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Art dialogue methods: phronèsis and its potential for restoring an embodied moral authority in local communities

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ABSTRACT

We put forward Art-Dialogue-Methods (ADM) as an inquiry for practical wisdom within communities. It draws from a series of methodological traditions like artistic inquiry, participatory action research and narrative research. The practice of ADM could facilitate healing processes in fractured communities and organisations in today's world. ADM avoids a search from grand over-arching solutions, but searches for outcomes as exemplars of the good life. We may find the relevance of this quest in the postmodern macro-context of the globalised world today with tendencies of individualization and neo-liberal markets. The authors explore the potential value of ADM for the development of practical wisdom within communities, by pointing out arguments in philosophical and sociological literature and by means of exemplary cases of ADM-programmes.

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Introduction

As consumers in a postmodern globalised world we seem to have no trouble swallowing disturbing and “fake” news, unethical economic transactions, corrupt practices of political and corporate leaders, witnessing one crisis after another in almost every societal sector. We either stick to our routines in daily life, as easily to be manipulated consumers and professionals, reframing the shocking news, immoral acts and disturbing practices as “realistic” or “cynic” truths, or we waken up and take a stance. This is the choice that has to be made. The process of becoming conscious critical cosmopolitan citizens (Appiah, 2006) has its price though: the necessity to reflect on and criticize our own actions and routines, both personally as well as in the groups and teams in which we participate.

Reflecting on the post-modern situation of our globalized world many sociologists and philosophers notice a general fragmentation of moral authority in society. The recurrent critique, which focuses on our age of uncertainty, in *liquid* and *a-moral times* (Bakhtin, 1982; Bauman, 2006; Taylor, 2006), is that the ethos of communities is suppressed by instrumental rationality. Thus, the ethical question “what is good”, is downplayed by the question what is efficient, and is answered in terms of economic rationality; not by means of ethical deliberation (DuGay, 2000).

If we are to legitimize authority, we must face the fact that we live in a world of multiple cultures and rationalities. We may choose to make the market logic dominant, so that whatever provides the greatest profits should define our actions. However, this instrumental “neoliberal spirit” makes, in the words of Paul du Gay, fragmented and anomic what should be organic and whole (DuGay, 2000, p. 67). In the light of the general fragmentation of moral authority in society we pose the question: How are we to address values and leadership when we do not have generally accepted and socially

embodied narratives anymore that will have a binding power for people individually and in communities, as well as for society at large?

This special issue explores the potential of creative methods in counselling and guidance practices. We will contribute in particular to understand the aptness of creative methods for healing organisational rifts. Characteristic of our approach is the dismantling of daily routines and creatively evoking practical wisdom within communities, not as “human capital” to be managed, but as an emergent quality in and between people.

In the article we describe the importance of the contextual fine-tuning of explorative change processes and results of what we have called Art-Dialogue Methods (ADM).

The article shows in particular a case in which an ADM-programme helped to establish the right conditions for an interplay between participants, perspectives and modes of understanding and (inter-) acting in situations that involved values and practices within and between communities in a Dutch organisation of higher education. Smaller presented illustrative cases show how embodied, contextual knowledge can be articulated, not just individually, but as a community.

The next (second) paragraph starts by an exploration of characteristics of art and dialogue -, showing how ADM draws from existing methods of inquiry by embedding it in current methodological developments.

In the third paragraph we explore the interplay of different modes of “intelligence” in concrete ADM-practices, which have helped participants to explore existential, community and leadership issues, empowering professionals both individually and as a community. The core of this “methodos”, we will argue, is the art of establishing an “in-between” space for co-creative interplay between people and between different voices and values, including subtle modes of understanding and inter-acting (“intelligences”) to afford practical, contextual wisdom as a community (“phronèsis”).

In the fourth paragraph we provide for a rich description and reconstruction of a case in which we show the interplay of the four discerned intelligences facilitated by an ADM-programme in the context of a department within an organisation of higher education.

In the concluding fifth paragraph the views and results presented in the article will be discussed in the light of tensions and contradictions characteristic of our postmodern condition and future developments of arts-based (educational) research.

Art-dialogue-method

Before going into the relevancy of ADM we start by explaining the distinctive qualities of Art Dialogue and Method as more serious than mere play and more comprehensive than rational reasoning.

Introducing ADM

Art is about the *invocation* of the senses by using multiple idioms or ways of sense-making at the same time. Invocation is by definition in the present and in the plural. Art invokes directly; it (re-)creates experience and consciousness to “dwell” in the moment. Therefore, art is quite different from generalising representations of reality, “transferring” these to future situations. It is about idiosyncracies and temptational imagining and sensing right here and now. The making of art interweaves with different traditions, such as mythical and religious texts in which music, rituals and symbols play an important role (Gadamer, 1975, 2010; Habermas, 1984). McNiff (1981) and Eisner (2008), the early advocates of arts-based research, elaborate on presentational aspects of knowledge to which the arts might contribute in qualitative research. Art addresses qualitative nuances in (social) situations; evokes empathy and compassion; generates new perspectives on old patterns of interaction and routines; helps create awareness of our feelings rather than cognitions. In other words, art does not provide just illustrations and subtitles for communication processes, but it does communicate in its own way. It creates.

Dialogue is a way of sensemaking through words, images, or any kind of symbolic interaction. We view these as different forms of media or “texts”. Dialogue stems from the old-Greek “dia” (meaning “through an opening”) and “logos”, referring to the (natural) principle of ordering things. Dialogue refers both to a kind of internal understanding, a way of sense-making by reflecting on internal voices and experiences, as a way of voicing understanding (“logos”) in-between (“dia”) people, trying to come to a mutual understanding. In dialogue participants explore presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, images, recollections and feelings that subtly control their interactions, both individually and collectively (Bohm, 1996). It enables collaborative inquiry into the systems and processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between people and groups. Dialogue has the potential to heal social fissures by making new connections and revitalizing wholes in a fragmented world.

Art does not necessarily lead to a dialogue, it is *dialogic* in another “language” or medium: by means of images, tones, movements, etc. In order to understand the interweaving of artistic and verbal dialogue we need to explore this notion as being central to the narrative, existential and hermeneutic traditions of philosophers like Heidegger, Levinas, Buber, Habermas and Gadamer.

Method, according to the etymology of the old-Greek words “meta” and “hodos” – *methodos* – refers to an exploration (hodos = way) for insight (meta – what lies beyond).

Thus, ADM dwells in (between) people (Polanyi, 1966) by the invocational nature of art and the explorative power of dialogue. Dialogue and art are inherent to human nature, social interaction and community life as forms of symbolic communication (van den Berk, 2003; Cassirer, 2010; Langer, 1979; Jung, 1970).

Summarizing these constitutive elements we consider the “methodos” ADM by pointing out how co-creative explorations and multivocal perspectives may lead to new practices and changes in old routines which are *exemplary* for the issue at stake in (or between) communities in a particular cultural or organisational context.

The exemplar is more than just a solution to a problem and more vivid than just theoretical knowledge. We underline an important development in action research that argues for considering outcomes in terms of practical wisdom (Eikeland, 2006; Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012). We will argue that creative methods are particularly suitable for the development of contextual and practical wisdom in communities, which we refer to by its ancient Greek name – “phronèsis”. We use this term to stress that “phronèsis” “is” not a psychological or cognitive characteristic of individuals and groups, but an emerging quality in (between) people and spaces – provoked through art and dialogue – manifested as an interplay between different voices, perspectives and modes of understanding and interacting with each other.

The methodological context

An exemplary case: “Man, Know Yourself!”

One ADM-based philosophical counselling programme is oriented on the dynamic game, “Man, Know Yourself” (Muijen, 2010), consisting of six rounds in which life themes are raised both by means of symbolic pictures, mythical stories and philosophical views and questions. How the game is played is described elsewhere (Muijen, 2009, 2011), here we will focus on the power of imagining an in-between (transitional) space (Winnicott, 2005). The game combines dialogue with arts (symbolic pictures, painting, music) into dramatic polylogues. In different rounds participants make associations and reflections on how they set goals, relate to others and make choices in life. Participants are invited to focus on moral and existential themes by using metaphors and play, dialogue and art. The game master/ counsellor may start by making an inventory among the participants: “How would you address your personal theme as a question or as a problem? Would you express it in an earthly (grounded), flowing, airy (light-hearted) or fiery (passionate) way?” (Figure 1)

In one round of the game the playful dialogical process is explicitly focusing on developing an inner (moral) compass for life orientation. For example, participants are invited to see the art of



Figure 1. The dynamic game, “Man, Know Yourself”.

making right choices in life as a quest in the labyrinth and will reflect their personal quest in the story about Theseus and the thread of Ariadne. Another round raises questions on how such a myth might contain a personal metaphor for their moral compass. The game cards suggest philosophical perspectives and mythical exploration. Similarly, crises are reflected upon metaphorically: both by symbolic images – for example a picture of a swamp – and by means of a provocative question on one’s attitude when confronted with such a crisis: “would you prefer a helping hand or try to survive by yourself?”

A participant reflected on the metaphorizing process and her experience after a workshop with the game:

The symbolic imagery allowed me as a player to feel the wild water literally rising to my lips. In imagining that situation, I visualized which roads I should take to get out of that situation. The surprising result was an intuitive feeling how to handle an issue I was facing in my actual life.

The reported experiences of participants of the game reflect what is called the *senso-pathic* (Mook, 2003) dimension in the context of play and art therapy: the game components (playing board, cards, dice, hourglass and rich objects) stimulate the senses and establish a creative tension between past and future, between cognition and feeling, between personal, private and social, cultural patterns, between moral and factual questions.

ADM in context

The methodological strength of ADM in philosophical counselling and community building is the interweaving of different “intelligences”; i.e. the ability to understand by discerning one thing or experience from another. By referring to different ways of being, or modalities, we stress the original connotation from Roman-Greek philosophy as opposed to cognitive, individualist orientations we find dominant in psychological discourse (Gardner, 2011). In the next paragraph we will introduce

four “intelligences” in the sense of a multivocal, cocreative arrangement to explore human potential of becoming sensitive (pathos), invoking the imagination (mythos) through rich sensemaking (logos) by means of dialogues through art. The aim is not art for its own sake, but as a way to develop good ways in life (ethos). At the same time our positioning in the world (ethos) gives valuable input for the “methodos”, as a way of questioning (lack of) taking a stance in professional practices, by exploring what our senses, experiences, imagination and other “intelligences” tell us.

We borrow from three important bodies of knowledge.

First, we relate the dynamics between the four intelligences to a narrative shift in dialogical and humanist traditions in the arts and the social sciences. The so-called death of the grand narratives does not have to result in a nihilism and (social and ethical) fragmentation of communities. We stress the importance of narratives by taking MacIntyre’s words: “I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 216). We are familiar with the way in which religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam use the power of “story telling” to give an understanding of human nature, our destiny and the good way of living. Their stories relate truths that have a binding power to these communities, including rules for moral behaviour.

Being aware of its “political” and ethical power we emphasize that stories are composed of texts that are not limited to verbal narratives, but consist also of imagery (through paintings, thick descriptions), smell (incense, flowers, herbs), sounds (the way of telling, the timbre and use of voice, music), taste (ritual food and drinks), situations (the ritualistic environment such as a church, a theatre, a board room, etc.) as well as the rituals themselves which are part and parcel of the origin of narratives. Both smell and taste are fundamental in invoking memories and the sphere in which stories and narratives are told (Draaisma, 2010). Thus we position ADM as a narrative approach to social issues.

Secondly, ADM is related to the use of arts for individual, relational, social development and healing.

Creative methods (music, dance, art, and drama) enhance therapeutic possibilities for patients to recover from developmental problems, anxieties and traumas, in order to strengthen social and emotional competences (Dalley, 1994, 1996; Levine, 1995; Levine & Levine, 1996; Kuiper, 1988, 1989).

The invocational and explorative power of creative methods also enhances deep (existential) learning (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1991; Yuthas, Dillard, & Rogers, 2004). Following a narrative and dialogical perspective on developmental processes (Isaacs, 1999), we acknowledge the interconnectedness of individual and collective learning and empowerment processes. Therefore, creative methods (e.g. community art, folk art, story-telling) can foster both individual developmental processes and empower communities by taking collaborative action on social responsibilities.

Thirdly, there is the use of dialogue, in which the relational aspect of art-dialogues takes precedence over individualistic approaches.

Although we are aware of the differences between methods like career writing (Lengelle, Meijers, Poell, & Post, 2014), art based therapeutical and narrative approaches such as the self-confrontation method (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) and Emerging Body Language (Bosman, 2012), we want to highlight a shared notion of dialogical enquiry and communication by creating a relational stage to invoke narratives and investigate meanings more than “truths” in a co-creative and dialogical way. In methodological research we witness a shift from representational to presentational forms of knowledge and the blurring of boundaries between researchers and practitioners (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Levey, 2018; Levine, 1995; Liamputtong, 2007; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008; Rose, 2001). Both arts-based and collaborative methodologies (like action research) are helpful to study in-depth experiential forms of learning-by-doing. By qualitatively pointing out how thereby new practices and changes in old routines are developed the results are *exemplary* for the issue at stake in (or between) communities in a particular cultural or organisational context.

The significance of “phronèsis” to restore coherence in communities

The ancient philosophical question of “how to take care of ourselves?” has become particularly relevant in times of moral crisis. The socio-ethical configuration of contemporary times offers a striking similarity with Greek history: in both era’s we witness a collapse of collective value systems. The art of living has been a substantial element in ancient Greek, Roman and even early Medieval culture. Since Socrates, practical philosophy contributed to societal coherence throughout more than nine centuries by affording a plurality of local and vital narratives on the good life. Care for ourselves is not a grand narrative of good and evil in the way some religious and secular “codes of conduct” demand. Rather, it is an appeal for the opposite: to find one’s own answers to moral questions and to take responsibility to review moral answers throughout life. By responding to the appeal to live one’s life accordingly, we may consider our life as “living art” (Foucault, 2005).

Following Nussbaum’s analysis of Aristotelian ethics, we must be aware of the inherent vulnerability of everyone’s striving for “the good life”. Illustrative is her ethical analysis of the classical tragedy of Hekabe: even a moral outstanding character like Hekabe can morally erode given the circumstances of war and betrayal by her best friend. Just like a flower will wither when lacking the sun and rain needed to grow and to flourish (Nussbaum, 2001).

Realizing the dependency of ethics on social contexts, on ecological and cultural forces we use another metaphor, the moral compass, to address the question of “calibrating” plural value orientations of individuals, communities and of society at large. Especially artistic expression, dialogical exploration and sharing narratives are indispensable forms of symbolic communication and interaction to experience the moral compass as a *living* metaphor, by seeing wholes rather than fragmentation, fostering an eye for the “gestalt” (Langer, 1979) of the unifying parts. In our eyes this approach can give strong answers to postmodern tendencies of fragmentation and loss of meaningful activities and sense-making.

ADM as “methodos” for an incremental development of “phronèsis”

Our “methodos” is not oriented on implementing an overall value system but fosters an explorative dynamics of four intelligences. Therefore we don’t offer a “model”. ADM is about re-configuring social, emotional, cultural, moral, economic, ... patterns in individuals, groups and communities as *parallel processes*. The ancient philosophy on the art of living (Eikeland, 2008) established a tradition for the development of “phronèsis”, understood as an enduring attempt for virtuous practices. Narratives offer a key how to take charge of our lives so that we learn to act wisely in and as a community.

Overviewing the history of ideas on the art of living, its ethical appeal demands more than merely rationality (logos), it requires emotional, social, rhetorical and moral intelligence. It demands us to be sensitive to the suffering of others and ourselves (pathos), daring to imagine what is utterly strange and to be able to tell stories about how we feel about tragic and unforeseeable events (mythos), as well as to explore the world courageously and to act in a dignified way (ethos).

To show how the interplay of these four intelligences contributes to restoring coherence in communities, we will reframe ADM as metaphoric communication (Muijen, 2001; Muijen & Van Marissing, 2011). Highlighting the importance of gaining insight in parallel processes between intra-, interpersonal and community levels we present ADM as an art of creating living metaphors, thereby widening the concept of metaphor (Cassirer, 2010; Langer, 1979; Ricoeur, 1975, 1984). In this manner an ADM-trainer needs to be capable of handling this (extra-)linguistic dynamics both as personal and group development, with cognitive and emotional dimensions of metaphorizing, evoking the imagination with the people involved. It is a playful, healing and dialogical process, evoking images of what could be real in-between actors and in-between reality and utopia. An increasing amount of studies provide the tools on how to use arts in (research and change) programmes, including literary forms, performance, visual art, narratives and folk art. The methodological strengths of these approaches in professional practices and research are, amongst others, the capacity to unsettle stereotypes, raising

critical consciousness, forging micro-macro connections, being participative by its provocative-exploratory power and focussing on multiple meanings. Thereby arts-based methods enrich “the landscape of knowing” (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Eisner, 2008; McNiff, 1981).

Pathos: creating a symbolic in-between sphere invoking the senses.

In ADM, we understand the role of arts as of fundamental importance to the (de)construction of meanings and social practices. The famous quote of Michael Polanyi “we know more than we can tell”, is to indicate that the tacit dimension to our knowledge is partly inexpressible. Yet at the same time the virtual opposite is true as well “we can express more, than we can (explicitly) know.” Like this tacit dimension in knowledge we refer to tacit dimensions in communication and interaction, expanding this concept to analogical, symbolical non-discursive domains (Bouwman & Brohm, 2016; Brohm, 2005).


Nietzsche used a musical metaphor to point to “truth” as a primarily rhetorical quality of communication: “Mit tönen kann man die Menschen zu jedem Irrtum und jede Wahrheit verführen: wer vermöchte einen Ton zu widerlegen.” (Nietzsche, 1984, p. 386) The way in which music touches the heart, conveys meaning and creates a sphere in which both listeners and musicians dwell, cannot be translated into words. Artistic expression embodies the quality of *showing and presenting* “truth” by means of in-dwelling and attunement between people. Dancing, music, the sculpturing process of making something in clay are based on a resonance. An in-between space is created by the sensing hands of the sculptor in the watery clay-substance through touching, feeling and forming. The boundaries between the subjective domain of the maker melts with the objective substance of clay into “flesh-clay”, an in-between double skin (Muijen & Van Marissing, 2011, p. 67 ff). A similar resonance is obvious in dancing, seen as e-motion-al movements on the border between inside and outside (Brohm & Muijen, 2010). In this way art “is” pathos, as real as vitality affects (Stern, 2010), a power helping us to come to an understanding with the situation; and similar to the emotional way in which situations can be transformed all of a sudden from pleasant to anxious; according to Sartre’s phenomenological view on emotions, not as states “in” subjects but as the way we dwell in situations. For this reason, we believe that ADM constitute open spaces in communication and interaction between people, in which imagining how the world could be, seems to be more powerful than analytical laws of logics.

Mythos: elaborating on living metaphors by co-creative dialogue.

The intelligence of “mythos” adds a dynamics (dialectics) between presentational and representational knowledge. In the playing field of the imagination the metaphorization process might be expanded by using different arts for *organizing* a musical, visual, theatrical or dance-metaphor. Here we give an example of how a musical metaphor facilitates a process of community building and leadership (Figure 2).

In the example described it is shown how the orchestrated musical metaphor stimulates an out-of-the-box inquiry of community building and leadership. The direct appeal of making music together allows the articulation of moral (existential) emotions, like bravery and cowardice; guilt and honour, resonating with the issues involved.

For example, feeling the significance of being afraid to sing solo and overcoming shyness to perform in front of the group may contribute in an experiential way to the development of leadership and empower both individuals and the community. Its strength is reflected in the context of the musical orchestration of the group dynamics: not as an abstract concept but as arts-based experiential learning how a certain style of leadership affects the group; how people can learn from the experience of playing solo and together (Willems, 2017). In the given example, the metaphorical power of verbal expressions – like “voicing”, “creating harmony”, “discordant tones”, “operating solistically”, “tuning in”, “backing”, “key-note player” etc. – is manifest in a follow up dialogue. Thus by enriching the musical metaphor with experiential narratives the participants add “mythos” to “pathos”, explicating the significance of acting like an orchestra in their working life as well (Muijen, 2012).



A musical metaphor
Voicework (Willems, M
in Muijen, H. 2012) is used to
stimulate both voicing personal
feelings and the experimental
exploration of different ways of
how to create harmony in a
group and how to handle
conflicts; how to balance
between dissensus and
consensus.

Musical exercises might
focus on keeping rhythm and
melody (*being authentic, being
in charge*) while at the same
time you have to listen and
adjust to other melodies and
appreciate the differences
between people.

A further complexity can be the
development of the
collaborative power by
exercising the complexity and
subtlety of the dynamics
between *taking the lead* and
the *need for backing*. A group
of people using small
instruments (e.g. percussion)
might give more or less backing
(or none at all) to a singer as
soloist




Figure 2. A musical metaphor for community building and leadership.

Logos: installing a dialogical stage for existential learning processes

The in-depth explorative power of “logos”, in the context of arts-based research and dialogues, is not to be understood as an abstract logical operation but as a relational process. Dialogical communication sets the stage for collaborative exploration of social and existential issues by means of learning processes, based on responsiveness, an open mind and a listening attitude. Lengelle and Meijers (2013, 2014, 2015) have shown extensively by research how deep learning processes are taking place in existential situations by means of a double hermeneutics in the sense of a dialogical

attunement: internally, developing a feeling of identity by listening to different voices in and stories about oneself; and externally, with respect to others, to different social tasks and roles in the community. Thus dialogue presupposes and generates being tuned into other people's emotions, movements and voices as well as to inner voices and signals. At the same time participants and counsellor must be sensitive and responsive to the expressions and (body) language both of oneself and others.

In ADM-programmes the focus is on existential and relational themes by creative and explorative learning (as opposed to one-dimensional learning processes on a behavioural level). Illustrative is a research project in which therapists, consultants and trainers, using arts for personal and organisational change, were involved, investigating the transformative power of arts-based dialogue in their own field. In a follow up meeting they were invited to exchange narratives and experiences with each other about what could be the value of using arts in their professional work. In order to show the power of arts to facilitate developmental processes these professionals constructed images and metaphors themselves. The outcome pointed to the value of art-dialogues for (re-)uniting opposing forces and fragmented parts in the organisational context, within and between groups as well as between voices and "strivings" within themselves as professionals (Muijen, 2001, p. 204 ff).

Ethos: restoring ethical relations and reframing social issues by re-enactment and empowerment

As a starting point, we support the idea that we need to build moral communities rather than to look for a new universal ethical theory or a grand narrative, like Nussbaum (2001, 2014) argues. The before mentioned double hermeneutics, based on the confrontation of internal and external dialogues, is formative for the ability of calibrating the inner compass. This antique metaphor is more than just a competence for moral decision-making, it is referring to the "intelligence" of ethos. Poetical, musical, dramaturgical, ... metaphors function as a frame to give expression to existential feelings like loneliness, comradeship and responsibility, which involve both ethical and social questions (for example feeling guilty to resist group pressure).

It is known that the dynamics of a group fosters either authenticity or punishes deviation of the group norm by excluding outcasts, accepting bullying behaviour and condoning attitudes of bystanders, etc. Arts-based communication provokes the shifting of perspectives from judgemental (moral excuses and accusations) to explorative and empowers people to re-enact rather than acting out (Schaverien in: Dalley, 1994). By means of reframing social issues through metaphorical exploration ethical sensitivity is stimulated. The re-enactment of ethical dilemmas and social problems by means of dancing or visualising the situation, by means of dramaturgical dialogues between stakeholders is helpful not just to acknowledge or "solve" problems but to feel moral-emotional dimensions in relationships. In this way ethical voices and perspectives on the social issues at stake will evoke. Thereby ethical relationships can be restored in communities.

We argue that ADM allows for more than a restoration of traditional views: it has the potential to recover meaning and values in the complex contexts of late modern life, an era, in need of sense making and qualitative approaches to complex social issues. As we are facing the increasing power of large economic systems, while at the same time we are often less embedded in local communities, there is a general tendency towards a "self" that feels "atomic", disempowered, alienated, purposeless. From the macro scale to the intrapersonal scale of keeping psychological health in existential frictions and the art of how to make good decisions in life, we are facing the loss of value systems and the inflation of meaning by the fragmentation of human life. When professionals, using creative methods in their counselling or supervision practices, do not take this larger dimension into account, we fear that these methods may become another fetish in the neo-liberal market system; an employability tool that produces conformity to company values

(Bloom, 2013) or an element of “fun” that is just another way for normative control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009).

Therefore ADM needs careful framing in order to avoid this pitfall, by becoming aware of the multi-layered calibrating process between opposing values and by being sensitive to parallel patterns in personal development, community building and leadership.

The next session describes a case how the four “intelligences” are blended in an ADM-programme.

A case of developing phronèsis in a professional community

This case illustrates how the four intelligences, blended into an ADM-programme, might enhance the calibrating power of the moral compass and empower the ethos of a professional community (Muijen, Appel, & Cock Buning, 2004). In this programme about twenty lecturers and a manager of a department of Social Work were involved. The programme took place from 2002 to 2006 and its effects on collaborative action were monitored from 2006 to 2010.

The intake meeting resulted in a focus on the actual working conditions of the professionals. In an explorative dialogue, frictions were discovered between the value systems of different groups, especially between different generations of lecturers. More severe was the friction discovered between personal interests and educational values of the professionals on the one hand and the more economically and technically oriented team of managers on the other, which had caused incidents and conflicts. Thus, it was agreed that the five training sessions would be fine-tuned accordingly with three trainers, using creative methods to face the clash of values and interests.

Evoking mythos

The participants were responsible for different curricula on two professional levels. The programme started with an inventory by choosing pictures, symbolizing personal-professional values and attitudes. This resulted in several anecdotal stories about their shared history, which was followed by a dialogical process of collective sense-making by which the small narratives and anecdotal events became more meaningful within broader contexts, exemplifying relevant themes and moral issues in the community, such as pain resulting from conflicts between colleagues and between lecturers and managers. Then the metaphorization process started with questions such as: how do the different stories reflect community values? How do the issues affect them as a community? How do they want to act on them as a team?

Mobilizing logos

These questions were explored in-depth: The educational and social values – the sensed cohesion as a team by personal and social bonding; their humour and flexibility – were expressed by using a metaphor: the team felt as a “safe haven” for each other. A linked metaphor of “creating bridges” despite the differences within the (younger and older generation) group of professionals expressed their shared focus on values such as creativity, spirituality and educational flow with students, which was described as a flower garden.

The metaphorization processes resulted in a dialogue about ambivalences and emotional under-tones in their shared values and feelings, referred to as “the secret of our school”. At first glance this metaphor seemed to express their “powerful bonding”. Further exploration of the (painted) metaphor revealed feelings of distrust towards the management, embedded in a longer history of incidents and organizational change from a traditional focus on educational values towards an instrumental way of “managing” education. This change was experienced and understood not just as a “neutral” new management approach, but as a cultural shift, which resulted in a gap between professionals and management.

Expressing pathos

The gap was most evident in a follow-up session, in which the participants were invited to visualize “the future of the school” by means of a “gardening metaphor”. The three subgroups (containing four to six participants) characterized their paintings as:

“a blossoming flower garden underneath a midday sun with a garden house”,

“a picture of a wild garden with real picked flowers on top of the painted garden” and

“The island garden” (Figure 3)

The last picture had a particular striking effect on the participants, confronting the group with an image of an “autarkic” community. The blossoming flowers referred in a metaphorical sense to a strong professional community, but living on an island in “splendid isolation”. The image represented the “secret of our school”: the strong personal and professional ties between the lecturers and the distance towards the management and “outside” world, symbolized by the water around the island. This metaphorical image resulted in some questions to be considered for further investigation: “Are we really working on an island? Who is part of ‘our’ community and who is excluded and belongs to the ‘outside world’? How would it be possible to narrow the distance to ‘the outside world’?”

Empowering their ethos

The confronting (pathos), visualizing (mythos) and reflective (logos) power of the metaphorizing- dialogical process had helped the professionals to explore the historical roots and actual meaning of their professional values. A follow-up session was organized to empower them (ethos) by creating symbolical bridges between the professionals and the “outside world” (especially the management). These (2D and 3D) created living metaphors helped the professionals to develop their ethos as a



Figure 3. The island garden.

community. They now asked: “how are we able to change the policy making process from a ‘bureaucratic obstacle’ to something that is working for us by creating open communication channels with the management?”

Developing phronèsis as a community

We underline the limited scope of this arts-based intervention on the intermediate professional team level. It was not enough to change the on-going process of polarization and bureaucratization within the macro-organizational context. Still there was some longer-term impact of the mobilized phronèsis within the community. As a follow-up, several working groups were formed and an action plan was submitted to the management team. The fact that the different teams of lecturers were willing again to communicate and cooperate with the management turned out to be one first step in a reconciliation process in the years after the ADM-community building programme (2006–2010). It consisted in a setup of (in part inter-organisational) communities-of-practice. This resulted in a bottom-up process of professionalization and collaborative action. For example: they started writing a book on applied ethics for students and lecturers of the University of Applied Sciences.

The longer-term outcome of the reconciliation process took a different course though: despite the empowerment of the teams the managerial decision-making process was not changed accordingly. Economically driven pressure coming from the neo-liberal way in which education is organized in society at large, resulted in a harsher and no-nonsense output driven policy of managing education. Thus, the gap between the management and professional level was further deepened, undermining the thin layer of newly built trust and hope for possible change. Despite this fact the professional communities-of-practice continued to work collaboratively on their book on Human Recourses Management in Ethical Perspective, which was presented at a conference (Nijhoff & Wesseling, 2010).

However the overall case stands for a meaningful process of empowering and building bridges between students, professionals and management, creating an educational community despite conflicting forces.

Conclusion and discussion

In order to restore the ethos of a community in the face of fragmentary powers in society today, we have argued that ADM requires an incremental, embedded approach, exploring the development of contextual, practical wisdom (phronèsis). This “methodos” as an inquiry within communities was taken from (art) therapy, philosophical counselling, action and arts-based research and dialogical change approaches for collaborative action and community building. Crucial seems to be the fact that ADM is not externally designed as a “to-be-implemented-reform-plan”, but as a contextually fine-tuned arrangement of arts-dialogue-methods.

We have argued that ADM has the potential for contributing to practical wisdom through an integration of multiple intelligences in a dialogical and creative way, so that it fits local contexts and cultural characteristics.

We demonstrated this potential within a professional community of lecturers. The context was characterized by a fragmentation in value systems between generations as well as a traditional conflict between the rationality of professional values, embodied by the lecturers, and the instrumental rationality represented by the managers. These social configurations reflect four decades of economic short-term rationality at the cost of sustainable value-driven processes of sense making (DuGay, 2000). The ADM-programme allowed for an enriched rationality as well as for a shared understanding of the significance of value orientation in educational practices. Thus, although on a small scale, ADM allows for viable exemplars that may have far-reaching consequences (Flyvbjerg et al., 2012).

A critical methodological reflection

ADM as “methodos” is more and less than another “mixed methods”-approach: it is “more” because the contextual, multi-layered blending of four “intelligences” is crucial to its success; it is “less” because it is disruptive of one-dimensional methodical devices such as protocols and focuses on parallel (dysfunctional) patterns at micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

The methodological power of ADM appears to transcend the level of psychological interventions, “personal growth” and “team spirit” by encountering existential questions and creating an in-between space (transitional area) in which metaphorization and deep learning (through art and symbolic play) contribute to healing processes reciprocally on individual and group levels.

We are well aware that the methodological principles, drawn from the literature and our own ADM-based programmes, have a limited empirical base in the sense of quantitative methods. Our claim is not contributing to an evidence-based model but rather to practice-based evidence, based on exemplary cases and philosophical analyses. Thus, instead of art-based inquiry in general we focussed on specifically designed small-scale philosophical counselling and community programmes.

This brings us to the importance of a narrative focus on ethical questions, meaning that our “moral sense” is shaped by the stories about “the good life” that are being told in communities. Stories about “the good life” encompass artistic expression in which we deliver clues that may tell the other more than we ever realize and are able to express verbally.

This might be the reason why ADM is helpful to foster reflection on values underlying conflicts and emotional disruptions; thus offering a valuable source for reconstructing the meaning of life stories and integrating the history of the (professional) community.

To develop ADM further to a next level would require in depth research of the processes described. We hope to have contributed a small step to this long-term goal: ADM as a way of life-long value-learning (Brohm & Muijen, 2010; Muijen, 2004; Muijen, 2009, 2011).

Multiple intelligences

We have offered an outline of ADM as the art of mobilizing the dynamics between four “intelligences”. The power of imagination as the intelligence of mythos helped to create small narratives by means of rhetorical metaphorization processes, counterbalancing the dominance of logos and its monopolistic reality claim. Our ADM-programmes stimulate emotional and ethical intelligence as well: by making the meaningfulness of moral emotions explicit and becoming aware of the necessity of polyvocal, multidimensional perspectives on situations.

To operationalize these aspects into narratives includes both story-telling as well as the apprehension of life events revealing an inherent quality of human life itself. Stories are valued as having a moral educational power: just like epics, legends and parables in narrative (religious) traditions. In the presented case the narratives on the professional community driven into “splendid isolation on the island garden” and exploring its future as a “blossoming garden” did have this impact. Crucial was the process of articulating their identity on the basis of shared professional values, which defined them as a community. Boosting the ethos of a community means the appropriation of the wicked problem (Conklin, 2006) together with the fragile reconciliation process with management by addressing conflicting issues, installing empowerment. Thereby emotional aspects and a cultural perspective on ethical questions and frictions are included (Kinni, 2003), taking all stakeholders into consideration (Abma, 2010).

To an integrated research program of artistic inquiry and dialogical change

A relevant question for further research would be how ADM could be extended by combining artistic-inquiry approaches and action research into a powerful tool for developing a learning organization (Bridges & Bridges, 2011; Wierdsma & Swieringa, 2011). To widen the concept of dialogue in this

respect and to enclose art as a “third voice”, we might refer to a Habermasian view on communication: “truth” is conveyed not just theoretically, but contains ethical (practical rationality) and expressive aspects (aesthetic rationality) as well.

Therefore we stress the fact that ADM-based programmes are not just a popular mix of creative methods but are embedded in expertise. Crucial is the contextual fine-tuning of ADM so that both our gut-feeling as trainers and counsellors and the “pathos” and tacit knowledge of professionals can be made constructive in dialogues. To accomplish this, we should become sensitive and responsive to ambivalent meanings, hidden plots, and what has not been said in the stories being told, thereby taking questions on authenticity and integrity into account. To capture ethical and aesthetic dimensions in sense-making ADM presents a powerful voice. Therefore, we stress the importance of an open atmosphere in which stories are being told.

In the context of ADM we have experienced that moral issues in communities and organizations can be addressed dialogically, not just by power-play. Crucial in this respect is the development of “phronèsis” by the “art of living”: to make one’s life meaningful both for oneself (authentic) as to other people in the organization and to broader contexts in society (polis, cosmopolis). This is what Foucault could mean by his phrase how to live one’s life like living art: the human answer to the appeal of taking charge of one’s life and sharing it with the community.

This implies an ontological claim of narratives in the sense of Ricoeurs analyses (1975, 1978). Dialogical philosophers like Levinas and Buber add another revealing implication concerning our identity, saying that we are, even when we understand ourselves as “individuals”, in a very fundamental sense relational: that we are not so autonomous as we might think and that our “social and political nature” is not secondary but primal. We are in a very fundamental sense relative to (important) other persons, in the way Buber (1997) explicated: “in the beginning there was relationship”.

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