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Guerilla knitting: An emerging approach to organize a museum project

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Abstract: Many studies have reported the beneficial influences of various artistic methods on organizational processes, culture, and learning. This paper connects to those findings by presenting an empirical case study of a situation in which a special form of handicraft, guerilla knitting or yarn bombing, was used in a museum organization to facilitate the planning and implementation of an exhibition project. The idea of knitting was suggested by one of the museum experts and accepted and facilitated by the museum manager. The emerging nature of guerilla knitting is of particular importance since most artistic methods are introduced by the management. The data are collected by action research including observations, photos and keeping a field diary. The study demonstrates how knitting functioned as a way to counter the initial resistance to working with the particular project, created an increased sense of togetherness, and facilitated a museum hosting a successful exhibition. The knitting project also enabled the museum professionals to cross several institutional borders, such as institutionalized work practices, culture of individual achievement, management practice and physical museum space. The qualities of guerilla knitting are analyzed with the help of Schiuma's models of art-based initiatives.

Keywords: action research, aesthetic organizing, arts-based methods, guerilla knitting, handicraft, museums, self-organizing

Guerilla knitting: An emerging approach to organize a museum project

This paper focuses on how artistic methods can be used in organizations to develop and enhance particular processes or achieve specific goals. More specifically, we present a case study in which a special form of handicraft, guerilla knitting or yarn bombing, was used in a Finnish museum organization to facilitate the planning and implementation of an exhibition project. Earlier research often portrays how artistic interventions have been used to educate managers (Austin & Devin, 2003; Springborg, 2012, Taylor & Ladkin, 2009, 2014; Zambrell, 2016) or are introduced by the management to initiate a learning process in their organization. On the contrary to this point of departure, our study concerns an exhibition project in which a member of the staff suggested the use of guerilla knitting, resulting in an emerging knitting activity only loosely directed and facilitated by the museum manager. We suggest that artistic methods initiated by employees can be a powerful way to achieve shared goals.

We present a practical case study of a museum organization in Finland that adopted an innovative approach to publicize an art exhibition. The particular exhibition of African outsider art was met with unpredicted objections from some of the museum staff who considered the exhibition inappropriate for a provincial museum. After considerable effort to initiate the project and to brainstorm marketing opportunities with practically no money, one of the museum staff suggested the group should try guerilla knitting. This mildly anarchistic approach gained support and became both a method of countering the resistance to the exhibition and a medium to carry out the publicity and marketing campaign for it. The key principle of guerilla knitting in our understanding is the use of soft material, such as yarn, to produce knittings and exhibit them in some public place in order to leave one's mark in that public space. What makes guerilla knitting particularly interesting to us is the possibility to analyze and observe how such an approach can be cultivated in a museum organization.

The purpose of the paper is to first show how guerilla knitting enabled the museum staff to complete the exhibition process and analyze the activities that took place at individual, organizational and public domain levels. Secondly, we show how the knitting project enabled the staff to overcome strong institutional barriers of the museum organization and to create permanent organizational transformation. Our specific research question is: what kinds of organizational processes are enhanced in a project involving artistic methods? We wish to contribute to discussion on the use of artistic interventions and artistic methods in organizations (Darso, 2004, Berthoin Antal & Strauss, 2013, Schiuma, 2009) by identifying a subcategory of artistic methods, that of handicraft methods. Handicraft methods in our opinion have a special quality of concentrating on the ways of the hand and making things by hand as well as the role of materiality which we consider extremely important and meaningful. Although guerilla knitting in our study was not strictly a method — it was more of an emerging creative activity — we suggest it could be considered a handicraft method due to its creative and artistic nature.

The data are collected by the method of action research and consist of observations, photos and field notes made by the first author, the museum manager. The data analysis results in ten categories that are significant in the guerilla knitting project. The findings are further evaluated by positioning them in Schiuma's (2009) models of the impact of art-based methods. We also describe how the knitting project enabled museum professionals to cross several institutional borders and to create permanent organizational change. We conclude by discussing the main contributions of this study.

Artistic and handicraft methods

This section presents the theoretical background of this study that builds on the use of artistic methods in organizations. We discuss various ways of employing artistic methods in different organizational settings. We also identify a sub-category of artistic methods, that of handicraft methods, and describe the studies conducted in that area.

Artistic methods

There is a considerable volume of studies investigating the role of arts and artistic methods in organizations. Among these are studies on creative and artful processes (Austin & Devin 2003, Darsø 2004, Johansson Sköldberg et al. 2015), the potential of the arts for training and development (Nissley, 2002; Taylor & Ladkin 2009; Springborg, 2012; Berthoin Antal & Strauss, 2013; Parush & Koivunen, 2014), identity building (Zambrell 2016), leader-follower relationships (Hujala et al. 2015) and arts as a catalyst, a lever, and a trigger (Schiuma 2009). Very close to these approaches are those on the aesthetic aspects of organizations and management and the sensual dimension of work (Ramirez, 1991; Strati 2000; 2007; Hansen et al. 2007). Below we discuss a few of these topics.

Arts-based methods have the ability to evoke imagination and sensible knowing and to be useful in practice based learning. Sensible knowledge is used by people to comprehend, act, and learn in organizations. It emphasizes sensory perception and the aesthetic judgment that form a fundamental pathos of organizational life. (Strati 2007, 72-74). Materiality in everyday organizational life and the medium in a project are evocative and influence the perceptual patterns. In an arts-based project the perceptive and sensory faculties and sensitive-aesthetic judgment are activated (Strati 2010: 881).

Artistic methods can teach us about the nature of creative processes. Darsø (2004: 150) for example explains how the deep experience aroused by the making (presencing) stirs individual transcendence. It is where the core of the artful making lies, in sensing and presencing, and art is seen as a role model and in action (events) in an ambiguous setting. Darsø creates a model to describe the process of artful creation within four quadrants: art as a role model, artful capabilities and competences, social and product innovation and art in action.

Austin and Devin (2003: 168-171) have also analyzed the creative processes of artists and pondered what managers could learn from artists. They suggest an artful framework with the following four qualities: release, collaboration, ensemble, and play. *Release* is a form of control that aims at behavior and achieves the desired action in unpredictable ways. Release moves a person beyond vanity toward a new willingness to express avant-garde ideas, to collaborate freely and thus discover a new range of responses to the work of others to reach one's limits. *Collaboration* is a conversation that arises out of individual release and a fundamental technique within it is reconceiving. Collaborators reconceive a process in the light of each other's contributions, using them as material to create new unpredictable ideas. People working collaboratively create an *ensemble* which is greater than the sum of its parts because the things it creates are larger and more interesting than anyone in it. Ensemble is the hard-won result of collaboration, born of the practice that enables release. The act of making is the *play*, which denotes the act of making the experience where individuals become a part of the experience. There the process is far more important than the product because the artful making shifts from prescribed goals toward improvised collaboration. The product of an artful making process develops during that process and is its result, not its goal.

Since the arts can teach us about creativity, it is unsurprising that arts-based methods have become an attractive option in management education. According to Springborg (2012: 123-129), using arts-based methods may at its best advance the connection with the context, the creation of personal relationships and increased sensibility to a text, as well as the ability to relate positively to a context. Furthermore, the creation of art is suggested to be the creation of a concept because art is a refined and intensified form of experience. Perceptual refinement allows us to become aware of new perceptual patterns in our experience. This leads to the notion that artistic activity is a form of reasoning without words and so it is possible to develop managerial capabilities by working with perception. Arts-based methods can provide a means to develop an approach to the world that can in turn contribute to a more holistic way of engaging in managerial contexts (Taylor & Ladkin 2009: 56-57, 60-61). In this sense arts-based methods involve both the art process and the resulting product. Art-based methods are underpinned by four processes: skills transfer, projective techniques, illustration of essence, and making.

Finally, there is research that evaluates the impact of arts-based initiatives on various aspects. For example, in Schiuma's (2009: 12-29) evaluation system artistic interventions are considered thought-provoking and capable of engaging people in reflection, self-assessment, and the development of new knowledge of the organizational issues. The implementation of art-based initiatives affects human resources and the organizational infrastructure in four value zones: the igniting, the intrinsic, the instrumental, and the artful zone. The igniting zone concerns art as entertainment; the intrinsic zone includes art as a galvanizing and inspirational element; the instrumental zone is about art as sponsorship and investment; and the artful zone has to do with art in an environment, art as bonding and training and art as a means of transformation. Art as a means of transformation is relevant to our study since the knitting activity resulted in organizational transformation in the museum.

Handicraft methods

Handicraft, the skill of making things by hand, could also be considered an artistic method involving embodiment and creativity. There is less research about the use of handicraft methods in organizations than about the employment of other artistic methods. From various studies about artistic methods in organizations we consider the studies about studio techniques (Barry & Meisiek, 2014, Taylor & Ladkin, 2014), model-building exercises, (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2007; Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008) and the making of artifacts (Gayá Wicks & Rippin, 2010, Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) to belong to the category of handicraft methods. In the following paragraphs we examine the special capacities of these examples.

First, studio learning techniques means to have a dedicated space for hands-on, creative experimentation on some problem, question, or task (Barry & Meisiek, 2014). The concept combines intellectual curiosity, craft skills, aesthetic expression, and artisan-style production. Studios can be places for drama and improvisation methods in addition to visual methods, such as drawing, painting, sculpting, photography, and video. The central aspect that differs from other educational practices in for example management training is the strong emphasis "on participant-led inquiry through *hands-on*, creative engagement aimed at producing atypical results— imaginative problem reframing, innovative solutions, synthesis-oriented skill sets, integrative learning" (Barry & Meisiek, 2014:4). Barry and Meisiek (2014:11) propose four perspectives to explore the practices of business studios: materiality, space and place, process, and theme. In this article, materiality is of particular interest. Materials matter, because different materials elicit different kinds of engagement and cognition. Fluid, plastic, or natural materials like clay are likely to inspire more emotional engagement, while hard, finished materials invoke more abstract and cerebral encounters. Materials have built-in associations, affordances, and constraints which we are often unaware of (ibid.12-13).

Another example of methods emphasizing handicraft are model-making exercises. These can include producing a prototype, various kinds of models or other material constructions. The most documented example of these exercises in research is the Lego Serious Play system in which the participants engage in creative thinking and problem solving by using Lego blocks (Bürge, Jacobs and Roos, 2005, Roos & Victor, 1999). The participants typically work in an analogical fashion, by bringing topics from a source domain to the target domain. Various organizational processes and problems are visualized and demonstrated with building materials, for example Lego. The use of the hands is again central here: touching and feeling the material stimulates the thinking process very differently from working with text. Jacobs and Heracleous (2007) describe how evaluating alternative building options requires the participants to integrate objective/technical as well as subjective/aesthetic judgments in making choices.

Thirdly, the creation of artifacts can be identified as a handicraft method. Taylor and Ladkin (2009: 61-63) describe a leadership mask-making exercise that encouraged the participants to explore their sense of leadership. The making process encouraged participants to examine their subconscious attitudes and transform that unconscious knowledge into more conscious awareness. Gayá Wicks and Rippin (2010) used a doll-making exercise as part of their teaching as a way of learning about leadership. They invited their students to make a leadership touchstone representing something about themselves as leaders, "good leadership" or the lack of it. The students began the work with the help of postcards, looking for suitable images for leadership, and continued on to choose between different materials provided to create the actual doll. The participants were able to explore leadership from a more intuitive position and bypass the cognitive processes that usually dominate the management practice. The doll-making exercise offered the participants an opportunity to reflect and wonder without the immediate need to fix things, make decisions, or draw definite conclusions. According to Gayá Wicks and Rippin, the ability to remain in this uncertain state of inquiry can be uncomfortable, but ultimately very productive and useful.

Most of the articles on artistic interventions in organizations report very positive outcomes whereas there are bound to be failures as well. In a similar fashion, in our study the shared experience of knitting turned out to be meaningful and encouraging for the participants. We will next describe the project in more detail.

Research design

The study was carried out at the K.H. Renlund Museum (KHRM) in Kokkola, Finland. This provincial museum in Central Ostrobothnia displays the rich cultural heritage of the region and offers exhibitions and educational programs (City of Kokkola, 2014). One of the tasks of this museum in 2011 was to organize an African outsider art exhibition, *ARS11 This is Africa*, for the summer of 2011. Outsider art in general has a "self-taught" label that applies to art that is produced outside of the familiar art-historical narrative — art that is not of the academy (Gómez, 2017, Maizels 1996, 150). African outsider artists also contrast with the anonymous tribal creators of the past and come fore as individual artists of their own right. This was a cooperative project produced by a public-private partnership and curated by external curators. Despite this, plenty of work remained for the museum to do, including ensuring local visibility. The exhibition was one in a series of art exhibitions of international contemporary art, ARS, exhibited in Finland since the 1960s. All the previous ones were displayed only in the Museum of Modern Art Kiasma in Helsinki but this time the main exhibition had satellites in several provincial museums, KHRM museum being one of those.

The KHRM museum is the only museum in Scandinavia exhibiting outsider art on a permanent basis, but the museum has other profiles as well. They include Finnish nineteenth century art, provincial art, and artifacts representing the cultural history of the region. The ARS11 exhibition was arranged according to an authorized program. All the exhibiting museums of the ARS11 project had agreed on a framework of marketing which included the five official ARS11 colors to be used. In January 2011, the local visibility planning commenced at the KHRM museum. The budget for visibility was limited which forced the staff to look for innovative and creative ideas.

The research design was guided by the principles of action research (Reason, 2006). The data were collected during and after the knitting process and consist of field notes collected by observations and the first author's (the museum manager) journal recording her experiences. The data also include observations by one of the participants (Mrs. Q), dozens of photographs and hundreds of handcrafted pieces. After the project ended the staff was invited to a retrospective discussion about the entire process. This discussion was also tape-recorded and included in the data. This set of data was analyzed from the perspective of organizational processes and activities. Our interactions with the data revealed the different kinds of organizational processes that were enhanced during and after the knitting project. The first round of analysis resulted in 15 themes of organizational effects. We continued to combine and conceptualize these themes and concluded with ten themes. We then used Schiuma's (2009:20) model on the organizational impacts of arts-based initiatives to group the ten themes according to individual, organizational and public domain levels.

The data of the knitting project are part of a larger action research project at the museum that included interviews and developmental interventions. The overall objective of this action research was to develop the museum's working practices from being oriented around individual activities toward more collective ways of creating and sharing knowledge (Ahmas, 2014). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016:165-179), action research is most often described as being an inquiry with people, rather than research on people. It refers to interactive research design than often consists of several research methodologies and pursues action and research at the same time. Action research is not a strict research method; rather, it is a systematic approach to such research that takes involvement, a close relationship to the research object, and participatory, sometimes even emancipating actions as key points of departure for the research.

This study could be characterized as a participatory action research since the museum manager was researching her own organization and participating actively in the knitting project. Her objective was to organize the African outsider art exhibition together with her staff. The particular way to organize this event did not come from the museum manager; it came from one staff member. The manager's role was to facilitate the project and make observations about the key events in the process.

Since there are two authors in the current text, we decided to deviate from the use of first person (mode in the field notes) by using "we" instead. This decision does influence the tone of the writing but hopefully makes the tradition of action research visible. We include plenty of interview citations and excerpts from the field journal.

The knitting project

The ARS11 exhibition was a unique occasion for the museum. It was the museum manager's task to make the staff understand that creating attractive visibility was of great importance. She started asking questions and initiating discussions about ideas or possible activity plans for carrying out the visibility project. Discussions were needed because the planning phase for

an exhibition usually takes almost a year and the discussion made the exhibition appear more real to the people involved. Despite discussions and several brainstorming sessions no ideas emerged. The project did not move forward at all.

Suddenly, an air of resistance to the theme emerged among some individuals. They argued that African art had nothing to do with the KHRM museum profile. Resentment of the exhibition project spread among the group and the protagonists vociferously criticized the choice of theme. Those opposed to the presence of the ARS11 at KHRM attempted to garner support to have the exhibition cancelled. They argued strongly that the museum should focus only on national and regional content. The opposition also manifested itself passively in some staff being unwilling to cooperate and delaying the completion of their tasks. The weekly staff meetings became the arena for the debate. In one of these meetings one member of staff related how she had heard of a fascinating idea called guerilla knitting. The knitting theme prompted lively discussions and an exchange of ideas, and finally the staff decided to utilize it to achieve local visibility. The guerilla knitting idea appealed to a broad spectrum of the staff including the primary opponents of the exhibition.

Wikipedia defines guerilla knitting as follows:

Guerilla knitting, yarn bombing, urban knitting, or graffiti knitting is a type of graffiti or street art that employs colorful displays of knitted or crocheted yarn or fiber rather than paint or chalk. While yarn installations may last for years, they are considered non-permanent, and, unlike other forms of graffiti, can be easily removed if necessary. Nonetheless, the practice is still technically illegal, though it is not often prosecuted vigorously.

While other forms of graffiti may be expressive, decorative, territorial, socio-political commentary, advertising or vandalism, yarn bombing was initially almost exclusively about reclaiming and personalizing sterile or cold public places. It has since 2004 developed with group graffiti knitting and crocheting worldwide, each with their own agendas and public graffiti knitting projects being run. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yarn_bombing)

According to Joanna Mann (2015: 66): "Yarn bombing is a technique that merges street graffiti with the fibre work of knitting or crochet. Also known as 'yarn storming', 'knit graffiti' and 'guerilla knitting', yarn bombing involves stealthily attaching handmade fibre items to street fixtures or parts of the urban landscape".

According to the marketing plan, the five colors were to be used to signal ARS11. The basic message behind the guerilla knitting was to attract audience attention and to make people curious to ask questions like what is this, what is it referring to?

The museum manager bought several pairs of needles and bags of yarn in the five colors of pink, turquoise, lime green, cobalt blue, and gold. One of the co-workers brought a large yarn basket from home to be put at the middle of the meeting room table and filled with yarn. The museum staff started to knit. Almost everybody knitted in meetings, at their desks, during the lunch hour and coffee breaks. The knitting became a part of the daily work and duty. Many enjoyed knitting so much that they took the pieces home to continue the work in their spare time. Some yarn was even sent to friends and partners in other towns to involve them in the process, and they proved eager to join. Later in the summer a basket full of yarn was also available to customers of the museum café.

The museum manager participated in the project with the staff and knitted pieces. She was familiar with knitting from years back, but this time found it different from previous experiences when she had been determined to produce something utilitarian, such as a pair of socks. This time it was liberating with no pressure at all and knitting was more like an act of expression using needles and yarn. She found it pleasant and relaxing to be able to sink into deep thoughts and knit them together with her feelings of the moment into the stitches in a similar way that Mrs. Defarge did in Charles Dickens' (1990) *A Tale of Two Cities*.

A member of the staff (Mrs. Q) related her experience in the following manner:

The guerilla knitting was a new opening for me and for many of us at the museum and I had only come across the idea on the Internet. In the beginning there was some resistance, as there always is to new ideas, we saw that in some individuals intentionally delaying processes.

Gradually the knitting got started following the example of those members who started it off. Finally the whole work community got involved. I don't remember anybody withdrawing from the project, even those who normally wouldn't think to pick up a pair of needles were involved. Eventually we realized time was running out and noticed that we were lacking a good many pieces but we had to settle for the ones we had.

At least I felt that the knitting united us and the objective of the process became clearer as the work proceeded. I think that we became a close team with a unified spirit. To me the project was a positive one and I would be happy to start over again. (Mrs. Q)

Not everyone knew how to knit at the beginning, but during the process people grew eager to learn more about knitting and patterns, such as lace styles. The skilled knitters taught the less skillful. Mistakes were considered piquant details that were not necessary to correct. People soon admired each other's pieces and gave positive feedback on the skills and designs.

People enjoyed the fact that they could start to knit a piece and leave it in the basket for the next person to continue. However, taking up someone else's knitting and continuing in their own style and "handwriting" was not easy for the participants to do. Nevertheless, the participants became used to the sharing system that came to form part of the knitting process, and which made several of the pieces shared works of knitted art.

During the spring of 2011, the staff were encouraged to knit at the museum.

People felt committed to the idea and it became their way of identifying with the ARS11 context. They felt proud of solving the marketing task in an imaginative way. (Museum curator)

There were often opportunities for staff to knit together, and people often got together around the meeting table to discuss knitting either in official meetings or just for fun. Many life anecdotes were shared and were often accompanied by lots of laughter. Those same discussions also led to several spirited ideas on the issues of museum work being presented. A few of them were even refined to be carried out in practice. Handicraft was integrated into intellectual creation stitch by stitch and the process of artistic creation merged with conceptual creation and became reasoning without words. The visibility task that started as an intangible idea was being resolved and executed by the skills of making things by hand. Picture 1 depicts a knitting session in the coffee room.



Picture 1. Knitting in action

It felt good to do something with your hands during an office work day. The knitting offered a break that inspired creativity in us. The knitting as such felt nice but it also fed feelings of togetherness and belonging as the knitters belonged together and became a tight group organized around the project. The knitting encouraged a positive and relaxed atmosphere and became the glue holding the staff together. (Museum manager)

Anecdotal evidence of the power of the knitting exercise was provided when one of the ladies involved came to thank the museum manager for the opportunity to get involved in knitting because it made her feel so good.

The guerilla knitting process was initially unstructured and any style and size was acceptable. The plan was very loose: to decorate the museum court yard with the knitted pieces. Eventually some people started to structure the knitting process and made a plan of display including a table of required sizes of pieces. This motivated some skilled ones to create knitted masterpieces. In May, the pieces were collected from the internal team and from their external contacts who had taken up the knitting challenge (see Picture 2). Individual pieces were connected to each other in accordance with plans made previously. The long shawls of guerilla knitting were attached to the museum's iron gate, hand railings, drain pipes, tree trunks, and lampposts in the museum courtyard and in the streets adjacent to the museum. The museum manager felt it was empowering to beautify the local environment, just as Costa (2000, in Vacchani, 2013:95) described. The juxtaposing of brightly colored wool against the harshness of the physical surroundings felt meaningful (Vacchani, 2013:96). The ARS11 exhibition knitted local visibility project was completed and accompanied by placing empty oil barrels, also painted in the ARS11 colors, on street corners.



Picture 2. Attaching the final knitted pieces to the museum gate.

The staff often spoke of what the public's response to the pieces would be. The knitting certainly attracted attention and was welcomed, so meeting its visibility objective. Many visitors and passersby came in with questions about the pieces, admired the handicraft, and wanted to participate in a process that was actually already in practice finished. This request prompted the museum staff to put a yarn basket in the museum café where it was available to customers wishing to contribute knitting for the whole summer, even though the exhibition had been launched months before.

Findings

The findings comprise three parts. First, we analyze the organizational processes occurring during the guerilla knitting event. When analyzing the data we identified ten themes that encapsulated the characteristics of guerilla knitting. Our themes are art making, experiencing, reasoning, resistance, discussing and storytelling, sharing, structuring and enabling, audience response, task, and joining as a result of an aesthetic choice. We present these results guided by Schiuma's (2009) approach to the organizational beneficiaries of arts-based initiatives by arranging our categories on three levels: the individual level, the team and organizational level, and the public domain. We felt able to combine the team and organizational aspects into one level because Schiuma explains that on an individual level sensorial experiences touch and engage a person emotionally and intellectually, and because the experience is fundamentally rewarding and fulfilling, the impact can move from an individual to any group he/she is a part of. The rewarding experiences of arts-based methods tend to diffuse further into an organization and the public domain as a spill-over from one circle to another. Second, we point out how the knitting project caused organization members to cross several institutional borders. Third, we evaluate our results in relation to Schiuma's value matrix including three zones: the intrinsic, the artful, and the instrumental.

Organizational processes in guerilla knitting

To provide the reader with an overview of the analysis, we first provide an illustration of the themes organized according to Schiuma's model on the organizational impacts of art-based initiatives (Schiuma 2009:10) (Figure 1). In the following paragraphs, we discuss each theme in more depth.

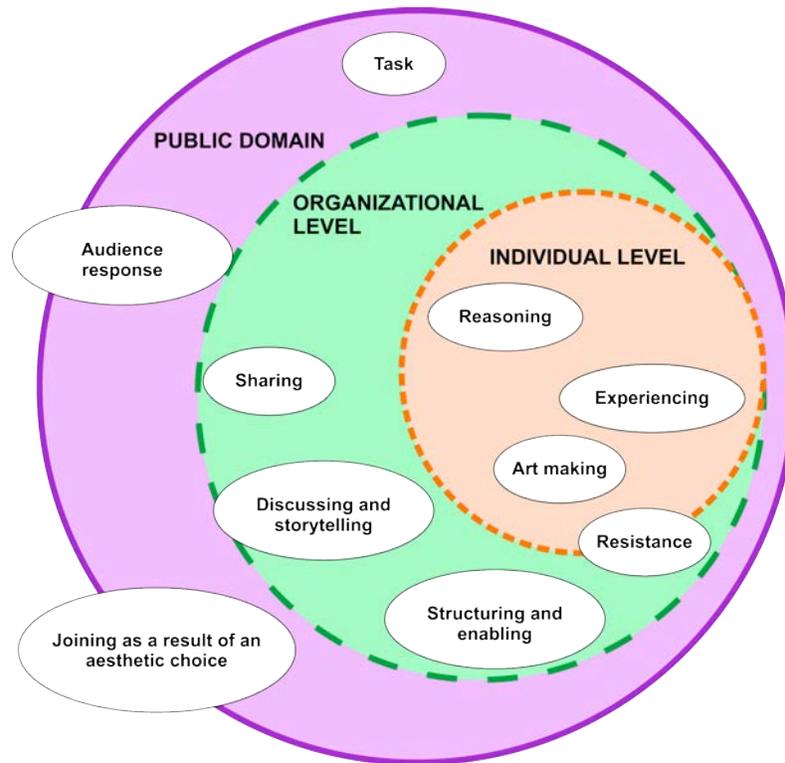


Figure 1. Themes of guerilla knitting in relation to Schiuma's (2009:10) model

Individual level. The themes on the individual level are art making, experiencing, and reasoning.

Art making. Our respondents did not identify handicraft as a regular work activity, it was an experience of self-realization and made room for individuality and the personal touch.

I felt it almost liberating during the work day, it was a unique chance for self-expression. (Museum curator)

Not everyone was thrilled with the guerilla knitting initiative at first: some did not consider knitting as one of their primary competences. The nature of the medium, the material used and the participants' skills in working with it eventually proved important in changing the opinions of those who were initially reluctant. Yarn was a very attractive material, leading some participants to comment how they could not keep their hands off the lovely yarns. Making something by hand stimulates the imagination, and generates a feeling of producing something tangible. Springborg (2012: 127) notes that the medium is in itself evocative and

influences the perceptual patterns. It means that a symbol created in a particular medium can embody and evoke feelings.

Strati (2010: 883-884) emphasizes the materiality of everyday work and organizational life which is constituted by activation of the perceptive and sensory faculties and the sensitive-aesthetic judgment in workplaces. Knitting is a physical activity involving the hands that requires mastery of the medium, tacit knowledge, and sensitive-aesthetic judgment, which are all connected to emotions. In other words, knitting contains sensible knowledge (Strati 2007: 62).

During the project, knitting was equated with play and art, it was like a pastime pursued during the working day.

We felt free to try anything that occurred to us. We were playing with yarn, experimenting and learning new knitting patterns and techniques. (Museum project partner)

Schiuma (2009) recognizes this kind of approach to art making and play as appearing in the *igniting zone*, that which concerns art as entertainment. According to Austin and Devin (2003: 170–171) the act of making is the *play* in artful making and denotes the act of making the experience where individuals become a part of the experience. Play is children's work and great fun: it incorporates no aspirations but is instead a goal in itself. In that sense, it resembles art being aesthetic in a disinterested way. Friedrich von Schiller (Hein 1986, 67) suggested that a human being does not go into play or makes art in necessity. Playing games and making art provides a person with the chance to engage the senses and to experience a feeling of balance.

In art making, the process is more important than the product as Austin and Devin (2003: 171) suggest because the artful making moves a person away from prescribed goals toward improvised collaboration. The product of an artful making process develops during that process and is the result, not the goal. As Turney (2009, in Vacchani 2013: 101) comments on knitting: "knitting was seen as a journey that was more important and emotionally significant than the destination (the object itself)".

Experiencing. Taylor and Ladkin (2009) argued that making art and working with the hands touches a person's emotions and the making process includes a premise that the act of making art can foster a deep experience of personal presence and connection. Presentational knowing provides relatively direct access to our experiences and an emotional connection to ourselves, others, and our experiences. It happens through drawing on expressive forms of imagery in making art with one's hands.

Your actions are constantly connected to your inner self and your mood will always find expression in the handicraft at hand. When you are bored, your knitting might be a little monotone but if you are really inspired everybody will notice it in your knitting. (Museum curator)

This experiencing was of very particular kind that rarely happened at work. It was unusual to be allowed to knit during working hours. Darsø (2004: 136-146) calls it *presencing*, a deep experience aroused by the act of making where individual transcendence occurs. It starts from the normal mode of operation and continues to observation and discussions. The process continues on to sensing, which means becoming one with the external world (making art) and it in turn facilitates the move toward *presencing*, the world being a combination of being present in the moment and sensing. *Presencing* is the state of being both open to the

external world and the internal sensation, as well as being fully present in the moment. When a person makes art they have to let go of all control.

Reasoning. Springborg (2012) stated that artistic activity is the flesh and blood of thinking. He argued that it is possible to think by working with perception and maintaining a connection through continued sensing, regardless of any instrumental purposes during the process. He suggests that the creation of art is a creation of a concept because art is a refined and intensified form of experience (ibid. 126-129). Perceptual refinement allows us to become aware of new perceptual patterns in our experience. Springborg went on to note that artistic activity is a form of reasoning without words and so it is possible to think by working with perception (ibid.).

In my mind I associated the knitted pieces with many stories and funny anecdotes I had heard, and that made my pieces special. It was not about knitting alone but the atmosphere of knitting together as a whole. (Museum manager)

During the guerilla knitting project, several ideas emerged as the knitting progressed. The knitting activity inspired people to talk about all kinds of topics, work and non-work related, but the purpose of the activity was not to produce new ideas or engage in brainstorming. Despite this, several ideas surfaced that could be further developed later on. Knitting stimulated reasoning and thinking.

Springborg's remark is reminiscent of the tale of Mrs. Defarge with her knitting in Paris during the French revolution in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* when she incorporated the incidents she saw in the street into her knitted work (1993: 190, 205):

But the fingers went, the eyes went, and the thoughts. ... She knitted in her own stitches and her own symbols, it will always be as plain to her as the sun. Confide in Madame Defarge. It would be easier for the weakest poltroon that lives, to erase himself from existence, than to erase one letter of his name or crimes from the knitted register of Madame Defarge.

Organizational level. The analysis revealed the themes on the organizational or team level to be resistance, discussion and storytelling, sharing and structuring and enabling.

Resistance. It was important to give space to resistance and critical voices. People felt they were taken seriously. The resistance probably had its roots in feelings of not being engaged in the decision making. However, it was important to manage the resistance and not to let it subvert the ARS11 project. What was most needed then was to show the opponents that they were participating in the decision making process as full members in a non-hierarchical setting.

The concept of guerilla knitting was rebellious and breached articles of the city ordinance on the conduct expected of the museum as a respected institution. In this case it offered the opponents a way to express their protest, which was channeled toward a constructive goal. They felt empowered being able to protest and get their way in choosing the guerilla option. The resistance soon died down and the staff acquired a shared aim.

Discussing and storytelling. When we refer to discussions in the project we mean the more formal talk on museum topics in a professional setting, and by storytelling we refer to unofficial moments of chatting together, telling stories, jokes, and anecdotes. Both discussing and storytelling took place, in a very free and uncoordinated manner.

There were loads of funny jokes, gossip, and entertaining stories. We really had lots of fun and laughed a lot too. Handicraft also inspired some brilliant professional ideas to return to later on. (Museum employee)

According to Darsø (2004: 45) the knitting meetings can be considered art creating meetings, artistic events, that have the potential to put people in contact with each other where the communication happens through knitting. It is not only about having fun but about the actual connection that people feel and the support they experience while working together. People feel like they are having a dialogue; contributing their ideas and being listened to in a two-way communication, even if that is sometimes non-verbal.

Austin and Devin (2003: 169) argued that as a component of an artful framework *collaboration* is conversation that arises out of individual release and the basic technique involved is reconceiving. Collaborators reconceive a process in light of each other's contributions using them as material from which they make new unpredictable ideas. In the knitting process it seems to be a combination of conversation and *making* art, verbal and non-verbal communication that encourages togetherness. The knitting was communication that attracted the staff to join in the art making.

Sharing. The knitting project encouraged the sharing of knowledge and skills. The skillful knitters taught the novices. Although the knitting was predominantly done by women, there was one courageous man who wanted to learn to knit too. He received plenty of tuition and guidance from others. Sharing knowledge mostly included teaching people to knit and to knit in different styles. Skills transfer is one of the four processes that Taylor and Ladkin (2009, 56-57) suggested underpins arts-based methods. Skills transfer has a process character and is related to universal skills such as handicraft or listening that can be transferred from the arts experience to other realms (Taylor & Ladkin 2009: 60-61).

The knitters took part in a collective process which resulted in a collage or a bricolage, meaning a piece put together from several different elements or materials. Bricolage can also refer to a creative process (Dezeuze 2008: 33-37) of pottering around between the necessary and the pleasant. It may be full of passion, amateurism, and commitment, but it has nothing to do with professionalism and institutional knowledge production. It is easy to equate bricolage with children's play or making art. The guerilla knitting project turned into a collective aesthetic handicraft (Koivunen 2009: 265) of play and art through the bricolage process.

Listening to others or fitting one's handicraft to that of others in sizes and models is a matter of having the ability to evaluate things from an aesthetic point of view, it is an issue of the sense of rhythm which relates to aesthetic capabilities (Koivunen 2009: 266).

We learned to share our handicraft. I was able to continue a piece somebody else had started and someone else could take the one I had been working on. It literally made the guerilla pieces shared. (Museum curator)

Sharing is also a relational skill, each person had to have an idea how their knitting might fit together with the other knitters' pieces. Koivunen (2009: 266) remarked that in such a situation, decision making is based on collective rhythm keeping, but also demands a sense of maturity and timing. In the knitting project, the individual pieces were designed to fit with other pieces and to make a rhythmic and balanced whole in the five marketing colors. It was a matter of coordinating the knitting models and sharing the aesthetic judgment.

Structuring and enabling. For a few months the knitting continued in an organic and unplanned manner. As the opening date for the exhibition approached, the museum staff realized the effort needs to be organized and drafted written instructions to guide the project toward completion.

It gave the process a clear direction and inspired some virtuosi into masterly knitting performances. We all became goal-oriented. (Museum curator)

The initiative was taken by a few individuals on the staff because the pieces were to be attached to certain places they had earmarked. The pieces were connected to each other and the attachments and display were organized. The structuring effort turned the project into a goal-oriented one, and reinforced individual commitment. It may have been a sign of the need for stronger leadership than was available at the time.

Enabling individuals to perform the art endeavor involved ensuring they were provided with materials, yarns, knitting needles, and time to knit. This was the museum manager's task. Enabling also included encouraging people to get involved in knitting and understanding the value and meaning of it. It manifested itself in asking questions, looking for ideas, having mutual discussions in both official and unofficial encounters. Another act of enabling was to offer a forum for the criticism that arose. Furthermore, enabling involved the staff in continually supporting each other throughout the project.

Koivunen (2009: 271) pointed out that a weak organizational structure advances and enables creating collective competences in an organization. In the project there was no hierarchy and instead the operations and the decision making were performed with maximum flexibility. The project was carried out in concert with the staff to help the individuals to focus on their work, the knitting, as effectively as possible.

The public domain. The themes of the public domain are audience response, the task, and joining as a result of an aesthetic choice.

Audience response. The audience response was anticipated in discussions and played a vital role in the endeavor because the goal was to attract attention and ensure visibility. Structuring and organizing the knitting and determining the size of the pieces was of great importance. Structuring also supported the enabling of the whole project. Volunteers and café clientele becoming involved in the knitting constituted a remarkable positive response from the audience. The knitting exhibited in the museum area attracted interest from people and brought visitors to the museum.

As they entered the museum café, customers commented on seeing the knitted pieces on the lampposts and tree trunks in the courtyard and some volunteered to contribute to the knitting. They were so eager that they were knitting as they queued to be served. (Museum café employee)

The audience wanted to find out about the exhibition and its connection to the knitting. The staff's handmade advertising for the museum project was a success. Locally the idea of knitting also gained interest and spread to other organizations: the following autumn a local school also experimented with guerilla knitting.

The task. The museum manager found herself responsible for implementing a task: ensuring visibility for the exhibition. The guerilla idea pleased her and others and they decided to action it. According to Austin and Devin (2003: 161), managing an artful project requires having some idea of the desired outcomes from inception, but without controlling

preconceptions. The museum manager was influenced by the initial resistance among her staff members and considered fostering a sense of togetherness among the staff paramount, even if the knitting project might jeopardize the institutional respectability of the museum.

The museum manager was in charge of the mutual meaning making in order to promote the exhibition, and she employed leadership tools suited to her leadership style: asking questions, discussing and making room for alternative decisions. Nevertheless, the mutual meaning making was not her achievement but a result of shared multilogues (i.e., many-to-many conversations, see Dachler & Hosking, 1995) where every participant was free to have their say.

Art making was used instrumentally in order to enhance the museum's visibility and promote the exhibition. Performing the task was an issue in the public domain involving answering to the strategic objectives and promises the museum had set as a public institution.

Joining as a result of an aesthetic choice. Volunteers became involved in the project through donating time, work, and effort. Strati (2007:72–74) argued that aesthetic knowledge resulting from arts-based methods gives rise to interaction and the construction of social relationships. The senses produce different kinds of knowledge which raises different social relationships. The aesthetics gave form to the tacit dimension of the organizational knowledge.

Friends and townspeople became curious about the pieces and admired the skillful handicraft. They were attracted by the yarn, the colors, and the prospect of working with their hands, and that made them want to get involved. I think they also felt sympathetic toward the exhibition of African outsider art. (Museum manager)

Ramirez (1991) studied organizing by an aesthetic choice and referred to Immanuel Kant (Atalay 2007: 49) and his concept of *sensus communis*. According to Kant, aesthetic experiences are subjective by nature but they also are collective by *sensus communis*. People who have aesthetic feelings for a theme or an institution expect others to share similar feelings. This idea can be applied to the project, and not only to the museum personnel but also to the outsiders, those invited to contribute by the staff or the café knitters, who wanted to join in the project to support a common goal. The volunteers and partners involving themselves in the project had aesthetic feelings toward the theme of the exhibition, the museum or the knitting, and they made an aesthetic choice to join the project.

Crossing institutional borders

The guerilla knitting activity at the museum may not have been a radical demonstration of rebellion or anarchism, but it caused the museum professionals to cross several borders. They were doing things differently using an exciting yet safe method; they were the guerillas of the museum institution. The museum people identified with the thrilling idea of guerilla knitting, of doing something extraordinary and perhaps somewhat radical. It could be easily argued that instead of guerilla knitting the museum staff merely engaged in using "regular" knitting as a way to inspire their work. When observing the knitting sessions in the office this may indeed be a valid claim. We do, however, state that it was of utmost importance that the employees identified with the idea of guerilla knitting. This exciting idea helped them not only become excited about the project but also negotiate several institutional barriers in the organization. The knitting activity not only boosted creativity in planning the marketing of the exhibition, it also created permanent change in the work practices of the museum. We identified four borders that were stretched and renegotiated during the knitting process.

The first and perhaps the most influential of those borders was the institutionalized work practice in museums. Using artistic methods to initiate a project or develop its content does not belong to the organizational culture of a museum institution: it is a clear step into the almost sacred realm of art and artists. Museum work is considered expert work based on both analytical thinking skills and the aesthetic judgment of objects. The materiality in museum work connects with art or heritage objects but museum professionals are not expected to produce artifacts, let alone display them. Their education means museum professionals tend to withdraw themselves from artistic activity. Studying art history tends to make one humble in front of the great masters of art and utterly critical of one's own artistic activity. Museum professionals are trained as scholars, not as artists. Perhaps in a museum organization this border crossing required even more courage than in some other types of organization. Guerilla knitting stretched the boundaries of both professional identity and professional work to include creative and playful elements. This playfulness is often an essential part of artistic methods, as in the earlier example of playing with Lego blocks.

The second stretched border was that governing individual achievement. Working independently and not sharing your working practices and knowledge with others was the dominant way of working in this museum when the focal research project started. In the knitting project one was able to grab a piece of handicraft somebody else had started and continue knitting with a personal pattern, coloring, and touch. The resulting handicraft was literally co-created and individualism was renegotiated. The knitting functioned as a means to make the collective effort visible in the final collection of knitting. In expert work, it is sometimes difficult to notice and appreciate how a project or a task consists of the efforts of many individuals. Fletcher and Käufer (2005: 29–30) wrote of the myth of individual achievement — how in Western society we have a strong belief in individual accomplishments and tend to downplay the role of the collective action needed to create those accomplishments. In other words, individual actions are rendered independent of other people's activities when in fact most actions involve interdependence. The knitting project was a concrete example and reminder of how other work activities also build on colleagues' work and how it is acceptable to continue the work someone else has started. The knitting offered an opportunity for the professional museum personnel to understand how their work connects to that of their colleagues.

The third institutional border that was crossed concerns the management practice in the museum. According to institutionalized management practice, it is the museum manager who initiates action and to whom museum professionals turn when they encounter problems. This border was renegotiated in the knitting project. First of all, the suggestion to try out knitting came from the museum professionals, the followers. Second, the members of staff took the initiative and started coordinating the knitting project with regard to what pieces were still needed and how the pieces would be used to decorate the museum environment. They felt responsible for structuring the knitting project and took action to prevent colleagues becoming frustrated, and to work toward the goal. The museum organization operates in a hierarchical fashion and the border delimiting the manager's power over the subordinate (Dachler & Hosking, 1995) was crossed during the knitting project.

The guerilla knitting activity also extended the physical museum space, which constitutes the fourth way in which institutional practice was interrupted. The end products of the knitting effort were placed in the environs of the museum at several locations for the public to see. The official museum buildings were tamed by the colorful knitting, conveying that they were approachable and almost playful. Members of the audience did not have to enter the museum building to see elements of the exhibition. In other words, outsider art was literally advertised outside of the traditional museum space.

We believe this process of pushing one's limits and broadening the perspective are typical outcomes of the use of artistic methods in organizations. In our case example, the institutional borders were crossed and dominating practices interrupted in the course of the knitting project. Many of these transformations remained permanent, for instance, there was an increase in collective working and relationships became less hierarchical.

Guerilla knitting in relation to Schiuma's value matrix

We also wanted to analyze the results of guerilla knitting in relation to Schiuma's (2009: 34–39) art-based initiatives value model. That model depicts four zones of value creation that art-based methods can contribute to: the igniting zone, the intrinsic zone, the instrumental zone, and the artful zone. The value zone defines the nature of the benefits of arts-based initiatives by their intensity of impact on people or an organization. Schiuma combined these value zones with three strategic management approaches which are illustrated in Figure 2 with arrows. Arrow number 1 illustrates the "building arts capital" necessary to enhance the value creating capacity of an organization; arrow number 2 illustrates "engaging people energy", which acts as a catalyst for personal change; and arrow number 3 depicts "artful organizational development", which integrates organizational and personal development.

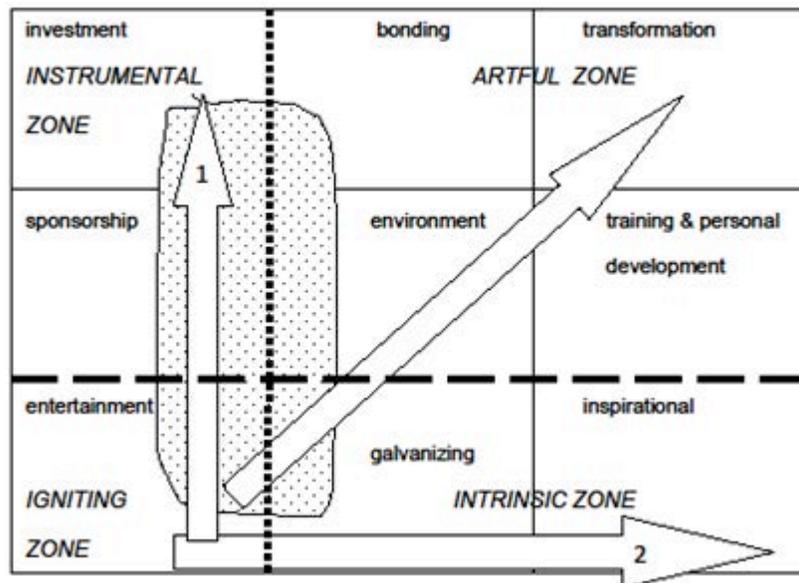


Figure 2. Guerilla knitting project in relation to Schiuma's (2009:35) Arts-based initiatives value matrix

In the figure, the dotted area illustrates our interpretation of the positioning of guerilla knitting, and it is clear that so positioned against Schiuma's matrix the guerilla knitting project partially relates to every zone. In terms of the strategic management approaches, guerilla knitting most closely resembles the building arts capital approach, since the museum had an express goal of enhancing its brand and creating visibility by adopting an alternative marketing approach. In that sense, the knitting project fits well in the instrumental zone. In

the case of the KHRM museum, the impact is more aligned with the organization targeting enhancing the added value of its products and services. From the instrumental viewpoint the goal of creating visibility was attained and audience attention was attracted as desired, and furthermore, the visibility achieved by the exhibition was welcomed.

In addition, there were some remarkable impacts on people. In the *igniting zone*, the art process spurred the participants' interest in the issue and offered great fun and entertainment. It was a positive and happy journey that contained the seeds of the conquest of resistance. The *intrinsic zone* engaged people on a personal level and channeled their energy in order to reach the goal. There were moments of experiencing, learning, and art making. The final conquest of resistance occurred in the *artful zone*. The handicraft process proved to be an integrative instrument that people happily accepted by aesthetic choice according to *sensus communis*. It encouraged people to share, open up to each other, to the task, and to the environment. There was a change in the organizational atmosphere which became more open to creative and alternative *modus operandi*.

Conclusions

We have presented a study in which a specific artistic method, guerilla knitting, was applied in an organization to positive effect. Our research question concerned those organizational processes that are enhanced in a project involving artistic methods. According to our findings, the effects are twofold. First, the knitting project influenced processes on the levels of individual, organizational, and public domains; and second, the project caused staff members to cross several institutional borders. The individual level themes are art making, experiences, and reasoning. The themes evident on the organizational level were resistance, discussing and storytelling, sharing, and structuring and enabling. The beneficial effects on the public domain were evident in the audience response, carrying out the task, and joining as a result of an aesthetic choice. Furthermore, the project traversed several institutional borders: working practice, the culture of individual achieving, management practice, and the physical museum space. In other words, permanent organizational change was created in the museum.

To connect our findings to existing research, we positioned our data categories against the models of the value of art-initiated methods suggested by Schiuma (2009). It is feasible to state that the organizational impacts of guerilla knitting extended from the individual and organizational level to the public domain as Schiuma suggested. Furthermore, guerilla knitting seemed very similar to the strategy of art building capital presented in Schiuma's value matrix. The impacts on people were mostly of the igniting type and instrumental in nature.

Our first conclusion is that the study lends support to the findings of many previous studies (e.g., Nissley, 2002; Taylor & Ladkin 2009; Springborg, 2012; Berthoin, Antal, & Strauss, 2013) reporting important and meaningful impacts of arts-initiated methods in different organizations. Our study identifies the importance of making that was suggested by Taylor and Ladkin (2009), of playfulness and collaboration and sharing (the ensemble concept of Austin & Devin, 2003) and of the role of aesthetic skills (Strati, 2007; Springborg, 2012).

To provide a more detailed analysis of arts-based methods, we have identified a sub-category among these methods, that of handicraft methods. This second conclusion emphasizes how these methods particularly address the ways of the hands and making things by hand. Here we wish to join other researchers (Barry & Meisiek, 2014; Taylor & Ladkin, 2014; Jacobs & Heracleous, 2007; Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008; Gayá Wicks & Rippin, 2010, Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) who have already discussed methods we identify as handicraft methods. Our study

aligns with the above-mentioned studies in illustrating the importance of touch and tactility as well as that of materiality, which definitely warrant more research. The connection between people making something by hand and cognitive skills has also often been recognized in various contexts. Furthermore, knitting as a domestic activity may be more easily approached than other artistic methods drawing on the fine arts.

As a third contribution we emphasize how guerilla knitting was applied in the museum as an emerging way of dealing with a difficult exhibition project. It was not suggested by management but an ordinary member of staff. The method was also implemented very organically and with only a very light management influence. The knitting started in an unspecified manner — the museum employees just starting knitting without any particular goal or strict instructions — and only at a relatively late stage was some structuring and organization superimposed. In addition, the initiative for more structure came from the employees themselves, not the management. To the best of our knowledge, no prior research has investigated the emergent nature of an artistic method. Our study suggests that an artistic method initiated by the employees can produce and sustain good results in an organization. It can vitally enhance an organizational process and help to reach desired goals. Furthermore, when initiated by the group of employees themselves, the motivation and energy to proceed with such a method seem to arise naturally. We can only speculate whether a similar level of enthusiasm would have been present if the initiative had come from the management.

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