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“States-of-the-Arts” in Organization & Leadership Practices: A Poly-logue in Three Parts: Final Part III Com-&-Implications, Opening Conclusion & Perspectives

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“States-of-the-Arts” in Organization & Leadership Practices: A Poly-logue in Three Parts*:

Final Part III Com-&-Implications, Opening Conclusion & Perspectives

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Abstract & Introduction

Like in the first and second parts, the final part of this poly- or metalogue series on the “States-of-the-Arts” in Organization & Leadership Practices, will give voice to and process again different positions and responses.

In particular, it will focus on ways of artful making, professional artistry, serious play, and in-(ter-)between. Overall, it will discuss some im- and complications, offering some conclusions and perspectives.

Just as a note on form again, the meta-logue of this series tries to offer not only a way to express what and how the participants take positions and comment on and debate various themes, issues and problems. Rather, this multidimensional dialogical structure for these conversations in particular and as a whole is also relevant to a proper socio-reflective processing of contents (Bateson, 1979, 2000:1 Bateson & Bateson, 1988). Adopting this form of a poly-voicing “meta-logue” helped to explore in ways that bypass stilted senses of trying to write in a formal journal style.

Often more hinting, alluding to apropos and speaking between lines subversively, instead of writing in pro-positional discursive ways allowed other more living positions and dishing courses to be ventilated. Accordingly, the form here serves a living and enlivening way of

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expressions and it preserves vivacity in a luscious prose doing more justice to plurality of experiences and reflections, variety of courses and discourses.

This more artful way of expressing provides a provision for a way of processing complexity in non-reductive ways, hinting to unfathomable planes with its edges and between zones and passageways, with the abyss above and below, thus offering multidimensional "transformations".

As we have experienced, this dialogue goes on in slow, open and curious ways of relating. This relating can be characterized by a very special sort of listening, and speaking, questing and questioning, while being present. This "presencing" is one, with an embodied and reflexive attention to the ongoing process and one's own part in it (Bohm 2004). This "presence-reflective" meta-loguing becomes not only an alternative form, but also an inquiry process for the chosen topic that expresses an embodied reflexivity, critical problematising and appreciation of entanglements of "people-scholars".

To provisionally finishing this series and seemingly stopping the ongoing flow of this conversation is an interruption of something that would and could go on and on, being more and more enriched by further voices, ideas, thoughts and feelings, finding its conversational expressions. There is no conclusive termination as neither any further speakers, nor listening readers here have privileged access to the "final" meaning of these con-textures. In this sense, a text, like this reconstructed one of a conversation, is always beyond any control and finishing.

There are so many and valuable possible other and othering meanings and interpretations, contradictions, paradoxes, unsettling openings that could have been expressed, supplemented. It carries but are constantly escaping, breaking in or slipping away, and continue to be a not yet actualised hermeneutic potential. There is never a foreclosing completing of the incompletable, which is alive in an ongoing conversation that does not come to an end when the conversing ends.

So the ending here, is it not its own beginning and its beginning, but the end of the states-of-affairs given ... "and". "and". "and". "and"?!

Keywords: Merleau-Ponty, body, embodiment, artistry, art, aesthetics, serious play

Part III - Com-&Implications, Opening Conclusion & Perspectives

(Stage: Again, the "dramatis personæ" and some new participants are gathering to resume their conversation at very same round table, invented by Merlin. Dusk is casting its subtle light, creating an elusive atmosphere. Slowly the constant casual talking is quietening, while all take their seats in the conferencing place of the symposium. Once more, the sound of the mindfulness bell by the facilitator invites all, this time for a final round.)

Facilitator: Let us now reconvene and come to conclude our conversation. We can then open up towards some perspectives on what we have discussed, thus preparing future continuations ...

In the first part, we debated the status of organizing, the role of senses, sensation and sense-making. We discussed the significance of the living body and embodiment. As part of this, we have had a contested dispute concerning the status of embodied sense-making and its im- and complications.

In a second round, we argued about various qualities and the role of art and aesthetics in organization and leadership. Accordingly, we learned about critical, utopian, and pragmatic dimensions of the "artful" artworks and the transformational potential of a living embodied aesthetics in organization and beyond! In particular, professional artistry was recognized as mediating form and competency by which leadership organization with its members and embodied aesthetic processes can intersect. Subsequently, the role of envisioning and imagination, the art of leadership, performance and critical performativity and the potential and actualities of improvisation were addressed in detail. Finally, we mused on various implications and consequences.

Organizational Researcher: Yes, we travelled quite a fascinating journey through wondrous landscapes. What impressed me most was that aesthetic experiences of artworks and working of art as well as the aesthetic processes can be employed as inspiring guides or media for fashioning everyday experiences and lives of leaders and organizations differently. Artful forms can contribute to releasing those qualities and cultivating the needed competencies. In fact, art — that "works" — can provide what will be in demand not only in current times but even more also in the future, if we want to develop a sustainable world.

Küpers: Aesthetically reflective and artistically oriented leaders and employees, as well as organisations, expand their repertoire and deepen or heighten their sense of what is possible for managing, organizing and thus working more creatively. The integration of the arts into leadership and organization not only results in multiple ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Rather, this integrating also aids social coherence, supports the practice of emotional competencies, and encourages critical thinking and visionary capacities and realisation of wisdom and art- and playful practicing professionally 2013, 2020.

Artist: But how can we keep our playfulness in doing so? Your professionalism related to art(istry) sounds too serious for my taste.

Austin and Devin: Leadership and organizations inspired and guided by art integrate learnable qualities of "artful making" (2003) that allow creative collaborations and serious play as tools for dealing with complexity, embracing ambivalences and uncertainties, and innovating under deadline pressure and other constraints.

Statler et al: As a concept and intervention technique, serious play describes moments in which play and work are deliberately and meaningfully juxtaposed in distinct organizational contexts and in relation to outcomes (Statler et al. 2011). With playful

experimental openness to emergent change and using sensual media to express knowledge and ideas (such as LEGO bricks or clay), playing seriously enables participants to generate new insights about their organization and the problems faced by it as well as to cultivate capacities to adapt to emergent and unexpected change (Statler & Oliver, 2008).

Merleau-Ponty: Indeed, art facilitates working with overlapping or multiple meanings, thereby contributing to a tolerance for and living with ambiguities playfully. The effective artistically and aesthetically informed practitioner, then, should be well-versed not only in the analytical and logical-rational patterns but also in non-logical, intuitive, and aesthetic perceiving, patterning and thus frisky practicing their ways and of leading and organizing in a playful mode.

Statler et al.: Yes, exactly! As a practice of paradox, play is not defined by specific material circumstances associated with it, or the outcomes associated with it, but instead the extent to which participants are frivolously having fun. This can then serve as an instrumental means of achieving serious productive objectives, thereby enacting a paradox of intentionality (2011: 247) of being seriously playful.

Organizational Researcher: Such use of play is in danger of being appropriated for specific and vested interests that may be alien to a free and intrinsically valuable playing. The question will be, who defines, and in which ways, the seriousness? Furthermore, what will be the status of the desired or pre-determined outcomes? If play implies valuing spontaneity (of the responsive body and forms of embodiment) and entails an acceptance of what might appear first as unorthodox results or outcomes, what happens to playing if it's utilized? Instrumentalising play and its qualities may then be contained, harnessed, tamed or framed in all too serious ways.

Leadership Researcher: Is this then a form of coarsened behaviourism: slap a game on top of any activity and people will want to participate! But didn't and don't humans already gamify their social relations through the use of playful interactions?

McGonigal: But reality is in many ways broken, and games can make us better and change the world (2011).

Deterding: If it is true that we experience play as fun partially because it is framed or arranged as autonomous, with no outer control, coercion, or frightful consequence affixed, then ... well, then the irony of instrumentalising play as a means to another end is that it depletes the very source it tries to tap into: the experience of autonomy in non-instrumental activity (2015: 49).

Artist: Undeniably, an increasing "utilisation" kills the very soul of all games and plays, stripping its magical enchantment, gathering momentum and distinct cachet —

Organizational Researcher: Perhaps this instrumentalization of play that will engender alienation and professional deformation makes people reassert their autonomy and playfulness in gaming or playing with the "system" for seeking out new, yet unknown spaces and forms of nonfunctionalized restoration and resistance

Artist: that will then be functionalized again — that's not breaking the path and logic of ongoing instrumentalization and exploitation! We need to be more radical!

Fink: Play has an extraordinary status in its being an existential basic phenomenon, just as primordial and autonomous as death, love, work and struggle for power, but it is not bound to these phenomena in a common ultimate purpose. Play, so to speak, confronts them all - it absorbs them by representing them. We play at being serious, we play truth, we play reality, we play work and struggle, we play love and death - and we even play play itself (2016: 204).

Artist: as part of the play of the world re-enacting being as Heraclitus knew already!

Organizational Researcher: Wait a minute! Before getting lost in such overarching interpretation, perhaps it is better to see how changes take place in local meanings and forms of playing?!

Kane: Accordingly, the critical question remains: who gets to play what kind of game (2004: 275)?

Merleau-Ponty: ... and what role do bodily senses "play" in this?

Panagia: ... What is the political life of sensation involved (2009)?

Rancière: What we need is *redistribution and reconfiguration of the sensible*! This involves aesthetic ruptures that challenge the "share of the sensible" that defines the respective places and the parts. It is only thereby that it becomes possible to alter the field of the possibilities and capacities of what and how something can be sensed, felt, seen, heard, thought, said or otherwise expressed. When we take equality as a means of contesting hierarchical and exclusionary distributions of the sensible, and this allows us to imagine other forms of arrangements, preserving the possible as possible (2004, 2010).

Spicer et al.: In this context, it might be interesting to link embodied play to a critical performativity that is using possible tactics of critical affirmation, ethics of circumspect care, a progressive pragmatism orientation, and a focus on potentialities and a normative emancipatory stance, rework discourses and practices (2009: 545-554).

Organizational Researcher: Additionally, what about integrating socio-ethico-political dimensions of flesh - in the sense of Beasley and Bacchi (2007) - of play that pays attention needs to underlying principles and purposes.

Swidler: However, some practices of organizing and leadership may become entrenched among others as more dominant, in that way some become "more equal than others" and end up anchoring nets of activities (2001).

Organizational Researcher: Indeed, we need to see critically in which organizational setting which political in- or exclusive practices are exercised. This analysis can help to understand how, by what power, control is achieved and maintained as well as what forms of practicing are excluded or superimposed. In particular, such a critical stance can reveal how specific embodied experiences, meanings and practices of leaders and followers or stakeholders are discriminated, marginalised, degraded and ignored, dominated or subordinated.

Küpers: Thus, a critical approach towards what can be called "*inter-practice*" can be used for studying the ordering and normalising effects of disciplinary techniques and encumbering processes of forced or imposed practices on individual and collective levels (2011), while always already related to bodies involved.

Harding: Yes, for example, investigating the bodies of managers, who embody the desired aesthetic of organisational control and how they produce and are consumed by the organisation, while being rendered invisible or seen as something to be mastered. On a collective level, this also implies critically exploring group-dynamics or governing functional, structural and resource-related issues within the organisational system that exclude, for example, certain practices of improvisation or the roles of improviser. That is why practices of playful improvisation are so important because they are realized through non-purposive, non-rational and especially silence(d) practices in organisational life (2002).

Artist: That is why it is important to explore what is or cannot be expressed, processed or practiced playfully. This implies also those phenomena that are unthinkable, supposedly un-doable or tabooed.

Organizational Researcher: With these quests and questions, the challenge will be to design or keep possibilities of play activities open that keep its spontaneous emergences open ... and qualify them somehow as ethical or even practically wise.

Statler: Indeed, it will be vital to make a connection between serious play and practical wisdom (2005), also to not get lost in a ludification and divisive gamification, not only of work, but also of everyday-life and culture.

Holliday, et al.: especially for developing practically wise leader(ship),...which we showed is necessary (2007)!

Küpers: Yes and understood as an enacting “Art of Practical Wisdom” (2013).

Waistell: Actually, complementing an environmental aesthetics can also promote “Corporate Sustainability” (2015). Thus, art and aesthetics can deepen the affective relationship of organisational members with nature by focusing on, accessing, and conveying emotions, engaging with natural phenomena culturally, and promoting a more pro-environmental orientation within the organization (2015: 182).

Ivanaj, Poldner, & Shrivastava: (*together*) Yes, aesthetics can convey emotional knowledge related to the affectively charged theme of sustainability. And aesthetic inquiry can access the emotional connection between humans and nature that is required for sustainability. Moreover, art can convey human emotions and can indeed facilitate understanding and expression of sustainability, enliven vision, and galvanise action (2014).

Practitioner: To be realistic in all this, shall I say, fanciful imaging and airy-fairy sounding potentials, we need to also see the limitations and problematic qualities associated with art and aesthetics in the practical context of organization and leadership. Artistry can be disruptive, deconstructive, deceptive, delusional, and just plain boring, missed or wrong when applied or processed not properly in organizational settings. Furthermore, as art and aesthetic processes are often idiosyncratic or evanescent and tend to be non-calculative and unpredictable, many of my colleagues as leaders and employees might be overwhelmed. Or they block and suppress genuine aesthetic ideas or processes and creative actions proposed by their followers or others.

Organizational Researcher: Thus, there is a need for translation or better to say “trans(re-)lation” - relating concepts and practice in bridging ways - and vision or versions of overthrowing or undermining sub-versions!

Practitioner: Integrating more processes that are aesthetic can threaten our status and power as leaders, and we will be criticized or blamed if new art-inspired practices, strategies, or goals have negative effects on the organization and its members.

Organizational Researcher: Yes, I agree with these critical assessments. Furthermore, art and aesthetic forms cannot only be innovative, but also conservative or appropriated. For example, they can be misused for ideological purposes, validating and reinforcing already practiced actions, beliefs, and events. They function as just maintaining the status quo, business as usual, or remaining in one’s comfort zones. One final point: a misused “aesthetication” occupied with a functional cooption can also be a means of manipulation or replace authentic leadership and organization.

Practitioner & Organizational Researcher: (*together*) What becomes increasingly apparent is that to realise the potentials and reap the full benefits of integrating art and context-sensitive leadership, our very understanding of leadership and organizations themselves must change. We, all practitioners are called to embark for journeying towards new shores and organize in different ways. The existing forms and ways of doing things need to be transmuted and reorganized into other formations and alternative practices.

Küpers: What is required is a kind of “trans-Formation” of organizing and leadership towards an aesthetically responsive leader-and followership that is best based on a radicalised inter-relational understanding about and of those involved (2011a, 2020).

Leadership Researcher: In such an approach, the individual person of the leader and each individual follower and their situated context are the emergent products of relational processes. With a focus on relationship instead of leadership, it becomes possible to shift attention to what transpires between people, as opposed to focusing on what is contained within them. This implies moving away from the heroic-leadership stereotype, with its dyadic perspective and unidirectional power orientation, towards a more reciprocal influence processes associated with shared or distributed leadership.

Küpers: By taking into account art and aesthetics, an integrative and more holistically oriented understanding of leadership and organizational practice can be attained. This

orientation can lead to truly authentic “trans-Formational” leadership. In such practice of leading all would parties share an interest in mutual development and collective well-“be(com)ing” by activating social synergy and with this the development of the organization as a whole (2005).

Essentially, learning by and practicing concretely art and aesthetically rich experiences of leaders and employees can then be itself a source of potential “trans-Formation” and surplus value for “in-corporated” organisations. In the future, organizational members who understand how art and artists work and who develop a sense of artful practice themselves will have an advantage and an enriched more fulfilling life over those who do not. It will be an unfolding live cycle, open for a re-generative “be(com)ing”.

Artist: Can then the integration of art and leadership and organization take - symbolically and practically - more a circuitous and *spiral* pathway, rather than a linear one, as it is expressed also in the beautiful Nautilus shell spiral or works of art.

Bert Myers: *as for example expressed in my X-ray Nautilus shell*
<https://www.mcgawgraphics.com/collections/bert-myers>

Fraser & Hyland-Russel: Interestingly, this shell is constructed as a series of chambers that lead deeper into further chambers, spiralling around the “inner self”. Importantly, these chambers are also open outward, connecting the inner creature with the surrounding sea, and analogically can be used as a metaphor for learning processes and provide a model for mediating and evaluating conflicting discourses and social pressures for emerging moves of one’s personal and communal journey (2011: 29).

Artist: ... Also land art, artistic architecture or works of art express this message of a spiral.

Robert Smithon: Look at “The Spiral Jetty”



The Spiral Jetty - Land Art by Robert Smithson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuVHgFXdJLA>



Standing in Spiral (own photo)



Celtic knot and spiral patterns

(Source License: **Creative Commons Attribution**

<http://www.craftsmanspace.com/free-patterns/celtic-patterns.html>)

Andy Goldsworthy: Look at photos of my works where I cocreated spirals as "land art":

Architect: Spiral stairways allow taking different perspectives if you move up and down on them.

Küpers: Yes, this natural spiral nautilus and expressions of works of art can serve as a profound and dynamic image of meaning. They are like metaphors for deepening awareness and integration, especially of personal, relational, and cultural stories and

practices of artful doing and even wisdom learning, going beyond one-sided and reductive approaches.

Organizational Researcher: This is important because the very nature of artistry transcends much of the myopic, one-best-way approach that characterizes much of conventional leadership and organizational quick-fix formulas. Therefore, the integration of art and leader- and followership, and organization, could itself be understood as an emergent and unfolding work of art that is an open-ended process of continual co-creation.

Organizational Researcher: It seems to me that for realising embodied creative practices, we need to critically consider the danger of a kind of regression, falling prey to kind of pre-modern longing for unity getting entangled into those retro-romantic fallacies or irrational sentimentalities. As understandable as a yearning for returning to a pre-reflective unity for the disembodied, alienated, rational modern and fragmented, relativizing postmodernism consciousness appears, there is no way back to a retro-regressive coincidence with nature or supposed pre-existing truths.

Merleau-Ponty: Indeed, what is required is rather an adequate "post-postmodern" and more integral orientation and practice of transformation following a co-creative way forward or cyclic movement spiralling back and forth through gaps (*ecart*) without getting confined (1995).

Shusterman: This kind of reversible embodied practice is realised "by actively developing our powers of reflective somatic consciousness so that we can achieve a higher unity of experience on the reflective level and thus acquire better means to correct inadequacies of our unreflective bodily habits" (2005: 176). Phenomenology, like pragmatism, offers complementary perspectives that more adequately provide a full-bodied engagement in practical efforts of somatic awareness ... generating better experiences for the future rather than trying to recapture the lost perceptual unity of a primordial past (2005: 177; 2008).

Merleau-Ponty: Yes, let us enter and experience the *in-(ter-)between* of the chiasmic flesh - as described before - out of which meaning emerges, all amidst reversible, responsive expressive fields. Between what is given and what we give, material and immaterial, senses and sense, synchronic and diachronic, structures and processes, habits and improvisation, etc. Emerging out of the ambiguous nexus of intertwining forces (1995)

Facilitator: Dear participants, I am afraid, we need to leave it t/here.

Thank you all for your valuable contributions. We have discussed various facets of multiple entangled states of the arts and affairs with regard to sensuality and aesthetics in organization and leadership. We conversed intensively on the status of senses or sensation and partly elusive subtleties of sense-making. Furthermore, we debated the role of embodied art and aesthetics in organization and leadership.

Intriguingly, we focused, especially, on its critical, utopian, and pragmatic dimensions and "trans-formational" potential. To move towards a professional artistry, we propelled through processes of envisioning and imagining performing improvising and outlined some implications.

Various emerging patterns and narratives emerged, but as expected, many questions and quests remain open. Indeed, what a programmatic agenda calling for pragmatic agencies!

I do hope that we find opportunities to continue this conversation, which we not only have (had) but *are* propelling towards further conversations and difference-sensible divergences and convergences as well as moving inter-between ...

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