

# Collaboration of creative professionals with companies (CoCreaCo): antecedent conditions for collaboration in crossovers

Antecedent conditions for collaboration

Steven de Groot

*Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, Sittard, The Netherlands*

Received 17 February 2020  
Revised 31 March 2020  
4 May 2020  
1 June 2020  
Accepted 3 June 2020

## Abstract

**Purpose** – Collaboration between creative professionals (artists and designers) and companies has become more prominent. In so-called “crossovers,” indicated with the acronym *CoCreaCO* (collaboration of creative professionals with companies) when they concern specific crossover of creative professionals with companies, societal and organizational challenges such as becoming more innovative are addressed through multidisciplinary collaboration that increasingly embraces and exploits the distinctive way of thinking and working of artists and designers. Over the past years, several scholars focused their research on the effect of artistic interventions or arts-based initiatives (ABIs) and design thinking in organizations. Hardly any research has been done on the conditions (organizational and individual factors) that are conducive to ABIs in organizations, such as trust and common ground. The central question for this study is which conditions foster successful collaboration between creative professionals and organizations in crossovers. For this study, the conditions for collaboration between creative professionals and four Dutch organizations were studied by interviewing ten creative professionals, project managers and employees who worked together, following which a survey of 60 questions was filled in by 41 Dutch respondents. This study shows that despite the differences between the disciplines of creative professionals and employees for this type of crossover, both disciplines requested quite similar conditions for collaboration. Both creative professionals and employees should realize and encourage trust and common ground by focusing on an open process and outcome, a shared creative process started with a shared problem. Experience with this type of collaboration, art disciplines, the role and qualities of the artist (individual factors) as well as the organization’s sector seem to influence neither expectations of collaboration nor the intention to engage in this type of cooperation in the future.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Both ten employees (project managers) and creative professional(s) with whom the organization cooperated were interviewed (four case studies, semistructured interviews). Thereafter, 41 respondents have been filled in a survey.

**Findings** – Successful cooperation can be explained by six concepts of determinants, which are briefing, qualities of creative professionals, organizational qualities, organization factors and common ground. More particular, creative professionals’ independency and their ability to render observations and to reflect of these and organization’s role by informing employees and organizing a clear work process need to be addressed before or during collaboration.

**Originality/value** – past years, many scholars focused their research on the effects of artistic interventions or ABIs and design thinking in organizations. There is hardly any research on the conditions that are conducive to artistic interventions in organizations such as trust and common ground.

**Keywords** Artistic interventions, Multidisciplinary collaboration, Crossovers, Cocreation

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Creative professionals (artists and designers) and organizations are increasingly seeming to cooperate in so-called “crossovers.” In their study on collaboration of European arts and

© Steven de Groot. Published in *Journal of Work-Applied Management*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>



Journal of Work-Applied  
Management  
Emerald Publishing Limited  
2205-2062  
DOI 10.1108/JWAM-02-2020-0006

---

business, Heinsius and Iglesias define crossovers as “connectors between the business sector and the arts” () in which they could “find each other in innovation, imaging, design, reaching out to people, leadership development, team building and so on” (Heinsius and Iglesias, 2015, p. 6). To be more specific, I introduce the acronym *CoCreaCO* (collaboration of creative professionals with companies) as a specific crossover of creative professionals with companies in which organizational challenges are addressed in multidisciplinary collaboration.

The focus on this type of collaboration stems from the needs of organizations to better focus on customer needs (Brown, 2008; Veryzer and de Mozota, 2005, p. 2), to combine knowledge and disciplines to develop new products and services (Brockman and Morgan, 2006) and to distinguish themselves more from competitors through innovation (Beverland *et al.*, 2010; Dell’Era and Verganti, 2007). Also to solve “wicked problems” in organizations, managers more and more approached creative professionals for collaboration (e.g. Carlucci and Schiuma, 2018).

Over the past years, several scholars focused their research on the effect of arts-based initiatives (ABIs) (e.g. Carlucci and Schiuma, 2018; Schiuma, 2011; DarsØ, 2004; Berthoin Antal, 2009, 2012, 2013; Schiuma, 2011; Kimbell, 2011). Hardly any research has been done on the conditions that are conducive to ABIs in organizations (Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018; Schnugg *et al.*, 2015). Berthoin Antal *et al.* (2009) point out that there is even less research on how artistic interventions are actually carried out so as to describe and explain the multiple paths through which their effects flow out and are felt in organizations. How to bridge the gap between the world of management and that of artists and designers has not yet been studied systematically (Berthoin Antal, 2012).

What happens when an artist or designer enters an organization? What happens when managers and employees with their ongoing tasks, clearly defined roles, time pressure and (inductive) way of reasoning are confronted with a different mode of reasoning (abduction), use of different methods (sketching, brainstorming and prototyping) and different approaches to organizing work such as collaboration, projects and codesign (Dunne and Martin, 2006; Zambrell, 2015)? Managers would like to understand how ABIs can contribute to processes of organizational change and change in employees’ attitude (Berthoin Antal, 2009). Creative professionals are interested in “how they can improve their interventions, what might be dangerous, and what is well done” (Berthoin Antal, 2009, p. 148).

So, the central question for this study is which conditions foster successful collaboration between creative professionals and organizations in crossovers. These conditions include the input of a unique perspective on organizational problems, the related action repertoire (“change agents”) and/or methods such as ABIs. On the basis of a study of 4–5 cases of cooperation between an organization and creative professionals, design rules will be developed for collaboration between creative professionals and organizations. For example, has the collaboration been successful due to the mode of reasoning, the specific “nature of design” (the management of managers vs the abductive thinking by the creative professional) or does the added value of the collaboration lie mainly in the input of methods and tools and/or a new form of cooperation?

### Literature review

A considerable amount of research has been conducted over the past years on ABIs in organizations, identifying the first conditions for multidisciplinary collaboration between creative professional and organizations. Also studies on multidisciplinary collaboration in other disciplines such as care environments such as hospitals could probably offer insights into characteristics of cooperation. Finally, creative professionals’ specific way of reasoning needs to be defined and its consequences for multidisciplinary collaboration need to be

---

identified. Besides an overview of relevant literature to gather initial conditions for collaboration between creative professionals and organizations, what is also needed is a literature study to develop an interview protocol for qualitative research in which creative professionals as well as employees will be interviewed about their experiences with this type of crossover.

### *Artistic interventions*

ABIs in organizations have been the subject of research since the beginning of this century. Studies by DarsØ (2004); Berthoin Antal (2009, 2012, 2013), Schiuma (2011) and Kimbell (2011) have shown that collaboration between artists and designers on the one hand and organizations on the other contributes to organizational value creation. Berthoin and Strauß (2013) examined 268 publications, practitioners and publications on arts and business to assess the social impacts of the arts in organizations and society in Europe (programs such as the New Patrons program in France, Airis in Sweden, Disonancias in Spain and TILLT in Europe), finding ample evidence of artists' and designers' strong contribution on a personal, interpersonal and organizational level. They had strategic and operational impact (such as increased turnover or productivity) and an effect on internal relationships, organizational and personal development, collaborative ways of working, willingness to adopt broader and different perspectives and activation of employees (see also Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018).

A growing diversity of ABIs have been observed in organizations, which has led to the first classifications of ABIs (e.g. Berthoin Antal, 2012). DarsØ (2004) offered the first typology of ABIs, focused on learning from artistic metaphors, artistic capabilities, artistic products or artistic events. Later she revised her schema to show different approaches, focusing on developing artful capabilities and competencies, conceptualizing and prototyping, social innovation and product innovation, or collaborations and practice spheres (DarsØ, 2004; Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018). Schiuma (2011) differentiated "managerial forms of ABIs," namely art-based interventions, art-based projects and art-based programs. Barry and Meisek (2010) proposed "workarts" such as art collection, artist-led intervention and artistic experimentation. Berthoin Antal (2014, p. 177) defined ABIs "as processes that bring people, products, and practices from the world of arts into organizations." From a perspective that ABIs lead to new ideas and contribute to employees seeing and doing things differently (e.g. Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2013), it can be argued that design disciplines and applied arts could also effectuate this. Indeed, design disciplines such as product design or architecture are characterized by a nature of design problem and a mode of reasoning and activities that are comparable to those of the arts (e.g. Kimbell, 2009). Since creative professionals bring specific products and practices, collaboration between creatives and companies (*CoCreaCo*) could be defined as "the interpersonal process of collaboration that brings people, products, and practices from creative professionals into organizations through which people working in different disciplines contribute to a common product or goal."

Like stated before, a crossover concerns crossing borders between different or multiple disciplines. So, crossovers between creative professionals and organizations (*CoCreaCo*: collaboration between creatives and companies) could be defined as "the process of collaboration that brings people, products, and practices from creative professionals into organizations."

Finally, the *conditions* for collaboration between creative professionals and organizations have been studied, although most of the contributions on this kind of cooperation are focused on the effects of it. Hardly any research has been done on the conditions that are conducive to ABIs in organizations (Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018; Schnugg *et al.*, 2015). Berthoin Antal (2012, 2011) mentioned some "intangibles underpinning ABIs," including trust, a shared language and the organization's experience with ABIs, which contribute to the effect of ABIs.

---

Other conditions that Berthoin Antal identified are employees' attitude toward ABIs ("good idea," "we'll see" vs "waste of time and money"), the role of an intermediary in bringing creatives and companies together and offering knowledge and skills to support the process of collaboration. An "interspace in which the norms and routines of the organization are temporarily suspended" (Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018, p. 10) and managers' and employees' interest in arts or/and in ABIs also seem to be important aspects of this type of collaboration (e.g. Zambrell, 2015).

Stenberg (2016) argued that both sides (creatives and employees) need to become acquainted with each other's way of reasoning and methods and how they perceive the work environment ("mutual activity"). Stenberg also found that, whereas the work environment was experienced by employees as being more open and constructive, the management style had become more authoritative. Furthermore, both employees and creatives argued that they need freedom to experiment in creative practices. Other conditions for collaboration that Stenberg identified are employee engagement, the organization's interest in the creative process (not necessarily in the arts or artist in particular), the ability to use their artistic competencies, employees' participation in the projects, embracing employees' project ideas and access to one's subjectivity (see also Collins and Amabile, 1999). So, creative professionals require a potential space to be able to be creative, in seclusion as well as in interaction with others, clear expectations and goals, as do employees.

Finally, Berthoin Antal (2009) argued that clarity on which competencies artists need to be able to work on complex issues of organizations, as well as clarity for managers on the effects of ABIs, artists' enjoyment of working with the organization's employees and opportunities for employees to free themselves from ingrained norms of behavior in the organizational culture are often stated determinants of successful cooperation. Berthoin Antal (2009) also found some aspects that should be prevented *during collaboration* between creative professionals and organizations. Both sides should prevent conflict in trying to work with artistic means and organizing projects and supporting different needs among employees. Employees should not be suspicious of the artist's intentions or feel they suddenly have to work as an artist rather than as a project manager or creative consultant, as that could lead to the artistry being diluted as a force to produce new perspectives and meanings. Finally, during collaboration between creative professionals and employees, management should prevent trying to control the process and to instrumentalize the potential of an artistic intervention. Management should also refrain from repressing conflicts or letting them go unmanaged. It is better to address them constructively.

#### *Multidisciplinary collaboration*

Creative professionals – artists and designers – are characterized by specific competencies. That is why they are increasingly being asked for collaboration with organizations. Their mode of abductive reasoning, which is characteristic for the nature of arts and design, and their specific working processes are typical traits of creative professionals (Zambrell, 2015), so too are their activities and methods, their approach to knowledge production and typical approach to organizing their work (ibid). Although artists' competencies differ from those of designers (autonomous vs human-centered and problem-solving), they share their way of abductive reasoning and working (e.g. Kimbell, 2009). For this study, we followed both types of creative professional in their collaborations with organizations to study whether there are differences in conditions for multidisciplinary collaboration.

Collaboration is defined as "interdisciplinary," "multidisciplinary," "multi-professional" and "interprofessional," which are often interchangeable terms (Nancarrow *et al.*, 2013). Nancarrow *et al.* argue that the terms interprofessional and multiprofessional are more narrowly applied than the terms interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, as the latter two also

---

take into account organizational characteristics and all employees, both professional and nonprofessional ones. Berg-Weger and Schneider (1998), cited by Bronstein (2003), defined interdisciplinary collaboration as “an interpersonal process through which members of different disciplines contribute to a common product or goal.” Particularly for multidisciplinary collaboration in which creative professionals are involved, contribution to a common product or goal could be further specified (Scopa, 2003), regarding the different ways of describing design thinking (as a cognitive style focused on problem-solving, as a general theory of design for taming wicked problems or as an organizational resource to improve innovation) (Kimbell, 2011) and the different contribution of ABIs in organizations, as mentioned earlier (e.g. Berthoin Antal *et al.*, 2018). Scopa (2003) found besides common ground also shared vision, shared ownership and mutually beneficial transformation as important characteristics and qualities of collaborative processes with creative professionals.

There is particularly elaborate research available on multidisciplinary collaboration in the field of care and social work, where different disciplines were forced to collaborate from the end of the previous century (San Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005). Many of these studies (e.g. San Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005; Bronstein, 2003; Nicholson *et al.*, 2000; Korazim-Körösy *et al.*, 2014; Nancarrow, 2013) offer insights that can be useful for the discipline of arts and design. For example, San Martin-Rodriguez *et al.* (2005) distinguish different types of determinants of successful collaboration: on a *social level* (such as collegiality and power differences), of the *cultural system* (such as different perspectives on collaboration) and determinants of the *professional system* (e.g. understanding practices of other professionals, different values, work styles and personal traits and awareness of other professional contributions).

Others, including Nicholson *et al.* (2000) and Nancarrow *et al.* (2013), are focused more on *organizational factors* and *individual factors* of collaboration. Important *organizational factors* of multidisciplinary collaboration are structure (team and organization), collaboration philosophy (and attention to the collaboration process), administrative support (realistic objectives, administrative leadership), resources (physical proximity, space and time), noncompetitive culture and trust and willingness to share, equity of relationships and (shared) decision-making (and how to manage conflicts), shared values, goals and way of working during collaboration, enactment and clarity of roles, interdependence (willingness to share) and coordination mechanisms (group discussion, division of work and common rules) (Nicholson *et al.*, 2000; Nancarrow *et al.*, 2013).

Important *individual factors* of collaboration are trust, listening and communication skills, interest in other disciplines, self-awareness, flexibility, mutual respect and willingness to collaborate with unknown disciplines and an ambition to educate others about self, own role and contributions (e.g. San Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005; Korazim-Körösy *et al.*, 2014; Nicholson *et al.*, 2000).

In particular, literature on *client–consultant collaboration* has also been studied. Based on Kubr (2002) and Buono (2009), *information exchange*, *awareness of resources*, *commitment*, *learning* and *independency* are indicated as important facets of client–consultant collaboration.

### *Knowledge gap*

Literature on multidisciplinary collaboration offers valuable insights for principles for successful cooperation between creative professionals and organizations. Determinants such as trust, willingness to collaborate and interest in other disciplines (individual factors) and collaboration philosophy, clarity of roles, interdependence (willingness to share) and coordination mechanisms (organizational factors) obviously are also relevant during collaboration between creative professionals and organizations. In particular for this type of crossover, the detractors and facilitators identified in terms of organizational and

---

individual factors (Nicholson *et al.*, 2000) have not been validated for this type of collaboration. Therefore, they need to be examined, in particular focused on the possibilities to apply creative professionals' competencies such as their mode of reasoning, their nature of design and processes and activities, practices and methods, organization of work and their approach to knowledge production (e.g. Kimbell, 2009; Berthoin Antal, 2009, 2012; Zambrell, 2015).

---

### Data collection

The central question in the project is which conditions foster successful collaboration between creative professionals and organizations in crossovers. The study aims to examine conditions that influence cooperation between organizations and creative professionals. First, we selected four case studies of Dutch organizations who worked together with creative professionals. In selecting these cases, we used the database of completed projects of Art-Partner, an agency in the Netherlands that acts as an intermediary between organizations and creative professionals and that has guided dozens of projects. In selecting cases, we looked primarily at the willingness of organizations and executive creative professionals to participate in the research. It led to the selection of the cases of two universities of applied sciences, a hospital and a dental practice. Both the organizations (project manager) and the creative professional(s) with whom the organization cooperated were interviewed (semistructured, ten interviews in total). Also, both partners of Art-Partner were interviewed. For these interviews, the protocol developed by Scopa (2003) was used. From this protocol, only those facets (group of determinants or concepts) were used that concerned collaboration, which are *context*, *common ground (organizational factors)* and *roles/qualities and trust (individual factors)*. Based on the first interview with Art-Partner and the literature review, the facets of assignment and briefing, methods, ownership and project management (all organizational factors except ownership) were added to this interview protocol.

After these interviews, to establish a larger mixed research survey to gain a greater volume of analysis data and to obtain a broader picture of conditions that influence cooperation between organizations and creative professionals, an online questionnaire of 60 items was developed. Therefore, we used most items from Scopa's survey (Scopa, 2003), in particular these related to the factors *context*, *common ground and roles/qualities* and *trust*. We also added items mentioned during the interviews. Given the small number of respondents, we took a progressive approach by considering codes that were mentioned by at least 50% of respondents. This data collection method was completed with items related to client–consultant collaboration (Kubr, 2002; Buono, 2009), without the facets of information exchange and awareness of resources. The facets of methods, ownership and project management were not queried in this survey because they drifted too much from the aspect of conditions for collaboration or they were not mentioned very often during the interviews. So, in total, the concepts of briefing, qualities and roles of creative professionals, qualities of organization, trust, common ground and organizational factors were examined. Two questions about an intermediary were added to evaluate the role and impact of Art-Partner. This questionnaire was tested among the interviewed persons of the described case studies and was thereafter distributed among all 30 organizations and 30 creative professionals who worked on projects organized through Art-Partner over the last two years.

### Results

The results of the ten interviews show which conditions organizations (project managers) and creative professionals perceived as relevant for collaboration with each other (see Table 1).

Antecedent conditions for collaboration

	Creative professionals ( <i>n</i> = 4)	Employees   (clients and project members) ( <i>n</i> = 8)
1. Assignment and briefing	Open process, unknown outcome (3) Trust in outcome (3) Expectations that are not too explicit (2)	Experience with collaboration with creative professionals (3) Looking for new perspectives (3) No strict deadline (3) Clear joint goal (but unclear deliverables) (3)
2. Methods	Empathize: work together and show interest, observe (4) Employees out of org. context (4) In art environment (2) Artistic interventions (4)  Collect thoughts and stories (4) Capture observations and reflect on them (3) Slow down (3)  Work together with employees (4)	Empathize: work together and show interest, observe (4) Give attention (3) Collect thoughts and stories (3) Capture observations and reflect on them (3) Employees out of org. context (4) In art environment (3)  Organize, depict and design/create together (3) Work together with employees (4) Get the group moving (3) Postpone judgment/solution (slow down) (3)
3. Roles/qualities	<i>Creative professional</i> "Flexible art view" (3) Independent (= not threatening) (3) Interest in work and organization (2) Make contact (dialog) (3) Listen and observe (4) Give back observations and reflect (3) Talk, design and create together (2) Interest in people (3) Curious (4) <i>Client</i> Receptive (to language, interventions, perspective and new value) (2) Affinity/experience with arts (3)  Trust in open process (3) Communication with internal organization (2) <i>Employees</i> Interest/curiosity (2) Updates client on progress (4)	<i>Creative professional</i> Curious / open-minded (4) Art view: organization is material (3)  <i>Client</i> Receptive (to language, interventions, perspective and new value) (4) Dare to adopt a different vision/approach (3) Creating with employees (3) Autonomy of employees (3)  <i>Employees</i> Updates client on progress (3) Reflect together (client and creative professional) (4) Client's affinity with arts (3) Work together, create together (4)
4. Ownership	Disinterested (4) Client's affinity with arts (4) Attention (to organizations and problem) (4) Through empathizing (4) Work together (4)	
5. Trust/commitment		

(continued)

**Table 1.** Summary of result of interviews with creative professional and employees

	Creative professionals ( <i>n</i> = 4)	Employees   (clients and project members) ( <i>n</i> = 8)
6. Common ground/ cooperation	View: organization is material (4) Out of the context/in art environment (3) Through invitation (2) Through dialog (3) Through play (3) Design and create together (3)	View: organization is material (3) Different perspective/frame (3) Design and create together (3)
7. Project management	Planned activities (2) versus unplanned (2) Strict deadline (2) Flexibility in process, tempo (4)	No format in advance (3) Tempo (3) Consultation (3) Flexibility in process, tempo (3)

Table 1.

For *assignment and briefing*, both parties mentioned different aspects. Creative professionals predominantly mentioned an open process with an unknown outcome, while organizations mostly mentioned experience with collaboration with creative professionals, looking for new perspectives, no strict deadline and clear joint goal(s) as important features of assignment and briefing. The *qualities of creative professionals* that were mentioned the most are ability to listen and observe (mentioned by creative professionals) and being curious (mentioned by both). The *qualities of the organizations* that were mentioned the most are having affinity or experience with the arts and having trust in open process (mentioned by creative professionals), while organizations' own role perception particularly concerns being receptive to language, interventions, perspective and new values brought in by creative professionals. Building *trust and commitment* during this type of crossover should be realized by the client's affinity with arts and through working and creating together (mentioned by both). For creative professionals, being *selfless* in relation to the organization, showing empathy and having attention to the organization's problems are other widely mentioned aspects of trust and commitment. Aspects of *common ground* and *operational cooperation* that both sides consider important are applying the view of "the organisation material" (the "material" such as employees, rooms, documents to work with instead of paint or a choreography) that the creative professionals are working with. The final condition for collaboration that was covered by the survey was *project management*. Related to this aspect, both parties were not unanimous in their answers, except when it came to flexibility in process and tempo. Creative professionals mostly mentioned planned as well as unplanned activities and a strict deadline while project managers speaking on behalf of the organization mostly mentioned working without a format in advance and using consultation during collaboration.

The questionnaire was completed by 41 respondents. 54% of them were artists or designers (40% artist), 46% represented for-profit organizations and 72% of the organizations employed more than 100 employees. 83% of the respondents had previous experiences with collaboration between creative professionals and organizations. 69% of the artists were theater makers, and 34% of them worked in visual arts.

The most important aspect of the *briefing* (before collaboration) concerns the clarity of the reason behind the project. The vision and approach, the budget, the duration and deadline are also highly valued by both parties (organizations and creative professionals) (see Table 2).

The most important *qualities of the artist* for this type of crossover are listening and observation skills, being curious and open-minded, capturing observations and imagination and creativity. The biggest difference in scores (creative professionals vs organization) concerns the degree to which the creative professional shows a "flexible art view," which

Briefing (very important + important)	Artists ( <i>n</i> = 22)		Employees ( <i>n</i> = 19)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Reason	100	0.32	100	0.45
Clear assignment	68	0.96	89	0.51
Expected goal/result	68	0.51	79	0.45
Approach	68	2.03	74	1.85
Activities	68	0.61	68	0.60
Duration/deadline	84	0.67	100	0.77
Vision/approach	95	0.48	95	0.51
Commitment organization	74	0.78	79	1.13
Budget	100	0.88	89	1.29
<i>Result</i>				
Above + in accordance with expectations	89	1.27	95	1.07
Collaboration in future	100	1.05	100	0.96
<i>Qualities of creative professional (very important + important)</i>				
"Flexible art view"	84	0.90	53	0.77
Independency	79	0.61	74	0.67
Listen and observe	100	0.75	95	0.82
Capture observations and reflection	100	0.45	89	1.53
Curious and open-minded	100	0.82	95	0.77
Connect with context	68	0.32	84	0.75
Imagination/creativity	95	0.91	100	1.38
Vision on paper to action	84	0.85	79	1.33
<i>Role of creative professional (very important + important)</i>				
New perspective	95	0.37	95	0.61
Advisor	21	1.05	32	0.84
Mentor	37	1.29	42	0.61
Change expert	26	1.21	26	0.90
Confuser/disruptor	84	0.85	63	0.42
Problem-solver	16	1.57	21	1.44
<i>Qualities of organization/client (very important + important)</i>				
Receptive to new ideas	84	0.77	89	1.16
Affinity with arts	32	1.30	26	1.56
Experience artistic interventions	11	1.23	11	1.60
Support management	89	0.68	74	1.35
Arrange conditions	68	0.97	84	1.46
Inform employees	74	0.96	95	1.38
Space and confidence employees	100	0.48	95	0.65
Space for experimentation	100	0.42	100	1.10
Trust in open process/outcome	95	0.56	100	1.19
<i>Mutual trust (very important + important)</i>				
Through interest	84	0.66	89	1.24
Through references	42	0.98	41	0.85
Through previous experience	32	1.08	42	0.58
Through prior insight	16	1.11	37	0.60
Through fulfilling agreements and communication	100	0.50	89	0.50
Through pilots	53	1.15	74	0.51
<i>Common ground for collaboration (very important + important)</i>				
Through shared vision	47	1.39	68	0.68
Through process beneficial to everyone	42	1.27	68	1.14

Antecedent conditions for collaboration

(continued)

**Table 2.**  
Scores given by creative professionals and employees

	Artists ( <i>n</i> = 22)		Employees ( <i>n</i> = 19)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Briefing (very important + important)				
Through outcome beneficial to everyone	53	1.07	63	1.20
Through shared (creative) process	68	1.18	74	1.15
Through shared language	26	1.05	74	0.70
Through shared problem	47	1.26	47	1.10
Through experiment	89	0.82	63	1.15
<i>Importance of organization factors (very important + important)</i>				
Loose informal structure	26	1.35	26	1.02
Clear work process	32	1.43	63	1.02
Dynamic work process	84	1.20	79	0.94
Work in common space	37	1.47	26	1.16
Work outside organization context	32	1.54	37	1.19
<i>Importance of intermediary</i>				
Through an intermediary (yes)	63	0.50	53	1.23
Importance of intermediary (very important + important)	57	1.89	55	1.46

**Table 2.**

means that he or she is able to apply aspects of the arts in an organizational context, such as slowing down, making compositions of groups of employees and creating (mental) space for new perspectives. The creative professional is expected to play the *role* of a bringer of a new perspective and to be a confuser/disruptor. He/she does not need to fulfill the role of advisor, mentor, change expert or problem-solver. The most important *qualities of the organization* for this type of crossover are space for experimentation, space and confidence for employees and confidence in an open process and outcome. Remarkably, neither experience with ABIs nor affinity with the arts was classified during the interviews as very important or important organizational quality for this type of collaboration. When it comes to *organizational factors*, such as structure or work process in particular, a dynamic work process is considered an important factor for collaboration between creative professionals and organizations. *Common ground* for this kind of collaboration is realized by different factors. For organizations, common ground is particularly achieved through a shared (creative) process, a shared language, shared vision and a beneficial process for everyone. Creative professionals rated doing an experiment together, a shared (creative) process and an outcome that is beneficial for everyone the highest. Of all determinants for this multidisciplinary collaboration, the scores on common ground show the biggest differences between creative professionals and employees. With the exception of doing an experiment together, all the other six factors of common ground get higher scores from employees than from creative professionals. Gaining *mutual trust* during this type of collaboration in particular is realized through fulfilling agreements and communication and through mutual interest. Advanced insight into activities and approaches was the trust factor with the lowest score.

Thereafter, the survey asked about the role and importance of an intermediary. 63% of the creative professionals and 53% of the organizations worked with an intermediary such as Art-Partner. A majority of the respondents think that working with such an intermediary party contributes to successful collaboration between creative professionals and organizations. Finally, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the collaboration. 89% of the creative professionals and 95% of the organizations indicated that their collaboration exceeded or was in line with their expectations. Also 100% of respondents on both sides stated that they would consider engaging in similar collaboration in the future.

---

### Analysis

The qualitative data of the interviews was coded manually (selective coding, based on the classification of found factors for multidisciplinary collaboration such as *qualities of creative professionals* and *common ground*). This was preceded by a cross-case analysis.

During conducting some analyzes in SPSS, the questionnaire showed a high internal consistency (*Cronbach's*  $\alpha = 0.811$ ). Although only 41 respondents took the survey, we conducted a regression analysis to examine the mutual relationship between conditions and their contribution to the expectations of the collaboration and the intention to engage in this type of crossover in the future.

With some caution, the sample of 41 respondents was very small, we can conclude firstly that a correlation analysis shows some interesting possible relations (all significant) between the conditions for this type of collaboration that were mentioned. During the briefing, discussing *the approach* of the cooperation with the creative professional seems to be relevant. Addressing their ability to *capture observations and reflect on them* should also be taken into account. Common ground through a *shared language* shows strong correlation with 16 other items of facets mentioned, such as a shared problem, offering a new perspective or a clear work process. Also, the common ground item of *doing an experiment* shows strong correlation with 14 other items, such as budget, a shared creative process and with support of management. Noteworthy is also that most of the briefing items strongly correlate with about 12 other variables such as fulfilling agreements and communication and a process as well as an outcome that is beneficial to everyone. To better show these relations between conditions, future research among a larger number of respondents needs to be done.

Secondly, but also with some caution ( $R^2$  values between 0.147 and 0.597, *F* ratios between 0.819 and 2,429 with *Sig* values between 0.603 and 0.046) some conclusions can be drawn after conducting this regression analysis in which we examined the relationship between the facets of conditions for this type of collaboration and two dependent variables, which are 1) expectations of collaboration and 2) intention to engage in this type of crossover in the future. *Expectations of collaboration* (positive) can be explained by the facets of qualities of the creative professional (in particular by their independence and their ability to capture observations and reflect on them), by qualities of the organization (mostly by informing employees and trust in open process and outcome), by common ground (by a shared creative process and a shared problem). Also taking on the role of advisor contributes to expectations of collaboration. Experience, art discipline, trust and briefing aspects such as a clear assignment or budget do not show strong correlations with expectations of collaboration. *Intention to engage in this type of cooperation in the future* (positive) can be explained by the facets of qualities of the creative professional (in particular, creative professionals' independence and their ability to capture observations and reflect on them) and by common ground aspects of a shared creative process. Experience, art discipline, trust, role of the artist and briefing aspects show strong correlations with the intention to engage in this type of crossover in the future. As pointed out earlier, a larger number of respondents is needed to validate and enrich these analyses.

### Discussion

Discussion on the results of this study will be conducted along three topics: the contribution of this research to the existing body of knowledge on collaboration between creative professionals and companies, the comparison of conditions for collaboration between creative professionals and companies (*CoCreaCo*) with those for other multidisciplinary collaboration and the extent to which either creative professionals and/or organizations should adapt to the conditions identified for successful collaboration. During the interviews, most of the "intangibles underpinning ABIs" mentioned by [Berthoin Antal \(2012, 2011\)](#), such

---

as trust and the organization's experience with ABIs, are recognized. Employees' positive attitude toward ABIs, the artists' interest in the relational process with employees, management that avoids trying to control the process and instrumentalize the potential of an artistic intervention and the artists' enjoyment of working with people in organizations are also mentioned by respondents during the interviews. Stenberg's (Stenberg, 2016) concept of "mutual activity" is also recognized in a work environment in which employees are more open and have freedom to experiment, along with employee engagement, artists' ability to use their artistic competences and the participation of employees.

This study relies heavily on Scopa's PhD research, although she only focused on interdisciplinary collaboration from within the *visual arts*. (Scopa, 2003). Many of her conclusions are confirmed by the results of this study or can be supplemented by them. Her idea of a shared collaborative vision of *how* to proceed, however, is not confirmed by the study. A more open process of working in which a way of working and results spontaneously arise seems to be more effective. Her aforementioned concept of a shared or neutral environment for collaboration, which provides a nonthreatening, safe space for collaborators to develop trust, is not confirmed either. The differences in results – the role of *shared collaborative vision* as well as a *shared or neutral environment for collaboration* – need to be further examined in future. Even "work in a common space" shows a negative correlation with the (positive) expectations of collaboration while "work outside the organisation context" shows a weak correlation with this dependent variable. She argued that "common ground is identified through *focused dialogue* and a shared language is developed through *debate and negotiation*" (Scopa, 2003, p. 166). This research shows that common ground in particular is realized by a shared creative process and through discussing the shared problem. Developing a shared language even shows a negative correlation with the (positive) expectations of collaboration and is therefore not supported. Her findings on too "*tightly-structured*" collaboration and a "*loosely structured*" approach can be confirmed, as can her conclusion that "the structure of collaboration needs to be flexible, adaptable and responsive to the particular context."

Berthoin Antal *et al.* (2018) and Zambrell (2015) discussed the clarity on the competencies that artists need to be able to work on complex issues of organizations, which can be refined to competencies such as bringing a new perspective, confusing and disrupting by deploying their independence, and their ability to capture observations and reflect on them with employees. Stenberg's (2016) argument that "they need to come together in a mutual activity" can be confirmed. Interesting question for future research is what *kind* of activities such as collecting or ideating strengthen a feeling of mutual collaboration. Both sides should organize common ground into a shared creative process and by discussing the shared problem. Her conclusion that creative practices need a space of freedom to experiment can be confirmed by the high scores on the experimentation-related items of the survey.

Other conditions for collaboration that Stenberg discovered, such as employee engagement, the organization's interest in the creative process (not necessarily in the arts or artist in particular), participation of employees in the projects are confirmed as well. During collaboration, the organization (management) should focus on informing employees and building trust in an open process and outcome in an informal structure by applying clear work processes, as stated by Berthoin Antal before (Berthoin Antal, 2009).

Good briefing, in particular about the approach of the collaboration and commitment of the organization, seems to be important for the *process* of collaboration, but less important for the *expectations of collaboration* and the *intention to engage in this type of cooperation in the future*.

For future research, it could be interesting to examine the differences of perception of the importance of some conditions such as aspects of *briefing* with the results of the first qualitative study, which show a less important role of *briefing*. Anyway, repeating the

---

quantitative part of this study among more respondents is necessary to show a more reliable analysis.

Reflecting on the theory of *multidisciplinary collaboration* (e.g. Nicholson *et al.*, 2000; Nancarrow *et al.*, 2013), trust and willingness to share, equity of relationships, goals and way of working during collaboration (all *organizational factors*) are often mentioned by respondents. So too are important *individual factors* of collaboration, such as listening and communication skills, interest in other disciplines, flexibility and willingness to collaborate with unknown disciplines (e.g. San Martin-Rodriguez *et al.*, 2005; Korazim-Körösy *et al.*, 2014; Nicholson *et al.*, 2000). Finally, the results confirm the importance of the role of an intermediary (e.g. Berthoin Antal, 2009) before and during this type of crossover.

Perhaps the most remarkable result of this study is that creative professionals as well as employees collaborate because of the *multidisciplines* they experience during collaboration. The features requested for this multidisciplinary collaboration get quite similar scores, although during the interviews, for example, for *assignment and briefing*, both parties mentioned different aspects. Most of the items divided among the different variables of collaboration get quite similar scores from the creative professionals and organizations. The scores only differ greatly (more than 25% difference) when it comes to “flexible art view,” representing the variable of *qualities of the artist* and *shared language*, through a process that is beneficial to everyone and through experimentation (all representing the variable of *common ground*). It is difficult to explain these differences. Future research is needed to examine these differences. Although the worlds of organizations and creative professionals are apparently very different, their quantitative scores on antecedents for collaboration surprisingly do not show great differences. There are only differences on clear assignment and the duration and deadline (briefing), expectations and future collaboration (results), “flexible art view” (creative professionals’ qualities) and most of the common ground items and clear work process (organization factors).

Furthermore, the quantitative study – although limited because of the low number of 41 respondents – offers more specific supplements and further specifies the mainly qualitative results on this topic. Indeed, some differences between the supposed important conditions – mentioned during the interviews as well as highly scored in the questionnaire – and the result of the different correlation analyses are interesting. Many of the variables and items deemed important by the respondents for this type of collaboration do not show a strong contribution to the results of collaboration during the quantitative analysis. Perhaps these items played a role in the decision to collaborate, while they turned out to be less important than other conditions. For example, the supposed important role of the *organization’s experience* with ABIs is not confirmed by the quantitative data from this study. Even *affinity with the arts*, marked with a relative high score as well as often mentioned during the interviews, does not seem to be important for this type of collaboration. Like mentioned before, future research needs to be done to examine these differences in data. For example, imagination/creativity as part of qualities of creative professionals or space and trust for employees as part of organizational qualities do not necessarily strongly contribute to the intention to engage in this type of crossover in the future. So, an important result of this study, many of the variables and items deemed important by the respondents for this type of collaboration do not show a strong contribution to the results of collaboration during the quantitative analysis.

## Conclusions

The goal of this study was to examine which conditions stimulate successful collaboration with creative professionals in crossovers. This study offers some new initial insights into the antecedents for this type of crossover. The respondents, which included both creative professionals and organizations, are all very satisfied with their collaboration. Also 100% of

---

respondents on both sides will consider this kind of cooperation in the future. Although this research should be repeated among a larger number of respondents to validate and enrich the quantitative analyses, we have been able to extrapolate a few initial conclusions.

Successful cooperation can be explained by six concepts of determinants, which are briefing, qualities of creative professionals, organizational qualities, organizational factors and common ground. More particularly, creative professionals' independence and their ability to capture observations and reflect on them and the organization's role by informing employees and organizing a clear work process need to be addressed before and during collaboration. A good briefing does not directly contribute to (positive) expectations of collaboration but seems to improve the process of cooperation by discussing the fulfilment of agreements and communication and a process as well as an outcome that is beneficial to everyone. Both creative professionals and employees should realize and encourage trust and common ground by focusing on an open process and outcome, a shared creative process started with a shared problem. Experience with this type of crossover, art disciplines, the role of the artist as well as the organization's sector influence neither the expectations of the collaboration nor the intention to engage in this type of cooperation in the future.

Future research among a larger number of creative professionals and organizations should enhance the reliability of analyses in this study, in particular the quantitative analyses, as well as to examine the found differences with Scopas's study such as the role of mutual activity. Also the variables and items deemed important by the respondents for this type of collaboration, which do not show a strong contribution to the results of collaboration, need to be further examined. More detailed new research could transform the determinants for collaboration found into practical interventions as well as test the suggested advice for both creative professionals and organizations. Many organizations and creative professionals have already engaged in successful collaborations, and now we understand a little bit more of how they succeed. So, in line with the recommendations of Heinsius and Iglesias (Heinsius and Iglesias, 2015), organizations and creative professionals are called to *CoCreaCO*: to become key connectors between the business and the arts. Who's next?

## References

- Barry, D. and Meisiek, S. (2010), "Seeing more and seeing differently: sensemaking, mindfulness, and the workarts", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 11, 2010, pp. 1505-1530.
- Berg-Weger, M. and Schneider, F.D. (1998), "Interdisciplinary collaboration in social work education", *Journal of Social Work Education*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 97-107.
- Berthoin Antal, A. (2009), *Research Framework for Evaluating the Effects of Artistic Interventions in Organizations, Transforming Organizations with the Arts*, Research Rapport, TILLTEurope, Project 2009, Routledge, New York.
- Berthoin Antal, A. (2011), *Artistic Interventions in Small Organizations: Why do the Stakeholders Engage and what do They Value from the Experience?*, Social Science Research Center, Berlin.
- Berthoin Antal, A. (2012), "Artistic intervention residencies and their intermediaries: a comparative study", *Organizational Aesthetics*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 44-67.
- Berthoin Antal, A. (2014), "When arts enter organizational spaces, Implications for organizational learning", in Meusbürger, P., Berthoin Antal, A. and Suarsana, L. (Eds), *Knowledge and Space, Vol. 6: Learning Organizations: Extending the Field*, Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 177-201.
- Berthoin Antal, A. and Strauß, A. (2013), *Artistic Interventions in Organizations: Finding Evidence of Values-Added*, CreativeClash, Culture Programme, European Commission, Berlin, WZB.
- Berthoin Antal, A., Debucquet, G. and Frémeaux, S. (2018), "Meaningful work and artistic interventions in organizations: conceptual development and empirical exploration", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 85, pp. 375-385.

- Beverland, M.B., Napoli, J. and Farrelly, F. (2010), "Can all brands innovate in the same way? A typology of brand position and innovation effort", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 33-48.
- Brockman, B.K. and Morgan, R.M. (2006), "The moderating effect of organizational cohesiveness in knowledge use and new product development", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 34, pp. 295-307.
- Bronstein, L.R. (2003), "A model for interdisciplinary collaboration", *Social Work*, Vol. 48 No. 3.
- Brown, T. (2008), "Design thinking", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 86 No. 6, pp. 84-92.
- Buono, A.F. (2009), *Emerging Trends and Issues in Management Consulting: Consulting as a Janus-Faced Reality*, IAP, Charlotte.
- Carlucci, D. and Schiuma, G. (2018), "The power of arts in business", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 85, pp. 342-347.
- Collins, M.A. and Amabile, T.M. (1999), "Motivation and creativity", in Sternberg, R.J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Creativity*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 297-312.
- Dell'Era, C. and Verganti, R. (2007), "Strategies of innovation and imitation of product languages", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 580-599.
- Darso, L. (2004), *Artful Creation, Frederiksberg*, Samfundslitteratur, Denmark.
- Dunne, D. and Martin, R. (2006), "Design thinking and how it will change management education: an interview and discussion", *Academy of Management Learning and Education 2006*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 512-523.
- Heinsius, J. and Iglesias, M. (2015), "Connecting arts and business: realising the potential for creative partnerships", *Connecting Arts and Business*, April, pp. 1-132.
- Kimbell, L. (2009), "Beyond design thinking: design-as-practice and design-in-practice", *Proceedings European Academy of Management conference*, Liverpool, May 2009.
- Kimbell, L. (2011), "Rethinking design thinking: Part 1", *Design and Culture*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 285-305.
- Korazim-Körösy, Y., Mizrahi, T., Bayne-Smith, M. and Garcia, M.L. (2014), "Professional determinants in community collaborations: interdisciplinary comparative perspectives on roles and experiences among six disciplines", *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 22, pp. 229-255.
- Kubr, M. (Ed.) (2002), *Management Consulting: A Guide to the Profession*, 4th ed., International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Nancarrow, S.A., Booth, A., Ariss, S., Smith, T., Enderby, P. and Roots, A. (2013), "Ten principles of good interdisciplinary team work", *Human Resources for Health*, Vol. 11, p. 19.
- Nicholson, D., Artz, S. and Armitage, A. (2000), "Working relationships and outcomes in multidisciplinary collaborative practice settings", *Child and Youth Care Forum*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 39-73.
- San Martin-Rodriguez, L., Beaulieu, M., D'Armour, D. and Ferrada-Videla, M. (2005), "The determinants of successful collaboration: a review of theoretical and empirical studies", *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, May 2005, Vol. 1 Suppl, pp. 132-147.
- Schiuma, G. (2011), *The Value of Arts for Business*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Schnugg, C., Berthoin Antal, A., Adler, N. and Woodilla, J. (2015), "Artistic interventions that tilt organizations: opportunities and leadership challenges", *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, January 2015.
- Scopa, K. (2003), *The development of Strategies for Interdisciplinary Collaboration from within the Visual Arts*, PhD Thesis, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.
- Stenberg, H. (2016), "How is the artist role affected when artists are participating in projects in work life?", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, Vol. 11.

Veryzer, R.W. and Borja de Mozota, B. (2005), "The impact of user-oriented design on new product development: an examination of fundamental relationships", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 22, pp. 128-143.

Zambrell, K. (2015), "Managers in artistic interventions and their leadership approach", in Johansson Sköldberg, U., Woodilla, J. and Berthoin Antal, A. (Eds), *Artistic Interventions in Organizations: Research, Theory and Practice*, Routledge, New York, Vol. 1, pp. 185-203.

---

**Corresponding author**

Steven de Groot can be contacted at: [steven.degroot@zuyd.nl](mailto:steven.degroot@zuyd.nl)

---

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)