

Concept Symposium 2006 Principles of Governance for Major Investment Projects

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EXERPTS FROM FRANK J. BARRETT (ORGANIZATION SCIENCE/VOL.9. NO.5. 1998):

"CREATIVITY AND IMPROVISTION IN JAZZ AND ORGANISATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING."

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF JAZZ IMPROVISATION

1. PROVOCATIVE COMPETENCE: INTERRUPTING HABIT PATTERNS
2. EMBRACING ERRORS AS A SOURCE OF LEARNING
- 4 3. MINIMAL STRUCTURES THAT ALLOW MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY
4. DISTRIBUTED TASK: CONTINUAL NEGOTIATION TOWARD DYNAMIC SYNCHRONIZATION
5. RELIANCE ON RETROSPECTIVE SENSE MAKING AS FORM
6. HANGING OUT: MEMBERSHIP IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
7. ALTERNATING BETWEEN SOLOING AND SUPPORTING

IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-JAZZ CONTEXTS

- 1. BOOST THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION DURING AND AFTER ACTIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED**
- 2. CULTIVATE PROVOCATIVE COMPETENCE: CREATIVE EXPANSIVE AND INCREMENTAL DISRUPTIONS AS OCCASIONS FOR STRETCHING OUT TO UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY**
- 3. ENSURE THAT EVERYONE HAS A CHANCE TO SOLO FROM TIME TO TIME**
- 4. CULTIVATE COMPING BEHAVIORS**
- 5. CREATE ORGANIZTIONAL DESIGNS THAT PRODUCE REDUNDANT INFORMATION**
- 6. CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATES THAT VALUE ERRORS AS A SOURCE FOR LEARNING**
- 7. CULTIVATE SERIOUS PLAY: TOO MUCH CONTROL INHIBITS FLOW**

”Jazzimprovisation can be seen as a hopeful activity of human potential: it represents the belief in the human capacity to think freshly, to generate novel solutions, to create something new and interesting, reminding us of John Dewey`s contention that we are all natural learners. To quote the saxophonist Ornette Coleman: ”Jazz is the only music in which the same note can be played night after night but different each time.””

Improvisation

The communicative aspect to oneself and the dialogic aspect to others are central to all improvisational activity, which should be a solid basis for a “well-functioning democracy.” In all kinds of dialogues there are always certain elements of uncertainty present because one does not know the result until the participation in the dialogue has come to an end. This fact is elegantly captured by Asplund: “I don’t know what I have said until you have answered and you don’t know what you have said until I have answered. You show me what I have said and I show you what you have said.” (Molander, 1993 p. 97)

Jazz Improvisation

Amongst the many different definitions of jazz improvisation, Paul Berliner’s definition is particularly useful in this context:

Improvisation involves reworking pre-composed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation. (Berliner 1994, p. 241)

This definition recognises that successful, creative improvisation is dependent on preparation and training as fundamental factors to spontaneous and intuitive action.¹

¹ For a further discussion on the concept of improvisation, see Jørgensen 2004, p.79-114

Jazz clarinetist Ken Peplowski about the Process of Improvisation:

... "I HAVE FOUND THAT THE SINGLE MOST ANNOYING THING IS THE LACK OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT AMONG EMPLOYEES. THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN SOMEONE JUST DOING THEIR JOB: JUST DOING THE MINIMUM THAT'S REQUIRED.

MY JOB AS A MANAGER WOULD BE A LOT SIMPLER AND MORE SATISFYING IF MORE EMPLOYEES UNDERSTOOD IMPROVISATION.

DOING THE MINIMUM IS IMPOSSIBLE IN A JAZZ GROUP. IF WE DID THAT, ALL WE WOULD DO IS PLAY THE MELODY AND GO HOME. INSTEAD, WHEN WE MAKE MUSIC EVERYBODY DOES THEIR JOB, BUT THEN BUILDS OUT FROM THAT POINT AND STARTS THINKING INDEPENDENTLY.

AS I HAVE SAID, THE BEST MUSIC DOESN'T COME FROM ONE PERSON - THE LEADER - STANDING UP AND DICTATING WHAT EVERYBODY ELSE SHOULD DO. I LEAD BY LISTENING TO THE OTHER MUSICIANS AND REACTING TO THEM.

THEY KNOW THEY HAVE THE FREEDOM WITHIN THE STRUCTURE THEY ARE GIVEN IN THE SONGS AND THE CHORDS. WITHIN THOSE STRUCTURES THEY REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE THE LICENSE TO BE VERY CREATIVE AND TO MAKE ME CHANGE MY MIND AND GO INTO DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

I WISH MY WORK AS THE MANAGER OF A SMALL BUSINESS WERE MORE LIKE MY WORK AS A JAZZ MUSICIAN. I GET FRUSTRATED WHEN PEOPLE CAN'T TAKE THE NEXT STEP ON THEIR OWN BECAUSE THEY'RE AFRAID OF ROCKING THE BOAT OR MAKING WAVES.

IF YOU DO THIS IN JAZZ, YOU WILL MAKE BAD MUSIC. WE KNOW WE NEED TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER, TO LISTEN AND RESPOND. THERE CAN STILL BE A BAND LEADER, BUT OFTEN THE BEST THING HE CAN DO IS TO STEP OUT OF THE WAY AND LET OTHER PEOPLE DO WHAT THEY DO BEST.

Leserinnlegg om improvisasjon i Rana Blad 27.07.02:

”... Improvisasjon har virkelig ikke vært noe vilkår for overlevelse. Den har vært et vilkår for det helt motsatte: spontane og ugjennomtenkte handlinger, hasard, feilberegninger, økonomisk undergang og andre katastrofer som i verste fall var definitive.

Improvisasjonens verden har vært regnet som en dødssone som både småbrukere, industriarbeidere og deres etterkommere har forsøkt å holde seg borte fra uten at det alltid har lyktes.”

Reader's letter on improvisation in the newspaper "Rana Blad" 27.07.02:

“...Improvisation has not really been a condition for survival. It has been a condition for the very opposite: spontaneous and unplanned actions, hazard, miscalculations, economic destruction and other disasters that in the worst case were definitive.

The world of improvisation has been considered as a death zone, which farmers, industrial workers and their descendants have tried to keep way from, but not always succeeded”.

Improvisation in other contexts

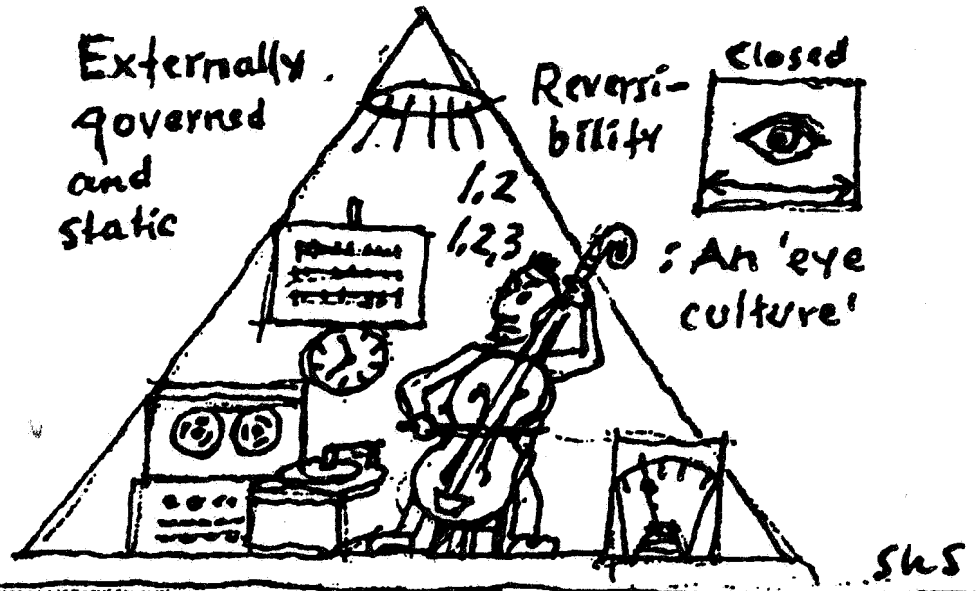
Despite the large amount of literature on improvisation outside the field of music that was forthcoming in the past century, the necessity of improvisation has been rarely recognised in different organisational contexts, such as industry, management, education, etc. This is probably due to these activities being mainly grounded on a reliance of linearity and traditional systematic thinking. When regular planning breaks down, and on-the-spot solutions are needed, such as through improvising, this way of acting is often regarded as a sign of failure and referred to as “emergency solutions” or “fire fighting”. There is all too often a plea for new and more detailed plans, which results in a huge amount of newly written, detailed, complicated instructions and bureaucratic procedures. The ability to find on-the spot solutions to local problems is, as mentioned, rarely accepted in work life. In other words, there is a tendency to regard improvisational activities as unfair and as a rupture in the activities of a canonised, official administration system². To solve problems and meet local challenges that continually emerge during a working day, employees closest to such problems then have to improvise in an off-the-cuff manner which draws on their tacit knowledge. Improvisation is thus regarded as a temporary expedient, something risky and dangerous, and, accordingly, a practice and activity that should be avoided. As such the status of improvisation can be evaluated as very low. Not surprisingly, such an outlook has inspired little research activities related to this vital topic.

² In socialist countries, for the underground resistance jazz was regarded as a symbol and a metaphor for freedom and personal expression, therefore jazz was often suppressed by the authorities.

Gregory Bateson:

We social scientists would do well to hold back our eagerness to control that world which we so imperfectly understand. The fact of our imperfect understanding should not be allowed to feed our anxiety and so increase the need to control. Rather, our studies could be inspired by a more ancient, but today less honoured motive: a curiosity about the world of which we are part. The rewards of such work are not power but beauty.

"COMPLICATION"



"COMPLEXITY"



Process,
'Creative
time'

- Mechanical pulse?
- Not at all!

SKS

PYRAMIDAL VS ORGANIC MUSIC

Tegning: Sigmund Setreng