

SUMMARY
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TRANSFORMING ORGANISATIONS WITH THE ARTS.

Research Report

by

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TILLTEUROPE

PROJECT 2009

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The Research Framework Strategy is produced within the work of the policy grouping TILLT Europe supported by the Culture Program strand 2 at the European Union. This group has committed itself to producing a package of studies to understand the impact of artistic interventions in business and in research projects, and to formulate recommendations on European policies that should support this type of intervention. The TILLT Europe project management group consists of members from TILLT (Sweden), DISONANCIAS (Spain) and the WZB – Social Science Research Center Berlin (Germany).

WZB



VÄSTRA
GÖTALANDSREGIONEN

STIFTELSEN **framtidens
kultur**



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

D|SONANC|AS

Art i Innovació
Art for innovation

TILLT

A Research Framework for Evaluating the Effects of Artistic Interventions in Organizations

By
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Conclusions and Next Steps

Like most innovations, the phenomenon of artistic interventions in organizations has met with enthusiasm, growing curiosity, and, naturally, some scepticism. The claims about the positive potential contributions to learning and change in organizations that are attached to them are enthusiastically shared by many people who have participated in some kind of artistic intervention. Policymakers and decision-makers who have not yet experienced such interventions but who sense that new approaches are needed to stimulate innovativeness in all sectors of the economy are expressing curiosity: What effects do artistic interventions really have in organizations? Too little empirical research had been conducted to be able to respond to this question, which is not surprising in a relatively new field of practice. Researchers are professional sceptics, so their engagement in closing the gap between claims and reality in this field is sorely needed. The curiosity of policymakers in the European Commission therefore triggered this study, which has addressed a twofold question: **Where should attention be directed to find the kinds of value that artistic interventions add in organizations? And how should the research be conducted?**

In order to respond to this double question and generate a research framework to guide future studies, we first reviewed the literature, then sought out the expertise of stakeholders in the field. Although the literature about artistic interventions is expanding, we found that very few publications report about studies on the effects of artistic interventions in organizations (see chapter 2 of the final report). The series of three Artful Research workshops that we organized in Berlin in September 2009 was designed to tap into the experience of artists, intermediary organizations, people from organizations that had engaged in artistic interventions, consultants who have worked with artists, and researchers who have studied arts and business, innovation and change, or who have methodological expertise. The experimental format of the

Artful Research workshops stimulated the participants to explore what they have seen happen in organizations during and after long term (several months) and short term (several hours or days) artistic interventions. We created the opportunity for them to delve into and share also into their (often tacit) knowledge about direct and indirect effects (see chapter 3 of the final report).

Where to look for value

The preliminary analysis of the rich material produced during the Artful Research workshops permitted us to identify areas in which to look for effects that the stakeholders consider valuable.

- A key finding is that the stakeholders value the growth they see in people in and of itself, not simply as means to an end. For some stakeholders this human growth was at least part of the original intention of the intervention, for others it was a discovery during the intervention that gave them the feeling the project was worth the effort. They see value in giving people opportunities to experiment, develop new kinds of knowledge in new ways, nurture hidden skills, and discover an interest in cultural issues. The growth in self-esteem that stakeholders observed during and after an intervention is evidently intensely satisfying.
- The reports from experience indicate that the value that individuals draw out of an artistic intervention can flow out and generate value a) in their work, b) in interactions with others in their unit or across organizational units, and c) beyond that to affect organizational strategy, performance and culture. Figure 1 illustrates the different kinds of value that stakeholders have observed emerging in each of these areas.
- Since individuals (at all levels and in all departments) are the agents of organizational learning, the addition of value must start with them, but the movement of value from the core outwards to the meet the strategic interests of the organization is not automatic. Therefore, research seeking to document the value that artistic interventions can add in organizations will also need to explore the conditions that enable or impede the ability of individuals and the organization to generate value from the experience.

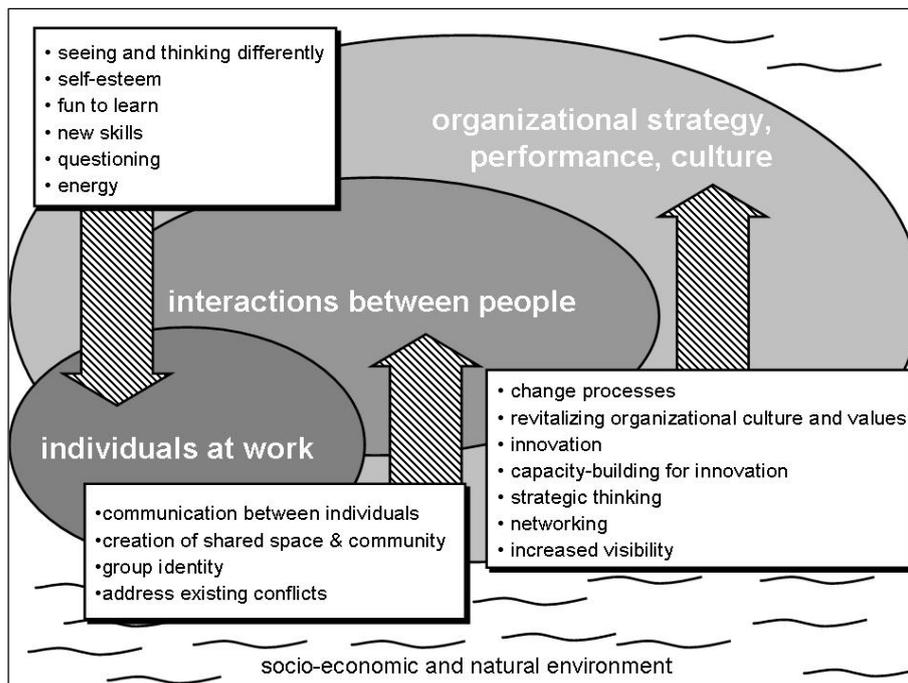


Figure 1: Where to look for the values artistic interventions can add

How to look for value

The proposed research framework takes into consideration the fact there is as yet no theory capable of explaining the complex phenomenon of artistic interventions and often indirect ways that they affect organizations.

- The implication is that researchers-evaluators have to develop an innovative and customized “toolkit” with appropriate indicators for studying these interventions *in the very process of conducting their research*.

Furthermore, the proposed framework recognizes that the stakeholders in any given project have different roles and interests, as well as different expectations of and perspectives on the organization, the artistic intervention, and research. Gaining an understanding of how artistic interventions generate value in organizations depends to a large extent on the willingness of the diverse stakeholders to share their knowledge and experience.

- The implication of this fact is that researchers must surrender their usual primacy in the research process if they want to understand the phenomenon. A participative research methodology is needed in which the various stakeholders contribute to defining a question or set of questions they agree is worth

pursuing, then to collecting and making sense of the data, and to representing the results.

We therefore propose a research framework composed of a mix of methods to adequately capture the richness and complexity of artistic interventions, with action research at the heart, flanked by case studies and survey research.

- The form of action research we recommend is action evaluation research, which supports individual and organizational learning during the project, and generates knowledge that can be shared with others (e.g., in the policy-making and academic communities) afterwards. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the final report, participating in action evaluation research also offers the stakeholders an opportunity to develop a variety of valuable skills (e.g., intercultural competence, reflective transfer and conflict engagement).
- In addition, we see a need for researchers to conduct case studies to derive and test action strategies, trace causal pathways, and explore hypotheses that are generated by action evaluation research on specific interventions. The accumulation of findings from action research and multiple case studies will provide a solid basis for formulating conclusions, and also for developing survey instruments.
- Surveys will be a useful complement to the qualitative research methods. Some participants at the Artful Research workshops were reluctant to embark on surveys at this early stage of understanding in the field. Until appropriate instruments have been developed, we therefore recommend starting by analyzing the results of ongoing surveys in organizations (e.g., employee surveys) to see whether they reveal effects that could be related to artistic interventions.

Next steps

The Artful Research workshops showed how valuable it is to engage with stakeholders early in the research process to define the focus and formulate a framework. The proposed research framework is ready to be refined and piloted in different settings (see Figure 2). The time is evidently ripe for the enthusiasts of artistic interventions to engage in serious, (self-)critical research into the effects of their projects. The results of these studies could whet the appetite for

experimentation of those observers who are curious, and they might also shift some of the sceptics into the camp of the curious.

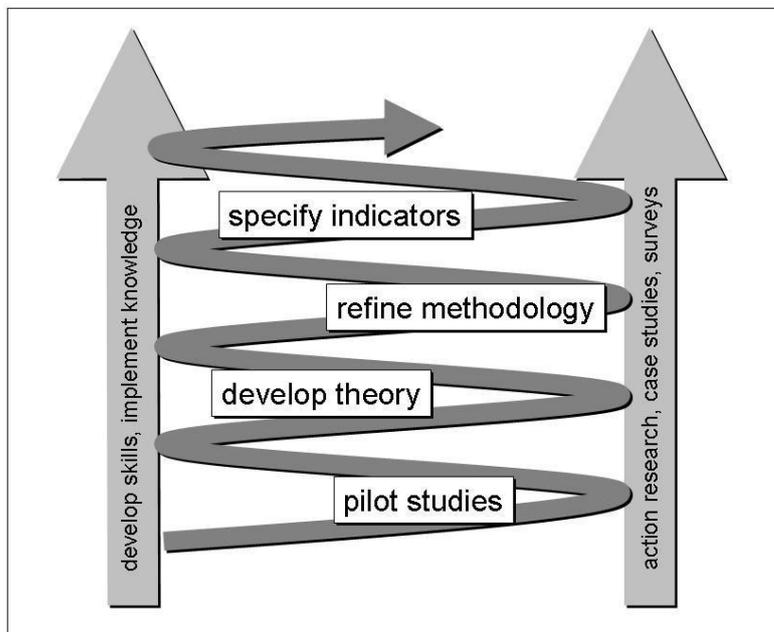


Figure 2: Next steps

Engaging in artistic interventions is by nature an unpredictable process. Using the mix of research methods proposed here will **help stakeholders clarify which kinds of value are likely to emerge under which conditions**. It will provide guidance in **how to create supportive conditions** to benefit from artistic interventions in organizations. Equally importantly, systematic research will help specify **when not to take the risk**, so that stakeholders do not embark naively into such interventions. But research results cannot replace the courage needed for decision and action, both at the policy making level and within organizations. Experience suggests that one of the preconditions for creating value through artistic interventions is and will remain the courage to trust: to trust the process and the people involved in it. **Next steps therefore include the willingness take a step into the unknown – to learn by engaging in and reflecting on experiments.**

Participants

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