of a company (Borja de Mozota 2008; Cooper, Junginger and Lockwood, 2011; Liedtka 2010, 2011). The term design thinking, then, has been used to describe how designers conceptualize their work practices (Brown, 2008, 2009). How inspiration from the art and cultural worlds – followed by discussions on arts management and aesthetics within organizations – can facilitate efforts to increase creativity within different kinds of organizations and companies has also been of growing interest during recent last decades (Austin and Devin, 2003;

Berthoin Antal and Strauss, 2014; Gagliardi, 2006; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Meisiek and Barry, 2014; Strati, 1999; 2007;; artist in residence, www.resartis.org, 20110620). Surely, art and design belong to two different traditions, as do design management and arts management, as stated by Johansson Sköldbörg and Woodilla (2012, 2013). There has been little cross-disciplinary research and these researchers argue that relation needs to be further discussed (Johansson Sköldbörg and Woodilla, 2013).

However, although there is an increasing level of interest in developing creativity within organizations, it is still tricky to analyze the consequences (Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011). Surely, there is an asymmetry in the thinking systems of the creative and business worlds. Business thinking expects rationality and clean economic logic using quantifiable measurements, and executives value stability and control. In contrast, design thinking assumes more or less messy, complex, real life. (Liedtka, 2010; Rylander, 2009). Concerning artistic processes, ambiguities and uncertainties are characteristics of these, and artists are said to be capable of experiencing and staying in doubts and mysteries, without irritably reaching for fact and reason. For art to “work”, its results cannot be pinned down in advance, claim Barry and Meisiek (2010).

This text is based on an empirical study of artistic interventions at a trade union UNIONEN with an interest in developing its efficiency as inspired by such discussions in the private sector. The intervention project, called AIRIS, was carried out between companies UNIONEN and TILLT, whose business idea is match-making between artists and companies regarding artistic interventions. In our study, we ask how design thinking and artistic interventions can facilitate organizing, managing, and understanding an organizational development project that has increased creativity as part of its goal. Further, how do we support a smooth start for an intervention project? In doing so, our aim is to increase theoretical and empirical understanding of creative interventions as strategic tools in organizational development for creativity and innovations. One of the researchers has a background in business administration and the ‘art and management’ field, and has also been the leader of the research project, while the other researcher is a designer; thus, the AIRIS project has also been part of collaboration between TILLT and the Business and Design Lab at the University of Gothenburg.

In what follows, we firstly present our theoretical framework; some notes on creativity and its relationship

with innovation are viewed and we state our position in that discussion. A review of design management and design thinking comes next, followed by a section on the arts and management and artistic interventions. The next section is about the methodological questions of this project. After that, interpretations and an analysis of the empirical results are presented. In “Final Words”, we conclude our insights and make a proposal regarding how management of the intervention process can be facilitated.

THEORETICAL INSPIRATION

Creativity and innovations

Creativity is difficult to define due to its multifaceted nature, claim Styhre and Sundgren (2005). They present four different streams of research on creativity, e.g. creative processes, creative people, creative products and creative environments. Creativity can be viewed as new ways in thinking – it generates associations and one dares to think that everything is possible; it also favours the constant flow of ideas, of which imagination is an important part (Englund, 2010). In the organizational literature, creativity is often conceptualized in terms of finding out something new, like ideas, products, processes, procedures and services (Amabile et al. 2004). Koivunen and Rehn (2009) point out that creativity was previously greatly connected with the fields of art and culture; but nowadays, the premise of theoretical reasoning must be that creativity exists in all areas and that every single person is a source of creativity, as also remarked on by de Fillippi et al. (2007) Gagliardi, (2006), and Strati (2007, 1999). Styhre and Sundgren (2005) state that, previously, the focus was on the individual perspective, noticing the romantic roots of views of creativity when it is understood as the great achievements of single individuals. However, later on, interest has instead focused on the contexts where creativity occurs. Accordingly, the dependence on the meaning of the creativity concept is a historical, cultural and social issue (Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

Often, creativity, as the *generation of new ideas*, is followed by discussions about **innovation**, understood as the *implementation* of creative ideas (Koivunen and Rehn, 2009). According to Wennes (2009), economic results are key to the innovation perspective. Innovation can be understood as a technological process aimed at bringing inventions to the marketplace (Johansson and Woodilla, 2009; Styhre and Sundgren, 2005). Innovations can also be social (Mulgan, 2007). However, in order to prevent the innovation discourse from collapsing into purely economic and technological

issues, Styhre (2013) reminds us of playfulness and squandering.

Ideas about how creativity can be manifested can be found in process thinking (Hernes and Maitlis, 2012). Chia and King (1998) argue that new situations and outcomes incorporate the events into their past, providing opportunities for something new to emerge, but that this also brings restrictions. According to process thinking, creativity and becoming are immanent in all living systems; instead of viewing social entities like organizations as things, they should be seen as processes of world-making (ibid.). Mary Parker Follet views creativity as a collective action needed in a dynamic society (Follet 1919, 1924). She uses a relational, interactive perspective; if something new is to emerge, this will happen when different kinds of encounters and conflicts occur within a community. Inspired by De Fillippi et al. (2007), we do not neglect the role of the individual in creative actions, but we do want to draw attention to creativity as both a relational and a context-influenced and context-influencing process. That view is, consequently, what guides the following discussion.

Design management, design thinking, design process

Design management can be seen as the management of design at companies, emphasizing its role in strategic and innovation work (Cooper et al. 2011). Adding value by means of corporate planning processes, using design, can be an individual activity or a management function, with the disciplinary boundaries for design ranging from engineering to fine art (Cooper and Press, 1995). Several opinions exist with differing epistemological positions as regards what design can be. It can be viewed as sensemaking (Krippendorff, 1989; Verganti, 2006). Simon (1996) talks about a framework of problem formulation followed by the finding of a solution, while Schön (1983) writes about reflection in action – both during and after the design process. When design management moves into more theoretical spheres of design, and expands its scope to include not only product development, production, distribution, sales or delivery, then *design thinking* becomes relevant as a concept.

Design thinking, buzzword or not (Johansson Sköldberg, Woodilla and Cetinkaya, 2013), can be seen as the abstracted form of practice-based design. It refers to applying a designer’s sensibility and methods to problem-solving (Dorst, 2011; Lockwood 2010; Rylander, 2009). At companies using design as a business strategy, both design and designers have moved beyond their roles as stylists

to catalyse innovation as a core competency (Sato, 2009). However, Kimbell (2009) argues that design thinking reduces design to an immaterial, intellectual problem-solving technique - design without the material practice. Tonkinwise (2011) is critical of design thinking, holding the opinion that it is “*design minus aesthetics*”, which can be illustrated by Brown’s (2008) statement that design thinking helps during the transformation of design away from the world of form and style towards that of function and structure.

One of the basics of design thinking is the application of a **design process** to a more strategic design management process; iterative, non-linear practices – some of the fundamentals of a design process – are utilized for business, product, or service development. Therefore, design thinking, with its process focus, is more closely related to the verb, the process of designing (Liedtka and Mintzberg, 2006). Ingredients of the design process include *the re-definition of the initial problem or brief* – being a part of the professional skill of a designer (Norman 2010). The next step is *‘the user of the intended product or service [being] in the centre’* approach (Norman and Verganti, 2014; Rylander 2009). During the *ideation phase*, design thinkers brainstorm using their gathered insights. Next, design thinkers use their developed ideas, making and testing without a clear goal but by *prototyping* new solutions arising from the four strengths of empathy, intuition, imagination and idealism. Neumaier (2009) says that, instead of “solving” problems, designers “work through” them. *Failure* is also a significant feature of design thinking (Brown 2009).

Summing up. According to the Design Management Institute (DMI, 2013), design thinking describes the use of design in management. Design thinking has several roots. Assuming both the more or less messy, complex, paradoxical situations and being purpose-oriented and using analytical logic it is argued to be more suitable to the vast and complex economic, social, and ecological problems of today than are traditional “scientific” approaches (Liedtka, 2010, 2013; Johansson Sköldbberg and Woodilla, 2013; Rylander, 2009). Aesthetics, art, and cultural aspects, too, should be included in design thinking (Svengren & Johansson, 2008; Tonkinwise, 2011; Verganti 2006; Venkatesh et al. 2012). Consequently, design management can be understood as the organizational strategy of design whereas design thinking is used as theoretical reflection, and design tools might be the concrete methods used in a design process.

Arts management and artistic interventions

The last twenty years have seen an interest in art and management. On the one hand, this is how ideas in business administration can influence practical organizing procedures in art and culture, creating organizations that achieve better management (Evrard and Colbert 2000; Fitzgibbon and Kelly 1999; Stenström 2000; Taylor 2012). On the other hand, there has also been a growing interest in how the art and cultural worlds, as well as issues concerning aesthetics, can create an understanding of organizing and management/ leadership (Austin and Devin, 2003; Darsö, 2004; Gagliardi 2006; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Koivunen and Rehn, 2009; Linstead and Höpfl 2000; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; artist in residence, www.resartis.org, 20110620; Soila-Wadman and Köping, 2009; Strati, 1999). Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal (2011) claim that companies often long for collaborations with the art world thanks to their “otherness”. Grzelec and Prata (2013) write that the general idea behind artistic interventions is that when the two contrasting logics (the logic of the artist and the logic of the organisation) clash, energy is released in the form of new ideas and a deeper understanding of what the organization is doing on an existential or meta level.

These interventions can range from the use of theatrical presentation workshops to developing employees’ confidence, sculpture sessions to stimulate curiosity and imagination, storytelling activities to encourage knowledge sharing and communication within and between work groups, photography sessions to encourage teambuilding, filmmaking to visualize a group’s development, choreographic training to improve specific parts of the workflow, and more (Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011).

Artistic methods can act as the “flavour of the month” or the “creative afternoon”, adding “something” new to managerial development activities, with little idea of what that “something” is (Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011). Even low-expectancy projects can have a high impact in the long-run if they manage to keep everyone engaged. Yet, the benefits are hard to predict and sometimes difficult to appreciate, from a management perspective. In order of such projects to be successful, the participants need to be open and to develop a high level of trust in the performing artist. First and foremost, artistic interventions – by the very nature of art – require freedom and trust (Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011). Berthoin Antal (2012) declares that art and artists stimulate us into seeing, hearing, and experiencing more of what is going on within us and around us. – That is where tacit knowledge (Polanyi 2009/1966) and

the soft skills (Levasseur, 2013) come to the surface. They are hard to evaluate in a world dominated by quantitative measurable results, dealing with emotions, feelings and intuition. For artists, these attributes are essential to their way of working, determining their decision-making processes (Darsö, 2004).

Exactly how the artistic intervention techniques can work has been discussed by Taylor and Ladkin (2009). These can exist on their own or in combinations: (1) Skills transfer: Arts-based methods can facilitate the development of artistic skills in a group. (2) The projective technique: Artistic endeavours allow participants to reveal inner thoughts and feelings that may not be accessible via more conventional modes. (3) The illustration of essence: Arts-based methods can enable participants to apprehend the “essence” of a concept in a specific situation. (4) The making: The very making of an art work can foster a deeper experience of personal presence and connection.

Darsö (2004: 135-146) presents a model inspired by Scharmer’s Theory U¹⁾ on how arts may influence the participants into reflecting on their everyday view of the world, thus developing a deeper understanding of themselves and how they relate to the circumstances surrounding them. Hopefully, this deeper understanding will lead to action. The different phases are named thus; first, *downloading*, whereby the participants see the world in their own traditional way. Second, they move to the observational phase, to seeing, as if from outside; followed by the third phase, *sensing*, from inside, that is, opening up in your mind to the observed world; fourth, *presensing*, in the sense of allowing inner knowledge to emerge and developing a reflective mode; and then fifth, *crystallizing*, whereby a deeper understanding emerges of who they are and how they relate to the world around them. The sixth and seventh phases, *prototyping and embodying*, then conceptualize or materialize the obtained knowledge when guiding the further actions of individuals.

Summing up earlier research experiences from interventions. Berthoin Antal and Strauß (2013) examined 205 publications about the business and social impacts from arts interventions in organizations of different sizes and in diverse sectors of society. The majority of the cases report impacts in *activation* (positive experience, emotion, stimulation, energy), *seeing more and differently* (reflection, widened

perspectives, awareness of present conditions), *personal development* (discovery of self, personal growth, skills) and *collaborative ways of working* (working together quality, communication quality, communication quantity). Only a few publications noticed strategic and operational impacts (profitability, marketing, strategy, product development, product / service quality, efficiency, productivity, HR development).

METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Inspired by the ethnographic method, we have been able to follow the artistic intervention workshops held at the offices of Group Lindholmen. Techniques have included the participant observation of meetings and encounters at workshops, as well as semi-structured interviews of group members, the intervening artist, the process leader at TILLT, and officials at UNIONEN. Focus group conversation with the group was also conducted. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interventions were partly documented by means of videos and photos, which have been studied, along with other written documents, e.g. internal policy documents and information material for (potential) members. The research question focuses on the start phase of the AIRIS project and this empirical study concentrates on the first three months. The project continued to the end of 2013, with only one of the current researchers being present at the workshops, and focused mainly on the learning process.

In our analytical and interpretative work, we have been influenced by the writings of Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) concerning the reflexivity of that work. The text draws on relational constructionism (Gergen 1994; Hosking, 2011), emphasizing the interactive nature of our sensemaking as an ongoing process whereby we humans structure and stabilize the moving social reality (Hernes and Maitlis, 2012; Chia and King, 1998). Our own role as researchers may be influenced by the fact that we have a positive view of artistic interventions; however, we have tried to address that through being inspired by reflective ethnography (Kostera 2007; Law 2004), where openness to the studied field expects several dimensions to be acknowledged. We also want to emphasize the role of aesthetics in knowledge creation, meaning that it is not only a chronological, linear, and rational process, but also one that is based on our senses, emotions, and imaginations (Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Strati, 2007, 1999; Taylor and Hansen, 2005; Welsch, 1997). Aesthetic reflexivity could be described as knowledge creation “through [the] appropriation and transformation

¹⁾ C. Otto Scharmer (2004, 2009) *Theory U: Leading and Learning from the Future As It Emerges*. San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

of the sensory and emotional characteristics of our experiences” (Sutherland 2012:1-19).

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The organization in our ethnographic study is the Swedish trade union UNIONEN. According to the Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, at the University of Amsterdam (Visser, 2010), trade union membership numbers fell from a peak of 86% in 1995 to 71 % in 2010. In order to address the uncertain development of membership numbers, the board of UNIONEN decided on a strategy aimed at developing new and creative working methods to counteract the situation. As a pilot project, a company TILLT was asked to organize creative workshops for a newly-established core group consisting of eight employees, “Group Lindholmen”. Some of these had previously worked for the organization, holding different positions, and some were new. TILLT’s business concept rests on match-making between artists and companies, followed by artistic interventions. The intervention project is called “AIRIS”. According to the AIRIS plan, a professional artist – on a freelance basis – will lead creative workshops at Group Lindholmen once a week for at least one year, accompanied by a process leader employed by TILLT.

The main purpose of the AIRIS project can be read in the contract entered into between UNIONEN and TILLT. It was drawn up by the board of UNIONEN. The aim was to attract 8,000 new members within two years. Group Lindholmen was to be supported by the main organization, and it was hoped that the lessons learnt could be conveyed to the national level of UNIONEN. Consequently, in addition to increasing membership numbers, one of the goals was Group Lindholmen wanting to learn about creativity and innovation. By means of increased creativity, they eventually wanted to find new and innovative working methods, as well as ways of improving the image of UNIONEN, thus making it more attractive to its target group - employees of private sector companies.

The artistic workshops lasted for three hours every Monday afternoon during 2013, with a break during the summer months. Three workshops held during the first part of the project are selected in the following text, on the one hand to illustrate the creative approaches and techniques and, on the other, to present our reflections on the start of the project, the kick-on workshop, the designer workshop, and the action plan formulation with a following focus group interview.

Observations from the intervention process

Kick-on – art and emotions, fun, trust: In February 2013, TILLT’s artist - who was steering the AIRIS process - started her first “getting-to-know-you” workshop with Group Lindholmen. After a short introduction of AIRIS, this artist presented her previous photographic work and art projects, e.g. photos featuring memories of a problematic relationship between a mother and her child. Afterwards the members were asked to cut out six images from magazines to represent their *personalities* and to glue them on to a plastic cube. During the reflection phase, the participants were supposed to talk about their cubes. The team mostly chose images representing hobbies and interests, rather than personalities.

In the afternoon, everybody went to a nearby photo studio. They were divided into two teams and each team was asked to come up with ideas regarding how to physically *visualise* “strength” and “togetherness”, via the medium of photography, for the other team. The photo-shoot – very physical in nature – led to a lot of involvement, laughter, and collaboration between the participants. The groups seemed to have fun and learned that ideas can also emerge along the way, not needing to be determined solely at the beginning of a process.

When we, the researchers, were discussing our interpretations after the workshop, we wondered whether the task of talking about the cubes would have had a different outcome if the team had known each other better and been more confident as regards sharing personal things. Proof of the important emotional aspect of artistic interventions can be found in the following statement by a participant: *“I liked the fact that the artist presented her work. This touched me somehow and is certainly something I’ll remember”*.

The designer workshop – for clarification of the creative process:

The designer workshop was organized by the designer - researcher and a design student because the team had become stuck in the fuzziness of the creative process in the workshops which followed the kick-on. During the earlier workshops, the group members were constantly asking for clarification, e.g. what was going on, why they were supposed to do some of the tasks, what the goal of the workshop was, and what the benefits and results of the workshops were.

The assignments during the designer workshop were; first, an icebreaking game using sound and a ball. Second, everyone told the story of their lives. The third task was a brainstorming session to generate pictures of different tools and tasks on a post-it note; in practice, this was drawing a

tool, like a hammer, and then finding and illustrating a task, e.g. swimming. Then they combined both the pictures and told a story based on these. The participants were also given homework, i.e. testing some of the other tools and tasks and delivering reflections on these the following week.

The assignments were meant to be clear but open enough to trigger the free flow of ideas. This proved difficult. However, as soon as it was explained that ideas could be quite random and playful, the participants started to reflect on the premise that the outcome was actually not as important as the creative process itself, and have fun. Presentation of the homework results the following week brought first good revelations.

The action plan workshop and the following focus group discussion – a lot of frictions and discontent: Although the team had started to loosen up a bit the first action plan workshop immediately raised an emotional discussion on what an action plan was, what it should lead to. It proved to be tricky to make a clear distinction between “the AIRIS action plan” and “the UNIONEN action plan”, which the group had received from the head office, setting out the business-related focal points.. Later, a control question from the Group Lindholmen project leader about the meaning of the brainstorming session was raised; whether the generated ideas should be linked to concrete and practically applicable proposals regarding how to recruit potential members (one of the core goals of the project), or to focus on things “that seem fun to do”? This demonstrated the ongoing confusion concerning the AIRIS project vis-à-vis UNIONEN’s business strategy. A statement underlines this notion: “*I don’t understand the structure of the AIRIS project. I need structure and an overall project plan.*”

Consequently, at the action plan workshop, very concrete actions and events were presented which were not necessarily really connected with the AIRIS project. In the following focus group interview, the group members quite strongly vented their frustrations concerning the project and the process.

Analysis

In order for creativity to emerge, the dependence on the context, wherein the AIRIS project works, must be acknowledged (Berthoin Antal and Strauss, 2014; Chia and King, 1998; Shalley and Gilson, 2004). The importance of increased creativity at the main organization was well noticed, and also accepted in the organizational rhetoric on several hierarchical levels. However, in formal positions at

UNIONEN, there were people who had a sceptical attitude towards the AIRIS project; Group Lindholmen felt that they had to continuously justify both themselves and the creative project. During the weekly workshops, some resistance was also noticed among the group members.

A few key observations became apparent:

A new team - problems with trust: Since Group Lindholmen was a new team, people were rarely acquainted with each other; they were preoccupied with their practical work issues and felt the need to prove themselves. This made it hard for the artist to create trust in her work, which is an important issue according to Biehl Missal and Berthoin Antal (2011). Trust is needed when ‘projective techniques’ (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009) are used with the aim of having the courage to reveal one’s inner thoughts and feelings at workshops.

From structures to openness: Engaging in an open and creative process seemed challenging to the participants. They were new to this way of working. Several researchers write about the need for an open attitude during a creative process. Darsö (2004) talks about ‘*downloading*’, meaning moving away from one’s ordinary view of the world towards ‘*seeing*’ in the sense of being observational as regards both one’s surroundings and oneself. This learning process eventually started to happen in the group, but also met with resistance. The participants had been used to well-organized and structured working routines. From the very beginning, they (including the project leader) had requested rules, set goals, to-do lists, tasks, and frameworks from the artist. This was hard to provide due to the nature of artistic intervention, which rests upon *co-creational approaches*, as Mary Parker Follet (1919, 1924) also notes as a prerequisite for creativity to emerge.

Differing expectations: Group Lindholmen had differing expectations and viewpoints regarding what an artistic intervention and working process is, compared to the artist involved. Taylor and Ladkin (2009) call one aspect of an intervention process ‘*skills transfer*’, entailing the possibility for the participants to learn what it is like working with artistic skills. However, as contrasting interpretations of goals and deliverables appeared, it was difficult for team members to concentrate on the creative work being done in the workshops. As one group member stated: “*I need to mentally prioritise my customer visits – then comes creativity.*” The artist also points out this struggle: “*We’d achieve things much faster if they trusted me (the artist) and*

didn't think about numbers and goals all the time."

Was the set goal, of achieving 8,000 new members, really a goal that could be achieved through AIRIS? These and other discrepancies often dealt with mismatching notions about understanding the creative process, time issues, questions about documentation, work efficiency, credibility, measuring and visualizing creativity, the pressure of performing, and justifying the financial investment in this project. As Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal (2011) argue, artists accept the uncertainty of the process and can hardly make promises regarding what the result of their work is going to be. Therefore, having clear, corporate, and measurable goals might be counterproductive to the project.

Acknowledgements: 'Crystallization' is Darsö's (2004) term for participant development during the intervention phase after 'seeing'. The term is used to describe a deeper understanding of the process leading to changed actions, called 'prototyping' and 'embodying' (prototyping – parallel to that used in design theory, referring to something which becomes materialized, or embodied as a changed behaviour). Our interpretation is that, when achieving changed behaviour, positive affirmations appear to be important. The participants in the group seemed to need to feel that they were achieving something that concerned their everyday work; that they were *efficient* in one way or another at the end of the day. This helped them to feel good about their work and stay motivated. It was important for the participants to see the results of each effort.

It might be learnt from our observations that an artist and a designer can use rather similar tools and techniques when it comes to practice-based methods. Compared with the study of Berthoin Antal & Strauss (2013), regarding artistic interventions, our case seems to focus on the same kinds of aspects, e.g. positive experiences, emotion, stimulation, energy, widening perspectives, and personal and collaborative ways of working. However, *there is a difference in this case in the sense that strategic development, product/service quality, efficiency and HR development impacts have all been raised as important issues by Group Lindholmen*. The question is, nevertheless, whether or not concrete organizational task development is something the artist should be engaged in, or whether it is a matter for the group to work with these organizational issues themselves, albeit with a widened and renewed perspective stimulated by the artist both during and after the intervention process.

The process calmed down eventually. Several extra meetings were organized after the action plan workshops

with the purpose of solving the situation, extra resources from TILLT were involved for clarifying discussions about goals and the artist introduced a reflexion circle to be held at the end of each workshop where everyone could tell about her/his experiences, thoughts and feelings. When looking at the AIRIS project as a whole, and not simply focusing on the complicated aspects, the following expectations, as expressed by a Group Lindholmen member, have also been acknowledged: *"We want AIRIS to be undemanding and to lead to openness, creativity and joy, in order to subsequently implement new ideas and approaches regarding day-to-day work. We want to jointly create positive energy and find the time to try new things and dare to fail."*

FINAL WORDS

The purpose of this study has been to put forward an increased empirical and theoretical understanding of creative interventions at companies and organizations.

As regards artistic and design *processes*, there are similarities; both thoroughly try to identify problems and, by relying on iterative and emergent processes, find alternative and new ways of dealing with them using imaginative approaches, and by means of utilizing different creative perspectives. In theory, both design thinking and artistic interventions are based on the notion of paving the way for seeing the world differently. However, regarding the artist's or the design thinker's mindset, differences may be noted. We can see differences between art and design when looking at their application during an intervention process. As one difference, the purpose-oriented and more analytical logic of design thinking should be noticed. Artistic interventions – being more intuitive and emotional – are practice-based methods that may have long-term personal, cultural, and organizational impacts and the outcomes will be seen eventually. In the context of our designer workshop, we can speak of design-as-practice. Design practice, in that sense, is different to design thinking, which focuses on theoretical elaborations, as mentioned by several researchers. Consequently, design thinking describes how a designer's mindset can be used *strategically*.

The constant talk within Group Lindholmen about the business and organizational goals of UNIONEN, and the resistance we experienced within the group concerning the AIRIS process, made a strong impression on us. It made us reflect on the difference between business thinking and creative approaches. Surely, during artistic interventions the situation at the workplace was *paradoxical*. On the one hand, the artistic process was messy and emotional

and demanded courage in order to experience and remain within the feeling of uncertainty, while, on the other hand, the participants were expected to do one's job following the logical and rational requirements according to business thinking. Consequently, we propose that, in order to facilitate Group Lindholmen's acceptance of the artistic process, and thereby supporting the learning of creativity, the notion of design thinking could have been used to *explain* the aim of the AIRIS project, as well as how it was designed, structured and planned to be managed. Knowledge of design processes, conceptualised in design thinking writings, can help us to communicate what is going on during an artistic intervention process, thus narrowing the gap between various understandings. However, we believe that a certain amount of friction and conflict will be both necessary and desirable during the creative process in order for something new to be able to emerge.

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