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# States-of-the-Arts in Organization & Leadership Practices that “make sense” – A Poly-logue in Three Parts: Part I - Embodied Senses and its making in Organizations

wendelin kuepers wk

ARTEM ICN Nancy France, [wendelin.kuepers@icn-artem.com](mailto:wendelin.kuepers@icn-artem.com)Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/oa> Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Arts Management Commons](#)To access supplemental content and other articles, [click here](#).

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# **States-of-the-Arts in Organization & Leadership Practices that “make sense” – A Poly-logue in Three Parts:**

## **Part I - Embodied Senses and its making in Organizations**

Wendelin Küpers

ARTEM ICN

### **Abstract:**

In the following you can listen into a dialogue between the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, other philosophers and authors as well as organization and leadership researchers and business practitioners as well as an artist. By listening to them you enter a conversational process of a con/ and diverging *poly- and metalogue*.

As a manifestation of a polyphonic practice, it offers an experimental and experiential forum, in which different voices do express ideas, arguments, and comments as well as where thoughts, but also affects and feelings or intuitive musings are emerging in an ongoing flow!

The focus of the first part will be on the status of sensation and sense-making in managing, organizing and organizations interpreted as embodied life/world, followed by subsequent parts that process questions of art and aesthetics in particular.

**Keywords:** Merleau-Ponty, senses, sense-making, body, embodiment, leadership, organization, dialogue

Dear Reader!

Welcome to an experimental (con-)textual performances!

In the following, you can listen into a dialogue between the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, other philosophers and authors as well as organization and leadership researchers and business practitioners. With them, you enter a conversational meeting field of multiple connections, making points of con- and divergence. As such it offers an experimental and experiential forum, which gives voices a chance to express ideas, arguments, channeling thoughts, but also affects and feelings or intuitive musings! Related to its etymology, to converse, from the Latin *con* or *com* meaning "together" or "with" and *verse* meaning "to turn", conversation is literally a *turning* with another or a turning together that offer a sense of play or creativity and openness.

The chosen mode provides a medium where different turning body-minds and perspectives explore, meet and unfold in a conversational flow.<sup>1</sup> Such alternative form of expressions allows listening and perceiving also what is happening *in-between* the positions and statements including the in-between of lines of inquiry. In this way, various questions, utterances, insights and interpretations with their nuanced meanings are moved or propelled, sometimes only hinting or alluding to fostered associations and horizons, which could invite to be further explored.

Accordingly, the following is a kind of conversational processing that is a series of difference-sensible con-versations of interlocutors. In particular, it mediates a conversing between those engaged in topics related to senses, sense-making, meaning, art, and organizational life and management/leadership performed in the spirit of promoting adding ad-venturous expeditions and innovative imaginations.

Situating contents in such a conversational context brings to life and gives flesh to ideas also by examples and illustrations; enriched by empirical findings and practical concerns as well as critical reflections. Hence, the following re-presents a multi-layered dialogue, which is in fact more like a *poly- and metalogue*.<sup>2</sup> Rather than constructing separate, fixed or closed individual-based definitions of realities or rational-lines of argument, poly-logical practices open up to a living relationality and possibilities of a spiraling, disclosing and co-emerging flows. Polyphonic voices, individually and interwoven in an arguing chorus as a kind of *aesthetics of (re-)presentation*. Such presentational practices uncover and allow other modes of communication, including felt sensitivities, imaginative sounds, visual associations etc. Accordingly, such dia- and/or poly-loguing is opening for a poly-sensuous interplaying of tasted, gestured, and viewed expressions, thus multi-voiced con-versation that is a living narrative, which includes a diversity of points of standing and moving.

Not aiming for a single vision or finalizable version, these inter-exchanges are an array of juxta-positioning reasons for or concerns about and perspectives on various angles. In terms of epistemology, this implies that if there is any truth to be found or better to say co-created, it happens through a multitude of simultaneous expressions with their quests and questions, engagements and commitments. This kind of *heteroglossia*<sup>3</sup> can help to question, test and

contest our own and others' ideas, those established and those merging or to be developed. It is through the plurality of our relatively autonomous consciousness, inter-relationships and "hybridised" negotiations that the potential can be actualized or "actuated".

In particular, these are possibilities of "trans-individualistic", post-entitative and more integral understandings of and repertoires for creative interpretations and enactments. As a writing modality, this form, much like a sounding board opens up for complexity, ambiguity, and emotional *resonance*. Such resonance comes from making the words — for lack of a better word — embody what they are about and make them breathe experience (Meier and Wegener, 2017). Hopefully, the listening reader can relate to those or invoke in them likewise sensory experiences that may lead to a more nuanced understanding, and invite them to extend the text, or relate to their life-worldly con-texts.

By practicing a dialogue as a "discipline of collective inquiry" (Isaacs, 1996) or co-inquiry (Heron, 1996), the readers are thus invited to open-up to discover or co-create interpretations of what appears as "real", relevant or insightful. Listening to multiple voices, incarnated in presences of different persons and propelled contents, allows participatory witnessing an embodied relational logic and enacting an inter-practice in praxis (Küpers, 2011; 2018) that is sensitive for the oblique, meanings *between* lines and alluded hints, revealing other ways of being and becoming.

As an active audience or engaged readers of this concert of voices, we are becoming listeners, and perhaps are provoked to comments or to ask possible questions, state contestations or find other forms to contribute with our own ideas. This can lead to further weaving the con-textures or advancing the ongoing, unfolding fluid dis-courses to emerge. Please feel invited to share your responses, reflections or imaginations by writing, dabbling, drawing or expressing them and, if you like, forward them to the author for cocreating a hyper-contextual repository<sup>4</sup>.

For setting the stage (a round table), here first, the list of some of the key *dramatis personæ*, who among others, will appear in this play:

**Participants:**

Facilitator

Merleau-Ponty

Karl Weick

and various other named scholars and contributors.

There will be also more generic characters like Organizational and Leadership Researcher or Practitioner and Artist, who represent types that are more general. They link and enrich the conversations among the specific academics by offering other perspectives, questions or comments. In this way, they are revealing positions or contestations that are not part of the established discourses and thus do not have references.

They are more examples of “living references”, who express what an emblematic person from the field of organizational, management or leadership studies as well as what an artist or practitioner might bring onto the round table.

As you will hear and see, the conversation “turns” rounds and resolves around specific thematic fields. While the first part, in the following, focuses on the status of organizing sensation and sense-making, interpreting organizing and organization as embodied life/world, the subsequent parts are different. The second part emphasis more the status of art and aesthetics in organization and leadership. There will be discussions about critical, utopian, and pragmatic dimensions of art and the transformational potential of a living embodied aesthetics in organization and beyond.

The focus will be on the inter-connection between leadership and embodied aesthetic processes as professional artistry, the role of envisioning and imagination and interpretations on the art of leadership and performance and critical performativity. In addition to some ideas about the potential and actualities of improvisation, we will hear about various implications and perspectives. Finally, the third part offers some regards back and forward. It offers some conclusions, com- and implications as well as perspectives, in particular in relation to artful making, professional artistry, serious play, the vital role of an “*in-(ter-)between*” in all of the discussed dimensions and practices.

## **Part I - Embodied Senses and its making in Organizations**

*(Stage: The “dramatis personæ” are gathering at a round table in a room with natural light. There is an ongoing informal chatting as some of the participants know each other while others are introducing each other. Some drinks are offered, while people are finding a place. The facilitator rings a mindfulness bell and starts speaking)*

**Facilitator:** Welcome everybody to this meeting. We have gathered here for a conversation about organization respectively organizing as a practice, especially in relation to sense and sense-making as well as art and aesthetics. First, I would like to thank you all for that you have accepted the invitation for what promises to become an extra-ordinary event. Merleau-Ponty, can I ask you initially: what do an organization and what does organizing mean to you, or better to ask *how* does it appear and how do you interpret both, particularly with regard to an understanding of a more comprehensive meaning and aesthetics?

**Merleau-Ponty:** Merci bien! for the invitation here! Responding to your question: Well, being a phenomenologist, for me, the question is indeed less what something “is”, but how phenomena appear and thus drawing out, evoking, and revealing uncovering that which is covered up or buried over in what ordinarily shows itself in our everyday understanding of things and events.

**Practitioner:** So your philosophizing is not an abstract, dry activity, ignoring the practical intricacies and problems of the real world? Sorry, but I have biased prejudices against world-ascending philosophy and abstract speculation ...

**Merleau-Ponty:** No, for me philosophy, while processing exciting ideas and fulminating theories, is a way of perceiving and learning to look at and act in the world differently.

What I am moved by and move philosophically (and also what I try to teach) is not a cold, bloodless, heartless philosophizing, but a living, vibrant, responsive practice! When we slacken the strings enough to be open, we encounter many profiles of a phenomenon, immanently. Hopefully, we are then able to dwell and rejoice in the complexity of being in this very real world.

**Practitioner:** But this complexity in organizational every-day life and all its experiences and contextual intricacies can be overwhelming, as it comprises a wide range of dimensions and particulars, to be processed often under tremendous time pressure!

**Merleau-Ponty:** Yes and that is why philosophizing must be an open sensing and unrestricted reflection on the whole of human experience and all their activities, including also political societal and even art-related and religious or spiritual issues. Moreover, philosophy must attend to the contingent, the vague, the dark underside of things, or it is not a philosophy strong enough for the world in all its rich contours. But the same is true for science, which in its own way needs to be an account of a moment of lived experience or it is not a worthwhile interpretation at all. So this is all about to make philosophy and research as embodied and concrete as possible and to interrogate and deal with the living problems of our times as well as envisioning alternative possibilities to come.

**Organizational Researcher:** So Merleau-Ponty, again then: how do organizations and organizing appear to you in this immanent understanding?

**Merleau-Ponty:** From my phenomenological perspective, what you call an organization is part of the *life-world* and this very world is constituted in particular by bodies and embodiments. In other words, organising is always already bodily and embodied, and thereby a creative practice, which always already occurs in a phenomenal field. I think this phenomenological understanding is highly relevant, for a meaningful and aesthetic understanding of organizing. For me, investigating organization as a placed life-worldly reality, as co-constituted and characterized by artful and aesthetic dimensions, requires an embodied sense-based orientation and interpretation of lives and living.

**Sandberg and Alba:** Yes, entwinement of life and organization or living and organizing is the way forward for returning to practice anew! (2009).

**Ecologist:** This even more, as live is increasingly endangered in what is called Anthropocene!

**Küpers:** ... which is why we move towards an "eco-scene", also via more sustainable ways of organizing (2017).

**Organizational Researcher:** Certainly, the senses and the body as a physical manifestation play a certain role as a contextual factor for example in relation to so called human-resources. Nevertheless, let us not forget that organization is basically a functional purpose-driven system, constructed by various factors, including those, not related to bodily features as objective variables.

**Merleau-Ponty:** By positioning organizing and perceiving bodies and embodiment as "factors" and reducing what complex bodily qualities embodied process are to variables and mechanistic parameter and causal relationships you seem to underestimate and reductively misinterpret the constitutive dimensions. In such ways, you cannot properly approach and understand the inter-involvements and dynamics emerging in that very life of and living in organizations in its placed situatedness, what we phenomenologist call "*Being-in-the-world*"! Therefore, we need considering systematically the embodied senses. That is all that sensing what happens before and

while we are thinking and processes of perception and intention as well as responsiveness.

**Artist:** In fact, that is what I am doing and/or allow happening in all my creative processing. Relating to sensation with all its actively directing and receptive senses is present in my work, helping me to disclose meaning that for me is always an aesthetic one.

**Merleau-Ponty:** Only thereby can we gain an adequate comprehension of what is going on among situated organizational members and their practice and genuine sense-making and meanings involved.

**Holt & Cornelissen:** Yes, we share an interest here as we are also seeking to comprehend and to theorize how people appropriate and enact their "realities" (2014).

**Maitlis & Christianson:** (*signaling agreement*) (2014).

**Boden:** To understand this enactment it makes sense to focus on analysing the practical activities of real people engaged in concrete situations of social action (1994 ibd.: 10).

**Berger & Luckmann:** That is the quotidian practices of meaning-making (1966).

**Mangham & Pye:** It is about the *doing* of managing ... (1991).

**Practitioner:** ... and of course as part of that also doing of organizing and the very doing of strategizing

**Patriotta & Brown:** ... and as such sense-making occurs not only as happening in place, but are mediated also temporally on a daily or even moment-to-moment basis.

**Wood & Ladkin:** Yes, leaderful moments, as continuous coming into being (2008), and thus is relevant to every mundane interaction and event (2011).

**Sandberg & Tsoukas:** Likewise, we need to understand how organization emerges from this very organizing and sense-making, thus as immanent (2014).

**Organizational Researcher:** But investigating those pre-reflexive embodied and sensual dimensions challenges the conventional agenda and methodology of our discipline and field of study

**Practitioner:** ... and that of practices in organization in today's challenging contexts.

**Empirical Researcher:** Yes, our positivistic and post-positivistic approaches try to explain, that is to determine causal relations and predictions. What you call pre-reflexive and embodied dimensions are difficult to approach and capture methodologically and empirically at all.

**Merleau-Ponty:** This kind of thinking is deeply spellbound or trapped in what I call empiricist and objectivistic thinking. Like its pendant, rationalistic idealism (intellectualism), this empiricist realism is highly reductive as it reduces live-worldly phenomena and its perception to either potential rational ideas or objectified factual matter. For me, empiricist and behaviorist as well as mentalist-intellectualist explanations fail to understand the *living body and thus organizations as living worlds*.

This is the case, because they assume that the body can only be grasped as "object" as physiological thing (*corpus*), and passive receiver of sense-impressions or controlled and treated as extension of mind.

Rather, for a proper understanding and appreciation, the body mediates and is mediated between and beyond "subjective" and "objective" dimensions. We need to get out of that dichotomist thinking and rearticulate the relationship *between* "subject" and "object", self and world, mind and matter, culture and nature among various other

dualisms. And this can be best be done by an account of pre-reflective senses and the living body, and how these not only “make”, but allow sense and meaning to unfold approached phenomenologically.

**Artist:** ... and artfully!

### Embodied Sense-Making

**Organizational Researcher:** The question remains, how to approach and represent these bodily dimensions. For example, what is meant by pre-reflective? Do you mean unconscious? But then, how to render it reflectively? Furthermore, in which way is it different to, for example, psychologist approaches, and psychoanalytic investigations of individual and collective sub-consciousness?

**Polanyi:** How can we research all these bodily dimensions and its implicit knowledge and tacit meanings intelligibly and how to explicate them systematically (1967)?

**Constructionist:** Moreover, what do you and we mean by “meaning” in all this? Following an inclination towards a constructivist orientation, meaning for me needs to be approached by investigating a *cognitively based sense-making*. And this can be investigated by observation and ex-post-rationalisation, while it needs to be seen as part of specific meaning-orientation in organization. Accordingly, we need to inquire how actors are constructing meaning in relation to their enacted organizational environment. Karl, don’t you agree?

**Weick:** Yes, we need to understand that all organizing is a process in which individuals interactively undertake action (enactment), the results of which they subsequently confront as their environment, which they then seek to make sense of by retrospectively chopping their lived experiences into meaningful chunks, labeling them, and connecting them (i.e., selection). Such sense made is then retained in their minds in the form of cognitive cause maps, indicating what is crucial for carrying out their tasks and how they are interconnected (retention). Through sustained interaction, individuals interlock their behaviors over time, and, in so doing, they deal with residual equivocality, which they seek to remove through negotiating a consensus about their common task and how it ought to be handled. Thus, a group of individuals become organized, when their shared mental cause maps converge (1979). At least, in my original conceptualization, sense-making is co-extensive with cognizing.

Importantly, this sense-making is the ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation by extracting and filtering cues and plausibility (1995a). In selectively perceiving the world, sense-making for me is interested in how we author as well as interpreted situations, captured in the notion of self-fulfilling prophecies and that *believing is seeing*. Specifically, it refers to that fascinating ongoing<sup>5</sup> process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order of organization and its management to make decisions practically.

**Klein et al.:** For this to happen and for making sense of sense making, it needs to be understood as a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections, which can be among people, places, and events, in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively (2006a).



**Weick:** Correct! Thus it consists of particular episodes, is triggered or mediated by ambiguous events, emerges through specific processes, while yielding specific outcomes or effects, and is in all this influenced by various situational dimensions.

**Sandberg and Tsoukas:** This is confirmed by empirical studies (2014). Examples of situational factors, understood as resources, are for instance context, language, identity, cognitive frameworks, emotions, politics, or technologies.

**Weick:** To put it short: sense-making is a set of recipes for connecting episodes of social interaction in an orderly manner (1979: 45) to restore sense thus is always related to a social context.

From my point of view, the cognitive activity of the individual is leading then conceptually to a socio-cognitive process. Thus, in organizations, sense-making is a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests. Organizing is then seen as the reduction of the equivocal and emphasizes ecological change, enactment, selection, and retention. But basically, sense-making remains a *meta-cognitive process* that is used by individuals to build, verify, and modify working models or "stories" in situational awareness to account for an unrecognised situation.

A selected meaning is kept for its plausibility and its relationship to our identity. Meanings are more likely to be retained if they offer a chance for self-enhancement, self-consistency, and self-efficacy (1995). These retained meanings feedback to influence our enactment and selection of meanings.

**Piaget:** (*nodding from a distance, as this echoes his processes of assimilation and accommodation, expressed in his theory of cognitive development.*)

**Artist:** (*Shaking his head and shivering his body in disapproval!*)

**Merleau-Ponty:** For me this kind of thinking is entrapped in a *mentalist and cognitive bias!* It still retains an one-sided tradition of *rationalism*, which retains a unhelpful Cartesian dualism, and is not integrating sensual, embodied, affective and emotional forces and dimensions sufficiently. Phenomenologically, sense-making is not only cognitive or socio-cognitive; and not only functions to reduce multiple meanings or handling complex informational data, used by people in an organization.

Actually sense is not (merely) "made", but meaning is intrinsic to and unfolding in the phenomenal field and it has qualities that defy any "making" or (re-)construction.

**Kearney:** Yes, and sense has a threefold form of meaning of i) sensation, ii) meaning, iii) direction/orientation that together signify how we "make" sense of enfolded lives and its expressions that can be explored with a carnal hermeneutics (2015: 16).

**Merleau-Ponty:** Moreover, sensual perception, as very base or medium of sense-making, re-creates or re-constitutes the world at every moment (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 214). As enveloped in a living significance, perceptual sensation is literally a form of communion (ibid. 2012: 219). The sensible gives back to me what I had lent to it, but I received it from the sensible in the first place (ibid. 2012: 222).

**Facilitator:** If I understand you correctly, then in this way, sense experiences of organising are a vital form of communication with and within the world, which makes it present as a familiar setting of our life.

**Merleau-Ponty:** As the perceiving capacity is incarnated, also consciousness is perceptual. Following this orientation, perception is not merely passive before sensory stimulation, but a creative receptivity

**Waldenfels:** ... and responsiveness (2011).

**Natural Scientist:** This implies that brains and its emotio-cognitive systems exist enmeshed in a physical, perceptual world.

**Merleau-Ponty:** Yes but always connected to the *world of living and action*. It is this world where people do things; it is here where they enact skills and realise social practices that facilitate interactions with others and what are called "objects". In other words, perceptual and intentional consciousness as part of our very existence is experienced in and through bodies: We "*body-forth*" our *possibilities*, while living and organising in(to) and through the world perceptually!

**Thompson:** Yes, this is true, as the significance and valence of what is perceived and intended do not pre-exist "out there", but are *enacted*, brought forth, and constituted by living beings. In a way, what we call "living" entails "bodied" sense-making, which equals "*en-action*" (2007: 158).

**Merleau-Ponty:** Different to an understanding of sense as the outcome of actors' cognizing and rationally constructed interpretation, – for example of an interrupted or new activity – phenomenologically the world is already filled with the potential for meaning that is "realized" when *enacted* indeed. As such, sense is (co-)arising from the way in which the world is organised and humans, but also animals and even plants, in fact all organisms, relate, organise and express and inter-act in and through the same.

**Di Paolo et al.:** In fact, cognitive science confirmed this by various findings. Actually, yes, you are right, not only humans, but all organisms and sensorimotor life (2017) do not passively receive information from their environments, which they then translate into internal representations. Rather, they participate in the generation of meaning, while they are engaging not merely in informational interactions, but in social, transformational relationships. This is how they enact a world (2010, Di Paolo & Thompson, 2014), from cells to society (Froese & Di Paolo, 2011).

Thus, sense-making the creation and appreciation of meaning is processed by agents (cognizing) activities via significant exchanges with the world imbued meaningful (Di Paolo et al 2010: 39). This implies that meaning does not lie in the objective world, waiting to be discovered by the agent, nor is it already present "inside" the embodied agent, who somehow imposes it on the world. Rather, meaning is being created and emerging by agent's interactions with the(ir) world. In this sense, any sensemaking presupposes an experiential perspective that is always present for the agent and not (only) for an observer or a third-person point of view.

**von Uexküll:** Accordingly, the enactive notion of sense making is also intimately related to what I called in German "*Umwelt*" literally, "world around" (1934) that is the environment as experienced or lived from the organism's perspective. For a living system to be a sense-making one is to live in a world that is always an "*Umwelt*", namely, an environment that has a specific significance or value for it. And as I showed, this "*Umwelt*" is constituted in relation to the perceived and perceivable "*Merkwelt*" and a operational "*Wirkwelt*" that refers to what the organism is capable to do and to effectuate processed through a functional circle of a "*Umwelt-building*"

(1934). Meaning is a "*Ur-Teil*" that is an original part that connects all parts of a phenomena and without the same cannot appear (1950: 45-46).

**Umiker-Sebeok:** Semio-biologically, all living things are signs, and signs are living things! Therefore, all life qua signs and sign processes (semiosis) must be seen as constantly evolving according to certain general rules, for "symbols grow" (1986: 529).

**Varela et al.:** Yes and this very dynamic enactment of a world and a mind is realized on the basis of a history that is filled by a variety of actions that a being in the world performs (1993).

**Weick:** Yes, enactment makes the discretionary acting people engage in, manifest and visible (2009: 197).

**Merleau-Ponty:** I resonate with this understanding of making visible, but I warn you, your discretionary approach is in danger of reducing sense to a sequence of stages or a set of itemized features, reified as "Enactment"!

**Hutto & Myin:** ... therefore, we should call it better "*enaction*" (2013)

**Stewart, Gapenne & Di Paolo:** (*all nodding in agreement*) (2010).

**Merleau-Ponty:** oui "d'accord", and importantly it is not just a stage of sense-making, but as an embodied one, it is its very pulsatile heart to use this old metaphor.

**De Jaegher and Di Paolo:** Merleau-Ponty is right, we need to consider more properly sensual coordinated and extended inter-actions as part of what we call "participatory sense-making". It is the coupling and enactment of relatively autonomous, but inter-connected bodies that are involved in co-modulation of the self-in-interaction and other-in-interaction (2007: 504).

**McGann & Torrance:** Doing and meaning inter-relate in directed interaction between the body and the world it inhabits (2005: 184).

**Merleau-Ponty:** Moreover, actors in their ongoing embodied processing have latitude in what they do, as their action is situational and inherently creative within the felt horizon that is brought forth. This en-acting organising, relating and expressing, happens relative to their needs and intentionally mediated actions and responses as well as embedding (pre-given) social and historical meanings. There is not an "un-meaningful" world, on the one hand, and a production or construction of meaning, on the other!

**Sandberg & Dall'Alba:** Indeed, we are relating to a world, which is imbued with meaning for us (2009: 1357) and it is the ways of being that give meaning to what we do and who we are (Sandberg & Pinnington, 2009).

**Organizational Researcher:** But don't we as humans invent and organize meanings?

**Merleau-Ponty:** Yes and no: We ordinarily act in a world that is already organised in terms of meaning. The world has meaning for us in the ways in which we encounter it and the ways that it makes itself present to us. Meaning inheres in the world as we find it. The central element of our existence is to interpret that meaning through the ways in which we encounter the world. Phenomenologically, this meaning is to be discovered in the way in which it reveals itself to us. This disclosing revelation of meaning appears as being available for our perceptions, feelings, thoughts and particularly actions. It is only through those modes and enacted possibilities that the world affords us in both its physical and social manifestations, as a meaningful one.

**Organizational Researcher:** Does this mean that the process of sense-making is not (only) one of "making", i.e. assigning or constructing by construing a meaning to things?

**Merleau-Ponty:** Indeed, on the contrary, we are immersed in and process meaningful sensing always already. In a certain sense, we are "*condemned to meaning*". The question of sense-making is thus not how we "*make sense*", but how we allow sense to happen and then dealing with and handling sense. Metaphorically spoken, it is about how we swim in that world of sense of which we are part, and thereby how we constitute ourselves in that world. <sup>6</sup>

**Artist:** I like that image! Making visible is what makes art a creative enactment. But how does the meaning come into it?

**Merleau-Ponty:** To start with, the world is already pregnant with meaning in relation to our embodiment. (*Socrates humming in the background, having his idea of dialogue as midwife in mind.*) So from the phenomenological perspective, we encounter, interpret and sustain meaning through our embodied interactions with the world and with each other.

**Colombetti:** Yes and all rendering of sensemaking entails a dynamic position of a feeling and adaptive body which calls for developing an affective science that meets the enactive mind (2014).

**Buchanan:** These Onto-Ethologies of meaning can be linked to you, Merleau-Ponty (1975).

**Organizational Researcher:** Does this mean that action and meaning are inherently inseparable?

**Merleau-Ponty:** There is no way to talk about action independently of meaning – nor simply how action can arise from conscious intent. More significantly, the question is then how intentionality upswings from embodied actions in the world.

**Crossley:** Accordingly, a phenomenologically sensitive approach does not isolate the sense-making process as a specific phenomenon (1994: 14), but sees it as co-creation ...

**Facilitator:** ... yes and this also by giving sense a chance to emerge, or "letting" sense be(come). But what are the presupposed conditions of this making of the sense?

**Holt and Cornelissen:** Yes, we need revisiting sense-making as arising in conditions of absence, mood and being open. Sense emerges: first, from awareness of what is absent or concealed as much as what is present or revealed as a means (e.g. equipment) to an end (e.g. interests). Secondly, new meaningful sense emerges from ruptures to habit that cannot be described as break-downs in well-established cognitive patterns, but experienced through mood; and thirdly, from an exposure to an open, unknowable awareness of future possibility (2014).

Where instrumental, cognitively stated propositions and retrospective sense-making aims at preserving or reinvigorating bounded systems through new forms of organizing, we suggest that sense-making might also bring to the fore our relationship with the world as such. From this entirety, no single relation can be abstracted, weighed or improved, but the world in toto, including us, is glimpsed as being out of joint, a kind of basic break in the ordering of an anonymous one ("das Man"). From such disruption, like in genuine innovation, comes the momentary possibility of lives being lived in novelty, also beyond organization (2014).

**Maitlis et al.:** Even more: not only moods, but felt sense and felt emotions play a decisive role in individual sense-making in organization. They are mediating the relationship between unexpected events and the onset of sense-making process.

Emotions signal the need for and provide the energy that fuels sense-making. Furthermore, these felt experiences are shaping and concluding the sense-making processes. Some more for solitary, some more for interpersonal processes, some more generative some more integrative (2013).

**Johnson:** Importantly, the body generates meaning even before self-consciousness has fully developed. Meaning is rooted in and generated through the body's encounters with the world. Accordingly, there are manifold dimensions involved in the bodily origins of what is supposed or posed to be meaningful in the meaning-making which is fundamentally aesthetic (2008).

**Artist:** There we go! We need to deepen this link more!

**Facilitator:** We will do this in the second part of this conversation (Part II).

**Magala:** Before diving into this, we need to ask: What did and do we mean when we mean something? What do we make when we make sense? How will we continue to make sense over time? How do we make sense of ambiguities and paradoxes (1997; 2009)?

**Organizational Researcher:** How to get out of the cognitivist and, discursive slants and how to adapt the predominantly intellectualist approach to sense-making? Karl Weick, what do you think about this, as you are known as one of those who has established the discourse along these lines of argumentation?

**Weick:** You know, I am a cognitive psychologist by training and followed the tradition of this discourse for quite a while as well as and still pragmatism and symbolic interactionism<sup>7</sup>, emphasizing the actionable intersubjectivity constructed through language. But, let me emphasize that I am not entrapped into one paradigm, but open for extending it and entering inter- and cross-disciplinary research. Furthermore, with regard to the mentioned role of emotion, the theories that matter most are those theories that have emotional resonance (1999: 134). That's moving!

For responding to your criticism, let me add that the *retrospective identity construction of sense-making* is an ongoing process, and, as we have discussed, is always *enacted* in a social and external environment, thus related to what embeds and influences the individual. This extension towards a more social constructivist orientation includes how people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage on-goingly (2001: 463) and as such maybe offering an including link to your concern with embodiment!

**Baerveldt and Verheggen:** It appears that this seemingly "natural" experience is thoroughly intertwined with socio-cultural realities. The reality we have in common, and in which we find ourselves, is neither a world that exists independently from us, nor can there be a representation of such pre-given world. Rather, a world itself is brought forth by our ways of communicating and our joint action. We need to explore the expressive and dynamically enacted nature of cultural meaning (1999; 2012: 165).

**Artist:** That is too abstract for my taste. What about the moving bodies, shared gestures and concrete manifestations involved in what co-creates meaning?

**Cunliffe & Coupland:** That is what we explored in relation to how making experience sensible is processed through embodied and narrative sense-making (like John Shotter). And for this, we showed that the bodily entanglement with the world

furnishes organizational members with responsive forms of understanding aroused felt expectations and a vectored sense of where the situation might go (2011).

**Weick:** I am very much convinced that people discover what they think by looking at what they say, how they feel and where they walk (1995: 182). Also for me proffering shared, embodied experiences are important to creating shared meaning, so they are a kind of body of thinking-thinkers (1979). If people share anything, they do share actions, activities, moments of conversation and joining in working on tasks (ibid. 188). Let me emphasize again, sense-making is an embedded social process, thus it is related to what Mead calls the "generalized other" and various prototypes, stereotypes, and roles.

**Mead:** Lastly, someone, who think individual and communal meaning in the symbolic nexus of "Mind, Self and Society" together! Indeed, every sense-making person has of the (imagined) common intentions and expectations that others have about actions and thoughts within a particular society, and thus serves to clarify their relation to the other as a representative member of a shared social system (1934/1967).

**Weick:** Yes, George Herbert, I learned a lot from your symbolic interactionism and resonate fully with your pragmatism that was further developed since your time by neo-pragmatic advancements.

**Blumer:** Purposive and creative people act toward things based on the meaning those (physical, social or abstract objects or) things have for them, and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation (1969), re-constructively.

Pragmatization / Phenomenologisation Patrick Baert *Neo-Pragmatism and Phenomenology* rejection of foundationalism, naturalism and representationalism,

**Weick:** As much as reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order it is with hindsight that we make retrospective sense of what occurs (1993a: 635). For me people can know what they are doing only after they have done it (1995: 26). In particular, the point of retrospection in time affects what people notice (Dunford & Jones, 2000).

**Gephart:** ... thus attention and interruptions to that attention are highly relevant to the process (1993).

**Weick:** Indeed, following Schütz's (1967) social phenomenology of lived experiences, for me actions are known only when they have been completed, which means that we are always a little bit behind or our actions are always a little bit ahead of us (1995: 26). But by retrospective processes of sense-making actors are engaged to restore interrupted activities and by this restoring cognitive order. Actors first create what they subsequently focus on for interpretation and, once again, "en-act" on those interpretations in an ongoing cycle.

**Buffett:** In the business world, the rearview mirror is always clearer than the windshield!

**Artist:** You may need to clean up your distorting mirrors and do not miss what is going on in the present, outside your probably misguided, mirrored world!

**Elkjaer & Simpson:** What about a future anticipation? From a pragmatist perspective, sense-making may be seen more fully as a continuous process of reconstructing meanings that are drawn simultaneously from the past and the future. It is this interplay between past and future that gives temporal continuity to action in the living

present ... opening up to novel opportunities for future action, instead of reproducing history, which denies the inherent creativity of life and living and without this our understanding of people's conduct in organization will be impoverished (2011:77).

**Kierkegaard:** As I stated already some time ago: Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards. You are all perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backward. But then, you forget the other clause — that it must be lived forward. The more you think through this clause, the more you conclude that life in temporality never becomes properly understandable, simply because never at any time do you get perfect repose to take a stance — backward ... This, gentlemen, is the sum of all practical wisdom!

**Weick:** Being interested in how we can live forward, I do not ignore future perfect thinking (1979: 197-200), although I must admit that I did not integrate this temporal thinking into my early (now called classical) theories of organizing and sense-making. Originally the implication of retrospect is to use future-perfect thinking by placing future events into the past to interpret what *will have happened* (1979: 194-200), which leads to richer, more descriptive scenarios for reflection. I still think that often we act first and then discover our preferences, principles, values, and beliefs at the end. With an outcome in hand, we retrospectively construct the values and beliefs that make sense out of this outcome.

**Artist:** But aren't past, present and future interwoven? And what about proper timing and the Kairos that is to choose, and act the right way at the right time even given the indeterminacy of the "outcome"?

**de Bilde, Vansteenkiste, & Lens:** Indeed Kairos entails working within shifting temporal horizons and being able to take different temporal perspectives thus distributing attention and psychological and social focus across the past, present, and future (2011).

**Gioia and Mehra:** For future research, we need to think about *prospective sense-making* as the ability to project in advance what they can do to produce a sensible outcome by acting (1996), and a future-oriented sense-making, as described by Gephart, et al. (2010).

**Stigliani, & Ravasi:** ... also related to group-level (2012).

**MacKay:** And complemented with counterfactual sense-making in enacted environments (2009).

**Artist:** You see: We should not underestimate the repertoire of alternative future that can be creatively imagined and mindfully!

**Weick:** Yes, I agree, people discover their own inventions, which is why sense-making understood as invention, and interpretation understood as discovery, can be complementary ideas (1995: 15). And with regard to mind-fulness, I learned among others from Langer's work (1989) on learning characterized by a *heightened awareness* of specific circumstances in a given situation.

While transferring this concept to organization, I tried to develop this further towards what, with Kathleen Sutcliffe (2001; 2005, 2007<sup>8</sup>) we call *collective mindfulness*. Adopting collective mindfulness cultivates safer cultures in then high reliable organization that exhibits improved system outcomes. What I found is that highly mindful organizations exhibit a particular preoccupation with failure, a reluctance to

simplify; a sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience, and a deference to expertise.

**Artist:** Oho! There is a need for learning from failure and a sensitivity to operations in business? Much of what I perceive as business activities seems rather desensitizing and mindless.

This lack of mindfulness becomes evident in an unsustainable success-driven practicalism. Nowadays, this is increasingly reinforced by performance pressure, and intensified competition that drives "mind-fulness" out.

**Jordan et al.:** Mindfulness can be defined as a state of mind or mode of practice that permits the questioning of expectations, knowledge and the adequacy of routines in complex and not fully predictable social, technological, and physical settings (2009: 468). While it is grounded in individual mindful behavior as you and Roberts showed (Weick and Roberts, 1993), and processed in direct interaction in dyads or small groups, it also builds upon organizational mechanisms, like routinized action.

**Merleau-Ponty:** Beware of your metaphors, as dyads and mechanism are referring to a technical image and functional operation that do not give much space for genuine mindful processes. For me sense-making and also mindfulness is more and different. From my perspective, sense-making requires to be mediated by embodied socio-material events, processed by habitual rhythms. Organisations are inhabited by a corporeal body of embodied feeling, thinking and acting and inter-acting people that share material artefacts, and artistic facts! For understanding embodied meaning, we need to explore a genuine sense-making of and through the senses!

**The Practitioner, Artist and Küpers:** (2013a, b) (*expressing non-verbal and verbal agreement.*)

**Merleau-Ponty:** ... and the role of body-schemes and habits which guide them! We need to understand how our senses are related to as well as impacting and generating our actions as meaningful!

**Practitioner:** Yes, that makes much sense to me, and also very practically!

**Artist:** I agree and resonate fully, but ...

**Bakke & Bean:** Wait a moment! Let us first think about the link between embodiment and designed "materiality" of sense-making more closely (2006: 65). Yes indeed, sense-making activities may take the form of materialized enactments.

**Brown et al.:** Supporting Bente and Barbara's critique, sense-building not only represent passive, retrospective reactions to what happened, but also shape possible future activities, including habitualised practices of possible bodily posture and behavior (2008: 1052).

**Bakke & Bean:** Moreover, sense-making is not only about producing a consensually constructed coordinated system of action, but can also result in notable disagreement. In other words, sense-making is about what does not make sense and where senses are in disagreement. Narratives of sense-making are part of the politics of meaning (2006).

**Mitra & Buzzanell:** Indeed. We need a more tensional approach as meaningfulness is a dynamic and contested negotiation with far-reaching political implications. As we have shown, meaningful work for example of self-identified sustainability practitioners is



emerging through communicative practices and tensions as well as how the politico-economic constitution of work shapes practitioners' meaning-making (2017).

**Kärreman & Alvesson:** by the way, such a tension-centered approach allows to understanding also how ironies, paradoxes, dialectics, and contradictions play a key role in both ordering and dis-ordering social reality for organizational member (2009).

**Lair et al.:** Also for us meaningfulness is closely tied to the political structures and discourses at stake (2008).

**Trethewey & Ashcraft:** ... negotiating meaningfulness is "messy" and complex (2004).

**Patriotta:** With regard to politics of meaning, sensemaking is not only how meaningful understandings are selected, legitimized, encoded and institutionalized at the organizational level (2003: 351).

**Gabriel:** Rather, it is all about how residual pockets of contrary sense and alternative versions may develop and subsist in the unmanaged spaces of institutions (1995).

**Brown et al.:** Complementarily, the social order that sense-making enacts is not always or indeed generally homogenous, unified or indeed necessarily very consensual (2008: 1055). By attending to individual differences in sense-making we may ultimately be better able to explain how organized activities emerge from dis-sensus, ambiguity and disagreement (2008: 1057).

**Rancière:** *Vive le dissensus!* Let us disrupt the politics of the police and get into "real" politics that is one of "dissensus" (1999: 2010) enacting a politics of aesthetics (2004).

**Artist:** Of course, and not only explaining then causally, but expressing poly- or a-causally ...!

**Gebser:** and "*aperspectival*", overcoming the anti-thesis of affirmation and negation (1949).

**Brown et al.:** This orientation towards dis-harmonious is what fascinates us even more as sense-making stories, permit actors to maneuver *between* contradictions, to ignore and to gloss ambiguities, to both mask and disclose emotional responses and intellectual positions, to simultaneously make and to unravel sense in organizational settings (2014: 5).

**Letiche and Statler:** Indeed, this is important, as conventional sense-making procedures do not know what to do when confronted by the indiscernible, paradoxical and seemingly random (2005: 8). All those unclear contours, non-linear dynamics and non-codifiable circumstances as well as circumstantial complexity that characterize much of what is going on in organizing and its puzzling and messy realities, are calling for *mētis*-evoking and -mediated explorations, responses, cunning tactics, while engaging in the invisible, virtual structures of the possible (2005)!

**Artist:** You speak enigmatically! What is *mētis*? Is it a form of practical intelligence?

**Mackay, Zundel & Alkirwi:** *Mētis* is a responsive cunningness and situated resourcefulness as its enactment is wholly circumstantial, and spontaneously processing intuitive, creative responses to given or produced circumstances. As such, it is a fluid form of knowing that works *between*, or rather underneath, the formal order of concepts exploiting the complexities, ambiguities and paradoxes that come with simplified abstractions in order to discord with practical understanding of the world all relevant for so-called "Management Learning" (2014: 6).

**Artist:** I am all for occupying those spaces in-between, dwelling in-between not only conceptually, but situationally and trading differences off against each other and benefit from arbitrages.

**Chia and Rasche:** Interestingly, *mētiao* means originally the ability to consider, mediate, plan, think ahead and use the available resources efficiently thus can be linked to a wiser understanding of strategy and more dwelling-oriented worldviews. For us that is mindful sense-making or? (2010, p. 34-45)

**Barry and Meisiek:** Sense-making, and mindfulness is all about *seeing more and seeing differently*, and "work-arts" help to experience and enact the same (2010)!

**Artist:** "Art works"! I like that in the very deed!

**Facilitator:** ... as we will show and speak about later ... in a next round on art and aesthetics ... (see Part II, forthcoming).

**FROM "How can we know what we think until we see what we said"  
TO "How can we sense what we feel, until we perceive what is expressed"?"**

**Merleau-Ponty** (*addressing Weick directly*): Considering all these critical comments, I suggest another question as a starting point. Instead of asking as you did: "*How can we know what we think until we see what we said?*" that is acting in order to discover preferences, thus being in the throes of action that only make sense in retrospect, which triggered such influential citation context, as Anderson has shown (2006), we should start differently.

As an alternative to think that people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they already imposed what they believe it might be better to reformulate your agenda and inquire into: "*How can we sense what we feel, until we perceive what is expressed?*"

**Artist:** Intuitively, I like and vibrate with, feeling the "vibs" of that programmatic statement, and the experiences that it calls for! Actually and acutely, we need to consider sensual perception, before conception, expression and style!

**Merleau-Ponty:** This orientation requires acknowledging the *paradox of expression*, including in the genesis of sense. The paradoxical logic of expression is that in creative processes, what is eventually expressed is not yet contained in the X that is being made express. Nonetheless, what is expressed does in fact express this X.

In other words, expression and sense genesis are conditioned by a condition that does not yet contain what it conditions. As the condition of sense-genesis is a peculiarly generative condition, any rendering remains and is always partial, it is always an elaboration of sense. This generative condition entails an open ontology in which being is not fully given (flat), such that it already would, or would not, contain future sense.

**Morris:** Rather, being as becoming is internally hollow and generative; becoming is more than it is because it is "not-yet-t/here" (2008: 83).

**Merleau-Ponty:** Importantly, the paradox of expression and the genesis of sense are emerging through the moving senses and the patient and silent labor of desires involved (1995: 143-144).

**Springborg:** Yes, I agree and also sense-making in organization and leadership practice requires being received through the senses, rather than produced through an analytical process and conceptual mind. Staying with senses in the present, rather than drawing on yesterday's sense-making, allows for greater flexibility, for example

in relation to decisions (2010).

**Artist:** That is what my ongoing practice in all my creative working and playing as well as “artistrepreneurial” decision-making is all about!

**Springborg:** Liberating our awareness from yesterday’s sense-making with its fixations, and by cultivating artistic appreciation as process of receiving sensations, helps to return to our present sensing. When we keep sensing/paying attention to the movements of our thoughts, emotions, and other bodily sensations, we can make sense as part of our reshifted exploration that is today’s sense-making.

All of this together can form an arrangement of conditions intended to make us perceive some part of the world more directly through our senses – and less through our concepts and ideas. Such a re-arrangement can be called a work of art (2010: 256).

**Artist:** Yeah, Yeah Yeah! Keeping connected to sense and moving with sensations responsively that is what it is being genuinely creative in action, full of passion ...

**Organizational Researcher / Leadership Researcher (in chorus):** This rehabilitation of senses and understanding that is more comprehensive as well as an enactment of sense-making invites to process all those tremendous im- and complications involved. These are unfolding “plications”

**Deleuze & Deleuzians:** Hurrah! as “pli” means fold and fold-ing!

**Organizational Researcher / Leadership Researcher (in chorus):** ... concern not only the status of organizations and ways of organising, but likewise the role and practices of leaders and leadership, followers and followership as well as stakeholders, all as embodied media, always situated in presence.

**Scharmer with Käufer:** That is exactly what we call *pre-sencing* that is integrating pre- and sensing, as well as sensing and presence (2004, 2008)<sup>9</sup> that support to lead from the emerging future (2013).

**Gioia:** Karl! Your call to us to complicate our-selves certainly helps to better appreciate the complexity of the enacted and presented world, although paradoxically we might see that wisdom is contained in profound simplicities (2004). Seeking the profound simplicity - or simple profundity, i.e. “*simplexity*” - is indeed an endeavor in which the phenomenologist in all of us is seeking the essential elements that is the core principles or deep structures and processes of experience that lead to wisdom (2006: 1717).

**Colville, Brown and Pye:** Indeed this simplexity connects sense-making, organizing and storytelling for our time (2012).

**Colville, Pye and Brown:** ... a time that is so much “on the run”, in need to keep up with the continuous streaming of affects and experiences as being processed in multiple voices, forms and social media, unfurling with intensity, complexity and novelty. Therefore we need a sense-making that uses less frames conceived and born in yesterday’s waves, but shifts more towards perceiving cues of current action in the “coming wave” as well as to make the sensible sensible (2016).

**Artist:** Living and weaving in pre-sencing and simplexity prudently, in awaiting of coming waves while being sense-able sensibly: Wow that sounds wise to me ...

**Küpers:** Yes and this wisdom is one also of “taste” in the old sense of “*sapere or savor*”<sup>10</sup>. Even more, it is a living practice can be cultivated as an embodied, artful practice and professional artistry, by which the poietic and praxis come together (2013).

**Weick:** Yes, all this resonates with my basic understanding that “sense-making is what it says it is, namely making something sensible. Sense-making is to be understood literally, not metaphorically” (1995: 16); and I am very much in tune with linking sense-making to practical wisdom as this is also what I am searching for and would like to integrate more and more (2004).

**Van Maanen:** Considering all that has been said: Let us break open the dull writing in organizational theory, arguing and cultivate and teach a writing style of non-style that values limited metaphor, simplicity and a formal, if not mathematical precision, in short, a writing that has become a secondary or mop-up activity in our professional pursuits (1995:134).

**Czarniawska:** Indeed, let us put our hopes into (Lyotardian) paralogies, thus movements, which go beyond or against common reason and create a different style (2001, 2003).

**Lyotard:** Voila! Vivre *petit récit* la “*para*” that is going beside, past, beyond established ways of reason(ing); against or outside of conventional norms, seeking new meanings in excluded language games, change its rules or inventing new ones, search for instabilities and anomalies, processing future anterior, thus undermine all determinism, while advocating the polysemia; revealing or articulating the unknown, all providing other, and I would say better more just forms of legitimation! (1979).

**Artist:** I am attuned to that approach ...

**Steyaert and Dey:** Yes, related to and moving on-wards with Karl’s “mundane poetics” (Weick, 2004), we need a “Post-Weickian Organization Theory” and exploring sense-events in organizational worlds correspondingly (2007).

**Brown, Colville, and Pye:** This is important as previous studies on sense-making focused mainly on discourse, power/ politics, micro/macro concerns, identities and decision making/change. We need to move towards potentially fruitful avenues for further empirical and theory-building research. These moves may be guided by questions like: What are the “blind spots” in sense-making scholarship? What does this corpus shield, obscure, marginalize and ignore? What are its most important drawbacks, inconsistencies and peculiarities? Is it always necessarily the case that sense-making is utilitarian (2015)?

Are there occasions or events where sense cannot plausibly or practically be made? And, if so, what do these tell us about the limits of sense-making perspectives to account adequately for human experience? (ibid)

**Weick:** “A central issue in sense-making will be the ways in which people redeploy concepts in order to ward off blind perceptions, and redirect perceptions to ward off empty conceptions”! (2012: 151).

**Colville, Pye & and Brown:** But how does such “Weickarious learning” make the sensible once again sensible, and open up the sensemaking perspective to understand learning as a process that is more than mere interpretation and attends to embodied sense-making through adopting a thorough-going process approach. Thereby, we need to extend both the grasp and the reach of the sense-making perspective to make sense of learning and to learn to make sense (2016).

**Sandberg and Tsoukas:** Indeed, for creatively advancing we need to clarify the application range of the sense-making perspective and those under-researched types and aspects of organizational sense-making. Even more important, we need to expand it towards considering more the immanent mundane forms of sense-making as they are for example implicated in routine activities. Furthermore, we are called to explore more the ambiguous status of enactment, the conflation of first-order and second-order sense-making! Moreover, we need an ontology that will do justice to the paradoxical character of sensemaking rather than reduce it to a sequence of stages or a set of itemized features (2014).

**Organizational Researcher:** Transcending the limits of conventional sense-making, becomes even more urgent as a lot of unsustainable operation in organisations is not only not meaningful, but becomes increasingly dangerous and self-destructive.

**Cappuccio and Froese:** This all shows that we are moving at the edge of sense-making and making sense of non-Sense! How uncanny is that (2014)!?

**Facilitator:** Can we agree that we disagree on various perspectives and interpretation while focusing in a subsequent part II more on our next intended topical field, namely the status and relevance of art and aesthetics in organization and leadership that has been so far more implicitly discussed and alluded to?

**All participants:** We are looking forward to that debate

*(All go for having dinner to satisfy their bodily needs and enjoying a sensory feast.)*

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### **About the author**

Wendelin Küpers is an Associate Professor at ICN ARTEM, Nancy, France. Subsequent to working in the business world and a PhD at Witten/Herdecke University (Germany) and post-doctoral studies at St. Gallen University (Switzerland), he has been affiliated with various universities in Europe and New Zealand. Combining a phenomenological and cross-disciplinary orientation, his research focuses on embodied, emotional, creative and transformational dimensions in relation to more responsible, and sustainable forms of organising and managing. Furthermore, his research focuses on design, integrating artful and aesthetic qualities as well as practical wisdom into leadership/management and organization theory and practice.

<sup>1</sup> As such the following dialogical form of narrative is an attempt to realise a conversational genre of performative research. This implies that it reveal tensions between the presented ideas reflected in the way that speakers intermittently comment, expand and contrast their ideas with those of others. What can be gained from this deliberately ambiguous and incomplete narrative form is the generative power of fluidity and heterogeneity of ideas. This kind of expressing calls for an conceptual activism (Virilio) wherein there are always voids, ruptures and fluidity present in the (con-)text that might be changing the view on the world. Moreover it expresses the fun and struggle that can experienced when the nascent, semi-confusing meaning are expressed and processed. This in turn may render creative sparks of intellectual discovery to bring the ideas of these authors to life individually and in interaction in a way that cannot be achieved in a "traditional" research paper (Boland & Lyytinen 2017). Whereas a traditional research paper follows a logos and logic of being coherent and consistent in developing and presenting its argument clear and distinct and thereby strives to produce the single persuasive voice of an author(ity) the here employed conversational approach is different. It rather allows the diverse logics of multiple perspectives to emerge in a vibrating dialectic of claims, counterclaims, tensions and includes also omissions or non-continuation. Thereby it is creating a complex, dynamic landscape of interacting perspectives as they happen in conversations. As such, the paper becomes more like a kind of open narrative with the dialogue and argument as its plot, emerging and being cocreated as the listening and interpreting reader may seeks to infer what is going on behind what is being said in the text, and listening between lines of spoken words. The statements these characters say are not (direct) quotations from their writings, but are giving voice to reflect some of their key ideas and personalities as well as style that includes expressing affection, emotion, humor and commitment toward their ideas. The value and beauty of styles expressed in this way is that it presents ideas as originating from the perspective and conviction of an "I" – with each person talking his ideas into being in a social setting, rather than conveying ideas in a neutral and distanced form of third-person writing found in their main texts. Furthermore, it allows a living "We" to be present as birthplace of insights and learnings. In other words: the discourse becomes a vital course of unfoldment. Once the writing of the conversation started to build a kind of rhythm, it allowed for differences between the characters to emerge more naturally, and we will see how the characters are responding to the statements and positions of the others. In doing so, each party seeks to share, perhaps only hypothetically, the other's appreciation and to open their own to the other's persuasion with a view to enlarging both the approaching mutual understanding, if not shared appreciation or appreciative judgement that rests on aesthetics (Vickers, 1995).

In this way, the writing is not only about what is being said and how the flow of ideas originates and shifts, but also hints at how personal history, context and character influence what is being said. This conversational form with its emergent expression and development within the dynamics of social interaction serves to seek an authenticity grounded in the statements made by each author to the others rendering iterative back-and-forth exchange. In contrast to mono-logical forms by which complete statement have to be accepted as a whole or not at all this conversational genre of performative practice has continual shifts that reveal tensions between the presented ideas and invite new voices into its openings, reflected in the way that speakers intermittently comment, expand and contrast their ideas with those of others.

Overall, the conversational mode of performative research ultimately shows us that a life of ambiguity is what all scholarship must honor and value. It is from such surprising, seemingly incoherent moments where the rare, creative sparks of intellectual discovery spring forth. As part of a performative turn in social and organizational/management science such approach helps to keep its excitement and productivity vital and may contribute to the project of developing and designing better social worlds (Boland & Lyytinen, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Bateson (1972; Bateson & Bateson, 1988): Such a meta-lounge is (potentially) free from selfish attempts to know and control other!

Bohm: Yes and it goes on in conversations that have no agenda (2004).

As a special kind of conversation a dialogue goes on in slow, open and curious ways of relating characterized:

- (a) by a very special sort of listening, questioning, and being present;
- (b) by willingness to suspend one's assumptions and certainties;
- (c) by reflexive attention to the ongoing process and one's own part in it.

<sup>3</sup> The term heteroglossia refers to the qualities of a language that are *extralinguistic*, but common to all languages. These include qualities such as perspective, evaluation, and ideological positioning. In this way most languages are incapable of neutrality, for every word is inextricably bound to the context in which it exists. Heteroglossia is produced by means of the internal differentiation and stratification of different registers in a language. "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic language: languages of generations and age groups,

tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour, (each clay has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases) - this internal stratification present in any language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite of the novel as a genre (Bakhtin, 1981: 262-63).

<sup>4</sup> [wendelin.kuepers@icn-artem.com](mailto:wendelin.kuepers@icn-artem.com) The idea is to set up a web forum or blogging space on-line, where all comments will be gathered, as a forwarding feedback and continuation of an ongoing inter-involving conversation ...

<sup>5</sup> Essentially, sense-making is continuous *ongoing*, which implies that individuals simultaneously shape and react to the environments they face (Gephart et al., 2010: 281; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: 67; Weick, 2012: 146). As they project themselves onto this environment and observe the consequences they learn about their identities and the accuracy of their accounts of the world (Thurlow & Mills, 2009). This is a feedback process, even as individuals deduce their identity from the behaviour of others towards them they also try to influence this behaviour. Furthermore, people *extract cues* from the context to help them decide on what information is relevant and what explanations are acceptable (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978; Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2007). Extracted cues provide points of reference for linking ideas to broader networks of meaning and are "simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring" (Weick 1995: 50). People favour *plausibility over accuracy* in accounts of events and contexts (Currie & Brown, 2003; Brown, 2005; Abolafia, 2010): "in an equivocal, postmodern world, infused with the politics of interpretation and conflicting interests and inhabited by people with multiple shifting identities, an obsession with accuracy seems fruitless, and not of much practical help, either" (Weick 1995: 61).

<sup>6</sup> Plessner: Anthropologically, this ongoing need to construct and the compulsion to perform ("Vollzugszwang") your organisations and its members are striving is due to their ec-centric positionality by which they are "artificial by nature". By this, I mean a sense of disequilibrium or "constitutive root- and homelessness" of humans that they try to overcome through culture and technology to compensate for the natural place they have lost while aiming to find a new home as kind of "second nature" that is setting up a new, cultural world (1928/2003, GS IV, 395) within an open and unpredictable historical process (Boccignone 2014). In order to reach their (temporary) balance they will always have to strive for something new, they will have on-goingly surpass their own deeds and achievements (Plessner 1928/2003 GS IV, 395; Boccignone, 2014). This unfixed agency is like an ongoing "execution" of a piece composed while playing best be realized by an authentic and ironic attitude that can lead to a conscious and responsible, open approach between individuals and in contemporary complex society (and economy) calling for an intercultural recognition of diversity, and re-orientation, while trying to keep a difficult balance between lack of a homeland and cosmopolitanism.

Ivakhin: We need to develop a "post-constructivist" understanding. We need to reject both a straightforward or "naive" form of realism, which posits the world as simply there as it appears, independent of our conceptions of it, and a straightforward or "naive" form of (social) constructivism, which posits that the world as it appears is fully a construction of human, social, or discursive practices. A post-constructivism helps to overcome the limitations of social constructivism, while retaining its virtues, in order to arrive at a more nuanced realism that includes an understanding of social and semiotic processes within its conception of reality. As ontological projects various post-constructivisms aim for understanding how the world is "co-constructed" by social, discursive, material, biological, and other processes — which makes them constructivist in a broader and deeper sense than the term is customarily used.

<sup>7</sup> Symbolic interactionism has three core principles: (1) people act toward things, including each other, on the basis of the meanings they have for them; (2) these meanings are derived through social interaction with others; and (3) these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and handle the objects that constitute their social worlds (Blumer, 1969: 2).

<sup>8</sup> Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) What we actually need is to *integrate multiple conceptions of individual and organizational mindfulness* and further increase the relevance of organizational mindfulness for business schools.

<sup>9</sup> Presencing moves through the following different stages:

1. (Factual/phenomenal level, technical and instrumental subsystem) Observation of phenomena. How do processes and workflows function? Instruments, resources.
2. (Imaginative level, social subsystem) Forming a picture of how the organisation works. Understanding the social subsystem and how functions, roles and management are distributed.
3. ("Inspirational" level; cultural subsystem) Idea. Understanding the implicit/actual values, rules and policies that shape the organisation. How and why things happen.
4. Is this what we want?
5. (This maps onto 3.) What values and guidelines do we want for the future?
6. (This maps onto 2.) What does that mean for new functions and roles? How should the organisation of the future be visioned?

7. (This maps onto 1.) How can processes be developed in future? What phenomena and facts will characterise the organisation of the future? According to Scharmer, a value created by journeying through the "U" is to develop seven essential leadership capacities:

1. Holding the Space: Listen to What Life Calls You to Do (listen to oneself, to others and make sure that there is space where people can talk ...)
2. Observing: Attend with Your Mind Wide Open (observe without your voice of judgment, basically means to get rid of past cognitive schema)
3. Sensing: Connect with Your Heart (facilitate the opening process, i.e. look interconnected wholes)
4. Presencing: Connect to the Deepest Source of Your Self and Will (act from the emerging whole)
5. Crystallizing: Access the Power of Intention (e.g. make sure to find a very small group of key persons commits itself to the purpose and outcomes of the project.)
6. Prototyping: Integrating Head, Heart, and Hand (basically, it means that one should act and not let various sources of paralysis like reactive action, too much analysis, etc. interfere)
7. Performing: Playing the Macro Violin. (e.g. find the right leaders, find good social technology to get a multi-stakeholder project going)

8.

<sup>10</sup> Hu(wo)man ancestors associated wisdom with taste as the Latin sapien(t)s connotes knowing and wise with "tasting". Taste, i.e. *sapor*, is itself knowledge (*sapere*), and thus wisdom (*sapientia*), an association that is also present in the present participle of *sapere* "to taste, to savor" and "to be wise" (which also gave us sage and savant). While sapient suggests subtly sensing flavour and aromas, having taste as sagacity, sane just merely stresses mental soundness, rationality, and levelheadedness and judicious emphasis a capacity for reaching wise decisions or just conclusions. Accordingly, *homo sapiens* means both "men of wisdom" and "men of taste". When we say *homo sapiens*, we should keep in mind that the origin of the notion of wisdom, or of discourse – man as speaking man – lies in the capacity to taste with the mouth, and with the sense of smell (Serres and Latour 1995). Through taste we experience ourselves sensually thus "sense-makingly" as matter, bodies among other bodies, unavoidably "complicit with anonymous materials" in a "continuity of material transformations of decomposition and regeneration", whose immanence, as a certain Adam and Eve experienced, radically denies any transcendent God or Law, facilitating the expulsion from an Edenic world with relatively known consequences. Rather than God throwing out and banishing hu(wo)man from the Garden Paradise, it was the(ir) very act of tasting the forbidden fruit (of knowing) that immediately engendered the collapse of the Garden itself. This act was and has ever since pro-jected human-kind into the materiality of a world devoid of the hopes and fears of a transcendent beyond. This is our sapid knowledge: "We were too quick to forget that homo sapiens refers to those who react to sapidity, appreciate it and seek it out, those for whom the sense of taste matters – savouring animals – before referring to judgement, intelligence or wisdom, before referring to talking man ... Sensation, it used to be said, inaugurates intelligence. Here, more locally, taste institutes sapience" (Serres, 2009: 154). "Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience" (Shaw, 1903: 239).