Setting the Stage for Something New. Understanding Arts-Based Initiatives through the Lens of Liminality and Rites of Passage

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Abstract

Art is brought into organizations in the shape of "artistic interventions" in order to achieve a variety of effects: creating new values, initiating learning processes, supporting restructuring processes, or fostering innovation. Several methods and practices have been developed for this purpose, in which art or artistic workshops create spaces promoting precisely these effects. Such learning spaces, experimental spaces and memory spaces pose great potential for personnel and organizational development, in that, e.g., new ideas can be developed and internalized. Based on the idea of spaces created by artistic interventions, this article analyses them from the theoretical perspective of "liminality". This theoretical angle helps to fathom the effects experienced in artistic interventions which are difficult to evaluate. This way, the situation in which employees find themselves in artistic interventions can be framed to better understand processes of change and the opening for exploration of ideas. In addition, liminality is linked to the anthropological view of "rites of passage" (transition rites), which facilitate times of change and mark – or even constitute – transitions.

Keywords

Liminality, rites of passage, innovation, organizational change, arts-based initiatives

1. Introduction

Arts-based initiatives have recently become a growing opportunity for organizations to create value. These initiatives are designed for the specific needs of an organization or team and thus value creation is not limited to a small range of specific effects. Unlike sports activities that are often used as team building exercises, arts-based initiatives may aim at goals like development, change, inspiration, or innovation on different organizational levels: individuals, products, groups and teams or the whole organization (BERTHOIN ANTAL/STRAUß 2016; SCHNUGG 2014; DARSØ 2004) as studies on the formats and possible effects of

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arts-based initiatives show. These meta-studies as well as reflections on specific formats of arts-based initiatives aim at an understanding of underlying mechanisms of these activities for better theoretical understanding. Moreover, they aim at guidelines that help to create the best-fitting arts-based initiative in practice that is able to reach the organization's desired effects, or can be connected to sensemaking theory, learning processes, or innovation (BIEHL-MISSAL 2011; BARRY/MEISIEK 2010; TAYLOR/LADKIN 2009; BERTHOIN ANTAL 2009).

The field is fast growing and there are effects attributed to arts-based initiatives. For illustration: A systematic literature review I conducted in 2009 (SCHNUGG 2010), and repeated in the beginning of 2013 (SCHNUGG 2014) with an expanded pool of publications, already shows the diversity of arts-based initiatives. To give a rough impression, the conducted two-step content analysis of these already 119 books and papers aimed at how managers and consultants bring elements from the arts world into the organizational realms, and which effects are described. The manually coded effects 418 text samples that claim positive effects were then grouped by identical or highly similar claims into categories. By the end of this process, I arrived at 11 kinds of arts-based initiatives that range from bringing in artists and their competences to collaboratively exploring artworks in seminars. Moreover, this review provided an extensive overview of 26 different kinds positive effects that were attributed to these initiatives. These positive effects read like "facilitate personal development", "increase flexibility and openness", "enhance sense of community", "sharpen and communicate organizational identity", "strengthen organizational culture", "facilitate organizational change", "identify problems", and "provide a forum for questioning existing routines". Since then, the field expanded and regular reviews of the field appeared that introduced new models of what arts-based initiatives can achieve. A valuable contribution to this field based on the diversity of previously published in depth reviews was Berthoin Antal and Strauß' (2016: 39) elaboration on multi-stakeholder perspectives on searching for evidence of values-added in artistic interventions in organizations. In this chapter, they introduce the concept of "interspaces to explain the embedding of artistic interventions in organizational dynamics." They show the impacts of arts-based initiatives on a personal, interpersonal, and organizational level.

Already Berthoin Antal (2012: 45) notes, mapping the diversity of activities in this field led to label them with various terms like "arts-based initiatives", "arts-based interventions", "artistic interventions", but also

some less used terms like "workarts" which was introduced by Barry and Meisiek (2010) and terms that developed early in the exploration of these activities and which mainly focus on the aspect of learning, like Darsø (2004) spoke of "artful learning alliances" and Boyle and Ottensmeyer (2005) spoke of "arts-based learning programs". The latter two terms are not widely used in any overview of such activities anymore and focus clearly on learning activities and programs. Moreover, most arts-based methods are short-term interventions, are embedded in organizational change programs, are modules in training programs, and the more long-term oriented programs often focus on projects in R&D departments or guide like consultancy interventions an organization for a few weeks or months (BERTHOIN ANTAL 2012).

Both terms which are widely in use, arts-based initiative and artistic intervention, point to the fact that these activities by artist or activities that include art intervene in the daily routines, the organization's culturally engrained processes (BERTHOIN ANTAL 2012), commonly used perspectives and habits. They are brought into the organization to make a difference, to challenge the existing with something new and the introduction of something alien to the current culture: Activities outside of everyday work and processes and clearly marked beginning and a clearly marked end. This idea of arts-based initiative as something "special" or as "interspace" in organizations can also be found in the discussion of the term. Already consultants who were early adopters of arts-based initiatives in their work with corporations refer to this uniqueness, "not being normal within organizational life" is important for their effectiveness (BLANKE 2002).

Arts-based initiatives are not conventional approaches used in organizations on a day-to-day basis and what makes these initiatives so remarkable is their ability to stimulate different senses and create a "holistic" experience. These activities are more than purely intellectual challenges, but experiences that might include movement, vision, taste, haptics, and hearing. As such they are remarkable and memorable events (BARRY/MEISIEK, 2010; SCHNUGG 2010). Moreover, they create space for exploration, change, and development on many different levels, as stated above. The next step is now to provide a theoretical perspective which enables a better understanding of the interspaces, as introduced by Berthoin Antal and Strauß (2016) and the dynamics bound to these interspaces in order to enable researchers to do a more fine-grained analysis of the mechanisms of the effects of arts-based initiatives.

Following these arguments, the theoretical lens of rites of passage and liminality (VAN GENNEP 1909; TURNER 1966, 1982, 1987) provides a valuable understanding of the mechanisms why arts-based initiatives enable exactly the variety of effects stated above. Beyer and Trice (1993) brought the concept of rites of passage and liminality into organization studies based on their reflection on sensemaking practices in organizations, the importance of symbolic meaning, and it influence on the behaviour. They point to the possibility of using rites and ceremonies for conscious sensemaking processes in organizations which are also connected to sensory perception, materiality, and symbolic meaning. The concept of liminality is also applied to organizational change and cultural transformation of organizations (HOWARD-GRENVILLE et al. 2011) who reflect on the structure of rites of passage to allow change processes. Moreover, it has been associated with identity reconstruction (BEECH 2011), identities in increasingly precarious and fluctuating career landscape (IBARRA/OBODARU 2016), entrepreneurship (BILL/OLAISON 2011) innovation for allowing reflexivity and the co-construction of a new perspective (WALL/ENGLERT 2016). Recently, temporary work, project work and consulting have been associated with this theoretical concept. Project-based and temporary work can be interpreted as its individuals being in a seemingly constant state of liminality – a constantly fluid stage that can enable individuals to certain goals or transitions, but can be problematic if it is experienced over a long period (CZARNIAWSKA/MAZZA 2003; ERIKSSON-ZETTERQUIST 2002; JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014; GARSTEN 1999). More than the exploration of the liminal state these individuals are in – liminal persons (TURNER 1967) or liminal subjects as Garsten (1999) puts it –, this paper focuses on liminal space and rites of passage. Temporary liminality or liminal space have already been identified during dramatic events like crises (POWLEY 2009) or in strategic workshops (JOHNSON et al. 2010).

The effects and situations described in these papers and the possibilities described in liminality and rites of passage are paralleled with those ascribed to arts-based initiatives. First, arts-based initiatives might create this liminal space for play, exploration, creativity, innovation, and change, and be a platform for this "liquid" state or to explore, create space for testing and developing new ideas, closely connected to play as Turner (1974) puts it in later writings about the liminal and the liminoid. Something, to which also Bertion Antal and Strauß (2016) implicitly refer to. Additionally, the link of innovation setting to arts-based initiatives points into this direction (HUTTER/FARÌAS 2017). Second, arts-

based initiatives can more explicitly mark thresholds in as they provide the opportunity to create liminal space. They mark changes in organizations and constitute a certain point of collective organizational memory, but also enable personal exploration.

The remainder of this article shows how the perspective of liminality and rites of passage can support the notions of effects of arts-based initiatives. First, there is theoretical in-depth discussion of the concept. Second, the concept of liminality will be interlinked with the effects of arts-based initiatives. Third, the paper discusses practical implications and adds new aspects to the recent discussion of liminality within the organization studies discourse and creates a connection to collective organizational memory.

2. Rites of Passage and Liminality

When the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1909) introduced the term liminality for the phase of transitions in cultures based on the Latin word for thresholds, it had a narrow meaning in the anthropological tradition closely coupled to the rites of passage he was elaborating on. The concept of liminality arose in his analysis of rituals of indigenous people, periodical rituals that are tied to seasons as well as rituals that are linked to status transitions of individuals in a clan. The anthropologist Victor Turner (1967) elaborated on liminality as "betwixt and between", an essentially unstructured phase where cultural structures are reversed, exploration and new constitution of structures is possible. Later, Turner (1974, 1982) attempted to widen the use of the term in his own research, an example other researchers (SUTTON-SMITH 1972) and philosophers followed later as they started to put the concept of liminality in a more contemporary setting (ST JOHN 2008; CZARNIAWSKA /MAZZA 2003; JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014).

Van Gennep (1909) elaborates on rites of passage as marking thresholds which is usually divided into three separate phases: first, there is the phase of separation (divestiture), a pre-liminal phase that is often linked to a rite that separates the individual from the social group; second there is the phase of transition (liminality) which marks the threshold, the passage itself and constitutes the phase in-between; and third, there is incorporation (investiture) which is linked to a rite of re-integration or re-incorporation into the social environment. The phases before and after the actual threshold are clearly marked through rites

and thus help to create a safe space in-between, an unstructured space with allows change, exploration, experiments and finally transit. During the separation phase, the person or the individuals and groups who are to be subjected to the passage become separated from their previous social environment and their previous way of life. During the transition phase, the person or persons separated from their previous environment experience the liminal condition. During the incorporation phase, they enter a new group and a new life. Although rites of passage are important for the development or mark the process of gaining of new social status for one or a few individuals, they are important for the whole social environment. Moreover, a social group, a clan or a culture can go through passages, change, and mark these by rites of passage (VAN GENNEP 1909). Thus, rites of passage and the inherent liminal phase are not only connected to transitions of status of a single person, but also to changes that imply changes in a society or culture to initiate well-being of the society (VAN GENNEP 1909: 179).

A liminal space is a space of the "in-between" or a "time between times." This in-between can be understood as time of change, connection, re-wiring, or interplay. From these times between times some kind of difference originates. This difference is something that can develop in those liminal spaces but to create sustainable change it is not only necessary to create the freedom of the liminal space, but also to make this space recognizable through validation and attribution of meaning. The concept of liminality is based on blurring and merging of distinctions, simultaneous presence of the familiar and the unfamiliar, freedom of conventions and regulations, and allows for a sharp symbolic inversion of social attributes. Thus, persons who find themselves in liminal space are temporarily freed from structural obligations (TURNER 1982). Moreover, the liminal space is characterized by heightened reflexivity as these privileged spaces allow for a meta-perspective on how and what to think, about the doing and feeling in daily life (TURNER 1987). The liminal is full of potency and potentiality, though always in relation to the indicative (TURNER 1982). Turner (1974) also explores on a differentiation between the liminal and the liminoid. He explains that the liminal and the liminoid have similar characteristics, but the liminoid does not include the resolution of a personal crisis or mark a change. Like an art event that is visited for pleasure, it gives the opportunity to live through moments without everyday structures or routines.

Through ritualization or creation of stories around the change happening during the liminal phase or initiated through completion of the

liminal phase the difference will be memorably determined ex post. This subsequent narration and sensory experience testifies the difference and marks a situation, space, and time as turning point (MACHO 2004). This is possible because liminality constitutes a situation of social limbo for the liminal person. These thresholds or the limbo is characterized by ambiguity, indefiniteness, and blurred conventions. The liminal person's social identity is undefined during this phase. Individuals that are in this limbo are not at their old place and time anymore, but haven't entered the now yet. This undefined, ambiguous situation beyond the normative structure of an individual's social environment liberates them from norms and social restriction, enables exploration and breaking routines and ultimately leads into the constitution of new structures during the re-integration phase (TURNER 1967, 1982).

Next to this phase of liminality the very event-like perception, the extraordinary character of things that do not happen regularly, is another aspect that makes rites of passage a powerful concept for the reflection on arts-based initiatives. Ceremonies and rites have a deeply engraved symbolic meaning and are also very performative. Individuals who are engaged in the process do have to follow the rules of the ritual, follow a script or use specific gestures and words so that the rite is valid (TURNER 1982). Symbols, symbolic phenomena and symbolic actions play a major role in the rites of separation and incorporation (TURNER 1974). An important aspect of rituals – and thus events that mark or guide transitions – are that they are not just ideas or positions, but connected to the body and sensory experience. They are actions and material practices; they can resemble theatrical practices and are rich with symbolic meaning and they have a clearly marked beginning and end. This is also the reason that trigger the perception of rituals as disruption, meaning as something special. They are outside daily practices, usual communication, hierarchies, rules, and orders of the familiar and habitual daily life. These rites of passage and rites opening liminal space thus state the opposite of habits (MACHO 2004). They are very performative and are loaded with symbolic meaning. Moreover, the materials used in the practices will be loaded with symbolic meaning and afterwards may be used as charms. (Art)Works that are produced in the liminal space are witnesses of the transition (MACHO 2004: 85). These things that are produced during the liminal phase or have a special meaning in this phase can become powerful object for remembering change and important tools for development of new structures and strategies as they are witnesses of the transition. These objects are symbols for the transition that

happened and reminders for the social environment of what has changed (MACHO 2004; TURNER 1974).

Rituals are attempts to visualize the unseen, changes between the now and then, and to make these changes perceivable and experienceable, by addressing senses above intellectual reflection. Often narrations about this completion of the liminal phase are not actively created, but develop after the rite took place (MACHO 2004). They play an important role in experiencing transitions. For example, rites of separation are prominent in funerals whereas rites of incorporation are prominent in marriages (TURNER 1974). If there is no such rite or event, it is extremely difficult that such a narrative or memorable entity stays in the individuals' and cultural memory though, and thus the change might be forgotten or disregarded. With arts-based initiatives we can also ask how to enable such a liminal space but also how to visualize the "in-between" and the successful completion of this phase. For organizations Beyer and Trice (1993) argue that members of the organization make sense of their experiences and to a certain kind of the organization by using several kinds of narratives. Through myths, sagas, legends and other stories experiences, events like an anniversary celebration, completion of an important project, unique accomplishments, change of leadership or other important impacts on the organization are kept alive and remembered. Although organizational narratives are mostly mundane, the connection to celebrations, events and extraordinary happenings can influence how the change is remembered.

Summing up, the most important aspects of liminality and rites of passage are their strong symbolic meaning that is engraved in the corresponding events, reference objects and subsequent events, their performativity, the materiality and addressing of (multi-)sensory perception through experiencing the extraordinary space and time. These aspects are also essential aspects of arts-based initiatives that make them enablers of all those claimed effects from fostering creativity to constituting and communicating change. In the remainder of this article, I will present how arts-based initiatives induce liminality, enable exploration, support this phase of transformation, and help to push boundaries by creating a certain kind of limbo, a "liquid" or "fluid" state. In the next step, I will show how arts-based initiatives can constitute rites of passage and points in time that help social groups and organizations to remember transitions and change.

3. Liminality and Arts-based Initiatives

First, arts-based initiatives create a safe space to experience, learn, explore and invent. Liminal spaces are those phases that allow individuals to act without being bound to routines, social structures and other day-to-day business activities. Liminality tends to eliminate formal structures and processes individuals are obliged to in social environments. And as Turner (1974: 78) notes, "Liminality is both more creative and more destructive than the structural norm." They allow for negotiating the existing, inversion, disruption, and new experiences, and have been explored by organization scholars as productive spaces which are associated with creativity (SWAN et al. 2016) and change (HOWARD-GRENVILLE et al. 2011). Liminal space can be created in changing organizational structures as roles have to be re-negotiated and identities have to be re-built (BEECH 2011). Short (2015), for example, explores how liminal spaces offer fertile ground to develop knowledge and reflect on the lived experiences at work. The transitional or liminal phase of business ethnographers is invoked by the beginning of their studies which question the status quo, allow creativity to emerge, and new ideas to be constructed (WALL/ENGLERT 2016). Pointing to the same status of workgroups or study groups outside of daily routines, Johnson et al. (2010) reflect on strategic workshops as something that might create liminal space as participants are removed from their usual work environment and might find themselves in new positions to negotiate strategic issues. Similarly, Newely et al. (2008) and Wagner et al. (2012) show that project teams can benefit from liminality. Arts-based initiatives allow for liminal spaces, create it as they are creating clearly defined space that is outside of everyday practice, but they are also helpful tools that guide these processes.

Arts-based initiatives as a method to create liminal space and enable personal or organizational change by associating with a fluid state of liminality: like creativity, exploration of tools and new ways, experimenting with new structures and strategies, or experiencing new perspectives. They constitute this space by a clear beginning and a clear end, and in the restricted time they endure, these activities open up to processes that can take place within this 'secure' space that allows for experimentation. As liminal space allows individuals to learn by being removed from restricting structures – "by being disorderly". Moreover, this proto-structural system as Sutton-Smith calls the open and unstructured state of liminality, can be seen as the precursor of innovative normative forms and as source of new culture (TURNER 1974; SUTTON-SMITH 1972:

18f.). A recent example is the case of *Jump! at pro mente OÖ* (KUNST-RAUM GOETHESTRASSE XTD, 2017). As the organization entered a phase of restructuring and a major change in leadership, *pro mente OÖ* started to work with *KunstRaum Goethestrasse xtd*, who are experienced art collective in creating arts-based initiatives for individual and interpersonal development. They developed an intervention including performance, photography, and self-reflection methods. The aimed at creating interpersonal understanding between former leadership personnel and new leadership personnel, and to create a liminal space to explore values and perception of leadership. In a part of the workshop they expressed their approach by jumping which created a series of photographs. This was supported by a reflective workshop which ended in the creation of a video which included the jumps and personal statements of the leadership personnel. This helped to create a mutual understanding, bonding, supported the transition phase, and created visible artworks which are identified with this development.

As such arts-based initiatives seen from the perspective of liminality can help organizations, teams, and individuals in organizations to learn, be creative, explore, and to create new approaches and strategies. A few cases of arts-based initiatives use liminality to create strategy finding and organizational change processes, similarly to how Johnson et al. (2010) interpret strategy workshops as liminal space. For example, Mirvis et al. (2003) or Meisiek and Barry (2007) show that artistic performances and the engagement of employees in performances can help to develop new strategies, to find a common ground for new strategic directions and to tackle problems that are unspoken or unrecognized on some hierarchical levels in the organization. Berthoin Antal (2009) describes a row of similar cases on her report on the arts-based initiatives by TILLT. In greater detail, Pässilä (2012) explores reflective practices in organizations through post-Boalian theatre practices.

Van Gennep (1909) describes in his classical ethnographical studies on rituals how members of a group or society change their hierarchical position in the respective group or society through going through a transitional liminal phase. In the case of an arts-based initiative, the individuals that are thrown into this different situation are deprived of other organizational structures and have to talk to each other on a different level. In the case of performances, individuals have new roles and push their own boundaries by exploring abilities they normally do not use within the organization. This re-discussion of skills and knowledge in this collective experience puts them in the position Turner (1974) and

Sutton-Smith (1972) are talking about: a proto-structural system from which they have to develop new structures and goals. This helps them to approach their organizational and individual problems differently and to introduce new goals and strategies as during this phase, new symbols and constructions emerge that then feed back into the structure and system of the organization and supply them with goals, structural models and a raison d'être (TURNER 1974). The exploration happens within the arts-based initiative, though, which is something special and safe, with no immediate and direct consequences on the daily organization. Only when a decision is made and some incorporation has happened, it affects the organization itself (TURNER 1982). In these cases, arts-based initiatives are clearly linked to a transition.

Liminality is safe space where participants of arts-based initiatives can explore ideas and play with new structures without having immediate consequences. They can test and try before they decide on new ideas. Play is a fundamental basis to exploratory processes to create new understanding and innovation as it questions pre-existing understandings and allows for experimental re-combination of existing knowledge or doing (TURNER 1982). But this requires engagement that also means a deep level of interaction where values, understandings and beliefs are at stake. Especially for strategy development or restructuring of organizations this is an important point. Play can be understood as the intuitive, subversive, and unpredictable, it involves interaction, ambiguity, inversion, disruption, and understanding through experience. Thus, play is something that contradicts the everyday processes and structures in organizations. In liminality, there is no need to stick to the conventional structures of the organization but it allows the freedom to change learnt processes, to neglect hierarchical structures and to question understandings and perspectives. It allows re-combination of things, ideas and meanings and thus helps to create input for innovation. Through this, as Turner (1982) points out, liminality fosters deviation and creativity. By transcending 'normal' limits of thought, un-reflected self-understanding and behavior, liminal space opens the way to novelty and imagination, construction, and deconstruction (THOMASSEN 2014).

Seen from the theory of liminality, it is important to understand that liminality is not only important rites of passage of passage where it is fundamental to enable change, but it is also a space that is induced to allow the freedom to explore and to be playful without fearing immediate consequences by peers. Thus, seeing this state as "interspace" that aims at innovation, creativity, seeing existing problems and the own routi-

nes from a new perspective, become more interdisciplinary or find new connections to fields individuals have not thought of previously. This is what Turner (1974) defines as the liminoid. For example, arts-based initiatives that aim at collaboration of individual or teams with artists can trigger creativity and innovation. One often cited and much explored initiative is the Xerox PARC artist-in-residence program (e.g., HARRIS 1999; FERRO-THOMSEN 2005). It was a successful program that is still discussed and used by practitioners as a role-model to create artist-in-residence programs in corporations and scientific institutions. The idea was to pair artists with interested scientists who work on similar contents or with the same media in the R&D department of Xerox. Similarly works the re-launch of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) at Nokia Bell Labs in 2016, which is based on the successful E.A.T. collaborations at Bell Telephone Labs in the late 1960s/early 1970s (Patterson, 2015). These interactions aimed at starting experiments, creativity and innovation processes. On a very personal level, the liminoid provides the possibility to explore, to find oneself and to learn. Arts-based initiatives and these encounters of artists and scientists in the corporate setting give the artists and the scientists the opportunity to start projects and interactions that are outside their routines and well-known field-internal discussions. They allow for out of the box thinking and for exploring media they might use daily from a completely new angle: an artistic one or a new scientific one. Turner (1974) labels the exploration of skills and knowledge, that also leads to creativity and innovation, that does not go hand in hand with a personal crisis or a personal transformation, as liminoid. It resembles the liminal as it is a safe space stripped of former structures and rules, though. Exploration of hardware and software as media which is used in the case of Xerox PARC is thus liminoid.

There is a small border between liminal and liminoid and finding the right term for arts-based initiatives in this area can be difficult as there always might happen some individual change that is based on completely new understanding of their own skills. Many arts-based initiatives in leadership & HR development often focus on a learning, not on transformation processes (STOLLSTEINER 2008; BOYLE/OTTENSMEYER 2005) or at the development of interdisciplinary skills and the acquisition of new ways of seeing (OSBURN/STOCK 2005). In contrast to the focus on transition in Jump!, these are constituting "interspaces" like the liminoid. They resemble how Turner (1974) explores the liminal and the liminoid also in context with the concepts of 'flow' and 'play'. He shows how the liminal and the liminoid can enable play and ludic structures

as liminality is a space of exploration and re-combination. On the other hand, individuals are deprived of restrictions and necessities which enables them to lose their ego, concentrate on the 'inside' and being self-aware to concentrate on skills and ideas, both aspects that are important for the experience of flow and thus for pushing (creative) development. The liminoid is important for employees to reduce stress or to get a fresh perspective on their work, though. This might not produce measurable personal development, but deliberate individuals and teams from pressure and restrictive structures to find back to their skills, personal goals, and ideas. Arts-based initiatives that provide incentives or help the organization to support well-being at work (VON BRANDENBURG 2006, 2009).

Organizations sometimes need to create liminality for individuals and teams which can be guided through arts-based initiatives. The formation of new teams or the embedding of new hierarchical structures in divisions can be supported through arts-based initiatives. In this particular case, art is used similarly to sports events: For example, workshops with artists to create a collective sculpture or to express a common goal and vision of a team through artistic means like collages can foster team development and incorporation of new hierarchies. Collective making and collective experience will induce social bonding, support communication, and create a relict as lasting reminder of this liminal phase (BLANKE 2002). These activities may be a starting point for a new team that is separated from the previous organization. In this case, it has to be interpreted as rite of separation as Turner interprets rites that accompany weddings. But, such activities also help to incorporate new hierarchies or to include new team members. In this case, it will be interpreted as rite of incorporation.

But, arts-based initiatives can also provide tools to guide individuals, teams, or organizations through a liminal phase as they support the actors in finding their way through the necessary change in the organization. Thus, artistic tool can support either the liminal or liminoid: when artists join strategic workshops or work with consultants on restructuring processes of organizations (MANDEL 2007) for providing their artistic media and methods as supportive tool, such as prototyping or visualization skills. Artistic means can thus be helpful tools, but they can also create tangible objects that are relicts of the transition process and stay in the organization. Turner (1967) and van Gennep (1909) point to the meaning of rites and the objects they produce for a change pro-

cess. This is the second part of this theory this article will explore in the next chapter.

4. Rites of Passage, Change and Arts-based Initiatives

Arts-based initiatives trigger something new, enable transitions and make them tangible. These arts-based initiatives function as rites of passage as they mark a certain point in time as changing point and as such are outstanding, outside of the daily business (TURNER 1982). Thus, they also serve as mechanisms of memory, a collective memory that commonly must be embodied and internalized to be able to share it (MACHO 2004). Beyer and Trice (1993) demonstrate that this is important in organizations and organizational cultures. As Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) show, organizations are in liminal space during a phase of restructuring. Nevertheless, they see that it is a common phenomenon to observe that after a business consultant leaves, the organizations, management, and team fall back into their daily routines. Although the liminal space is closed nothing remarkable happened that defines a new beginning or communicates on a sensory and memorable level that something has to start. This results in disappointed members of the organization and working towards a restructuring process seemed to be in vain. For Turner (1966), an important aspect is the symbolic and sensory aspect of rituals as it makes beliefs, values, and tangible. Thus, the embodiment of the change through rituals – and in this case through marking the end of the liminality phase (e.g., after restructuring processes, like in the case of HAP-Raufoss presented below) in the organization through arts-based initiatives – creates symbols, objects, and memory the participating actors can refer to. But what Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) as well as Eriksson-Zetterquist (2002) also point to, is the last phase of rites of passage, the incorporation, that is the least developed phase in organizations. They point out that often the presentation of the final report is like an important ceremony that closes the liminal phase of the restructuring and of the consultants being in the organization. Nevertheless, this rite does not affect the whole organization and is not perceived by those individuals who are affected by the subsequent change itself. Reflecting on the possibility of bringing something into the organization that is as unusual and non-profane as the change itself, can be a first step to make the change visible and perceivable. In this case,

arts-based initiatives might become a relevant source to emphasize the incorporation phase in order to state the cultural (i.e. organizational) change.

During transitions cultures use different rituals to express and make the change possible (VAN GENNEP 1909; TURNER 1966). Van Gennep (1909) shows that special events can mark changes in a person's status within a group or culture, but also can mark changes in the cultural calendar or the culture itself. Rites of passage dramatize transitions through their highly symbolic and performative character (TURNER 1966, 1982). There case of HAP Raufoss is an arts-based intervention that demonstrates how arts-based initiatives can serve as important markers of change as well as points in time that are remembered and can visibly be referred to. It shows a relic of an incorporation rite at the end of a liminal phase during a process of restructuring. The case was originally presented by Eirik Irgens (2000) which Barry and Meisiek (2010) published in a shortened, translated English version: The case of HAP-Raufoss, an aluminum smelting company facing bankruptcy that was taken over by a new CEO, Johnny Undeli:

> When Undeli became the new CEO of the company, „he used his first months to analyze productivity and market possibilities. He halved the number of top leaders, did away with privileges like company cars, and moved the executive parking lot outside the fence. After talks with the unions, the overall number of employees was also reduced. So far, nothing artful. Then, even though the company was still incurring heavy losses, he decided to spend a million Norwegian crowns – more or less the last of the company's money – to paint the production factory completely white, floors and all. The employees didn't know what to think. They were accustomed to not spending a cent unless the usefulness and economic rationality of the expenditure were fully documented. And the floor, walls and machines would soon be dirty and stained again. As it turned out, the employees focused more on order and cleanliness, which meant less time searching for tools and fewer production interruptions. They also saw their traces on the floors and machines, and began reconsidering their work patterns. Two years after the start of the change program HAP became one of the highest ranked companies in its industry. (BARRY/MEISIEK 2010: 1518)

Barry and Meisiek (2010) identify in this case that the interplay of corporate crisis (going bankrupt and need to cut costs), distinction making (work procession white paint), and context shifting (hospital white within a mining company) was able to break with the prevailing corporate rationality: First there was the act of painting, then the white within the mining company, then different cognitive connections of this act and the color white like coming up with a new canvas, a white background that opens new interpretative possibilities, and last but not least there has been the act of doing something without any clear reason and wit-

hout economic rationality. Additional to this sensemaking lens, liminality provides an important perspective on this case. How could a simple artistic action like that help to lead to lasting change of structures, processes and embedding of new strategies in the heads of the employees? As Taylor (2012, p. 119) interprets this situation as an event through which Undeli intended to change the culture "from one where the employees were used to seeing the factory as a dark and dirty place that lost money, to a bright, cheerful place that made money." This points to the fact that this arts-based initiative can be perceived as part of the incorporation rite after the restructuring process and it also created a relict as visible legacy that reminds of this change. Let's shortly recapitulate the example through the perspective of rites of passage: First there has been the old organization. The old organization was not doing good; it was near bankruptcy. When there came a new CEO and he started to analyze the organization, organizational structures, processes, and culture, there was the 'separation phase' of a rite of passage and he started the liminal space in the organization. In this case, liminality endured for a long time; the restructuring process was often painful, trying to implement new ideals and ideas, and coming up with new processes. In this phase, the employees often do not know what they should change in their daily routines and work practices, and they often get under great pressure and motivational stress, because they fear, they could be the next to get fired. This is neither a factor for the motivation nor for long-lasting good work. After a certain time, the employees lost their intrinsic motivation for work, start to make lots of mistakes, fall into a burn-out due to the psychologic stress. As soon as they experience this phase as over and their workplace is again as secure, they fell back into their well-known routines from before the restructuring process started. First, no implementation of the new structures has happened, they have not been incorporated. Especially things like new vision, new culture, new procedures seem to be just terms, phrases without any background they can see or feel. Looking at change from the perspective of rites of passage, this missing incorporation is one of the reasons why restructuring processes and consulting often fails. In the beginning, there are lots of changes and there are big words used, but in the end, we fall back to normal. If there are rites and ceremonials to close this open liminal phase a clear point is made of a new start. Either a rite of separation from the old or a rite of incorporation of the new can help to make a visible change happen.

The incorporation of the new was clearly visible for every employee in the case of the arts-based initiative at HAP Raufoss. It was the expe-

rience of an event with different perception and senses that marked a new beginning which stayed as a reminder of this transition process: it was completely out of line of their daily routines at HAP Raufoss that it marked the turning point in the organization. From that moment on all those changes in the organizational structure, processes and even the organizational culture, were not only words someone tries to make them clear with words, argues in rational sentences, could get clear and understandable. This art project is a turning point that they subsequently could refer to. From that moment on– in their experience – everything was different. Painting the space white was a symbolic act that is connected to the transition of the company and remains sensory perceivable in the surrounding of the employees. This symbolic act happened at a certain moment of time and thus marked a special moment in time where the aesthetics of the organization visibly changed (the architecture, color, use of machines, which goes along with the importance of organizational aesthetics, Strati, 1999) and might be the fundament for new rhythms, understanding of processes and strategies. From that moment on the employees knew and felt that there has been a change in the organization and its culture and they could develop and live a new culture. Above that, having a relict (i.e., the white walls and floors) that is loaded with symbolic meaning helps to hold on to the turning point – as Turner (1982) states that the objects which are loaded with symbolic meaning during liminality can be used as talismans. But not only visible transformation in the organization's building can be used as visible marker for organizational change. Moreover, sculptures and collages that come out of team building processes which are supported by artists or artistic processes can be used as points of reference for the respective change (BLANKE 2002; SPENCER 2010). Thus, artistic events, workshops, or other artistic interventions can be memorized as those rites of passage that mark the beginning of a new era and wipe out the old. This new era might be a new organizational structure (IRGENS 2001), identity (SPENCER 2010), or the change in the culture of a team that previously had communication problems (WESTWOOD 2007).

This can also be observed in the memory studies that have been introduced to organization studies that show that the collective memory is composed from the past and the present beliefs. Outstanding events, ceremonies, and rites that a community experiences together are an important input to generate identity building narratives (ANTEBY/ MOLNÁR 2012). Especially the ambiguity and uncertainty lived through in liminality as it provides opportunities to re-imagine and redirect iden-

tity. At the same time, important and unique events feed on the extraordinary experience and the narratives that subsequently can be the basis for new understanding of the identity (CHRISTIANSON et al. 2008) or other developments.

The ritualistic and connective aspect of arts-based initiatives can occur at the end of a restructuring phase, in the course of an organizational or team development process. This aspect triggers the potential of commitment to provide identity, shelter, and a common purpose. The involvement in a ritual, or in this case the arts-based initiative, may lead to emotional connections, aesthetic pleasure, and psychological support (ARIZPE 2008: 142). Thus, active participation, being part of the arts-based initiative or being affected by it like in the HAP Raufoss case is important to make it memorable. The participative component is also important as it is a reflection on the potential of action of the participating individuals. This power is highlighted through the artful component and thus memorable (GRAEBER 2001).

This goes hand in hand with Turner's (1966) argument that the symbolic component of rituals acts as storage units of knowledge. In organizational studies, knowledge storage components of such rituals, ceremonies and other happenings are studied through the lens of learning and the lens organizational memory by calling them rare events. Events are defined as rare events if they occur outside the everyday experience of an organization and thus are unique, unprecedented, and uncategorizable (CHRISTIANSON et al. 2008). Although rites may happen in a certain frequency, if they are connected to a transition, to liminality, they are explicitly aimed at being outside of the everyday practice and thus are unique interruptions and separated from the profane. Interruptions can create consciousness of things like routines, habits, but also identity and processes that previously have been taken for granted and can become subject to modification. This consciousness can trigger learning and lead to conscious implementation of new habits, routines, and processes.

5. Discussion and Practical Implications

The approach of the diverse phenomena of arts-based initiatives from the lens of the theory of rites of passage and liminality generates a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that make them a powerful tool on all organizational levels: the organization itself, teams, product development and the individual level. The need for creativity, new

perspectives, and a safe space to explore these ideas and possibilities is relevant on all organizational levels that aim at change, develop and innovate. Moreover, memorizing change through relicts as well as creating symbolic actions that mark change are important to incorporate and work according to the new structures and visions from this moment on. Arts-based initiatives can provide both, safe space to explore and relicts of change.

Summed up, arts-based initiatives can serve as liminal space and rites of passage (rites of separation or rites of incorporation) in manifold situations in organizations: 1) They provide the space to explore, to be creative and to find new ways. This applies to all levels of organizations, so arts-based initiatives can be important for individual employees but can also contribute to organizational change and product innovation. 2) Through artistic tools and artistic expertise arts-based initiatives can support consultancy activities, project teams, and strategy workshops. Artistic media can be used for visualizations or prototyping, but artists can also contribute ideas in these situations without immediately affect the organizational routines or structures. 3) Arts-based initiatives can also serve as tools to induce the liminoid. They can give space to break out of everyday business, provide incentives, relaxation, and well-being at work. 4) As rites of separation they can help newly formed project teams to understand their new situation and position in the organization. As rite of separation arts-based initiatives can also help to start a restructuring process. 5) As rites of incorporation arts-based initiatives can support change processes. They can produce visible relicts that remind of the change, they make the change experienceable for the whole company and address thereby many senses. They mark the transition, make it memorable and make it real. This applies to organizational change as well as to the change of status of a single employee.

Studies on arts-based initiatives often have the problems to directly connect the claimed effects to the arts-based initiatives that took place (BERTHOIN ANTAL 2009, BERTHOIN ANTAL/STRAUꞨ 2016). The theory of rites of passage and liminality demonstrates that the unique and alien situation of bringing art into organizational contexts provides a framework that elaborates on this uniqueness of these activities as fundament for creating these effects. It is important to keep in mind that liminality is a state individuals are in during short phases, though. These phases do not always have to be linked to rites of passage, but allow for exploration, play, and thus innovation and change. Arts-based initiatives in this phase should be treated like that as it can lead to difficulties and

disappointing outcomes if the lines between the liminal space and the profane space get blurred. Moreover, liminality can also have problematic effects on individuals and societies or organizations, as Turner already pointed to (1967). The dual character of liminality is that it enables creativity, but it also harnesses anxiety (TURNER 1974).

Previously, organizational scholars who reflected on change of identity (BEECH 2011) and the situation of temporary workers and consultants (CZARNIAWSKA/MAZZA 2003; ERIKSSON-ZETTERQUIST 2002; JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014; GARSTEN 1999) pointed to problems that can arise from a constant state of liminality are constantly in a temporary position, a position that is by definition (VAN GENNEP 1909) embedded in a stable structure form which it is separated through the rites of separation and the rites of incorporation. Being caught in a permanent state of social limbo can deprive individuals of a stable ground they can go back to after this phase ends (JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014). This can to lead to insecurity, carries the danger of breakdown or burnout situations (BEECH 2011). Teams that use liminal space to work on a project, should have the possibility to re-connect to the organizational structures and systems to incorporate what they learned and produced (WAGNER et al. 2012).

Based on a need for flexibility, innovation and constant change, there is a tendency in organizations to lean towards long phases of or constant liminality (JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014; CZARNIAWSKA/ MAZZA 2003; GARSTEN 1999). Nevertheless, constant liminality does not automatically mean constant innovation. In contrary, Czarniawska and Mazza (2003: 287) observe that: "As liminality becomes routinized, marginal innovations may be happening all the time, but rarely inventions or breakthroughs." Although, liminality gives the freedom to explore and play with ideas, media and skills, and enables creativity, blurring the liminal space with the profane everyday routine can lead to reduced creativity because there is no contrast that is represented by the status quo, previously stable processes and structures.

Subsequently, contemporary philosophers like Pfaller (2008) follow Huizinga's (1956) argumentation by pointing to the problematic fact of the blurring of the boundaries between play and non-play. Huizinga (1956) shows that it is important to have both phases – play and non-play – clearly separated to be able to focus on what is happening in each. Moreover, if the rules of the game which are played in the liminal phase (and have no serious consequences on the real-life there) start to affect real-life, they gain seriousness and start to lose their ease and playful

quality. This then affects both, play and non-play. Pfaller (2008) argues that these blurred or even lost boundaries lead to strong self-inflicted restrictions on the one hand and excess on the other hand, as rules arise to manage the own way through the permanently undefined space in order to reduce insecurity and to cope with the enduring ambiguity. This applies to both, problems that are induced by a constant state of liminality to individuals, but also provides an explanation why long-term liminality will lead to less creativity and innovation. For arts-based initiatives, this is a clear sign to make sure that long-term activities are carefully planned or might have to address other issues. Nevertheless, arts-based interventions are outside of the core business of organizations and as such they are always alien to the ongoing system, what makes them remarkable and powerful tools.

6. Conclusion

This framework for arts-based initiatives as seen from the lens of rites of passage and liminality leads to a set of questions that help to study these activities more systematically. Thus, more detailed studies of cases have to follow, in order to give deeper insight into how arts-based initiatives create valuable effects. First, as arts-based initiatives can be understood as rites of passage in organizational change, it provides opportunities to explore how arts-based initiatives can contribute to the incorporation of organizational change. The incorporation phase of organizational change processes is the least developed one (CZARNIAWSKA/MAZZA 2003; ERIKSSON-ZETTERQUIST 2002). It often provides problematic situations in organizations and it is difficult for employees to adapt to new structures and visions. Arts-based initiatives and their uniqueness within corporations can be an approach to develop new methods for incorporating change. Studies like these can provide researchers in organizational change to learn more about the incorporation phase of organizational change: how important is an overall experience to mark the change? How important are a performative character and relicts of the change process? How do employees remember new structure and visions? Art-based initiatives can create the liminal space that can be seen as cultural process of organizational change (HOWARD-GRENVILLE et al. 2011). Questions about the best artistic tools and intervention methods that can guide consultancy processes and strategic workshops to create the fundament of organizational change have to be asked.

Second, liminality itself has previously been applied to situations in organizations that are created for change and development (WALL/ ENGLERT 2016; JOHNSEN/SØRENSEN 2014; BEECH 2011; JOHNSON et al. 2010). Already Turner (1967, 1974) pointed to the fact that liminality is a space for cultural and individual creativity, a space of exploration and development. Creating studies that look at creative processes of teams or individuals in arts-based initiatives, which explore this process through the lens of liminality, provides a new angle to literature on creativity and innovation in organizations. Moreover, this also leads to questions on how liminality is an important aspect for learning processes and practices in arts-based initiatives.

Last, but not least, it is important to re-emphasize that this theoretical lens includes many approaches to arts-based initiatives, again pointing to the fact it is not comprehensively including all arts-based initiatives and possibilities of bringing art into organizations. It very specifically deals with the tension between everyday work in organizations and art as well as artistic approaches. Nevertheless, organizations are confronted with challenges through new markets, environmental problems, technologies, and old structures getting obsolete. Liminality and its counterpart the everyday life and profane play a major role in organizations and the most important aspects of liminality – symbolic meaning, the connection to organizational memory through narrations and rites, learning, play and experimentation, sensory perception, performativity – can be tackled by arts-based initiatives. Thus, the theory of rites of passage and liminality underlines that arts-based initiatives are powerful tools in organizations – if applied at the right time in proper doses.

Author

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