

# **How To Access Organizational Informality: Using Movement Improvisation To Address Embodied Organizational Knowledge**

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## **Abstract**

Whether an organization is managed in a formal-directive or an informal-emergent way has an impact on how organizations adapt to external change. What so far has remained unnoticed is the influence of the body and embodied knowledge, especially reacting to these different kinds of management. In this paper we give first indications on how different the body and embodied knowledge respond to different ways of management and how this might affect the adaptability of groups and organizations. In an MBA-course on adaptive organizations we applied movement improvisation to let students experience the difference between formal and informal group coordination. We let students compare their experiences and substantiated their reflection by a video comparison of students' movements. As a result, we found that the mutual body awareness and connectedness increased after a movement improvisation exercise, stimulating informal-emergent coordination. The embodied knowledge was enriched and evoked to support emergent coordination amongst the students compared to a disconnectedness amongst students in a formal-directive way of coordination.

**Keywords:** Organizational informality, applied improvisation, embodied knowledge, movement improvisation, connection, FT MBA teaching.

## **How To Access Organizational Informality: Using Movement Improvisation To Address Embodied Organizational Knowledge**

*It is through our bodies that we are able to understand our relationship to self and other. Through our bodies we learn the relationship of power and resistance and how energy moves. Through form, through forming we begin to negotiate meaning. (Quinn, 2003: 20)*

Teaching organization theory is confronted with a perplexing contradiction. Although everybody spends a remarkable part of his or her life in extensive contact with organizations, there is almost no language to turn this experience into conscious observation and action. The language of organization theory and of organization theory teaching is excessively cognitive and too aloof to provide any connection to this everyday-based experience. There is a hidden knowledge of how to deal with organizations residing in almost each of us, which we have no appropriate vocabulary to employ. It is a kind of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1969) we somehow all contain. Tacit knowledge is commonly at play in organizations, when managerial planning and acting is somehow collectively recognized and followed as much as opposed and contradicted. Non-verbal body behaviour like eye-twinkling, sublime smiling and corresponding body postures are expressions and representations of this knowledge. Tacit knowledge is partly embodied knowledge (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Barsalou, 2010; Springborg and Sutherland, 2015) and plays an important role in the flow of formal and informal communication in organizations. Given the tacit feature of this knowledge, it is difficult to be directly accessed and addressed by managerial communication. It seems more related to a sublime, emergent and informal way of coordination in organizations, autonomously responding and influencing managerial communication.

Acknowledging the rising importance of emergent communication and action in organizations for the adaptability of organizations, we as authors were looking for ways to address and reflect organizational emergence and informality in the MBA classroom, especially including the body as both a variable to be addressed in the teaching and as a focus of experience of the students. We were focussing on applied improvisation, especially on movement improvisation to allow students exactly such an experience. Here, we report from a teaching session aiming to let students feel how managerial communication, especially both, formal directive and informal emergent coordination affects organizational communication, performance and adaptability. We analysed and compared how students responded in their body behaviour to a) a formal and directive as much as b) an informal and emergent way of dealing with surprises. As a result, we found out that in an emergent, informal way of coordination, the body expression of the students pointed to much more calmness, openness and self-assuredness in the coordination amongst students, while the directive way was related to anxiety, insecurity and the fear of failing. In the remainder of this paper, we firstly introduce the basic notions of formal and informal coordination in organizations and their relation to embodied knowledge as much as the idea of movement improvisation. Secondly, we describe our teaching goals and the teaching plan of the session, followed by a brief description of our methodology. Thirdly, we report from how the students in the exercise reacted in their body behaviour to the formal directive management communication and an informal-emergent one. Finally, we reflect on the outcomes of our teaching session.

### **Dimensions of organizational appearance and the role of embodied knowledge**

"The body affords us the ability to collect information about a situation (our feelings, emotions and perceptions of what is occurring at any given moment) which we then use to

consciously and unconsciously configure our agency in attempts to better align our actions with our intended purposes and outcomes.” (Springborg and Sutherland, 2016: 4 – this issue). Applied to organizational settings, the body provides a source of richly collected information about all dimensions of everyday organizational life. As main dimensions and ways by which organizations make themselves accessible and visible, formality and informality are the most important ones (Kühl 2014; Wetzel, 2015: 44ff.).

### *Formality*

Bluntly said, formality covers all decisions which affect hierarchy and chains of command, routines and procedures as much as decisions about personnel. That includes strategies and procedures for strategy definition, organizational charts, quality management handbooks and the official procedure to get a key badge, HR routines and controlling rules or goal setting formats. These appearances do all refer to the formal part of an organization. That the formal appearance of organization is not the only possible and relevant one became clear in the 1920's at the latest with the well-known Hawthorn experiments and the works of Elton Mayo. The accidental attention for workers triggered the discovery of a certain “atmosphere”, a specific “culture” which could foster the execution of formality and the pursuit of overarching organizational goals. Additionally, later research showed that formal structures contain unavoidable gaps, like the necessary handling of the small surprises which occur if plans hit reality. Formality never could be complete. Finally, it turned out that deviations from formal rules define important parts too, like the well-known “silent short-cuts” of avoiding too long formal chains (Luhmann, 1964). These appearances became known as informality. It is a premise of decision making too, since it affects all decisions about hierarchy, programmes and personnel, though in a rather autonomous way.

### *Informality*

Contrary to formality, informality, or organizational culture (Sackmann 1992) cannot be decided about (Luhmann, 2000, p. 394). This undecidability stems from an emergent character. Informality is the source of change, innovation and development, for example when members start to challenge and to deviate from formal rules. Furthermore, informality is the “location” where political alliances are built to grow important when the formal management is weak or wrong - or both (Pfeffer, 2013; Willmott, 2013). Informality is therefore another appearance of organization, creating and maintaining a permanent challenge to the formal structure. Accordingly, its main features are the opposite of the formal: here everything tends to be subjective, disordered and irrational, which is unavoidable to escape from the “iron cage” of formal domination. According to both appearances, management can employ a rather formal-directive way of coordination, which gives clear indication on who has to do what and an informal-emergent way of coordination, which restricts itself to providing frames for the self-coordination and self-adaptability of a group or an organization to occur.

These dimensions of organizational appearance so far have been developed without any respect to the physical body and embodiment occurring in organizations, as much as organization theory has remained “bodyless” throughout most of its history (Hassard et al., 2000). For both, formality and informality embodiment has been underestimated for long (Plester, 2015), both have been mainly a cognitive concept. Only since recently attempts have been made to link both closer together. The efforts to let managers become aware of their sensory experiences for improving their decision-making (Springborg and Sutherland, this issue; Ludevig, this issue) can be understood as a link between somatic experiences and the formal appearance of organizations. Furthermore, in a study about after-work beer-drinking behaviour of employees, Maria Tereza Flores-Pereira, Eduardo Davel and Neusa

Rolita Cavedon (2008: 1007) realized that “organizational culture is more than a cognitive-representational abstraction: it is also a perceptual-embodied experience”. Culture (informality) as much as formality are experienced bodily. Like all cognition, experiences with both organizational appearances become part of the embodied knowledge of individuals within organizations, as studies in embodied cognition show on a substantial level (Barsalou, 2010). The experiences with formality as much as with informality become part of embodied knowledge of and about the organization. Given the different nature of formality and informality we assume a different impact of both forms of communication on embodied knowledge. As formality belongs to directive communication and hierarchy, it is linked with a sensory experience of asymmetry. Hierarchy refers to an asymmetry of formal power and influence, which becomes sensually apparent, especially in status behaviour of asymmetrically placed position holders (Magee and Galinsky 2008). Informality on the other hand, is strongly connected to emergence and irrationality, and is not necessarily related to asymmetry. In this respect, embodied, tacit knowledge might be an important driver of informal processes within companies, which, by means of the sensory experience of managers, might reversely influence formal decision-making (Zeitner et al., this issue). However, how the body and the embodied knowledge of an organization relates and reacts to formality and informality is unclear. Taken the rising complexity of everyday organizational life and a rising challenge of organizations to become and remain adaptive, the “wisdom of the body” could substantially contribute to an improvement for employees and organizations as such in modern conditions.

In this regard, the highly rational, functional and individualistic mind-set of organization theory (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011) especially applied in business school teaching (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Grey, 2013) with its reluctance to context-sensitive, self-organizing and embodied phenomena (March, 2006a; 2006b) has driven business schools in a difficult situation. When high speed societal change is faster than strategic planning cycles and when individual managerial cognition capabilities are way inferior to collective self-adaptability, the self-adaptability of business schools themselves to strive for change in their curricula is in question (Adler, 2006). Gradual adaptations have taken place indeed, be it by the introduction of “design thinking” (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013) or broader of “co-creation” (Martinez, 2014) to the class-room. However, a fundamental shift so far has not taken place. One of the promising concepts able to change that from our perspective is movement improvisation, which we want to introduce in the next section.

### **Applied improvisation and movement improvisation**

Applied improvisation is a mind and skill-set, which has its roots in the performing arts and theatre (Johnstone, 2003; Boal, 1993) as well as jazz music (Humphreys et al., 2012; Kamoche et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it has been developed and applied in other societal milieus and challenging conditions independently from artistic roots, like in post-disaster management (Tint et al., 2015), or in status based conflict management (Walter, 2003). Increasingly it is discovered as a core skill set in agile and adaptive leadership (Gagnon et al., 2012) and innovation (Larsen and Bogers, 2014). Accordingly, improvisation has started to appear on the agenda of business school teaching on a content level (Moshavi, 2001; Biehl-Missal, 2010) as much as on a didactical level (Aylesworth, 2008). Applied improvisation aims to raise awareness on how someone acts and behaves within a group or an organisation, how that person is related to others and how to change his/her behaviour in order to broaden the possibilities of the group or organization. At the very core of applied improvisation lies the “yes, and ... !” principle, which encourages participants to focus their attention to what is around, to accept any given situation and any social energy present within this situation, and to build upon what is given by adding onto this situation by means of intuitive response (Moshavi, 2001; Tint et al., 2015; Van Driel, 2013). The impact of applied improvisation usually becomes apparent in an instant strengthening of social contact, awareness and overall

connectivity between individuals, by a substantial response acceleration to surprising events of a group or organization and by a co-creation experience that is leading the participants away from their usual traits and corridors of thinking and reasoning. The very core of applied improvisation is the fundamental respect and the acceptance of the autonomy of on-going communication. The very substance of the "Yes, and ... !" principle is in fact a cognitive guideline for an individual's response to emergent communication. It withholds an individual to control but to fuel it by permanently adapting to it. In this respect, improvisation promises to be one of the essential and scarce managerial techniques fundamentally resting and "flying on the wings" of social emergence.

Accordingly, improvisation as such provides a very different experience of teaching and learning in a classroom. Students take action, instantly and unscripted, by experiencing something socially emerging *while* playing and acting (Biehl-Missal, 2010; Aylesworth, 2008; Springborg and Sutherland 2014). They experience emergence in the very making. The teacher provides not more than a frame for something to happen, which is hardly predictable and which students have to adapt to in real time. By means of improvised play, students experience not only social emergence and energy, existing in an artificial situation of a classroom, they experience how a proper behavioural and cognitive reaction to this energy has an impact on this energy, can support or destroy it.

Movement improvisation, as one of the applications of improvisation, refers explicitly to improvisation as a performing art form and is closely linked to music and dance improvisation (Blom and Chaplin, 1988; Paxton, 1975; Novack, 1990), recently discovered by management research as well (Harrison and Rouse, 2014, Bozic and Olsson 2013). Movement improvisation is non-verbal improvisation, focussing strongly on body awareness of multiple players in a room. It is based on *somatic co-experiencing* and in this regard addressing the synchronicity and a-synchronicity of body movements. It unfolds the inner and informal power of a group by bringing the social perception of its physical, body elements to the fore.

The embodied knowledge of the participants becomes addressed and receives a voice, given the fact that most of other forms of expression (language) are suppressed. The cognitive attention of the participants and the observers are shifted to otherwise veiled or ignored knowledge.

In improvisation, performers get into a deep state of presencing (Scharmer, 2009). Presencing (Ludevig, this issue) is a state where attention is extremely high and sharp. The performer is part of the system he/she focuses his/her attention to and to which he/she constantly responds. From these responses, the performance arises. However, different than in improvised theatre, where language tends to keep cognition awake and close by, movement improvisation emphasises the experience of the instantaneousness of individual decisions, of an "embodied deciding". Movement improvisation offers a more direct experience of the "attention directed to the whole system" (Goleman, 1996: 148f.), while theatre improvisation is more focussed on the balance between "inner and outer attention" (Goleman, 1996: 146). In this respect, movement improvisation disconnects the performer in a different, more short-cut way from its own internal cognition than theatre improvisation and turns him/her intensively to the body perception of the social system instead.

To summarize, language based improvisation can be extremely impactful in providing an access to social emergence as such. Movement improvisation goes much further in providing on the one hand the experience of the own emotional, embodied and intuitive involvement in a complex, emergent flow of communication and on the other hand unfolds the necessity to fully pay attention to the "whole", to disconnect from own thinking in any response to the emergent process of somatic co-experiencing. Aspects like spatial and tangible merging and

splitting, opening and closing, harmony and rupture provide a distinctively different experience of collaboration, co-creation, wandering leadership and instant adaptation to changing external conditions. This however, is constantly happening in organizational settings at least on an informal basis, though appearing on a sublimely veiled level. The individual contribution to foster or withhold this emergence by means of playing with embodied knowledge and embodied, conscious and unconscious reactions is even less deliberately accessible. To target the body as a medium for perception, knowledge acquisition and digestion as much as an influencer of formal and informal processes was the ambition for our movement improvisation in a full time MBA course. We wanted to find out how students would react to formal and informal approaches of coordination in their body movements, seen as expressions of embodied knowledge.

### **Goals and teaching plan of “creating adaptive organizations”**

The full time MBA course “creating adaptive organizations” is taught in three sessions of three hours each (1.5 days). The course aims to a) enable students to comprehensively approach and understand organizations, (going beyond sheer formal organization design), b) to provide an experience of two ways of changing organizations, a top-down formal approach and a grass-root-informal approach and to c) enable students to ground the adaptability of organizations on both a formal and an informal basis. Two months prior to the “creating adaptive organizations” course, the students have been introduced to the applied improvisation concept on a basic level during a four-days-course of “professional management skills”. This basic course provided a small group training on basic communication skills, group dynamics, agile leadership, basic coaching principles and presentation skills, fundamentally residing on improvisation principles.

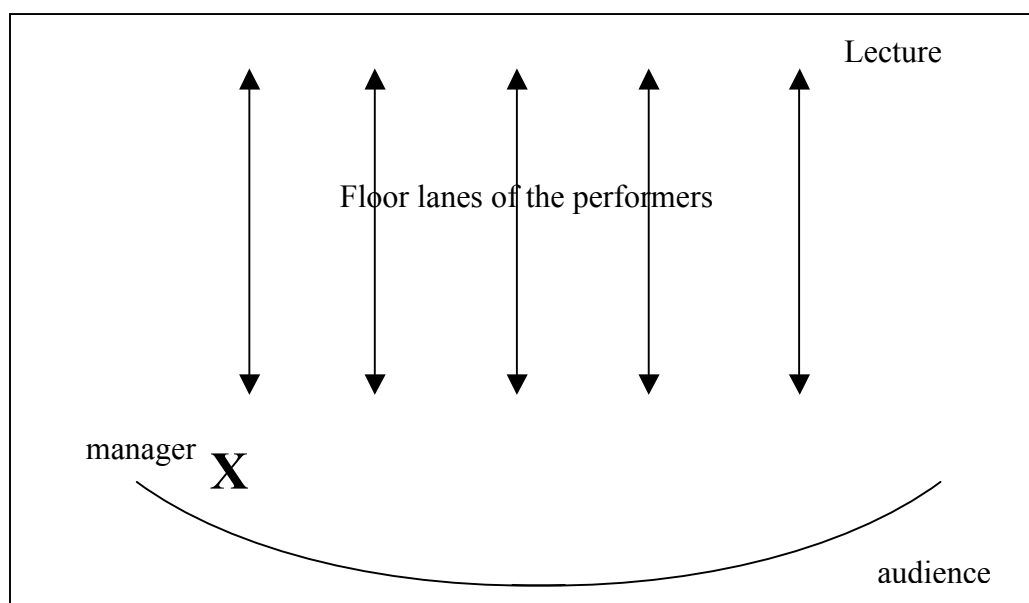
The first session of “creating adaptive organizations” course is fully dedicated to let students explore the “three faces of organizations” (Wetzel 2015), consisting of the formal (organizational design), informal (culture, politics and collective creativity) and the front (external appearance) “face”. This view is informed by a classic engineering view of organizations (formal design, Taylorism), a psychologistic view on group and organizational dynamics (informal face; human relations movement) and on sociological insights on the relation between organization and society (front face, based on institutional theory). The core element of this session is to let students explore each face from their recent organizational experience and to share and sharpen these experiences by means of front-loading introduction, group discussions and case studies. The second session is dedicated to introduce a formal-directive and top-down approach of change management, closely related to John Kotter’s highly popular model (1995). The model is introduced by means of a web-based organizational simulation (“GlobalTech”). This approach is presented as applicable particularly under conditions of a low informal changeability of an organization and high time pressure to change. The third session however gives room for exploring an informal way to adapt organizations, focussing strongly on the notion of self-adaptability, of a self-intelligence of the social system of the organization. This third session employs improvisation on an organizational level, going beyond the interactive foundations from the social skills course. It is employed as a model to let students experience the inherent collective self-adaptive force resting in organizational informality. It was the ambition of this session to illustrate in an experience-based and sensory-focussed way how organizations can turn adaptive to surprising conditions in an emergent way, given that informality is properly framed and navigated. This framing and navigating was proposed by means of basic improvisational principles, which have been translated and adapted to an organizational level. In this regard, students were supposed to experience organizational self-adaptability and the influence of this self-adaptability to better react to surprise, volatility and intransparency – and this in the self-experience as a student group. Differently from the basic course, this session was

substantially relying on movement improvisation instead of language based applied improvisation.

### Teaching plan and execution experiences of movement improvisation

The third session consisted of four parts. For the first part of this session, the group of 24 students was divided into four subgroups of six persons each. Each group was supposed to represent a department within an organisation. Their first task was to perform a one-minute choreography built on two general restrictions. First, the groups could only perform four different movements (walking forward/backward, jumping up, 180° turn, standing still). This was supposed to happen in a restricted space (figure 1). Second, each of the group-members was given his/her own area consisting of a straight line, parallel to those of the other group members.

Five different pieces of music were introduced to the group, which they could chose to be played for the performance, though the music could not be used during the preparation. The groups had so far only a vague impression of the atmosphere the music would create. No direct information about the beat or the speed was provided. The overall goal for all groups was to please the audience and to keep them entertained (having a strong product) and give them the impression of a strong organisation (show an effective coordination/collaboration between performers). For this performance, the groups were given ten minutes of preparation. One of the group members had to take up the role of the team manager/choreographer, who was expected to instruct the group while performing, like a conductor for an orchestra. After the end of the preparation time, the groups were performing their movement play one after the other, being on stage. After the first group had performed, the teachers started to introduce more and more events of surprise and volatility to the groups. For example, the wrong music was provided to the performance (wrong delivery of goods), members were pulled away before the group started to perform (fired, sick), the instructing manager was taken away (burn-out), and eventually, the last group had to move to the public stairs of the building, being exposed to the whole school (logistic trouble, being under mass media attention). After all groups had performed, we called the whole group together for a first debrief. We asked for feedback about how this performance was overall experienced.



**Figure 1. room constellation of the movement improvisation**

As a second part of the session, the group undertook a body and awareness improvisation exercise of some 45 minutes. The instructors provided and participated in exercises on awareness of the space, of bodies in the space, of the silent and sublime interaction between bodies by means of copying and making strong offers. Finally, ways to more broadly and better play with the given restrictions of the movement material (number of movements, floor lines) were introduced and trained like variation in speed, duration of single movements, change of distances to other performers. Here we relied to the movement improvisation approach used by Viewpoint.

After this exercise part, the groups were asked in the third part to repeat their performance. This time, some conditions of the performance changed. While the number of movements and the floor lines remained valid, there was no time provided for preparation, the groups could not choose their own music and they had to build the choreography along the performance itself, there was no manager anymore. Again, while playing, the groups were confronted with surprising and unexpected events. Group members were pulled away while playing or new members were suddenly brought in. Furthermore, two participants from the audience were placed at one side of the room and asked to move slowly crossing the middle of the performers' lanes in a 90° degree angle, so that they, while crossing the lanes, interfered strongly with the performance as such (see exhibit 3). Again, the amount of distortion was raised after each group performed. After this second movement improvisation part, a second debrief was conducted with the same introductory question about the general experience of this second round of performance.



**Figure 2. First round of movement improvisation with a manager**

In the final fourth part of the session, this somatic experience of emergent social energy was related to Karl Weick's notion of "heedful interrelating" (Weick and Roberts, 1993; Bijlsma-Frankema et al., 2008), as being primarily interactive, requiring a formal embedding. The remainder of the session consisted of a presentation of company examples using such embeddings to enable a vital interactive informality to happen, mainly focussing on High Reliability Organizations (HRO's) (Weick et al., 1999) like power plants, aircraft carriers or railway companies, which apply an impressive amount of formal rules and procedures, though rely substantially on informal emergent energy. The final conclusion of the session and the



course was provided as one core decision a manager as to make when it comes to organizational design. It's the decision to either rely on formalism to reject and avoid informality to interfere, or to rely on informality as a self-adaptive force. The consequences of higher speed in adaptation related to fewer control efforts by top management, a generally increased calmness, an increased eagerness to explore the energy resting in surprising events were obvious to us as observers.

### Methodology

To get a hold of how students recognized and learned about the differences between an emergent/informal way of coordination and a formally directive way, we used three different methods. Firstly we used classic debrief-techniques during the session. To validate what students could express orally and to extend our perception into the tacit, non-verbal learning of the students, we secondly video-taped the complete session and compared the body appearance of the students during the two fundamental parts of the improvisation exercise. Methodologically, we refer to the work of Leavy (2009), who described dance as a method for the scientific analysis of embodiment and a means to find out about the body as a very specific repository of knowledge. More concretely, Joan Picart (2002) and Diane Freedman (1991) analysed in their studies dance by means of movement analysis, understanding "movement itself as a way of knowing" (Leavy, 2009: 186). Freedman analysed the movements in her study by targeting 1) the use of the body, 2) the use of the space and 3) the effort and physical energy applied. This framework relates to Laban movement analysis that describes, documents and interprets human movement. For an explanation of choreography as writing, including Labanotation, see Kolo (this issue). This inspired us to compare the different parts of the movement exercise by means of use of space by individuals, the perceived body tensions and the perceived reaction of the audience as means to interpret the differences in body movements from the participants' view to our own interpretation. For this analysis, we focussed on two out of four groups. We analysed groups who performed their first part at the very beginning of the exercise and their second part at the very end of the second. This was chosen to maximize the probable difference in body behaviour between the unusual, surprising task of preparing a movement performance in the beginning and being most used to the movement sensitivity developed over the whole session. As a third means, we conducted qualitative post-session interviews about the general perception and core memories of the exercises and their cognitive effects from selected students.



**Figure 3. second round of movement improvisation, with cross-interferences**

**Results: Perceived differences in body behaviour between formally and informally instructed parts of the exercise***In-class debrief reflections*

The overall reaction collected after the first “formally managed” exercise showed a strong dependence on the manager, substantially related to expression of anxiety of the groups of doing mistakes and of deviating from the instructions of the manager. The managers themselves shared a strong sense of responsibility for the whole group performance and a high level of stress while performing. Overall, the occurrence of surprise and unexpected events was generally raising the stress level, on both the managers’ and the performers’ side, supporting feelings of vulnerability (see Satama, this issue) and of being committed to external forces. Surprise enforced the dependence from the manager. The audience was particularly pleased and laughed when failures and obvious deviances from the managers instructions occurred. The quality of the product was less important than the prospect of “sensation”. Following this sharing round, we asked for cues and traits of formality within the setting and the group reflected on the restriction of only few allowed movements, the floor line performers could act on and the existence of a manager. Benefits and pitfalls of formalisms were discussed for the exercise and for organizational everyday life in general.

Reflections collected after the second, “emergent and informally managed” exercise showed that the stress level had declined enormously and that the responsibility of the whole group had increased. The groups in different ways told that they found their own rhythm while performing and that mostly all individual performers were looking for patterns to emerge, to support and to let go and die after a while. The surprising events more or less triggered curiosity instead of anxiety, after the collective experience that the group can master to perform on its own and can adapt in a more loose and decentralized way. The groups called that “cluster formation”, when interesting new patterns occurred around unexpected events and “dynamic team formation”, when the whole performance of the group changed due to interferences.

The “cluelessness” which the whole group mentioned as a core feature of this round of performance was not seen as a thread, rather perceived as a reason for a “peace of mind” attitude towards whatever may come. The audience still was curious about “sensations” produced by interruptions. However, the student group reflecting as being the audience, was more intrigued by finding out the story line of what was happening in front of their eyes and a genuine interest in resilient behaviour. The possibility and attractiveness of making sense from surprising information accompanied the interest in deviance and possible failure. After this broad reflection, students were asked to reflect on the notion of informality and to compare to the first round of improvisation. Clearly, a sense of an emergent phenomenon occurring in the second round was realized and the benefits of quick resilience, flexibility, shared responsibility and cognitive relief from anxiety and vulnerability were acknowledged.

However, students realized that formalisms were still the same as in the first round, though these formalisms have been treated differently throughout the two rounds. In the first round they have been treated as taken for granted and followed more or less blindly, trying to avoid deviation. In the second round however, the “gaps” in these formalisms were discovered, the unfixed space any formalism provides and a playful way in working and using formalisms were realized. Formality was approached in a “negative” way, by exploring what is *not* fixed rather than what is fixed (Wetzel and Buelens, 2014). The instructors stressed the core point of this emergent adaptability and energy being available in any organization. The art of creating an adaptive organization would be then to develop a set of formal rules, incentives

and strategies enabling, supporting and framing the emergent informal energy of an organization to grow and to blossom.

#### *Results from the video analysis*

The video-analysis supported these first-hand impressions of the students. In comparison, the body moves of the students were in round 1 more focussed towards the manager (eye contact), smaller in space extension (jumps, steps), stiffer in body postures (fists, shoulders, mouth and smile) and less dynamic. In round two, after experiences in movement improvisation and after having seen the other two groups performing, the eye-contact was more focussed to the performing group members, larger in space usage and looser in overall body posture.

From our own perspective observing the relation of different bodies towards each other, we realized two different aspects on top of the movement analysis. Firstly, in the formally directed way of coordinating, there was almost no *connection* between the different players but a strong connection between each of them and their respective manager/choreographer. We experienced a lower responsibility of individual performers for the whole picture the group was drawing, it appeared more as if individuals were following instructions. In the second part of the exercise, the overall groups appeared to be more connected and aware of each other, they seemed to be more observing of what is happening (eye contact, flexibility of bodies towards new things occurring). Lacking a manager, special attention and focus was given to the intruding persons, however, different to the first part, a much stronger inner connection was present. Secondly, we perceived the *bodies in their interrelation being more sharp and present*, in a sense more "plastic" in their occurrence. We relate this mainly to a higher decisiveness of doing single moves, to be more distinctively and more expressive by being clearer about doing single moves, by letting the body express what it had learned in the time before. Related to that, we observed a stronger *independence and inner calmness* of the groups in the second round. The post-performance-reactions of the performing students after both parts differed a lot. While after the first part, many of apologetic moves and smiles were expressed, after the second part a stronger sense of calmness and satisfaction with what has been delivered was observable.

	<b>Formal-directive coordination</b>		<b>Informal-emergent coordination</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	Group 1	Group 2	Group 2	Group 1
<b>Intervention</b>	None	Choreographer off way of the audience	Two persons 90° change of lanes, perform the different movements themselves	two persons 90° change of lanes, slow uninterrupted movement
<b>Face expression (mouth, jaw)</b>	Firm, tight smile, closed mouth	Lose, relaxed, closed mouth	Lose, open smile, curious, slow repeated head turning	large eye balls, open mouth
<b>Shoulders uprightness</b>	Straight up, tight	Straight up, loose shoulders	Lose, upright, flexible, arms swinging	Lose upright, arms swinging
<b>Stiffness /tenseness of whole body</b>	only small jumps, not very high	Lose, relaxed, arms close to body	Relaxed, body even bowing	Relaxed, partly swinging
<b>Feet movement</b>	Small, quick steps	Small quick steps	Larger, slow steps	Mixed steps both in speed and distance
<b>Dynamics in movements (variability in speed, space taking)</b>	Following leader's instruction. In case of failure, tightening and shrinking of body	Not much relation to choreographer, rather very self-directed and connected to music	Calm adaptation to new bodies in the lanes, no hesitation	Collaborative patterns occur, bodies react to other bodies, even in silence

		rhythm		
<b>Usage of Space</b>	Small movements, restricted	Open use of lanes, not much of boundary extension	Body turning towards new bodies	Smile, open eyes, high eyebrows, body parts turned to the surprise (no protection)
<b>Eye contact amongst players</b>	Focussed on manager/choreographer, only one woman side-checking	Before music strong eye contact to choreographer, then self-focussed, not much to others	plenty of eye contact	Long sequences of following each other with their gaze
<b>Reaction of audience</b>	Detecting failures, reacting by laughter if failures occurred	Picking up musicality (rhythm), failure focussed	Indifferent, focussed on the 'full picture'	Story development "this was the story about ..." "Sam was a priest!"
<b>Comments</b>	Insecure of being exposed and vulnerable, no reference to music	Attempts to play with music, faces turned away from audience	Calm curiosity to what comes. High co-awareness	Playful experimentation with surprises from outside and from within the group

**Table 1: comparison of body movements between part one and three of the session**

### *Post-session interviews*

In the week following the performance, we conducted five short interviews with participants from all different groups to find out how the experience was perceived after the exercises were finished. The overall feedback about the session was strongly positive. Furthermore, the in-class-debrief-experience of the two parts was confirmed, especially the more relaxed atmosphere of the second part, the reduced stress level and the more playful way of dealing with surprises.

### **Summarizing reflections**

Firstly, for us, it was a substantial experiment to apply improvisation for organizational topics, leading away from the classical communication and interaction scenario of improvisation. Usually, this move is connected to a move away from interactive experience, away from body awareness and usually directly into high abstraction and cognition. It was for us a strong experience to witness how the focus towards the moving body nonetheless can highlight organizational, invisible and intangible aspects. For us, it was the so far strongest and most visible appearance of the sometimes rather stubborn and selfish "ghost" of informality, giving itself the honour of appearing in a classroom when she was addressed as a topic. Within this session, the occurrence of emergence could be provoked, which as such is a rather risky endeavour, raising the question of what to do when it fails. So far, we honestly don't have an answer to it yet, showing the possible vulnerability of such a session.

Secondly, and somehow rather clearly, a formal-directive way of addressing coordination prevents group members from connecting by means of embodied cognition. The link between group members, apart from the connection to the manager, remained underdeveloped. Furthermore, the feelings connected to that formal-directive way of coordination were dominated by fear of deviance from instructions (group members) and over-responsibility for the result (manager/choreographer). That seems to be a hint for the problematic aspects of formal-directive management under specific conditions.

Thirdly, for us this appearance was clearly linked to the emphasis on the body, which movement improvisation could provide. What comes to the fore in an exercise like this is especially how the body contributes to a non-predictable way of bringing coordination forward. Especially by a reduced amount of (formal) control, the body and its embodied knowledge supports an emergent, unpredictable way of adjustment to surprise and discontinuity. This happens in "real-time", meaning without prolongation of conscious

operations. This appears to be a major hint for how to develop a fast-paced adaptability of groups and organizations towards rapidly changing environments: by employing the embodied knowledge available and well-trained for exactly these circumstances. Accordingly, we read our results as a first hint on how the body contributes to an emergent way of coordinating, how the employment of body awareness and more elaborated embodied knowledge and cognition can support the self-adaptability of groups and organizations. These findings are generated by the use of dance as a research method: The exercises allowed for embodied experiences to emerge, and the subsequent video analysis made it possible to describe and interpret bodily reactions as expressions of embodied knowing.

Fourthly, also related to the use of dance as a research method, we could see how different ways of addressing a group affects the body and the embodied knowledge to respond. We felt that a formal way of addressing a group has a strong impact on how the embodied cognition is drawn to either a manager (formal-directive) or the group reacting to surprise. A directive approach, as we read it, tends to de-emphasize and un-train a co-awareness of bodies and a stronger connection between participants in a group based on their accumulated embodied knowledge. It seems as if the body and the inherent knowledge reacts differently to the way it is addressed and employed.

Fifthly, more time would be needed to highlight and unfold this stubbornness and selfishness, as expressions of the autonomous and self-directing nature of organizational informality. We could only show exemplarily how emergent informality occurs, we could only and very slightly touch how a deliberate management of this lady could look like. In fact, we think of extending the course with two more sessions, one with inviting guest speakers from HRO's and another one using dance improvisation and the metaphor of dance as such to find access on how to seduce autonomous, selfish informal emergence.

Finally, we conclude that perhaps it is teaching, which regains an access to experiencing and exploring collective energy and intuition, which then can inspire business schools to reconsider their approach to management, which then can inspire organization theory to reconsider its approach to organization. It might go beyond the sheer fact of re-inventing organization theory as a practical, casuistic science (du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2014), but, at the very end, a truly tangible one. We have made an argument that not only the body, but the moving body is a pivotal element in this context.

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