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Original Article

# Working with the potential of arts-based learning: Making sense and leaving ‘business as usual’ behind in an art seminar

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the interest in arts-based learning as part of the growing literature on artistic initiatives in business contexts, by advancing the understanding of the potential of arts-based business learning that people can yet fail to benefit from. We draw on Weick’s framework for how people construct meaning in organized situations and on a qualitative study of an art seminar in business education to consider arts-based learning in the face of pitfalls that can prevent people from engaging in approaches that differ from their usual ones and from which they can learn. We show that people can benefit from the potential of arts-based business learning when collective meaning-construction processes such as sensemaking or sensegiving can unfold and work in an iterative, active and intense way, to take people towards new experiences. Our study also highlights the usefulness of taking a perspective centred on ongoing collective meaning-construction processes and of focusing on both learning activities and learning situations when studying business learning.

## Keywords

Artistic initiatives, arts-based learning, business education, meaning-construction processes, qualitative research

## Introduction

Arts-based learning has significant potential for the endeavour to redefine the business learning formula, as the old one has reached its limits in our world that faces so many challenges

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(Colby et al., 2011; Purg and Sutherland, 2017). This unusual learning method can lead to many of the possible beneficial outcomes of artistic initiatives that have grown exponentially in business contexts, such as facilitating innovation, collaboration and reflexive thinking (Berthoin Antal, 2009; Carlucci and Schiuma, 2018; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). However, many artistic initiatives ‘go nowhere, and to date we know little about why some work and others don’t’: there is no guarantee that participants will benefit from them (Meisiek and Barry, 2018: 476) or that people will learn from artistic activities in business contexts (Seppälä et al., 2020). Considering the potential of art for business learning, an improved understanding of how arts-based business learning can succeed is important for business and society.

Meaningful experience was found by Meisiek and Barry (2018) to be a key to the success of an artistic initiative. This indicates the importance of using a framework focused on how people construct meaning in organized situations (Weick et al., 2005) to understand learning in artistic initiatives. An analysis of prior works with this perspective highlights two pitfalls that can prevent people from engaging in uncommon approaches from which they can learn: failing to deal with the unusualness of arts-based initiatives and receiving guidance that does not favour learning (Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2014; Clark and Mangham, 2004a, 2004b; Meisiek and Barry, 2018; Seppälä et al., 2020). However, the process by which people benefit from the potential of arts-based business learning remains unclear.

We present a qualitative study of an art seminar in business education during which students benefitted from arts-based business learning as they experienced unfamiliar approaches. In a four-day-day seminar, students created artworks in teams with the help of instructors skilled in both art and organization theory. With limited time and budget, the teams had to imagine and create artworks about their business speciality. Each team needed to find materials, create the artwork and present it in a collective private viewing. Students had to deal with the contrast between art and business contexts and find ways to manage the challenges and unusual experiences such as continuous change and uncertainty. We show that people can benefit from the potential of arts-based business learning when collective meaning-construction processes such as sensemaking or sensegiving (Weick et al., 2005) can unfold and work in an iterative, active and intense way to enable people to foray into new experiences. This contributes to the literatures on arts-based learning (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009), artistic initiatives (Carlucci and Schiuma, 2018) and situated learning (Colville et al., 2016).

## **The potential of art for business learning**

Initiatives that integrate art into business contexts can help people learn<sup>1</sup>. By engaging in artistic activities in business contexts, people can acquire new skills that are both useful and rare in many organizations (Adler, 2006; Berthoin Antal, 2009; Schiuma, 2009; Seppälä et al., 2020; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009). For instance, arts-based learning can develop empathy and creativity (Katz-Buonincontro, 2015); arts-based initiatives in organizations can develop people’s innovative skills and strengthen their innovation competence (Bozic Yams, 2018). The approaches that arts-based business learning has the potential to foster can even go as far as to differ from the usual business ones (Adler, 2015; Edwards et al., 2013, 2015; Katz-Buonincontro, 2015; Kerr and Darsø, 2008; Purg and Sutherland, 2017). Indeed, in business contexts that are often described as encouraging individualistic behaviours, art can promote new experiences and organizing that orient people towards collective practices and results (Sorsa et al., 2018: 371), shifting participants away from ‘adversarial, combative, and competitive approaches toward more collaborative, settlement-oriented mindsets and outcomes’ (Ippolito and Adler, 2018: 358). In business schools, art can ‘trigger critical reflection in the learners’ (Śliwa et al., 2013: 255) or engage students with unusual

subversive dimensions of business activities (Bureau and Komporozos-Athanasidou, 2017) by offering them surprising experiences.

Art can enrich business contexts because it can bring unusual elements with it. Indeed, business and art traditionally rely on characteristics that are assumed to conflict. For instance, business is associated with capitalism, rationalism, standardization and control, while art is associated with creativity, imagination and ‘artist critique’ (Chiapello, 1998). Artistic interventions are about a ‘meeting of different worlds’ (Berthoin Antal, 2013: 69). This contrast of artistic culture with the ethos that is dominant in business contexts (Adler, 2006; Purg and Sutherland, 2017) offers learning opportunities when business students engage in art.

Despite this potential, people can fail to benefit from these opportunities to learn, albeit not always to the same extent or in the same way. Arts-based learning activities can result in disappointing outcomes (Badham et al., 2016). Some can be ineffective in terms of learning and may even have negative effects, such as when they lead to post-intervention decreases in targeted outcomes (skill variety and work engagement) (Seppälä et al., 2020: 50). Participants can benefit from such activities but in a paradoxical way: these ‘may increase both empowerment *and* control’ (Badham et al., 2016: 124, emphasis in original). Sometimes, an artistic activity helps people to learn unusual approaches, but it can also generate confusion. For example, an arts-based learning activity can entail ‘paradox and contradiction’ when participants experience both new and familiar forms of leadership (Parush and Koivunen, 2014: 108–111). Thus, there is interest in understanding how arts-based learning fails or succeeds.

Artistic initiatives succeed in changing people’s ‘habitual ways of seeing, knowing and acting’ when participants can experience new approaches and engage meaningfully with these (Meisiek and Barry, 2018: 476). This latter study indicates that many initiatives fail to provide such opportunities due to issues related to meaning-construction processes.

According to studies on meaning-construction processes, people continuously interpret and produce organized situations through processes such as ‘sensemaking’ and ‘sensegiving’ (Weick et al., 2005). In an iterative, collective and ongoing way, people develop a plausible understanding of what happens by making sense of their surroundings to create meaning that serves as a basis for action, before re-making sense of what has been enacted so as to act further, and so on. This helps to find an ‘organizing’ principle adequate for a situation. People engage in such processes when their current understanding is experienced as unsatisfactory. Thus, any organized action is affected by the people who participate in it and who are, in return, affected by what they encounter. They can fail to deal with unusualness that challenges sensemaking (Weick, 1993) and be oriented by others through sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

Some have argued that ‘how people inside and outside organizations learn to make sense and make sense to learn is of both theoretical and practical importance and relevance’ (Colville et al., 2016: 4). An analysis of existing studies on arts-based initiatives with this framework of meaning-construction processes indeed helps to highlight two pitfalls that can limit the ability of participants to take part in experiences from which they can learn.

The first pitfall derives from the fact that some people fail to deal with unusualness. The more unusual events are, the more likely they are to challenge sensemaking or even precipitate a ‘collapse of sensemaking’: people who fail to make sense of events might be unable to maintain a successful organized action as they become unable to act, to engage in new approaches, or to change organizing (Weick, 1993). Challenges tend to occur when people are confronted with elements that clash excessively with what they know or believe (i.e. their mental representations, whether they are accurate or not), because expectations and previous experiences influence meaning-construction processes.

Thus, people can fail to deal with the unusualness of arts-based initiatives, which may limit participants' chances to learn from them. Indeed, such unusual activities entail 'a journey into the unknown' (Berthoin Antal and Nussbaum Bitran, 2019: 73), but too much disturbance excessively challenges people's ability to make sense of them and to engage in them. People learn from art only if it introduces a 'constructive disturbance' in an equilibrium between art and business (Darsø, 2016). The issue is that people need to deal with the contrast between art and business, but also between arts-based business learning and conventional business learning methods (Bureau, 2013: 213; Statler and Guillet de Monthoux, 2015). People may fail to make sense of unusualness in business learning as they cling to what is familiar (Weick, 2007). Business learning tends to be rational, optimization-focused, disembodied and based on the transfer of academic knowledge between experts and learners (Ghoshal, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004) whereas art supports situated, experiential learning that can offer 'a different situation than normally associated with classroom work' (Sutherland, 2012: 30). Arts-based learning occurs when people engage in, and make sense of, new experiences (Barry and Meisiek, 2010; Purg and Sutherland, 2017; Sutherland, 2012) during and after events (Sutherland and Jelinek, 2015). If people face an excessively challenging experience, this may affect, or even impede, learning from arts-based activities (Bureau and Komporozos-Athanasidou, 2017; Katz-Buonincontro, 2015; Mack, 2013; Moshavi, 2001; Śliwa et al., 2013).

The second pitfall derives from the fact that, in collective organized situations, some participants can use sensegiving to 'influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality' (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). Sensegiving provides guidance that helps to limit failures to make sense in organized action, but it also orients the action.

Thus, participants in arts-based initiatives can receive guidance that does not favour learning. In artistic interventions, both the art and business sides should help participants to make sense of unusual elements (Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2014), although failure can result from sense being excessively directed by either of these two sides (Meisiek and Barry, 2018). Guidance can be useful for arts-based learning (Badham et al., 2016; Sutherland and Jelinek, 2015). Insufficient guidance can lead to negative effects because people may fail to make sense of this unusual activity on their own (Seppälä et al., 2020) and irrelevant guidance can lead to ambiguous experiences with conflicting outcomes (Parush and Koivunen, 2014). Alternatively, excessive guidance can prevent participants from engaging in approaches that differ from their usual ones, from which they could learn. For instance, art can be used as an instrument to give the illusion of working on issues, as when an arts-based activity is directed towards business-compatible outcomes (Clark and Mangham, 2004b). Art can be used as a technology to promote a predetermined business message if little room is given to participants for free meaning-construction processes (Clark and Mangham, 2004a). When sense is excessively directed, art is 'reintegrated' by business contexts that welcome art but limit its expression to business-compatible outcomes (Chiapello, 1998). Relevant guidance in arts-based learning requires achieving a balance that is not easy to find.

To sum up, art has potential for the learning of business: artistic initiatives offer people opportunities to learn, but people can fail to benefit from this learning potential. The literature suggests that meaning-construction processes matter for the success or failure of arts-based learning. Two pitfalls that can impede learning are: failing to deal with the unusualness of arts-based initiatives; and receiving guidance that does not favour learning. There is much interest in better understanding the process by which people benefit from arts-based business learning. Therefore, our research question is: 'By what process do people benefit from the potential of arts-based business learning?'

Our study does not focus on what (or how much) people learn through arts-based learning, but on how they are able to engage with art to benefit from it, considering the many challenges they face in doing so. Our framework for meaning-construction processes in collective action can be fruitfully applied to the practice of arts-based business learning to further our understanding of such unusual learning approaches. This means studying how participants engage in arts-based learning and how they act during it.

## Methods

To answer this research question, we analysed an ambitious arts-based learning initiative (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009) that was introduced in business education in France. It offered the material for a single case study – ‘a rich empirical instance of some phenomenon, typically using multiple data sources’ (Gehman et al., 2018: 287).

### *Research setting and data collection*

We studied an initiative that took place in a prestigious French institution of business education. During a 4-day seminar, business students created works of contemporary art in teams and presented them during a private viewing. We observed three editions of this art seminar and additional activities that enriched the editions (e.g. post situ analytical sessions with students). The seminar was organized by and was held at the institution, but participants also went into the city (e.g. to purchase material). The private viewing in the first edition took place at the institution. A prestigious partner school specializing in art (located in the same city) hosted the private viewing of the other editions. This study focuses on what happened during the seminar itself (i.e. the in situ learning experience).

This initiative launched the second and last year of a master’s degree programme that trains cohorts of about 25 students pursuing a highly technical business speciality. Optimization, rationalization, efficiency and performance are central concerns of the curriculum. An extract from the ‘Course Design’ section of the syllabus for a specific module illustrates this. It mentions topics such as ‘[t]he construction of the system of costs: critical return on the ABC method, ABM’ or ‘[i]ncentives and control: from motivation to management through KPIs’. According to Chiapello’s (1998) analysis, this business speciality can be considered very distant and different from art. The students were 23 years old on average. Except for a few students, the programme provides an ‘initial’ business education before entering the labour market for the first time. Most join the business world after graduation, but each year a few continue to a PhD programme. About 50% of the cohort had previously studied at the school; most of the others were admitted after having studied business in other schools. About two-thirds of the cohort were women. Most students were French, and a few were international.

The seminar’s team prepared up of business faculty members and art specialists, assisted the students. Its composition changed from one edition to another, but the lead instructor (an expert in both art and organization theory, who had also designed the seminar) remained the same over the three editions.

A document prepared by members of the team of instructors between editions two and three, to present the initiative in institutional contexts, illustrates what the art seminar offered to these students:

The objective is to have students reflect differently on their subject; they will have to document and conduct research to express their mental representations of their subject; this should sharpen the students’

reflexivity, develop their capacity to critique, to step back, to offer solutions and to manage a project in an uncertain context, since the result (the creation) is not known in advance but will still have to be delivered within a limited time. The uncertainty, the limited time, the complexity of the organization and the not known solution are characteristics of what they will encounter in business; we want to prepare them for this.

The seminar was not created for a research purpose but for a learning one, although the facilitators involved used a process similar to action research to improve the initiative after each edition by using research methods to analyse it and inform any changes to the process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

Data collection took place over a 27-month period, when the initiative was being designed and developed, with a qualitative, longitudinal, inductive and 'grounded' approach that starts from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomenon (Corley, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013). The three editions of the 4-day seminar are central in the data collection; they can be considered as three sessions of a focused ethnography (see Knoblauch, 2005). Because we wanted to access the participants' actual experiences, the first author used extensive 'direct observation' (Manheim et al., 2006). During the first two editions of the seminar, this observation included 'participant observation' (De Walt, 2015). This study's research team neither developed nor offered the seminar. However, the first author participated in each edition from start to finish, as well as the additional activities, in the data-collection process. The second author visited the seminar from time to time (including the private viewings). The third author did not participate in the seminar at all. Data that stem from the editions of the seminar include many recordings (audio, video and photographs), as well as detailed field notes. The first author always favoured field experience over immediate recording in these contexts; the relative shortness of the events made this possible, and the means (e.g. note-taking versus audio recording) were chosen in situ accordingly (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010). Other data derive from the additional activities such as the post situ analytical sessions with students, from interview sessions with students or members of the team of instructors, and from documents (including flyers from the private viewings, post situ student reports, syllabi, extracts of websites of the initiative and the programme). Table 1 summarizes the data collection process.

All this provides methodological and data triangulation and helps to address the limitations of purely discursive data (Alvesson, 2003). It provides a balance between the direct experience of events and the recording of empirical elements for post-field analytical and mnemonic purposes.

The three editions of the seminar allow for some comparison, but the editions are not independent. Thus, this is not pure 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

## *Data analysis*

Our analyses are part of an ongoing longitudinal research project on art in business education, the goal of which is to generate theoretical insights about this phenomenon. Many empirical and theoretical analyses were conducted on the data (mostly qualitative inductive interpretative analyses; Gioia et al., 2013). 'Participant objectivation' (Bourdieu, 2003: 282), as the objectivation of the analysing subjects, helps to highlight the roles of the authors who constructed the propositions that we present in this article. The first author conducted data collection and the main analyses as part of this author's doctoral dissertation, which the second author supervised. The third author helped to structure our contributions based on the literature on (alternative) organizing (for instance, Weick et al., 1999). Therefore, the focus points and findings of this study emerged during analyses related to this general project (e.g. for the doctoral dissertation or conference papers).

**Table 1.** Data collection roles and resulting volumes.

	Role of the first author	Data types (volumes, treatment when relevant)
Seminar editions	1st edition: participant observation as an assistant to the lead instructor	Note-taking (18 pages); Audio recording (40, representing 500 minutes overall, full transcription) and video (44, representing 32 minutes overall); Photographs (326)
	2nd edition: simple observation at first, which became more participatory with a particular team of students	Note-taking (33 pages); Audio recording (34, representing 784 minutes overall, partial transcription) and video (95, representing 196 minutes overall); Photographs (299)
	3rd edition: non-interactionist observation	Note-taking (142 pages); Photographs (121)
Longitudinal case	General data collection	Interview sessions with key members of the team of instructors and with students; Observation of additional activities such as post situ analytical sessions with students; Collection of documents (e.g. syllabi)

The study's findings are generated from successive iterations between empirical analyses and a confrontation with theoretical elements. The first author used a general process similar to identifying '1st-order' concepts and '2nd-order' themes, which integrates theoretical elements progressively so as to reach an overall understanding (Gioia et al., 2013; Van Maanen, 1979). Part of the first author's research process focused on the participants' experiences during the editions of the seminar. To develop our understanding of the empirical phenomena, we grouped meaningful observations, and then we coded them with concepts from artistic interventions (e.g. Berthoin Antal, 2013) and organizational processes (e.g. participants' attempts to understand the situation and to decide how to act within it was coded as part of 'collective meaning-construction processes'; Weick et al., 2005) in later analyses specific to this collective study.

We report general tendencies rather than exhaustive descriptions of what happened in each group from each seminar. For instance, our narration tends to present approximations of how events unfolded in time during an edition (e.g. some teams may reach a certain phase in the morning of day two, whereas others will reach it in the early afternoon). The narration also tends to linearize how the activity unfolded (e.g. all teams followed the same general process; however, some may have started by installing the artwork for the private viewing before adding the accompanying text, whereas other teams may have done the opposite).

This study builds on the approach of Gioia et al. (2013) by using their logic to analyse a rich set of data that incorporates many elements that do not only result from interviews, following their recommendation. Thus, we do not build only on discursive data. We follow ethnographic works by offering narratives and analyses that demonstrate 'authenticity' and 'plausibility', and that bring some 'criticality' (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993: 595). We recognize that our analyses are interpretative; however, we believe that they are not 'purely idiosyncratic' but have some 'transferability' (Gioia et al., 2013: 24).

In this joint project, we conducted post situ analyses based on in situ observations. However, as part of our participant objectivation, we present an empirical account from the point of view of the first author who undertook the data collection (hence the use of the first person in the following section), to better render the field in terms of this author's experience. We introduce our theoretical coding and analyses gradually throughout the narration.



## Findings: Making sense of art and leaving ‘business as usual’ behind

We report on a case in which business education students benefitted from the potential of arts-based business learning, as students and instructors engaged in complex meaning-construction processes during a collective artistic activity. Students left their usual business approaches behind and experienced new ones, although some aspects of the new approaches did resonate with their business culture and with business education.

### *Encountering art within business education*

Prior to the first edition, I interviewed the head of the programme and the artist-lead instructor to learn more about their project. The former told me about the intention to offer an original learning experience so that students could think about their speciality through an unusual medium and share their reflections with others. The artist-lead instructor said:

I want to take [students] to the artwork through expression: they need to express something.

This instructor insisted that there is a strong contrast with the students’ area of expertise and there is a risk of ‘paralyzing’ them if the activity was approached through the ‘model of the artist’ as someone with an ‘I go into the unknown, I create, I innovate’ attitude. When I asked if there was a critical dimension in the seminar, the instructor told me how

[a]rtistic, it means critical, in a way! It does not mean critical, in the demolishing sense. [. . .]. It would be critical in the reflexive sense.

Each year, the artistic seminar would mark the end of the summer and the start of a new academic season. In the morning of each edition, after having welcomed the students, the head of the programme and the lead instructor delivered short introductory speeches. These presented the seminar as an integral part of the programme and a rich experience likely to be unusual for these students who specialized in a highly technical business area. The speeches also illustrated how the instructors’ mental representations of the arts-based seminar translated into practice. All this is exemplified by recordings made during the second edition:

So, in order to get you to reflect on this, [. . .] have a fresh look on the [business speciality], we start the year with the [seminar]. [. . .] But in any case, even if it can be a little disconcerting in the beginning, I think that this is a unique experience that you will live today and this week, which you will probably never experience again [. . .]

Some in the audience laughed and concurred. The speeches outlined what the students were about to engage in:

So, this is a big challenge. We know that you are not artists and it is not a matter of transforming you in four days into artists or that you change your path [. . .]. Each group will have a budget of 150 euros. To buy the equipment, to make what [the group] is. . . to buy what [the group] will need to present its ideas. When you have that to handle, you go a little in the unknown, you don’t really know, you buy things, but you don’t know if it will work. So, it will be necessary to handle this unknown.

Even though most students were clearly eager to start and experience the seminar, many also displayed a certain tension. Some smiled a bit nervously; some let out a sigh from time to time; and

others looked questioningly at the team of instructors or at their peers. At this stage, the students of the second and third editions seemed to experience less tension than those of the first edition. The students who participated in the first edition knew almost nothing about the upcoming experience, whereas their peers, who followed the programme later, had some opportunities to learn about it (e.g. in interactions with former students and through websites that presented the initiative), which may have reduced the tension. However, some tension still existed in the later editions.

Indeed, most of the students saw the artistic activity as something very unusual. Over the course of the seminar, many students expressed 'that they were not artists'. In a live interview, some described art as something 'opposed' to their business speciality. During another edition, a team told me that its objective for the private viewing was to 'produce an artwork without being really artists, you know. . .'

Despite the element of surprise, the artistic activity took place within the students' business education and it could resonate with their ethos as business students in two ways. First, their education prepares them for a speciality in which results and performance are central concerns. One student told me: '[b]ut, maybe we have also the aspect of rigour. . . we are in jobs in which we need to observe deadlines'. Second, their school is prestigious. Joining it is difficult, as is graduating. My field experience indicated that the students rarely considered the possibility of not meeting expectations in any activity. These two cultural elements seemed to apply to the seminar. For instance, the introductory speeches of an edition indicated that the students would 'present an exhibition' that would take place in a top partner art school described as 'really, one of the great places for art in France'. These speeches mentioned the need for 'an intense investment' and 'a requirement of quality.' The instructing team also highlighted the importance of respecting these conditions and of organizing for creation:

But you still have to take into account this management and above all you will in particular have to do provisional management during the whole week. So provisional management of budget, management of your roles between you, so HR management in a way: 'who does what, how do we organize?', organization. . . of time, organization of your relations, organization of production, because you will have to produce, all that. We will ask you, for each working group, to produce a provisional plan of organization and management of all these aspects.

The limited timeframe meant that students needed to start working immediately on the project, which first required them to create teams and to understand the activity. After the introductory speeches, the students expressed their motivations for the programme and the jobs it prepared them for by answering a question (e.g. 'Why are you here?') asked by instructors, which also provided the latter with an understanding of who these students were. Each year, five teams of four to eight students were formed (usually in the middle of day one). The instructors tried to create teams comprising students who had expressed similar motivations. For example, two students joined the same team with these respective motivations: 'making recommendations to improve the financial "health" of the company' and 'improvement and optimization of control and financial processes'. Students were able to change teams if they wanted to. Aside from having listened in detail to the introductory information, learners also tried to better understand what was expected of them. For instance, in the first edition, a student asked whether the teams had to use a certain medium for the art: 'What art form can we use?' The lead instructor told students that they could use any medium. On this basis, the teams then started creating artwork projects.

The beginning of this art seminar in business education confronted its participants with an unusual and challenging collective activity. Groups of people in such situations need to make sense of their situation to be able to construct a plausible meaning required for action, which is affected by

their mental representations (Weick et al., 2005). In the seminar, the students and the instructors started to exchange information to try to develop a shared and plausible understanding of the activity, based on their mental representations of what art was and what it could represent in this business context. Because most saw art as an unknown world, quite different from business, making sense of it was not easy. In the first interactions, the instructors used sensegiving to facilitate both 'meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties' and initial collective actions (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). This guided the students towards a shared and plausible understanding of the activity: each team would create a contemporary artwork that expressed something reflective about business, using some approaches that resonated with familiar business ones to do so.

### *Starting to practice art in business mode*

Initially, the ambiance looked relatively normal for a business classroom:

After the formation of teams, each team started to imagine its artwork and to plan how it would make it on time, to budget and with the available resources. It reminded me of business projects that I had done. Each team sat for a long time around a table, discussing its project in detail. It resembled business meetings: team members talked, gathered information using digital tools and made plans.

The instructors guided the creation process and provided a structure for the key seminar activities. The morning of day two of an edition exemplifies this clarification process:

The lead instructor drew a diagram on a whiteboard in front of the students. This introduced a 'general plan' and outlined the steps (and their organization) that would lead to the 'private viewing' at '4.00 pm' on day four. It included two circles corresponding to two deliverables (the artwork, referred to as the 'material production', and its accompanying text, referred to as the 'textual' production), as well as their timings and a 'validation' step early in the process.

It was observed that amid the students' discomfort and the participants' desire to succeed, the action started to unfold based on what students knew and had mastered. This helped them avoid a 'collapse of sensemaking' (Weick, 1993). Organized groups that perform highly amid challenging conditions rely on a shared language (Zohar and Luria, 2003) and a sociocognitive framework (Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011) that are adequate for the specific action. The business students shared a common language and a sociocognitive framework, but these concerned their business speciality rather than the practice of art (which the students had not mastered professionally). The presence of elements (such as vocabulary or processes) that resonated with business was likely to help participants stay within a sensemaking that was close to their usual one (Weick et al., 2005). Business education contributes to the students' identity: it is a strong context that is likely to affect what they enact (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2015). Succeeding is important for these business students. They prepare, in a context where excellence matters, for jobs in which performance is crucial. Thus, students initially opted for, and used, their usual organizing to manage the projects, which is largely based on action planning, intellectual reflection and discussion. This helped them to deal with the shock that art brought into their world. However, this changed over time as the students continued to confront the practice of art.

### *Being challenged by new experiences*

The students encountered situations that challenged them because, almost from start to finish, the instructors offered a process that integrated many elements associated with artistic creation. This started when students began to develop their projects in teams:

The instructors asked students to express ‘statements’ with a strong stance on the team’s theme. The teams refined their projects through a series of iterations. This required agreement between the team members and with the instructors (who thus also learned about the students’ working areas) within a challenging and constantly changing situation. The approach built on the contributions of others and it included group presentations wherein each team introduced its general project to their peers and the instructors and received feedback.

Even with the additional sensegiving offered by the instructors, this phase often proved to be a challenge: students needed time to go beyond just making a rather neutral observation and to arrive at a reflective statement. It took most teams more than the whole first day to manage to deal with this task. This project development phase also required the participants to patiently identify the relevant material to be used in their work of art. The teams did not know what to look for, or where or how to look for it. Most teams had to work until the middle of day two to develop their project and have it validated by the art experts. The lead instructor described the action plan as ‘improvisational’ in the third edition.

Overall, I noted there was a desire to move on to the making phase. One student told me, on day two of an edition that:

I like it when things progress at a fast rate and I feel that we are not progressing at a fast rate, so it upsets me. [ . . . ] In fact, I would like to already have bought [the material], and create immediately, and ‘Voilà!’ And when we are in the construction phase, I know it will be more interesting to me. But, for the moment, the concept is not really my thing.

Although the students were still in the development phase and had not yet entered the making one, the need for a rather ‘slow’ approach that demanded patience and an acceptance of ‘not-knowing’ (Berthoin Antal, 2013) was a challenge. This clashed with the desire to conserve time, to be efficient and to adopt an almost immediate and already known solution, as is the inclination in a business culture, where ‘knowing is considered the most important attribute for success’ (Berthoin Antal, 2013: 70). This slower, less defined process was a new experience for many business students; whereas, although it is not specific to art practice, it is often key to it. On the morning of day three of an edition, a student, reflecting retrospectively on the development phase, told me about having felt ‘anxious’ and ‘almost in despair’ at the end of the first day:

Because I had the feeling that we were going round in circles. Well we have brainstormed for almost three hours, on a topic in which we went for considerations that were really philosophical, and. . . Well, I did not see at all how we were going to be able to make a finished work, and it is a bit. . . we were really backed into the corner you know? I told myself: ‘what are we going to do [on the day of the private viewing]? We will not have anything to show maybe?’ And it is. . . Well this. . . we will be ridiculed, yeah, the [programme], the [institution]. . . There is really a big pressure, you know.

The students knew this was a learning seminar, but many wanted to feel proud of their work. A student said: ‘[f]or us, the result means a lot!’ Although the students needed to create their artwork within a limited timeframe, their culture of excellence caused them to think of art as a demanding activity that needed to result in high-quality pieces. The art seminar resembled a ‘crisis situation’ with high stakes and specificity: ‘these events defy interpretations and impose severe demands on sensemaking’ (Weick, 1988: 305).

### *Dealing with demands imposed on sensemaking and organizing differently*

As students moved on to the next steps, their actions evolved as they kept encountering situations that required them to reconsider their approaches.

Students left to purchase materials in the city. This again implied uncertainty and change. Even though, or maybe because, the city is big, finding the right elements within their budget was challenging. Plans often had to be changed because material was not available or was not suitable for what had been imagined. Sometimes, finding the material was so difficult that teams had to consider changing or adjusting their original ideas. Students also engaged in the making phase that entailed challenges because of issues relating to acquisition, transformation, and placement of materials. Some teams wanted to paint a certain material but could not do so. Others could not find a satisfying organization for the objects in the artwork. Several teams needed to use much of the available time to arrange their many pieces, sometimes up until a few minutes before the opening of the private viewing.

The art process demanded structure, but also flexibility, engagement and teamwork, as one team expressed in a post situ analytical document:

Because of unexpected material and technical [events], we had to extend our working hours from 8.30 in the morning to almost 9.30 in the evening. The materials that were used required substantial repairs (warped planks, to be cut, [to be] sand[ed]. . .) which compelled us to maximize our attendance time in order to finish works on time. [. . .] Some purchases had to be returned to shops, other elements had to be bought as extra, so some members of the group were given the responsibility of making quick expeditions to accomplish these missions while the others kept working on the artwork.

A student, on the afternoon of day three of a different edition, described teamwork:

We have divided work. [. . .] Well, we are seven, in a group, and everyone participates in his or her own way, and there is no one that does nothing in fact. So that is cool.

Students modified their approaches as they engaged fully with the practice of art. After having used a business ‘planning-based’ approach that clearly did not work on its own, the participants opted for additional approaches. Groups kept planning, handling resources, dividing work based on individual skills, but the action changed.

The students and the instructors sometimes verbalized the need for an adequate approach. For instance, one student told teammates in the afternoon of day three: ‘[people], let’s organize! Because here, we are in trouble’. This led to a short meeting to assess the situation and divide the work. One member said ‘[s]o, what do we do? Who does what?’ Instructors also provided additional sensegiving by sharing their vision of contemporary art. For example, amid the challenges related to materials, during the making phase of an edition, an artist-instructor told a team that ‘it is normal, at times, to be lost’.

Students searched for relevant approaches to deal with the challenging situations. The seminar participants formed kinds of ‘emergent response groups’ (Majchrzak et al., 2007: 147). Indeed, they faced unexpectedly challenging situations in a constantly changing environment. They also operated in teams that had formed recently and that had a sense of great urgency, high levels of interdependence and little to no ‘expertise that can be specified ex ante’ for this situation. Beyond the contrast between art and business, students came to realize that art is associated with ‘not-knowing’ (Berthoin Antal, 2013) and that they had to manage many expected unexpected events that required coordination and some ‘bricolage’ in a sufficiently shared understanding of the collective action (Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011: 258). Thus, the participants engaged in ‘joint sense-making’ processes during which a ‘significant negotiation of meaning takes place’ and students managed to break with their existing protocols, as groups in continuous interactions and epistemic conflicts in a fast-paced setting can do (Faraj and Xiao, 2006: 1163–1166). To successfully ‘do art’ in the business classroom, students experienced iterative sensemaking processes alongside

the sensegiving provided by the instructors who used the students' 'zone of proximal development' (Holzman, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Indeed, the instructors acted as 'more knowledgeable others' to provide students with a relevant amount of guidance, via sensegiving offered largely through discussion, that helped them access, and progressively master new, attainable approaches. Groups who face a looming deadline tend to change their 'framework of behavioral patterns and assumptions', often at midpoint in the process: they 'experience transitions—paradigmatic shifts in their approaches to their work—enabling them to capitalize on the gradual learning they have done and make significant advances' (Gersick, 1988: 32). In the seminar, this led to a reconfiguration of practices and the students reached a relevant organizing principle (Weick, 1993; Weick et al., 2005). Three elements can illustrate how this helped students to leave their 'business as usual' behind.

### *Organizing differently and leaving 'business as usual' behind*

First, students experienced optimization but in an unusual way. Art practice within business education propelled students towards a vision of optimization that is unconventional for business contexts where it is often about maximizing business outcomes: the use of extensive 'work' hours and task divisions was not for the purpose of producing a quantity of items, but to create a small number of high-quality artworks. Unusual in a business context, redundancy was valued in art. For example, operations such as placing a piece on the artwork properly might need to be repeated, to ensure quality. This was also exemplified in how the two instructors (also artists) helped to develop each team's project during an edition. One student said '[t]hat's funny, because they do not have the same ideas at all', and another one added 'that's what is also interesting, because you are able to tap into. . . where you think that something is interesting. They do not bring the same things.' The two instructors worked closely together and played similar roles, but students saw this as a source of variety, not duplication.

Second, students – who did not want to fail – also distanced themselves from the competitive spirit that can be rather prevalent in many business contexts. In this arts-based seminar, students came to define success as a collective performance, understood as the collective absence of failure. A student said '[y]ou have to finish a thing! [. . .] Especially in relation to the other groups [. . .]!' In practice, participants also organized themselves in such a way as to ensure that no team failed: they finished all the artworks in all three editions in accordance with expectations<sup>2</sup>. One case exemplifies this:

One team made its artwork via a process that required its members to work with several pieces, paint them and then assemble various intermediary parts. This required a lot of time. This team benefitted from what one member referred to as 'voluntary work' during the last morning of the edition: students from other teams who could free up time helped this team (which was 'in danger') to finish on time and avoid failure.

At this stage, I observed that the experience had reached a high point. A student said that the ambiance had changed to 'effervescence'.

The private viewing that concluded each edition also illustrates how students can build on collective approaches when they practice art. As with their voluntary work, the students went beyond intra-team collaboration and engaged in cross-team cooperation. In this private viewing, visitors evaluated the students as a group composed of all teams, not as separate individuals. The visitors did not grade the students but expressed an overall feeling as outsiders about what the participants had created during the seminar. While some teams wanted their artwork to be well-placed in the display space, they relied on the art experts regarding space distribution. Students had to engage

with the art experts of the instructing team to learn about their specialized world and make sense of it. For instance, students worked with them to present their artworks effectively, as they had done throughout the seminar regarding artistic questions (e.g. painting techniques).

Third, the artworks showed how the students, with the help of the instructors, eventually engaged in critical, reflective thinking on business. Each artwork offered an arts-based critique of contemporary organizations and society. The artworks materialized the ‘statements’ that the teams had developed over the course of the seminar. Aside from making their three-dimensional art pieces, the teams wrote textual comments on them, which visitors could read during the private viewing. For instance, the flyer of a private viewing described one artwork this way:

Through our work [of art], we wish to shine a light on the bivalent relation between fraud and [management techniques]. If the latter can be a tool of governance and [of] regulation of the economic world, it can also promote greed.

The seminar was an intense moment in which students engaged as a group to reflect on business. During a private viewing, a student told me:

Yeah, really very satisfied with the result. . . We are all proud, I guess, of the artworks we have been able to do, the ones, the others, and at the same time proud of the artworks of the other groups as well.

The students benefitted from the capacity of art to support reflective thinking on business (Chiapello, 1998) and from art practice that is also about ensuring a specific performance. This performance in collective art practice demands efficiency, engagement and practices similar to those in organizations that outperform conventional businesses in many ways (De Bovis, 2007), where it is not individuals who succeed when they produce substantial outputs but the organization as a whole (which is evaluated globally) when it avoids any important failure (Rochlin, 1993; Weick et al., 1999). Just as in these organizations, the art seminar was less focussed on using the least possible amount of resources to produce the most possible outputs than on mobilizing relevant resources to create meaningful artworks of high quality that matter to all and to society. The complex organizational process of art practice (Becker, 1982; Ravet, 2016) allows forms of organizing in which this performance is gained via approaches not based on business optimization or competition.

### *Making sense of what happened*

After an edition, the students reflected and built on what happened during the seminar in a debriefing session facilitated by the lead instructor. The students noted the tendency to act as a group and considered the forms of organizing that were used in this arts-based seminar. Although the students mentioned having used a ‘budget’ and having planned to finish on time, their comments also emphasized the importance of ‘trust’ and of having ‘received help’. These post situ comments show that participants were able to identify and conscientize features and specificities afterwards. Key comments are as follows:

No, there was not really an organization, but we were all in harmony.

When a person had an idea, he or she took a certain initiative, and the others listened to him or her, and then we checked if it was. . . making this choice. . . Well an exchange, and then we listened to each other, you know. [. . .]

[. . .] it falls within teamwork for a start, there needs to be a good understanding, a good group cohesion so that. . . the project can progress.

I think that in business, roles are more clearly defined. [. . .]

We had no divergent interests. Of course, that's a bit different from a company, from other organizations. [. . .]

In another post situ session, students discussed their mental representations of art with two instructors. The participants saw art as being different from other activities. Students contrasted art (which was described as something that required collaboration) with other activities where, they argued, one individual needed to stand out: 'there needs to be someone that pushes him or herself forward' in group public presentations, and 'if we had done sport, it would have been more individual'.

To sum up, our findings detail how several outcomes emerged in an arts-based seminar in business education. Across three editions, business students created collective team artworks that are focused on their business area of expertise with the assistance of a team of instructors skilled in both art and organization theory. Amid the contrast created by this arts-based seminar in a specific institution of business education, both instructors and students applied their specific and contextual mental representations of art practice. Complex collective meaning-construction processes and engagement with the practice of art (including sensemaking, sensegiving and organizing) took place. These participants constructed a learning experience that combined elements brought by the instructors (the 'art side' with 'artist critique' and 'not-knowing') and the students (the 'business side' with a collective performance), that transformed the usual practices of the students. The students used flexibility rather than just planning; they built on unusual forms of optimization to succeed as a group and developed both intra-team collaboration and a general non-competitive spirit.

## Discussion

This longitudinal, empirical study has explored *the process by which people benefit from the potential of arts-based business learning*. Our findings resonate with previous ones that show that art can promote new elements in business contexts (Carlucci and Schiuma, 2018). Our contribution is to detail how such outcomes can emerge when collective complex meaning-construction processes operate iteratively, actively and intensely as people encounter art and learn from it through its practice. Therefore, we argue that for people to benefit from arts-based business learning in collective artistic initiatives, meaning-construction processes need to unfold, to work and to include some guidance.

Our study confirms and details the role of meaning-construction processes (Meisiek and Barry, 2018) for the success of arts-based business learning. Our analysis of existing studies with this perspective, centred on the concepts of sensemaking and sensegiving, helped to identify two pitfalls that can limit arts-based business learning in artistic initiatives: failing to deal with the unusualness of arts-based initiatives and receiving guidance that does not favour learning (Clark and Mangham, 2004a, 2004b; Meisiek and Barry, 2018; Seppälä et al., 2020). By detailing the need for sufficient adjustment opportunities and the usefulness of a certain amount of sensegiving, our empirical analysis provides indications for avoiding a loss of sense so extensive that people opt for, and remain in, their usual experience. This confirms that art does not 'do everything by itself' and that the success of artistic interventions requires specific conditions (Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2014). With our in-depth understanding of the meaning-construction processes involved, we supplement the documentation on such conditions for arts-based learning.



We detail the role of temporality in the emergence of the potential outcomes of art. First, we show that adequate time must be provided to achieve transformation. The practice of art presented students with an initial shock, but participants also needed time to make sense of it and change their approaches. Unusual experiences, from which people could learn, emerged in the seminar when the participants identified the usefulness of approaches that differed from their usual ones and when they managed to experiment and use these in meaningful ways. Second, and as adjustment occurs gradually based on the experience, it is useful to provide several sequential adjustment opportunities. We indicate three key steps in being able to engage with an unfamiliar activity, switch to new approaches, and make sense of new experiences to learn from them. Thus, we enrich the conception of how time matters in artistic interventions (Berthoin Antal, 2013).

Our analysis advances the understanding of how meaning-construction processes entail practice-transformation and learning in arts-based activities. Sutherland and Jelinek (2015) note the importance of participants making sense during and after arts-based events with the aid of others. We contribute by signalling that acting in teams, accompanied by extensive dialogue, is an important mechanism to promote new types of sensemaking. The students constructed meaning about the activity and decided to engage in new approaches with their team members, especially through extensive discussion within their team and with the instructors, to develop an emergent shared vision. We also signal that a significant amount of sensegiving must be provided. Throughout the activity, the instructors both helped the students maintain a satisfying understanding of what happens to avoid an excessive loss of sense and suggested new approaches. Thus, we add to the debate on relevant guidance for meaningful arts-based activities (Badham et al., 2016; Clark and Mangham, 2004a, 2004b; Parush and Koivunen, 2014; Seppälä et al., 2020) by highlighting the importance of guidance, via sensegiving, that facilitates collective, continuous and iterative sense-making among participants so that they develop a self-determined experience.

We consider how to deal with the reported risk of an excessively challenging experience in arts-based activities (Bureau and Komporozos-Athanasiou, 2017: 51; Katz-Buonincontro, 2015: 101–106; Mack, 2013; Moshavi, 2001: 444; Śliwa et al., 2013). First, an intense experience (such as imposing a tight timeline) facilitates transformation, but the degree of intensity must be managed by sense givers. The students changed their approach because they faced a demanding situation with deadlines that required them to progress, but the instructors limited the uncertainty by offering their expertise in art, outlining steps, or providing reassurance. Second, sense givers can encourage learners to opt for approaches of their choice that are within the boundaries of what they can learn with assistance. The instructors used the students' zone of proximal development, which reduced the risk of a collapse of sensemaking by building on approaches that students could make some sense of while favouring a gradual, larger transformation.

The perceived distance between art and business can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Our study confirms that this juxtaposition can allow people to consider new perspectives. Thus, art has much potential for the learning of business in which leaving familiar approaches behind is a challenge (Weick, 2007). However, the contrast can be so strong that people fail to immerse themselves in artistic activities. In response to this difficulty, students may productively lean on their business approaches and utilize them before adopting new ones. We showed the usefulness of some business-related elements such as business language, culture and processes. Students were able to transform their approach over time because they had elements to start from and initially cling to; this helped them to avoid a total loss of sense and deal with arts-based learning. This extends previous findings on the need for a balance between art and business elements (so that neither of these two sides dominates the process) (Meisiek and Barry, 2018: 482), for 'constructive disturbance' (Darsø, 2016), and for familiar elements (Sorsa et al., 2018).

Our case, situated in initial business education, enriches the literature on arts-based learning that focuses on people who have spent years in businesses (e.g. Mack, 2013; Parush and Koivunen, 2014; Seppälä et al., 2020; Sutherland, 2012; Sutherland and Jelinek, 2015). We confirm the suggestion of Darsø (2016: 25) that business education can be an effective context in which to activate the potential of artistic initiatives – including beyond executive and leadership education – although we also support studies that indicate that this context can affect arts-based learning (Bureau and Komporozos-Athanasidou, 2017; Śliwa et al., 2013). The students in this study experienced approaches that were outside their usual ones. Because business education is largely about learning, students are likely to try learning with art in business schools, as opposed to participants being challenged to do so as part of an artistic initiative in other types of organizations (Seppälä et al., 2020). Yet, the students in this study also used some of their familiar approaches in an activity that resonated with business elements such as performance. Business education is an educational context that can avoid excessive orientation of artistic initiatives by business stakeholders towards business-compatible outcomes, but it remains a business context.

Finally, we detail how learning activities are offered in specific contexts and to specific populations whose members can experience situated processes that eventually *make* learning situations. This contributes to emerging research on how people ‘learn to make sense and make sense to learn’ (Colville et al., 2016: 4). The learners and instructors who engaged in the practice of art *iteratively* and *over time* made collective sense of a learning activity in specific ways, based on unique actions, contexts, mental representations and habits, in a particular learning *situation*.

## Limitations, future research and conclusion

Our choice of learning initiative has important implications. It both supports our contribution to the literature and limits our ability to generalize our findings.

Because our case is situated in initial business education and not in the business world, our propositions may not be generic enough to apply – at least fully – to artistic initiatives in other business contexts. In this case, the students were following a master’s degree programme as initial business education and almost all had limited professional experience (except for experiences such as internships). Understanding learning in initial business education is valuable to prepare students for similar learning in their future professional lives. However, additional research is needed to see if the findings from this case can be applied to other business contexts. Indeed, arts-based learning in a business school context may be specific because business education is an educational context that has its own rules, rhythms, habits and practices (Colby et al., 2011; Mintzberg, 2004).

Participants with other profiles may approach the activity differently from those in our case. These students were preparing for a rather technical business domain that research views as the opposite of art (Chiapello, 1998) and as part of an initial education. Leadership students or senior innovation professionals may, for instance, focus more on group dynamics or on ideation, respectively, owing to their speciality and to their time spent in organizations. However, they would approach art as *business* students or *business* people, although their processes may differ slightly depending on their profile and experience. This also applies to the instructors who design and facilitate the learning activities. For instance, medical specialists who use art in medical education largely focus on the development of medicine-related issues such as skills for diagnostic observation or communication (Perry et al., 2011). The students in our case are also enrolled full time in a prestigious institution and are highly motivated. Students in other contexts may react differently because their backgrounds can affect arts-based learning (Śliwa et al., 2013). For example, part-time students in a lower-tier school may search more for outcomes that are directly applicable to the workplace. Our study indicates that participants’ viewpoints on a specific learning activity can

influence the resulting learning experience. Thus, beyond considering other profiles of learners and instructors, future research could further investigate these dynamics.

Art may be a particularly strong case that leads to the outcomes that we report. For instance, our study indicates that people seem to associate art with features such as the ‘artist critique’ and a collaborative spirit. However, the critique may very well result from academic research (i.e. groups other than artists offer critiques of society; see Chiapello, 1998: 14). Based on the students’ comments, people may associate sport more with intra-team leadership than with equality and they would also likely associate it with cross-team competition. Thus, our analysis of a single case could benefit from additional cases (e.g. other arts-based seminars or other activities) and future research could explore further these mental representations of learning activities. It would be useful to determine with more precision how such representations transform learning and to investigate whether there are ‘objective’ features in some activities that do not stem from such representations.

Other limitations result from our methods. First, we show that students benefitted from arts-based learning by analysing the change, over time, of the nature of their approaches. However, we did not measure the extent of this benefit that future research could investigate, especially through quantitative methods. Second, our analysis builds on collective meaning-construction processes (for instance with joint sensemaking), but part of our framework focuses on sensemaking by individuals engaged in unusual events (Weick, 1993). Thus, future studies could consider whether our method is generalizable to individuals who participate in arts-based activities.

Another limitation, with possibilities for future research, is that we focus on what happened in situ rather than the long-term effects of the learning experience. Comments from post situ sessions indicate a certain conscientization among students, but future – possibly quantitative – research could study what participants learn through pre- /post-test methods. Future research could also investigate the long-term consequences of engaging in arts-based learning, for instance on the rest of the students’ business studies and later careers. Indeed, early experiences with artistic initiatives may have effects later: prior experiences related to art can affect arts-based learning (Śliwa et al., 2013). Thus, it is likely that having more young managers enter businesses with early experiences with artistic initiatives could affect the use of such learning opportunities later in organizations. Beyond considering this question in detail, additional research could, for instance, consider how people who have experienced artistic initiatives in business schools compare in the learning process later in organizations with those who have not yet experienced such initiatives.

To conclude, we further the understanding of arts-based business learning by detailing how people who engage in this unusual learning approach can benefit from it. We have described how, in a learning activity that is seen to offer a strong contrast to conventional business education and practices, participants developed their own learning situation through complex and collective meaning-construction processes. We have highlighted the importance of enabling participants to engage with this unusual activity and the usefulness of providing some guidance. This created ongoing and repeated possibilities for students to discover new perspectives on business. We show that people benefitted from the potential of the arts-based business learning activity when collective meaning-construction processes such as sensemaking or sensegiving (Weick et al., 2005) worked in an iterative, active and intense way, to enable participants to foray into new experiences. It is worthwhile considering both the learning activities *and* the learning situations (made of meaning and associated actions) produced with a certain group of learners (Colville et al., 2016; Śliwa et al., 2013). Our study also illustrates the importance of not only focusing on meaning construction at a given moment and of opting for an ongoing, processual and collective approach. In our world that needs innovation and collaboration, this perspective can inspire the implementation and analysis of future initiatives and foster positive transformation in individuals and organizations.

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## Notes

1. Because this theoretical analysis is ‘informed by [our] findings’, we refer to them ‘early to introduce the reader to core concepts and characteristics of the phenomenon’ (Köhler, 2016: 405).
2. We could sustain this argument using the classic criteria of success in project management (i.e. on time, to budget, to specification, with a fit between the project and the organization, with relevant consequences for the organization) since all were satisfied by all teams (White and Fortune, 2002).

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