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THE LITTLE
BIG THINGS
OF ONE SINGLE DAY



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Gratitude

Above all, I would like to thank my mental, emotional, practical and spiritual guides I had on this journey.

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Thanks to every single person that happened to be part of my life on May 20th, 2020. I learned so much from each encounter. I changed names but I stick to what happened from my view and tried my best to make it my journey. I talked with some of the people I met that day. Thank you for your generosity to let me write about our meeting. But I did not talk to all people. So, if you think "hmm, that could be me, why did she ..." tell me. Let's talk about it, share views and thoughts, laugh about it, fight about it, whatever it needs and learn together. Please take it as an invitation.

I would not have written this thesis without the tremendous help of my teachers, peers and friends. Uncountable hours of discussions, reflections, holding and challenging are in this paper. Having my own process in and around it and then reflecting new upcoming ideas with my travel companions and guides made the ideas come to paper. I have a relational learning style: talking through things with a trusted person is my preferred and most effective way of learning. Thus, I am not surprised that my thesis turned out to be the reflection of a day that was packed with interactions and learning opportunities with other people and not a day where I did my accounting.

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1. Introduction



On May 19th, 2020, I spent five hours not writing but sitting with my thesis and more or less staring on my computer screen. Like so many days before I felt somehow lost in all that I wanted to say and share and write. So, I was in a rather unhappy mood when I started to watch this film. My friend Mirjam told me the week before that Netflix now offers many Studio Ghibli anime films. I love these beautiful poetic Japanese films. This evening I chose *Your name is*. (jap. 君の名は。 Kimi no Na wa.)¹ It is almost impossible to describe this film as the magic of its story lies in weaving together different worlds with moments where the audience senses and feels but does not see.

The film questions our concept of linear time. On a so-called reality level (later described as consensus reality) the historical events are three years apart. Taki, a boy who lives in Tokyo, and Mitsuha, a girl who lives in Itomori, a small town in the Japanese country side, meet in their dreams. Together they create a different flow of events. Their interaction and love creates another version of reality. Like quantum physics, it shows the possibilities of different realities, applied in the form of a Japanese anime film.

In my reality, it was way past midnight when they met again as adults and recognized each other among thousands of people in the middle of Tokyo. Happy end. I was very moved by this poetic way to open up different realms on a feeling level. I thought of my friend Mirjam who introduced me to this kind of films. Actually, she is a story teller who has not made one movie yet but has piles of finished and unfinished scripts.

¹ *Your name is*. (jap. 君の名は。 Kimi no Na wa) by Makoto Shinkai, Studio CoMix Wave Films. This film became extremely popular. According to box office takings *Your name is*. is the world's most successful anime film to date, with more than 358 million US dollars in box office takings. (Photo = screenshot of the film)

She told me that she is still waiting for the day when she will meet the story that wants to be told by her. When she feels the inner urge to tell it, no matter what. Until then, she trains herself in becoming wide open for creativity. When she told me her story, I deeply hoped that one day my thesis will also tell me the story that wants to be told.

This also reminds me of David Seidler who, at the age of 73 years, won an Oscar for writing *The King's Speech*. In an interview, he said:

For years I knew I wanted to write about the king. He was a childhood hero of mine, because I stuttered and he stuttered. They always tell young writers, 'Write what you know.' The problem is, that is often misinterpreted. You literally write about yourself and your loves and the poetry in your heart and all the stuff you feel so passionately about. But that's not what the advice means. Don't write about yourself, write about something that has a resonance with you, an experience you can understand².

So, I was thinking about my thesis and, in this kind of after movie magic, I started to talk with my thesis:

Simone: "What a poetic film. So much is said with no words. And I am struggling so much with putting all my inner and outer discoveries of ideas, thoughts, experiences, feelings into a thesis. How will I ever be able to put at least some of those sparks on paper?"

Thesis: "You had your idea from the beginning; you wanted your thesis to be a kaleidoscope of your interaction with Process Work and how you include it into your daily life. And that is a wide and sparkling spectrum."

Simone: "Yes, that's what I am trying to do for quite a while now."

Thesis: "But maybe you did not properly understand the idea of the kaleidoscope. The patterns are not organized, they evolve. You cannot control the patterns."

Simone: "Aha ...? I am not sure what you mean..."

Thesis: "The inner workings of a kaleidoscope are comprised of pieces of shattered colored glass that, when tumbled together and viewed through a prism, form beautiful patterns. All you need to trust in, is that life is the tube and Process Work is the prism. Instead of thinking about and choosing the colorful shattered glass, which you so eagerly try to do, you could just open up to the colorful pieces of glass that life offers you and rather, study the patterns."

Simone: "Well, sounds like a great plan. But how should I do that?"

Thesis: "Take the kaleidoscope of one day of your life with all its events and feelings and thoughts, interactions, moods and conflicts and reflect your experiences. As David Seidler said: 'Write about something that has

² Interview with David Seidler, by Caroline McGinn Posted: March 23, 2012
<https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/interview-david-seidler>

a resonance with you; an experience you can understand.' Apply Process Work in your daily interactions, as a life style and not as a method. Don't make it so complicated. Play with it, stumble and fall and enjoy and learn. You could take the day that just began, May 20th. It is a very full day according to your calendar. It might be worth looking at."

Simone: "Wow, yes, that sounds like a great idea, it makes sense ..."

In *My name is*, Taki and Mitsuha try hard to remember each other's names but do not succeed. They forget. And I am a little worried that I will not be able to remember my night talk in the early hours of May 20th with my thesis when I wake up a couple of hours later. Fortunately, I did.

The kaleidoscope metaphor reflects my view of an individual or collective. We humans are a colorful patchwork of strengths and weaknesses, memories and dreams, hopes and fears – always in pairs, never one without the other. Our challenge is to meld these disparate parts of us into the person we are meant to be according to our *life myth* (see chapter 3). With every slight turn of the *assemblage point* (see chapters 3 and 10) the outcome changes, creating new patterns and designs.

Over the course of a day, we each go through a series of different activities, energy highs and lows, and mood swings. Over the course of a lifetime, we will change careers, relationships, and lifestyles, and in the process, change and unfold ourselves. When we walk along this path of unfolding who we are in our core more consciously and get aware of our abundance of traits and possibilities, life can be lived more fully and is more fun. Being more fully who we are and in our innate power we are able to increase our contribution to the community as well.

In this thesis, I look at my experiences, thoughts and feelings during May 20th, 2020, a full working day, like shattered pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope, and try to find the patterns. This was maybe one of the fullest days of the month according to my scheduled meetings and calls. I will link the things that happened that day to concepts and paradigms of Process Work.

I feel obliged to my thesis to not creatively change things, although I will leave some things out. I will concentrate on certain aspects of the conversations. As this day took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, my contacts were mainly through telephone or video conferences and not through personal meetings.

Thanks to this format, I have the chance to study the application of Process Work in my life, with the help of recordings and my notes. In this self-reflective research project, my aim is to make Process Work concepts tangible by applying them to the events of this day instead of only describing them as a series of events.

This thesis also serves the purpose of dealing more intensively with my life-myth – the underlying, stable pattern that moves me, to understand it better and to update my understanding of it. Hoping that this will lead to a deeper understanding of who I am. And I can say: "it worked out".

2. Structure

This thesis is a kaleidoscope of one single day. I divide the day into events. Each event starts with a little overview of the aspect of the Process Work paradigm and concepts that I will refer to in this chapter. A short introduction follows which I call *prelude* to give some kind of orientation, before I share a journal-style description of the event. Then, I explain the Process Work concepts that I found useful to apply to this very situation. Finally, I do my best to apply them in the *unfolding and reflection* part. Sometimes I refer to concepts that I only explain later on, as I want to avoid putting most of the basic concepts in the first two chapters. I mention the corresponding chapter in brackets.

Most of the chapters follow this structure, but not all. The first chapter is already an exception. Its aim is to set the stage and explain the cockpit I am looking out into the world from: my own life myth.

I am writing this thesis in my second language. I often use quotes as my English does not allow me to put things that I find wonderfully expressed, into words that make the thoughts and ideas as clear and accessible. Due to my English skills but also due to the way the thesis came to me, I will use a rather informal English to express my ideas, actually my Simone-English. I am grateful for the generosity of the Deep Democracy Institute to allow all kinds of English, to make it easier for non-native English speaking persons to express our thoughts and processes.

Since I am a visual person, I use little scribbles to illustrate some ideas. I love to create them. They help me to sort things in my mind and hopefully add some color and playfulness to this thesis.

The concepts of Process Work are at the core of this paper. Additionally, I will allow myself to add further colorful pieces of glass from other theories and schools of thought that are inspiring and helpful for my own understanding. James Clear, former athlete and recent author, wrote:

One form of originality is creation. Another form is synthesis.

I use both forms.

3. From Where I Look: My Life Myth

Dear reader, when you continue reading, you might wonder during one event or the other why I chose to reflect on exactly this part of the event or conversation. It is because my view of the world at that moment depends on what I see through my cockpit, in other words, my *life myth* which I will explain in this chapter. As the *life myth* is connected to the *Processmind* this is another concept I will dance with on the following pages.

3.1. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Life Myth

From a Process Work perspective, the way we look at the world is based upon our own individual life myth and personal process at this phase of our life. Thus, while writing these lines it is already May 27th, and I already feel like a slightly different person than the week before because I did a lot of reflection and sharing which already changed me. I will be a different person when you read this thesis. This is important to me as continuous learning and becoming is an important part of who I am.

Last year in a seminar with Max and Ellen Schupbach, my teachers on so many levels, I got the chance to work on one of my issues. Max welcomed me with the words: "It is great to meet you as the person that you are today", and it spontaneously moved me to tears. For me this was a freeing thought.

Life is a continual transformation, a rebirth experienced during every breath from womb to grave.

stated in the biographical book of the singer Alicia Keys³. We change constantly, but our life myth is stable, even though its expression throughout our lives is fluid.

A life myth according to C. G. Jung is a symbolic representation of two tendencies that build a mythical pattern for a person's life. These are the two polarities of our inner navigator. Of who we are. Adventurer and Nest-Builder, Magician and Excel-Software-Lover, detached and right-in-it, and so on. The life myth itself unifies both sides of the polarity. But as this world is binary and dualistic, we experience it most of the time in its manifested polarities.

These two tendencies are found in the childhood dream or earliest childhood memory. Arnold Mindell is a physicist from MIT, Jungian analyst and founder of Process Work. He extended this concept by

³ *More Myself: A Journey*, Alicia Keys, 2020

revealing that this patterning can also be found in recurrent experiences such as body symptoms, addictions, peak experiences (highs and crisis) and relationship patterns. This approach to each person's life myth is a spiritual path. Even if a person has no spiritual interest, knowing the main polarities of one's own life are useful to know. As Mindell states:

... a person can work with a life myth consciously and creatively, instead of being unconsciously propelled by it⁴.

Eckhart Tolle, a spiritual teacher and author, seems to have a Process Work viewpoint when he says:

We are a dance and life is the dancer.

Thus, life is an expression and reflection of our life myth.

Josef Helbling, my Process Work coach and thesis guide, told me once, that the energy between our two life polarities is the source of our life's vitality. The constant moving and balancing from one side to the other keeps us alive.

Processmind

The superposition, a term from physics, is another way of describing the stable pattern of the life myth. It combines the two polarities of our childhood dream, and is our connection and our unique expression of the *Processmind*. Arnold Mindell describes the Processmind as:

the palpable, intelligent, organizing 'force field' present behind our personal and large group processes and, like other deep quantum patterns, behind processes of the universe. Processmind is an attempt to extend and deepen our quest to know this field and these patterns as they are understood today in physics by connecting them to experiences studied and recorded in psychology and mysticism⁵.

Einstein called this unified field that organizes events *Mind of God*. For him this is the intelligence behind our universe. The idea is linked to many spiritual traditions like the Buddha Mind or the Tao. It is linked to the ancient wisdom of indigenous cosmologies and to the flow of nature in general.

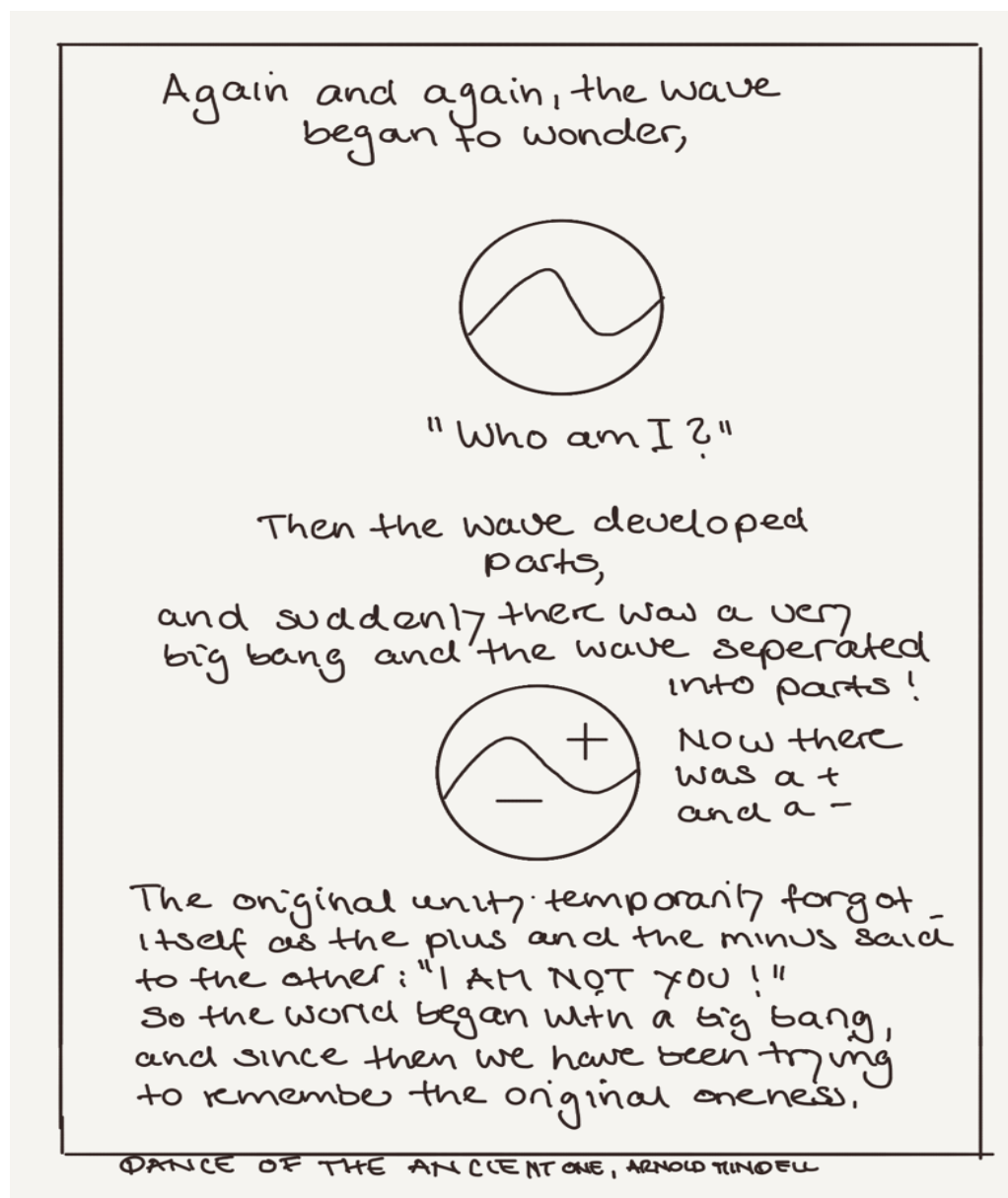
The Processmind is also linked to quantum physics. David Bohm, a quantum physicist and philosopher, talks about the hidden variables that

⁴ *The Leader as Martial Artist: an Introduction to Deep Democracy*, Arnold Mindell, 1992

⁵ *Processmind. A User's Guide to Connecting with the Mind of God*, Arnold Mindell, 2010 (p. xi - xii)

cause the pulsation of the universe. The constant unfolding and contraction between wave and particle throughout the whole universe⁶.

In Arnold Mindell's book *Dance of the Ancient One*, there is a beautiful drawing, that I just had to copy.



Mindell points out that the big bang helped the universe to awaken. Oneness seems to have the wish to forget its oneness and creates diversity, multiplicity and conflict. Maybe to remember the need for unity again. It splits its unity into diversity, similar to our life myth expressing itself in opposite energies.

All these energies and pulsations can be called the force field that creates and organizes: the Processmind.

⁶ Krishnamurti, Bohm and the Edges of Transcendence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Nz9SvNfAkg&feature=youtu.be>

In quantum physics two opposing realities can be present simultaneously. The whole universe is built upon an as-well-as principle of diversity and not on an either-or model.

In Erwin Schrödinger's famous experiment with the cat, this is also demonstrated. Erwin Schrödinger, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, demonstrated with a thought experiment the quantum mechanical possible superposition of several simultaneous states.

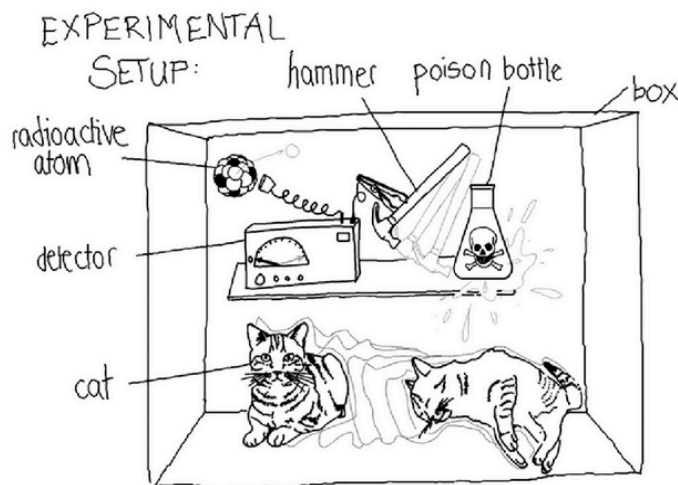


Photo: researchgate.net

In a box, there is a radioactive apparatus, a Geiger counter, a hammer, a bottle of prussic acid and a cat. In the course of an hour, one of the radioactive atoms can decay, but does not have to. If it disintegrates, the Geiger counter becomes active and the hammer

smashes the bottle with prussic acid. The cat would be dead in this case. The apparatus would therefore kill the cat within one hour with a probability of 50%. Schrödinger now asked the question about the cat's condition when nobody is looking into the box. As long as no observer is there, the cat is in a superposition, it is both alive and dead. Only through the observation the superposition collapses and manifests itself in one of the two states⁷.

Interestingly Schrödinger initially thought that this possibility that the cat can be dead or alive is proof that his wave equation theory of quantum physics is wrong. From his *assemblage point* (see chapter 10), it was just not possible to bring these events together at that time. But his self-doubts were wrong. In quantum physics, as in dreams, you can be in parallel worlds at the same time, just as the cat can be alive and dead simultaneously.

⁷ *Schrödingers Katze*, Martin Maciej, 2015, <https://www.giga.de/filme/the-big-bang-theory-handlung-charaktere-videos-alle-infos-zur-serie/specials/schroedingers-katze-erklaerung-fuer-dummies/>

Mindell states that our deepest parts, like the quantum wave, can be in two states at the same time:

These subtle, wave-like experiences in us seem to be the bridge missing in the parallelism of our everyday life⁸.

It is important to understand that these parallel worlds do not actually collapse but that we emerge into one of the possible states while the others continue to exist simultaneously. Arnold Mindell explains this idea of parallel worlds by pointing out that when we begin to focus on something, we see its most probable state. Most probable in terms of our culture and social environment, our identity and our current process, the context and so on. So, we choose one experience and marginalize the others. Amy Mindell writes:

To say it very simply, the moment we call something “a” or “b” we have marginalized all of its other possible states (c, d, e, etc.). That doesn’t mean that the other states do not exist, it just means that we are not focusing upon them. In other words, we are both alive and dead, awake and asleep!⁹.

This is true for our deepest self. We are always both energies of our childhood dream, our life myth, which is our link to the Processmind, that organizes us. Sometimes we are so much identified with one of the energies that we almost forget about the other. And then we feel miserable and not complete, because we aren’t.



This very thought of aligning the opposites is also the core of Taoism. *The Tao that can be said* expresses itself in opposites, in duality, in yin and yang: friendly – unfriendly, light – darkness. That is also the polarity expressed in our childhood dream. Contradiction is part of our existence and there is a continuous movement between the polarities.

Arnold Mindell uses the example of throwing a coin to get to a decision to clarify the difference¹⁰. The energy, power, field ... that swirls the coin and lets it fall in exactly the right way is the *Tao, that cannot be said*. That is the Processmind.

When the coin lands it is either yin or yang. The two opposites are not separate. They’re two different manifestations of the same reality, the two faces of the very same coin. As the Tao symbol clearly represents, yin and yang aren’t simply placed side by side, but they compenetrates each other, they’re intimately bonded.

⁸ *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

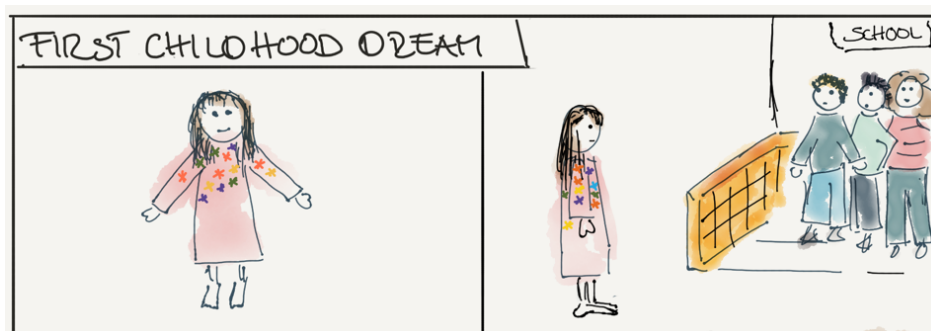
⁹ *Amy’s Hyperspaces: Creativity, the Bird of Paradise, and the Doorway to Parallel Worlds*, Amy Mindell, 2004

¹⁰ *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

My Life Myth

In the course of this thesis I learned to understand why, when asked by peers what my childhood dream is about, I always told both, my childhood dream and my earliest childhood memory. I always had the impression that only together they create the whole picture. The process of this thesis gave me a deeper understanding of why I felt that way. I will try to explain it here. And I am aware, it might make more sense to myself than for you, the reader.

These early childhood dreams often appear around the age of five to seven years, as did mine.



Here I am, in my long pink nightdress with embroidered flowers and stars, barefoot. Happy, raw, soft, following my dream path. And then, all of a sudden, I become aware that I am in front of my school. I look at the kids that are standing outside. They stare at me, I stare at them. Embarrassed that they might notice that I am not properly dressed, but they don't. They do not laugh, they only look.

This childhood dream seems to be rather common because many people told me they had a similar dream. This fact fits to who I am as well. There is a barefoot, vulnerable, soft, star- and flower-covered dreamer. And there is a kind of mainstream group power. Just by being together and following a shared goal makes them powerful.

The words I use to name those polarities change throughout my process. My actual descriptions are:

Following my dreams — Being with my group

Dreaming, feeling, expanding — Doing, functioning, focusing

Soft and vulnerable — Powerful

Swinging — Grounding

I know these polarities so well in my life. Learning is my hobby. I am always in some kind of training and learning environment. The many online training possibilities right now are kind of heaven for me, they invite my swinging side. I am a relational learner. I learn from and with others. I would rather watch a video than read a book. I need to sense the person, and I need a person or group to reflect the learning with. This helps me to ground the learning.

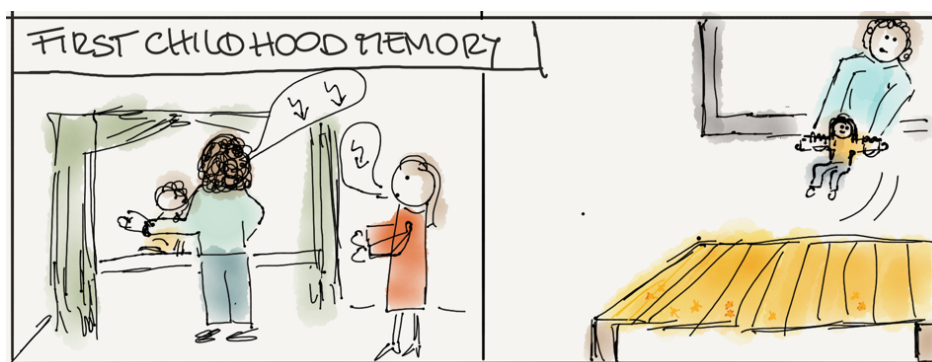
I enjoy life most when these polarities meet each other. I want to share two examples, one from my early childhood and one from my corporate life.

My grandparents were running a hotel and restaurant on top of a hill in the middle of nature and all their daughters showed up at the weekends, despite having other jobs, to run the weekend-service. They brought their husbands with them who also helped run the business, and their children. The most important thing for us children was, being invisible the whole day till the restaurant closed. That was pretty easy as there were many of us and it was great fun to just run around in the woods and play and discover.

The second example is from my younger professional years, during my corporate life, I worked in the media business. I loved the constant new stream of things and the creativity in publishing magazines. At the same time, I was really good at climbing up the corporate ladder. Due to my longing to be in a group of likeminded people and my mainstream adaptability, I made a career and went up the ladder like in a career handbook. When I was in my mid-thirties and higher up the ladder than I could have imagined, I realized, I do not fit in here anymore. I felt empty, as I had adapted too much to the system's requirements, and forgot about myself and my dreams. I totally felt in the wrong place. I jumped out and founded a consultancy company together with a colleague, whom I trusted deeply.

After 10 years I left. Again, it did not feel right any more, I adapted too much. Now, as a self-employed organizational consultant and executive coach I am very much interested in the combination of my coachee's individual unique path of being who they are and the vibrancy and matter of fact quality of organizational processes. I enjoy having much freedom to organize my work. On the other hand, I just moved into the office space of some colleagues I sometimes work with, to have some kind of group belonging.

I already shared that I always tell my childhood dream and my earliest childhood memory at the same time, as I feel they are somehow complimentary. In my first childhood memory, I might have been three or four years old, some years before I had this dream.



In my first childhood memory, my father held me, his three or four-year-old daughter, out of the window from the first floor. I remember there were loud and excited voices, my mother crying. I was aware of the tense background atmosphere. Most likely, I was also afraid, but I have no memory regarding my fear. I was focused on the yellow roof. Till this day, I know exactly the texture. I was swinging towards it, I escaped from this tense atmosphere by focusing on the *new yellow land of discovery*.

Arnold Mindell describes the memory and the dream as two possible access points to the same thing. And I can find the same polarities that are in my childhood dream, in this earliest memory:

Following my dreams (yellow roof) — Following my group (trying to function in this family system)

Soft and vulnerable — Powerful

Swinging — Grounding

In my dream and my memory, the atmosphere is very different.

In the dream, these energies face each other. I am aware of the different energies, while I am standing barefoot on my feet.

In my memory, my father uses me, his daughter, to get what he wants. The powerful side is much more present. Yes, his behavior enabled me. Without him, I would not have seen the yellow roof so close. But he is also a manipulator in the middle of a relationship fight.

Over my entire life so far, I have struggled with and around people who play out their power strongly. I feel attracted to power and at the same time I am afraid of its misuse. I am often unaware this is the very thing I am doing myself: misusing my power. I can be super harsh, a dictator, according to my partner, various friends and former colleagues. This signals to me that I have an edge (see chapter 7) to really identify with my power. In Process Work terms, an edge is the boundary between the known aspect of myself, and the unknown. If I bring out my power, I fear it might end in a heavy conflict, maybe without me being really aware of what I did. I am afraid that I might hurt people or myself.

Therefore, I prefer to adapt. But then I discover myself at another edge! The edge to be fully my dreamy self, to follow my own path, especially when I am with others. I hold back, thinking, it could be unsafe, they might not like it, then I might lose the contact and sense of belonging. Therefore, I tend to not show too much of myself.

During the process of writing this thesis I became even more grateful to the groups of people where I feel belonging and can be who I am: powerful and soft. I want to become more soft and vulnerable, and more powerful in different parts of my life.

As mentioned in my childhood dream, I am well able to concentrate all my energy on the so-called good things in a rather complex situation. This is a strength that has the price of neglecting the possibilities hidden in the other pile of things. In the current phase of my life I am interested in learning more about the gold that lies in my pain, in the unpleasant situation itself. I sense that when I am more awake for the gold in my pain, I will have more access or capacity to perceive and work with the more complicated aspects of myself and others.

I talked with a friend, a process worker, about our childhood myths. I told her about the memory of my father who held me out of the window over the yellow roof. She said: "In your memory you have to wring yourself out of the arms of the father, otherwise you will never end up on the yellow roof. You have to deal with the situation."

That was a very convincing insight. And that is what I want to do in this thesis, at least for this one day. I have decided to look at May 20th with a focus on the things that I found irritating, provocative, rude, hurtful or annoying, in order to find the gold that lies in there. Arnold Mindell wrote:

The alchemists knew about finding gold. They knew that in the midst of human misery and pain, in the midst of chaos, which they called the 'prima materia'— the raw material of life— was gold. The dark side of ourselves shows us the parts of life we are shy about. It throws us into tumultuous, non-equilibrium processes. Though it confuses and scares us, it also breaks down barriers and reunites people in unbelievable ways. Forbidden issues knock us off our old centers and press us to open up to the whole of life¹¹.

To write a thesis about a day in my life is actually very challenging for me. Really showing my inner self in written form, without the possibility of controlling who is reading it, feels like unknown territory. But as my childhood dream suggests, this is also exciting for me.

In hindsight, I discovered throughout this journey, how much depth and gold lies in the discarded pile of life, how much connection lies in conflict, how many sparkles are in the pile that I usually don't spend so much time with. It is just amazing.

I want to end this chapter with a couple of quotes regarding the life myth. Max Schupbach frequently says in seminars:

It takes the least energy to be yourself. Because it takes a lot of effort to try to be somebody else.

¹¹ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

Oprah Winfrey, an American talk show host, actress and entrepreneur, is quoted in the already mentioned book of Alicia Keys¹²:

When you're doing what you love to do, you don't get exhausted. You get exhausted from trying to fulfill everyone else's ideas and ideals about who you should be.

Caroline McHugh, author and coach, describes in her Ted Talk¹³:

You're only job on this planet is to be really good at being yourself. There is a U-shaped hole in the universe, that wants to be filled by you.

¹² *More Myself: A Journey*, Alicia Keys, 2020

¹³ *The Art of Being Yourself*, Caroline McHugh, Ted Talk, 2016,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5H5u6Eg4fM>

4. 6:30 am: Checking in with Myself

In this chapter I will not only describe the first hours of the day, but also explain some basic concepts of Process Work, starting with the *three levels of awareness*. In addition, I will discuss the *dreambody* concept and the *sensory grounded* approach of Process Work.

4.1. The Event

My alarm clock rings at 6.30 am. First thought: *Today is the day*. While waking up completely, I try to remember my dream and to be open to the feeling language of my body. I remember one scene of my dream: I have an intention to do something specific, I cannot remember what. But I do know, that I need to get a clear commitment from a group of people. They look like Japanese business people, all wearing dark suits. Four or five people. Gender, age – I cannot say. They are silent, their faces are without any movement, no visible feedback. I know if they do not say “yes” explicitly, they mean “no”. No feedback is negative feedback. I keep waiting for a reaction, watching them ...

This is all I can remember.

I used to jump out of bed, not paying attention to my mood at all and just do what needs to be done. Gymnastics, bathroom, breakfast, work ... Now, it takes quite a while, before I get the impression that I have paid enough attention to my body, my current mood and feelings and have got a more complete sense of where I am at. Then, I leave bed more fully awake and here. In the beginning, I tried to be precise and find the exact right word for my emotions and sensations, which hardly worked. Now I allow myself to use a *mélange* of everything. When I check my feelings I often fall back to sleep. I go into a state between sleeping and being awake.



Today it takes a while to fully awaken. I notice that I am slightly excited and my stomach is tingling. I am looking forward to the day. Actually, I feel a little audacious with my new thesis idea. At the same time, there is slight hesitation, I am a little shy about unfolding my personal events to others. I wrap myself tighter into the blanket, just for a couple of minutes.

My partner, Uwe, is already up. After a good morning kiss, I just throw the exciting message at him: “Today is my thesis day!” which does not make any sense to him at that time of the day. I

do my gymnastics on our roof top terrace. I so much love this early morning when the birds are singing the good morning song for me. I am here by myself– surrounded by the birds' songs and the humming of a city morning. What a privilege. Almost every morning there is a blackbird right at the corner of the terrace singing its song, no matter when I come to do gymnastics. The bird must sit there for hours. (Or probably a few of them like this spot).

I do miss the bird if it is not there to sing. I do my exercises and then go for a short meditation with the early sunlight on my face. My thesis is with me in this meditation. I love the idea and I am shy to be so personal. In the clarity of the early spring morning, I just know that there is no other way to move through this process than being personal.

Usually I write in my journal after my meditation and gymnastics. Today, I have the impulse to go for a run, it is going to be a full day. I just make a short audio recording of my dream and the first impressions of the day in order to keep them in mind. It is already 8 am and I have my first call at 9 am, but I need to get some more exercise, feel my body and feel earth under my feet.

4.2. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Three Levels of Awareness

In Process Work the perception of reality includes three separate observation levels: the objective and measurable level which is called *consensus reality*. This is what a video camera would record. Then there is a non-measurable, subjective and experiential level, including feelings and dreamings, called *emergence level or dreamland*. The third level is the deepest, most inexpressible – the *essence level*, barely noticeable. This might be the atmosphere of a special moment.

To make the three levels more tangible let's take the example of watching the ocean. The last time I did that was in June. One of the first days being allowed to travel to the coast again after many weeks of not being able to leave Hamburg due to Corona pandemic limitations.

Looking at consensus reality, it was around 11 am when my partner and myself arrived at the ocean. When we got there, we were standing at the beach for at least 15 minutes, just watching the water coming in and out without speaking. Still facts and consensus reality.

On the feeling level, I had a sense of happiness and freshly gained freedom and space. Space to move, fresh air to breathe. I was grateful to be here with Uwe. Grateful that we both just took this Friday off from any obligations and travelled to the coast for just one day. That is emergence level, emotions, dreamings, it is subjective. But it is for sure a big part of the experience of that very moment.

And then there was this sentient essence of freedom and limitlessness in this rolling in and out of the waves. Time did not matter at all.

In an organizational context it is important to acknowledge the consensus reality level of problems and concerns of an organization, like business facts or the description of problems. Usually that is what the people in the organization are well aware of and focused upon. For example: *Our number of customers shrinks, and we lost some of our best people.*

Harder to get is the emergence level, the dreaming part of the organization. Emotions, dreams, hopes and problems, topics that people in the organization hardly ever talk about. These elements might not even occur to the everyday mind, like the feeling that they are not as innovative as they used to be years ago. This information might be found in the gossip.

And then there are also essence experiences that connect the people on a deeper level to the organizational myth, the organizing principle of the organization (more on this in chapter 9). It might be the atmosphere, when you enter the organization for the first time and you have a certain feeling what this organization is all about.

A couple of years ago I was participant in a leadership training with *Common Purpose*, an organization that runs leadership development programs that aim at equipping people to work across all kinds of boundaries. In a diversity session, we were challenged regarding our ability to think inclusively. Our group had the task to organize a *get to know the city-program* for a high rank political guest of the city of Hamburg, where I live. The guest arrived, and he was blind, which we didn't know before (consensus reality).

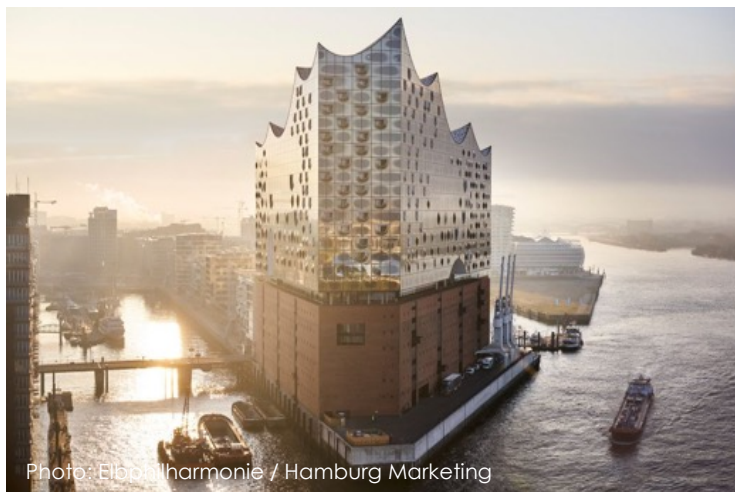


Photo: Elbphilharmonie / Hamburg Marketing

So, our group in a silent consent (emergence level based on our shared feelings) dropped every beautiful view item off the list. At the end of tour, he said: "Nice plan, but why don't we go to this beautiful place in the Elbphilharmonie

(new concert hall) where I can overlook the whole harbor?" We were frozen in astonishment. And then I learned that he loved to be in the height with an open free view over the harbor – because from there he sensed the whole scenery, the harbor, the cranes, the river Elbe, in the atmosphere around him including people, noises, wind ... He explained that there he feels the spirit of Hamburg most. That is the essence level.

These levels are all equally important and relevant. This is in contradiction to the overemphasis on the consensus reality in the global north generally, and in organizations especially. The more voices from all three

levels of awareness are included in the picture, including dreaming, altered states, somatic tendencies, the more information the individual or organizational system gets about itself. The closer the person or organization gets to this inherent wisdom, this innate vibrancy, the better the decision making or conflict resolution process gets¹⁴. It is like collecting all the different pieces of a 1000 pieces puzzle and the more pieces are connected the clearer the picture comes forward and can be recognized and co-created.

Dream and Dreambody

As a Jungian analyst, Mindell shared Jung's concept that dreams have a meaning. The basic idea behind Jungian dream theory is that dreams reveal more than they conceal. Jung did not believe that dreams need to be interpreted for them to perform their function. He suggested that dreams are doing the work of integrating our conscious and unconscious lives. In his view dreams could not be interpreted, but only unfolded by the dreamer. The whole dream-work is essentially subjective. A dream is a theatre in which the dreamer is himself the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the author, the public, and the critic. In other words, the dream *is* the dreamer. Each element in a dream refers to an aspect of the dreamer's own personality.

When working with the mythical narrative of a dream I was taught to go with the most unknown, irritating, or most fascinating element of the dream, the element with the highest energy. Amplify it, make it bigger, become it, dream into it, till it might unravel its meaning.

While dealing with his own health issues, Arnold Mindell could not believe only dreams have a meaning, and body symptoms do not. He began researching this topic with his clients and discovered the dreambody concept: the mirror connection between our night-time dreams and our body experiences¹⁵. He describes the dreambody as a dreamlike, unifying field that gives expression to body symptoms and dreams alike¹⁶. Every dream refers to a particular body experience. Each body experience can be visualized and usually appears in dreams¹⁷.

Mindell extended his idea of the dreambody to include any type of disturbance, including conflicts and relationship problems. He coined the phrase "the dream happening in the moment", to convey the idea that all experiential phenomena are manifestations of a dreaming reality¹⁸. The language of the dreambody is in the less conscious or unintended signals, such as body signals, sitting positions, vocal tones and facial movements. It takes a lot of awareness training to catch the signal as it appears.

¹⁴ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

¹⁵ <http://www.aamindell.net/dreambody>

¹⁶ *The Dreambody in Relationships*, Arnold Mindell, 1987

¹⁷ <http://www.aamindell.net/dreambody>

¹⁸ *A Path Made by Walking*, Julie Diamond and Lee Spark Jones, 2004

The dreambody is a non-consensus reality, sentient, pre-signal experience manifesting in terms of symptoms and unpredictable motions,

writes Dr. Ingrid Rose on Amy and Amy Mindell's website¹⁹. It is part of the emergence level or dreamland.

The dreambody concept is not only applicable to the individual, it is connected to the Processmind, the intelligence behind our universe. It is an individual experience of the essence behind everything. The Processmind shows itself also in dreams. It appears in flirts – flickering signals, like when your attention, in the middle of a conversation, is drawn towards a bird outside of the window for a split second. It can be experienced in synchronicity. Synchronicity refers to temporarily correlated events which are not linked by a causal relationship, but which are perceived and interpreted as being connected to each other²⁰. And it shows up in body symptoms, as said before.

The global dreambody links us together. Therefore, being our complete self, bringing all our individual parts to awareness, is important not only for our own personal lives but for the life of our communities as well²¹.

Sensory Grounded Information and Embodiment

In his book *Dance with the Ancient One* Arnold Mindell writes:

Normal consciousness is like a square around my head. My head inside of a box. I think only in my head. It's all about my head, my head, my head. Another state of consciousness involves taking the box off my head and letting the entire environment, the earth, the universe's spaces, be my head. Some people can achieve this new perspective by visualizing it. Others feel it. Some of us must use movement to get out of that head box²².

In one of his seminars in January 2020 Arnold Mindell added:

Wake up to the body signals. The body moves you as well as mind and thoughts. Because you are also material you are also moved by the moon, the sun and the rest of the universe.

The body picks up signals appearing in the emergence level and essence level much easier than our mind. But we need to have a relationship with our body to notice the signals. (Read more about signals in chapters 7 and 10).

¹⁹ <http://www.aamindell.net/dreambody/> by Dr. Ingrid Rose

²⁰ Wikipedia, September 2020

²¹ *The Dreambody in Relationships*, Arnold Mindell, 1987

²² *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

In the business world, our brains get well trained, but we often forget that humans are far more than just walking brains. We often tend to marginalize the body. Even though we know that in a presentation the predominant part of the impression we make on the audience is not created by the content, but by congruent body language and tone of voice, we overemphasize the content and underestimate our body language and body wisdom. Most of us know the noticeable difference between a speaker who tells us brilliant things, but somehow seems to be stuck in the head, and a speaker who speaks from and with the heart and his whole body. Then we absorb the information with all our senses.

A further explanation comes from biology. Information is transmitted directly from person to person by mirror neurons. Automatically. If the whole body of the speaker is involved and sending signals than our mirror neurons get more information on all different levels. It is easier to follow the presentation and the message that wants to be transported. Therefore, when a speaker is able to create emotions in us, the message lands more completely.

The mirror neurons are also responsible for empathy, the ability to feel the emotions of others. We see the facial expressions of others, and we experience the same feelings, more or less strongly, depending on the context and our own assemblage point. We do not think about it, we just get the message²³.

The mirror neurons also help me while playing Tai Chi. In dyad-training, my body feels where my partner's body might be tight. Because I feel a certain tightness myself somewhere. Or the other way around, my tightness makes it hard for my training partner to move freely as his body feels inhibited by my tightness. If I am stiff my partner cannot swing freely as our bodies are connected and communicate. This is sensory grounded information – the basic source of information in Tai Chi and also in Process Work.

Max Schupbach said 2017 in a seminar in Kyiv, that Process Work does not differentiate between mind and body. These are just concepts that make life easier. A similar thought is described in the concept of *embodiment*, in which consciousness requires a body, a physical interaction with the world we live in. To fully turn towards the world, we need to be open to the language of our bodies: the emotions and sensations.

Toko-pa Turner, a dreamworker and author, points out:

If you're doing it right, presence (in your body), rather than detaching you, sensitizes you to your environment. ... This is where you can grow more skilled at meeting life where it's at, rather than how you'd prefer it to be. ...

²³ *Mirror Neurons: Enigma of the Metaphysical Modular Brain*, Sourya Acharya and Samarth Shukla NCBI, 2012, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3510904/>

... By extension, presence also makes us more porous to life's mystery, ... to the "ongoing wow of now"²⁴.

For me it is a continuous learning path to take my body feelings and sensations seriously. My body is not just a machine that allows me to act on planet earth. Toko-pa Turner asked in one of her newsletters the question:

If the need of your body, like the need for food, sleep, rest, movement or touch, would be the need of your child, would you react in the same way as you react to your body's needs?

This question helps me to be more related to my body.

Maybe you are in the mood for a short exercise to work with your body's wisdom.

Exercise to connect to the body's wisdom

- Think of a current challenge, problem!
- Put the challenge aside and sit comfortably and take two to five deep breaths.
- Now scan your body patiently from head to toes. Which sensation, pain, feeling attracts your attention? It can be very subtle, like a little stiffness in the neck, a little stomach pain, tiredness ... Stay with it. Give space.
- Let it even become bigger or tighter or whatever is needed to turn the volume up ... maybe it wants to be expressed in the whole body. Maybe you want to get up and make a movement with your whole body. Maybe you want to bend down, lie down. Maybe it likes to sing ...
- Be courageous and do it for some seconds or even a few minutes until, while using this way of listening to the body, some new insights arise.
- Ask your insight, what advice it has for you, for the challenge or problem at the beginning of this exercise?

There is much more to say about the body's wisdom, from body memory in trauma therapy to embodiment work in coaching and acting. For me it was important here to open that door and underline the importance of body feeling and being present in your body.

²⁴ *Dreamdrops - Embodiment is the New Enlightenment*, Toko-Pa Turner, 2020

Arnold Mindell writes:

The most fundamental forum is your own heart. Both as a facilitator and as a human being, you must learn to hear yourself there²⁵.

And, he adds, that the biggest problem for a human being is not having access to the deeper self, the essence²⁶. We all need our bodies on this way. This path cannot be walked by just thinking about it.

4.3. Unfolding and Reflection

I will look at the events in the morning hours in the sequence I wrote them down and share my reflections.

Dream

My dream as I remember it in the morning:

I have an intention to do something specific, I cannot remember what. But I do know, that I need to get a clear commitment from a group of people. They look like Japanese business people, all wearing dark suits. Four or five people. Gender, age – I cannot say. They are silent, their faces are without any movement, no visible feedback. I know if they do not say “yes” explicitly, they mean “no”. No feedback is negative feedback. I keep waiting for a reaction, watching them ...

I turned to my dream only the following day, when I wrote things down. But I will use present tense, because the unfolding is just a postponed part of May 20th.

I ask myself: *What is the most unknown, disturbing, fascinating detail of this dream?*

It's clearly the silence of this group of Japanese business people in dark suits. Whereas I need a clear yes.

My first thought is: *Ahh, that's my DDI guiding team. I need their approval to go forward with this plan. A little reminder from my thesis – thank you!*

Then I think of my coach Josef, member of my guiding team, who keeps reminding me that dreams usually are not that linear. I just open up to the image of the silent Japanese group. And the image changes, all of a sudden, they are sitting inside me around a conference table and I

²⁵ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

²⁶ *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

can hear them. These Japanese business people are my inner guiding team:

- “How dare you? That does not fit to the formal requirements.”
- “Uhhh, a journal, that's too personal, that's frightening.”
- “It might also be really boring for others to read your stuff.”
- “What might the people you meet today think about it later on?”
- “You won't be able to do that properly.”

But there is also my inner Japanese film maker. He is the only one not speaking. He is the most fascinating one for me. So, I go with his energy. Just an almost invisible nodding and he looks straight at me. There is no questioning, no hesitation. Somehow, he is also my thesis. I just know, they are in business suits as it is a serious decision here. A clear yes is needed – from myself, to go for it. I have the feeling this is what my thesis encourages me and wants me to do. This is what I want to do.

I know these polarities from my life myth. The new emerging path of the yellow roof on the one hand side, following the dreaming. Which also means showing my own vulnerable self to *the powerful other* which is my internal critics. They want to keep me safe by sticking to what seems right in their view. There is also my external guiding team, the Process Work community, friends, colleagues and clients that might read this.

I give myself the advice:

It is a great idea, your thesis has chosen this path for you, this is the most beautiful way to find your topic. Have enough courage and also conscientiousness and care to walk this path.

Dreambody and Sensory Grounded Information

I recently read and wish I could remember where:

While thoughts are the language of the mind, feelings are
the language of the body.

I am training myself to hear both languages: the body and the mind.

In the morning, while I was still lying in bed, I was aware of subtle movements, of my feelings and sensations. As already shared I sensed a going forward energy. I felt inspired by my idea how to move forward with my thesis and by the fact that May 20th was going to be THE day.

A part of me was ready to jump out of bed, energized and ready to go. But at the same time, I put the blanket tighter around me. I was hesitating and had an impulse to put the blanket over my head and stay in bed.

Referring to the dreambody concept: the energies of my dream are the same as those energies in my body sensations. A forward moving energy, an excitement of following the emerging path. And there is also

a hesitation, a shying away: the blanket and the inner voices that are not in favor of this idea.

Embodiment and Three Levels of Awareness

Every day I am looking forward to these silent morning hours on my roof top terrace with no place to hurry to. I found a new clarity in myself. I was always hoping that one day I would have an instruction manual to show me how to be myself. Somehow, I was looking outside of myself in seminars, coaching sessions, exercises and so on. I was waiting for a kind of big bang: *Ah, now I know it, that is me and this is what I should do.* I was looking for a consensus reality answer to my question: *Who am I?*

Instead of getting an instruction manual I find more resonance in my body and my heart. When I am sitting in the silence of the morning, ideas and thoughts wander through me. I feel where my body resonates and where not. I experience a new way of inner resonance and clarity. To be able to tune into my inner voice of knowing and inspiration, I have to feel my body, feel my connection to the earth. It is not a *thinking about*, rather a *sitting with* and *feeling into*. When I only think about it, I stay in my head and turn the thoughts around in circles. In these early morning hours, I seem to have easier access to my dreaming and to the essence of who I am, easier access to my deeper parts.

5. 8 am: Corona-Policewomen in the Park

In this chapter I will explain what Process Work is referring to with the term *process*. I will share the concept of a *more known identity (U)* and a *more unknown identity (X)*. The attitude behind Process Work which is *Deep Democracy* is explained by talking about *roles* and *fields*.

5.1. Prelude

May 20th is a day in the middle of the Corona limitations time in Hamburg. We are allowed to walk outside but need to keep at least 1.5 meter distance to any other person that does not live in the same household.

5.2. The Event



Running in the park. A small, green park with a little lake in the middle, just around the corner from where we live. When I enter the park, there is an older woman not far from me. She senses me coming and stretches out her arm sideways to keep me at distance. She is not even looking at me. First, I feel a little puzzled. I am always running at the very right side to keep as much distance as possible in this small park. In my mind, I am really taking care of others. I realize that her reaction was not meant against me as she did not even look at me. I think: *That is probably a habitual response she has when somebody approaches her. Fear and self-defense against runners, the virus, whatever... She is just protecting herself.*

Typically, I see myself as someone who tries to be as careful as possible and not to get too close to others. From a role perspective, the woman is in the role of defending herself. As roles come in pairs, so here I am, in the role of the possible violator, just as policeman and robber are two sides of the same coin. If she is the policewoman, I am the robber. It is a small park and I will meet her for sure in the next round, therefore I will try to enlarge the distance even further. At the same time, I am wondering why this woman, who obviously has a need for extra distance, goes for a walk when most people do their morning run.

A moment later, I notice two runners approaching me from behind. The two young women stay closely behind me and have quite a loud conversation. I imagine that I feel their breath on my neck. This scene lasts probably three seconds, but I have the impression they are in my neck much too long already. Slightly annoyed I stop at the side and let them pass, for sure with a look on my face that says: *you really should know better how to behave in these times* look on my face. Which they do not even notice as they are totally self-focused on their conversation.

In this moment, I notice that the older woman managed to take care of herself without blaming somebody else, just taking care of her needs and making it visible. While I am expecting everybody to be aware and take care of all the other runners and walkers. If this expectation is not met I become the Corona-policewoman and show in my thoughts and looks how to apply Corona-rules in a public park.

This discovery makes me laugh. In the next rounds, I try to keep a proper distance to the older woman as well as to the two young runners. And I am already curious what I will find out about this scene in my reflection of the day.

Note: I write *older* and *younger* in comparison to myself.

5.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Process

Arnold Mindell describes a process as:

... the flow of overt and covert communication within an individual, family, group, culture or environment. Process includes inexpressible feelings, dreams and spiritual experiences²⁷.

He recommends:

Follow events, follow what people do, follow nature, follow the river. Process Work is awareness work. The work of

²⁷ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

becoming aware of how individuals, groups, and nature herself change, starting with ourselves²⁸.

Mindell also calls a process:

[the] bridge between parallel worlds, between opposites, between dream and body, and a bridge that puts the worlds together²⁹.

To bridge the polarities, to bridge the duality of this world, we need to look at the world from this view of intimately bonding, a view that focuses not on the parts themselves but on processes that move between and beyond the parts. That move between mind and body, individual and group, inner and outer, harmony and conflict.

Known and Unknown Parts of our Identity (U and X)

Process Work aims at increasing awareness in all parts of our behavior. The behavior the person or group is aware of as well as the behavior that the person or group is not yet aware of but can be observed by others. In creating increased awareness, Process Work supports individuals and groups to access a broader base of experiences and insights to enable them to get closer to their inherent wisdom including the deepest part, that unfolds when more and more parts of the individual kaleidoscope of life are included.

Becoming aware of more and more parts of ourselves is the way towards wholeness. It enables us to make better choices from the core of who we are. The challenge is that our different parts are not listed in the instruction manual that is neatly handed out to us when we are born. Instead it is a constant discovery process of the information we marginalize because our identity allows us to experience this event in this certain way and not in others.

To be able to interact with the world, we create identities in our early childhood. What we think we are and how we describe ourselves: gender, nationality, color of skin, the social class we are in, age, education, personality traits and so on. In an organization, this identity is what is written in the marketing booklet or what new hires get told in the official part of the job interview. During our lifetimes or during the first weeks of working in an organization the picture gets more colorful and more complete.

Our identity is what enables us to interact with the world. From the million pieces of information that the world offers us every single minute it is our identity that stirs what we see, hear, feel and digest. Our mindset, which belongs to our identity, is our filter for seeing the world, in order not to be overwhelmed. Our identity becomes our automatic steering wheel, so it is a big advantage to be aware of what we think about ourselves and

²⁸ *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

²⁹ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

the world and not take our identity as a fixed state but rather something really lively, always striving towards wholeness. In Process Work the part of our identity we are more familiar with, is called the *U* or *primary process*.

If we define the primary process of a person or group as the way that it identifies itself, then the *secondary process*, the things that are not yet consciously included, refers to unknown or even disturbing ideas and experiences. These are *X-energies*. X means not yet identified with. The X-energy expresses itself not in facts and figures, the consensus reality level, but in feelings, body symptoms, the emergence level or dreamland.

We have the feeling that secondary processes just happen to us. We feel like we are at the receiving end of something. Or we don't like a personality trait in another, as we are not aware or do not allow ourselves to identify with that trait in ourselves. If we were at peace with this X-energy then we would not experience a resistance to it or would not feel disturbed when we meet this energy in others. If an individual is not reflecting on herself she is automatically following the program of the known identity, the primary process. Arnold Mindell pointed out that to allow change to happen, as an individual or a group, a change in the perception of the identity needs to happen³⁰.

Generally, it is easier to become aware and finally integrate new information that goes along with our known identity, something that fits to the image we have of ourselves, that is in line with our known ideas and feelings. Imagine you consider yourself being great at leading. Now, somebody mentions your very strong directness in groups. That is probably easier to include into your picture of yourself than the feedback that when you talk about your favorite ideas your tone of voice is like a downing of the group you speak to.

To integrate a new piece information about ourselves, there is the need to become aware of it first, no doubt. Sometimes it can be rather challenging to differentiate whether our cognitive understanding, our mind, our primary process – just pretends that we understood something that leads to an update of our identity or if we really integrated the new information into our being.

For example, because a person spent countless hours of coaching or therapy on a certain topic, say, to let go of something, her mind really knows and wants to let go. But it might happen that her body feeling still does not go along with it, and every time the process starts all over again: *Sorry, not yet done*. Maybe it will never be done, as it might be a big edge. (More on edges in chapter 7).

The expanding of our identity, the unfolding of more pieces of who you are, is a full person process: mind, heart and body. There are these rare moments when we really, on a deep level, allow access to new information about ourselves, when we really open up to the new information or give up all resistance – cognitively, emotionally and on a sensory grounded level. Our minds understand the new information,

³⁰ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

whatever kind it is, and also our body and emotions are digesting the new information: Yes, *that is also me*. Yes, *I am really sometimes like that*.

It is something like a magic moment, an *aha-moment*, a moment where we cannot avoid *getting it* with our whole being. This is an alchemical process, the point where our known identity includes a new aspect and is enlarged.

Exercise to work with an x-energy, something not yet you

- When you let your day pass in front of your inner eye, was there something that bothered you? It can be a very small thing like my runners in the park.
- What was it? Make a hand movement that expresses the energy that caused the frown or reaction.
- Make the gesture a few times, without words or interpretation. Just the energy which caused your reaction. Just go with the movement. Until something new emerges, a thought, a feeling, an idea.
- How is this energy familiar to you? Where do you use it already, no matter if you like using it or not? Where could you use it more?

Deep Democracy, Fields and Roles

Deep Democracy, the attitude behind Process Work, believes in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all viewpoints in the world around us³¹. It is based upon an awareness of the diversity of people, roles, feelings, dreamings, cultures and contexts. From a Deep Democracy perspective, also disturbances and conflicts are seen as a possibility to bring new information to a person, group or organization. Like in my case the disturbance with the older woman and the two young women.

To understand and work with the different elements in a system, Deep Democracy uses the idea of fields and roles. From the physical side, a field is, how Einstein explained it:

... a totality of simultaneously existing facts that are understood as mutually dependent on each other³².

Or as Arnold Mindell explains it:

There is no such thing as independent change. The parts of the world are connected through the psychology of the whole planet³³.

³¹ *The Leader as Martial Artist*, Arnold Mindell, 2014

³² (1934, after Metzger, 1975)

³³ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

These forces create a field, similar to an invisible electro-magnetic field, that pulls people in various directions. These varied directions are called roles³⁴. Like in the park, the role of the policewoman was part of the field and also created the role of the violator.

Mindell describes a role as:

... a position or viewpoint that depends on time and place. Roles change rapidly because they are a function of the moment and locality. Roles in groups are not fixed, but fluid. They are filled by different individuals and parties over time, keeping the roles in a constant state of flux³⁵.

Just as water in a particular spot in the river is never the same water. Roles connect individuals and groups. The person in the role usually feels that the way he feels and acts not only represents what he brings as a person to this role, but that his behavior also depends on how the other roles interact. I can say for myself that in different groups, I feel differently and also end up in different roles in the same group. Sometimes I am super shy and do not want to speak at all, sometimes I lead the group and sometimes I am just helping the facilitator or whatever ... but I always feel one part of who I am is more engaged. It's casted by the role in this very moment. A minute later I might have another role.

As already said, roles depend on time and place, on the field that we are in. The role concept helps to get clearer about the structure of the process and therefore makes it clearer to understand what happened.

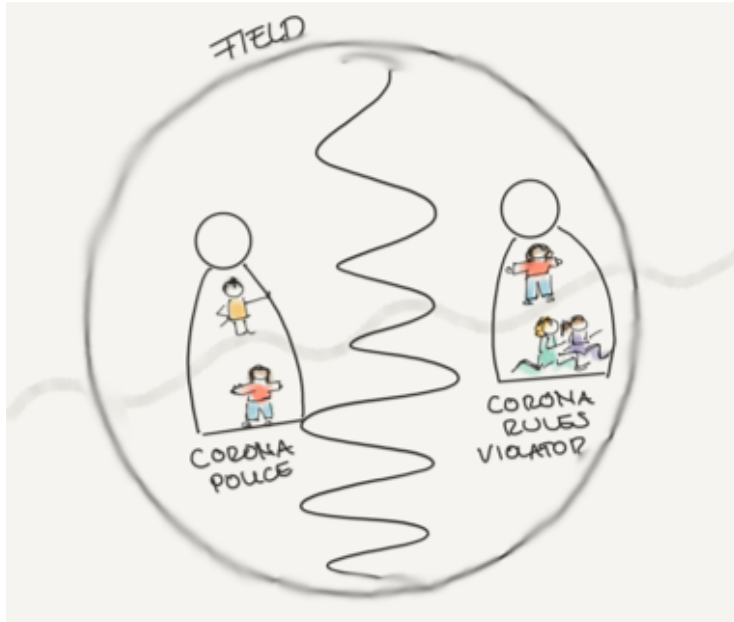
As mentioned, roles appear in pairs. The robber and the policeman are the two sides of the same coin. And like in the symbol of yin and yang the one role is already part of the other one. When you truly and deeply get to the essence of one role it automatically flips to the other side. It is a natural process. Roles are part of the self-organizing pattern of a field. And they draw to them, individuals to act them out. I talk about role structure in more depth in chapter 9 when talking about working with an organization.

³⁴ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

³⁵ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

5.4. Unfolding and Reflection

Field and Roles



The scenery of people in a small park at 8am creates a shared field. As I am part of the field my reaction towards the behavior of another person gives me information about her role and about the role that just casted me. I can use my feelings and thoughts to become more aware of the role I

am interacting with. Roles come in pairs and I had a reaction towards the older woman. So, I was casted by the role that is complimentary to hers.

The older woman sensed me coming and stretched her arm out to avoid me coming too close. She made me the *one who probably will come too close*, the possible violator. My reaction afterwards, the thought: *Why on earth is she going for a walk when most runners are in the park?* belonged to the role of the possible violator, because behind it was an attitude something like: *Get out here woman, you are a major risk group, you should stay at home*. Even though it is not a physical violation, it is clearly discriminating. It is a violent thought.

In the interaction with the two running and chatting women who breathed into my neck, it made me kind of angry that they did not at all take care of the appropriate distance. Thus, in that moment, I am identified with the role of the one who knows how to behave and obviously also knows how others should behave – the role the elder woman had a moment before. Same thing, same roles.

Instead of just being aware of their unawareness and acting on it, I got grumpy and became the Corona-policewoman. They were now *violators*. Maybe if the older women would have been there at the same spot, she might have taken the role – just stretching her arm. And I might have not been recruited by the grumpy version of the Corona-policewoman role. Maybe I would have been able to speak up to the young women, facilitating and making them a little more aware of their own behavior.

When the four of us left the park, we slipped back or forward into other roles. Likely, our roles in the park were occupied by other runners shortly

after we left. They belong to the context of running in a small park in Corona times.

Primary and Secondary Processes (U and X), Process

There are many versions of acting out the role of a policewoman. My grumpy version had to do with my known identity (U) and the more unknown part (X) that expresses itself often in disturbances.

In the interaction with the older woman, I felt irritated because she made me the possible violator. Me, who tries to take as much care as possible. So, my identity was highly associated with the one who is really paying attention not to violate the public physical distancing rules.

The two runners, totally self-focused on their running and talking, made me grumpy at first, due to the role of *policewoman* I was in, but also due to the very same secondary process, meaning the part of myself which I am unaware of or which I do not like about myself so much. I am a pretty good adapter to requirements and expectations of others. And I am not so much identified with the one that just does what she wants, no matter what others might think or feel about it. No matter which consequences for others my behavior might have. I stick to rules. Although I might not stop at every red traffic light as a pedestrian at 6am in the morning when there are no cars, if there is a rule such as how to behave in this pandemic, I intend to follow to it.

Regarding the older woman, my disturbance came as she made me the one that is probably running too close, not being aware of the physical distancing requirements in these times. The one that is rather selfish and less aware of the other people. The one that is not sticking to the rules. Actually, my reaction afterwards, my thoughts about her, showed that she was right. I am a possible violator. That is a part of me. This part also shows itself when I am going for a walk with a friend in these pandemic times. It happens quite often that I forget to pay attention to keeping 1.5 meter distance from other people when I am focused on the conversation. Exactly like the two younger women did. I do meet that part over and over again but I still have a hard time to really make it a more conscious part of who I am.

Following the outer and inner signals of this process made my day already a learning experience.

6. 9 am: Meeting in the Collective Field

In this chapter I will combine the topics I discuss with a friend with the Process Work concepts of *non-locality* and *collective fields and roles*.

6.1. Prelude

During this active thesis writing time, intensified by Corona circumstances, Tara and myself started to meet on an almost weekly base. What a treat for me. Tara is a trauma expert and coach. With Tara, I can ping pong all sorts of things I am wondering about. I am happy to meet her on my thesis day. She is important to me as a friend and as a learning partner and also as a companion to unknown inner fields. Often, I have the feeling that I am unfolding my experiences as a person mainly located in consensus reality while Tara is coming from the essence level.

6.2. The Event

Freshly showered, with wet hair and a bowl of muesli, I am heading to my Zoom call with Tara. I tell her right away that my new thesis idea is focusing on today's experiences inspired by the *My name is* film which I describe to her in some detail.

Tara: "Wow, this is a beautiful and tender idea. That fits perfectly. I know you as being passionately centered in consensus reality, you really love it. You need the grounding point of the now. And the other levels of reality are with you anyhow, you always put them in, but you are not really consciously framing them for yourself. And now you try to bring them into your life more consciously and frame it more. That seems to be a great path. It is the first of your ideas that feels, in a way, simple."

The word "simple" makes me smile. That's true. The idea is clear and simple. That sounds like a good way to go forward.

Simone: "Yes, and I don't have to think about the structure. The day is my structure. The linear time. I unfold my experiences with the Process Work paradigm and add some snippets of other schools of thought where they might add some value. That is more how I do things. As you know I love flea-markets and collages and just like to find interesting and valuable pieces for me and put them somehow together."

Our further conversation is linked to a talk by Thomas Hübl, a modern mystic and spiritual teacher. I will share his thoughts here before I continue with our conversation.

The link to the video is in the footnote³⁶:

Trauma is a process where I experience something in my present being that is so overwhelming that I cannot process it. I split off the part of myself with the tremendous overwhelm and stress, and I numb that part. That part becomes the past. Integrated history is presence, unintegrated history is the past. ...

It is like when we see a horrible scene on TV, and we turn down the volume and throw the TV set with horrible scenes, that we cannot stand seeing, into the ocean. That is what we are all doing. We mute the TVs and throw them in the ocean, in our collective oceans there are millions of TVs still running muted – stuck in time, as prisoners in time, in the ocean of our collective. All dissociated TVs affect the future generation. We do not know the world without trauma. That means we made trauma normal. We find out what trauma history we biographically have, but far more hidden are the ancient roles and our collective past. It is important to work on individual trauma but we have to put it in a much bigger context. We open up the tremendous capacity of hosting the world in us. But trauma shuts it down. And when we are traumatized the world that appears in us in our perception is much smaller than the world we live in and we create much more side effects³⁷.

Tara: All these unprocessed feelings and emotions that went under water according to Hübl's TV example need to be addressed, they are there and they are still piling up".

Simone: "If it is bigger than my own biographical trauma – how do I address it; how do I do my part of addressing that field? Especially as I am not even a big hero in addressing my own stuff".

Tara: "It is a mixture of witnessing and being present to or with it. This inner sensing and seeing, what Gendlin calls felt sense, is different for different people. Fully being taken over by it is not useful for me. It is like swinging forth and back. It is not healthy to fully go into it. Even if I am in the middle of the tsunami I always know who I am and having a witness present to it, I am grounded. You have to stay aware of who you are, stay grounded".

Simone: "How do you experience the tsunami?"

Tara: (silent, checking in with herself): "It is always happening all at once. It is like a loosely woven carpet and I want to get the main colors and flavors of the carpet. When I get it a little right then it calms down. But

³⁶ Thomas Hübl: Talk during Otto Scharmer's GAIA experience during Corona Times, May 2020

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=331&v=551C8rFE0Q&feature=emb_title

first I check if the irritation has to do with my personal biography, I check if I burned all my wood around it. I try to process everything around it that is personal first. And sometimes I feel it is not me. If you get dreamed up by a role then you have unburned wood around it.

“All that underwater-TVs are like an always running, not facilitated group process. But even in the ocean with all the TVs, in the moment I bring awareness to it, it changes the field, it cools it down, or it heats it up. It is in a way as if you would come into a running group process (see also chapter 9). You somehow try to become aware of the collective mood. Collective trauma is not enough processed. We all have to find out how to bring the collective trauma to cooler spots. All times exist at once. In the moment you change one element, at the same time all other worlds change. Like Hübl said: When you really integrate your past than it is presence. Then time collapses”.

Simone: “My mind cannot really grasp your words. But somehow, I sense what you mean. It is hard to put it into language though”.

Tara: “Exactly. It is rather a whole film around it. Like the one you saw the other night. It is more an experience. A kaleidoscope of sounds and experiences”.

Simone: “Right, like the scene in *My name is*, where Taki and Mitsuha miraculously meet during dawn for a couple of minutes. Even living three years apart from each other, they meet. It is a moment where they are together on all three levels of reality looking from a Process Work perspective. Essence and dreamland are evident in this scene anyway. The filmmaker integrated consensus reality so beautifully as well. These teenagers behave like real teenager. It is a magic moment but in consensus reality they are teenagers, so they are shying around and complaining about things the other did. I was surprised and loved that reality based, mystical scene. In this very moment, all levels came together. Time collapsed and they changed in the present moment as well the past and the future for the whole community. All this in the wonderful poetic, ancient language of these anime-film”.

6.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Non-Locality

Quantum entanglement, or what Einstein called a spooky action at a distance, occurs when two particles become inextricably linked. Whatever happens to one immediately affects the other, regardless of how far apart they are, without the possibility to communicate as the effect is immediate. Process Work refers to this effect as non-locality³⁸. It just happens at the very same time. If we work on our own topics, the

³⁸ *Entanglement Made Simple*, Frank Wilczek, Quantamagazine, 2016, <https://www.quantamagazine.org/entanglement-made-simple-20160428/>

energy that is collectively entangled with it, changes at the same time. When we work with conflict in the community, we work on our own conflictual topics as well.

Arnold Mindell, being a physicist and a psychologist, wrote (and you already read half of this quote in the previous chapter):

There is no such thing as independent change. Individual, couple and group changes happen interdependently. ... In ordinary terms, the parts of the world are connected through the psychology of the whole planet. There are no divisions between events in our inner world and the events of the outer world³⁹.

So it doesn't matter if a facilitator works with the entire organization as a large meeting, with some smaller sub groups or with individuals within the organization. She is still working with the whole organization from a field perspective. And as also organizational problems are non-local, she works with the whole world and with herself at the same time. The issues are present on all of these levels as they belong to the same global field.

Also, biology supports this non-local view on things with the discovery of morphogenic fields. This approach produced by the British biologist Rupert Sheldrake, states that a kind of all-encompassing field of consciousness connects two beings. Observations on bacteria have shown that newly learned abilities are immediately available to their counterparts in other regions or even continents without direct contact. Adaption that might take a million years, if left to individual mutations, can occur in just a few years because of its global exchange network, the morphogenic field⁴⁰. Margaret Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers write⁴¹:

Under stress, genes even travel between individuals; genes 'jump' back and forth among bacteria with great speed. Such access to one another's learning creates incredible resiliency and adaptability. It explains why bacteria have developed such speedy, worldwide resistance to antibiotics. They operate as a communicating and cooperating worldwide superorganism.

In my view humanity is just the same, we are just not able to research our own species as well as we are able to research bacteria. And we might not use our superpowers as well. But there is a possibility.

So, individual experiences are always connected to the larger field. If an individual works on herself she also affects the field. And if a conflict in a larger group is resolved it also has impact on the individuals. The saying: "If you want to change the world start with the person you see

³⁹ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

⁴⁰ *A Simpler Way*, Margaret J. Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers, 1999

⁴¹ *Das Morphische Feld*, <https://mentale-intuition.de/die-intuition/erklarungsmodelle/morphisches-feld/>

every morning in the mirror.” is not a small thing, it is a way to change the world.

Collective Fields and Roles

I love the sentence from Thomas Hübl in that video-talk:

We open up to the tremendous capacity of hosting the world in us.

This thought is very much in alignment with the idea of collective fields in Process Work. Arnold Mindell writes:

Deep Democracy is our sense that the world is here to help us become our entire selves, and that we are here to help the world become whole⁴².

Hübl points out that we have to start with addressing the under-water pain of our human collective. To turn towards it, see it, and feel it. Not more. But also, not less. To open up to that capacity obviously we have to look at the pain. Mindell said:

People have a need to feel their pain. Very often pain is the beginning of a great deal of awareness. As an energy center, it awakens consciousness⁴³.

And due to non-locality, this is also true for the collective pain. He continues:

We forget that our dreams and feelings are part of the momentary field. Our individual experiences are important. The physics of non-locality and the field of the collective unconscious imply that our personal lives are global. When the time is urgent, the concepts of inside and outside, of individual and globe must disappear as the courage to intervene in world events grows. In a world of non-locality, we must remember that there is no way out – unconsciousness does not work, nor even does death. We can kill our bodies, but not our roles or fields. In a sense, war and death are illusions, since they solve nothing⁴⁴.

This is a quote from 1989. It could not be timelier.

War and death solve nothing. As all the pain is thrown into the ocean, and from there propels our future. Pain needs witnessing, feeling and sensing. It needs to be integrated. In our own capacity.

⁴² <https://www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org/deep-democracy-lives-the-blog/ddi-lives-the-blog/eventmont/2012/2/article/deep-democracy-explained.html>

⁴³ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

⁴⁴ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

6.4. Reflection

As I become more and more interested how the individual experience and the group experience are connected the topic of collective fields, including collective trauma and collective creativity, is part of my area of interest. The Corona pandemic illustrates that the global community has an amazing power to create a new reality, if it is aligned in an intention, like overcoming Covid-19 with the lowest death rate possible.

When I reflect on Hübl's picture of the running TV sets, I think of the social expectations that are also part of the underwater group process. There is trauma and a lot of unprocessed pain. There are all kinds of collective voices and roles in this ocean, most of them oppressive. They need awareness in order to change.

When I look at my life and my process I identify some of these collective voices that have a vivid life in in my inner orchestra. They are oppressive:

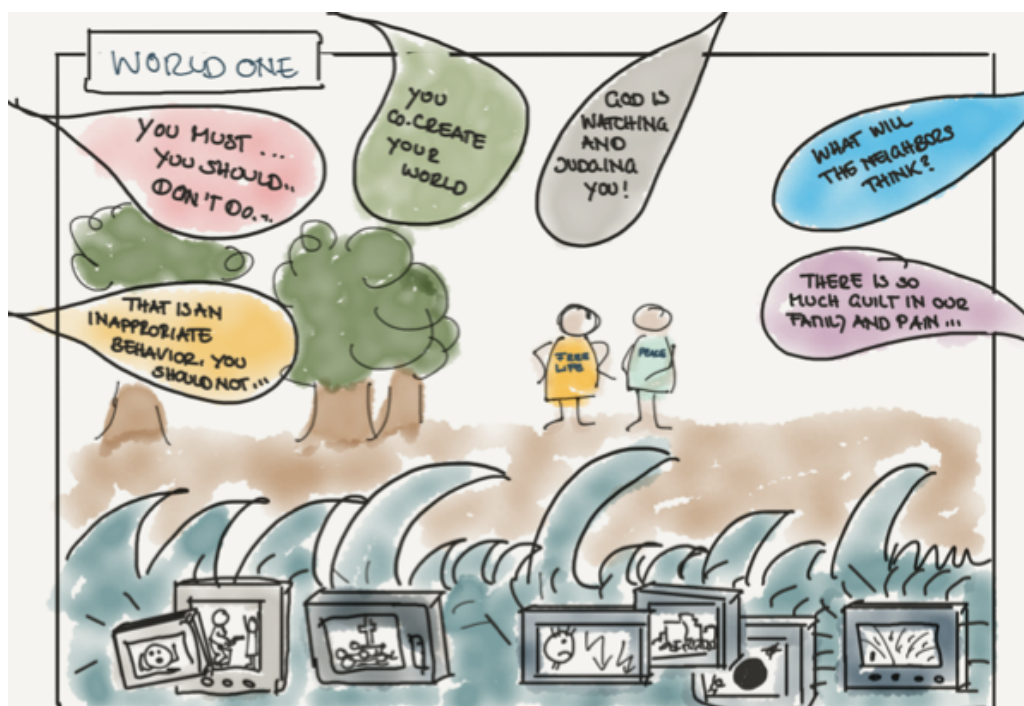
Gender: Be a good girl. Live up to the expectations of the others. Their needs are more important than yours. We already heard this voice in the park this morning.

Religion: Even if I do not call myself religious and talk about spirit and source when I refer to my spiritual connection, there is a lively god picture in me of a white old man with a long beard who is stern, judgmental and punitive.

Business: Success is measured in material wealth and recognition from others.

Knowledge: You should only talk about things where you have a profound background wisdom.

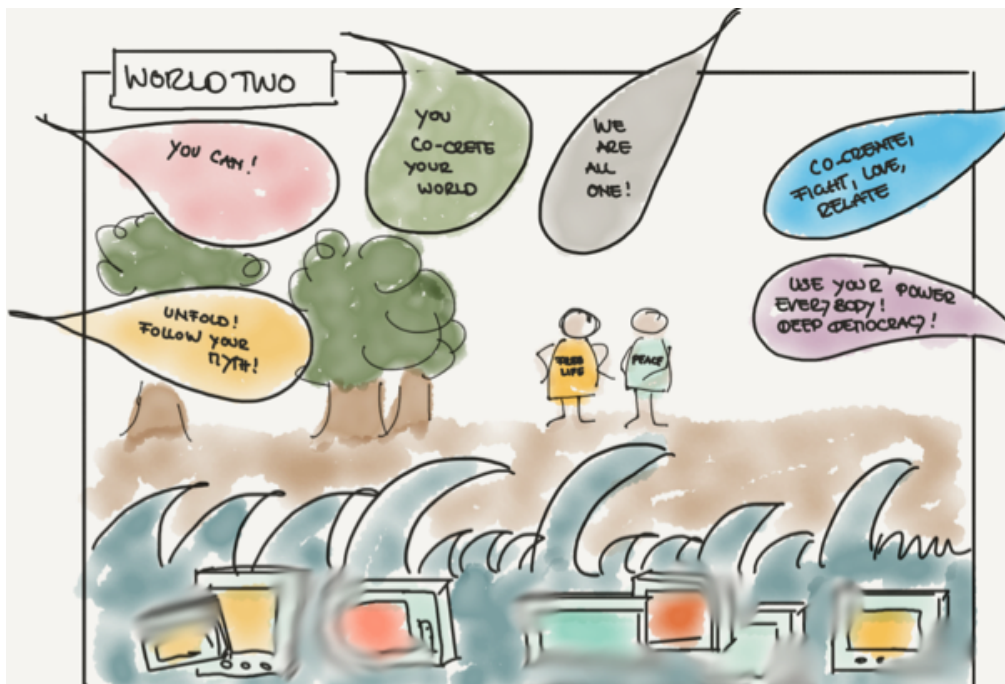
Politics: Sometimes I hear my inner Trump speaking: Everybody is self-responsible. We can just take care of everyone who can't get their own act together.



I could go on and on. In this ocean is so much marginalization: skin color, gender, dreaming versus doing, ... I feel them working and talking inside of me. I begin to realize that these voices are quite powerful. I thought they are outside of me, in others or in the ocean. But they are powerfully working in me, united in an underground community. These voices talk to me, but as they are part of me, I also voice them when I talk to others. Not consciously, but they swing in my words.

For sure, there is this stern and judgmental God figure in me. I grew up in a small village in southern Germany where people were commenting who is going to the church on Sundays and who is missing ... that voice got nourished. Even if I do not like it, the moral judge lives inside of me and judges other people's life style. As in the park this morning, when I thought I knew how to behave in Corona-times and thought others didn't.

Conscious interaction with these voices are needed from my side. In my own capacity. Not being over-flooded, but aware. I need to walk through this process and address the pain. In order to widen my capacity "of hosting the world in [me]" as Hubl says. That is also a part of burning my wood, processing my own pain. The yellow roof part of my life myth, wants to explore this side, that I have thrown in the ocean. This thesis is a part of it. A day where I concentrate on the incidents that I do not like.



The collective voices cannot be only painful. The collective fields are all-embracing. The witnessing, sensing and feeling of joy, love and beauty is sometimes as well marginalized. And the more we open our hearts to the miracles of this life the more this part is felt, the better for this world as well as we co-create our future. I don't have the impression that we live in an overjoyed world, at least not in the culture I live in.

7. 10 am: Walking to her Own Drums

I apply the Process Work concepts of *phases* and *rank* in this chapter. Additionally, you find an explanation of the term *edges*. I found it helpful for my reflection and unfolding to refer to the *metaskill* of *eldership* as well.

7.1. Prelude

Part of what I am doing is working as a leadership trainer in cooperation with a training & consulting network. Initiated by this network, a group of four women, myself included, started a coaching experiment that clearly failed. United by that experience we meet approximately every 4 to 6 weeks to share thoughts, methods and ideas. I am not sure how long I will hold on to this kind of meetings as I feel a lack of relevance. I know that the others are having the same question as we talk about it openly.

Nevertheless, this very morning we have a video call scheduled. One of us dropped out an hour before via mail. So, it is three of us: Carola, Julia and myself. Carola wants to test a method she is excited about. It is about getting from the mind into the body what I highly appreciate to learn more about.

7.2. The Event

After a quick check-in Carola sets the frame. She tells us that she has already chosen the questions to work on today, based on our last call six weeks ago:

- When you trust deeply how do you feel your liveliness?
- When you really appreciate yourself how do you feel your liveliness?
- There was a third question I cannot remember as we did not go through it.

She explains that each of us gets 10 minutes to let drop the question into the body and share thoughts, feelings and sensations. No verbal relating, no talking, no questions, no comments. The other two should just hold the pot and witness.

Simone's inner dialogue: "Beautiful questions but I really do not like the way she tries to direct us through. Deep questions already pre-chosen as her extract of what this group needs based on old data. Why does she

do that? I offer this woman 90 minutes of my anyhow full day and then I am organized into something I am not sure if I like it."

Another voice in Simone says: "Well, probably she is a little stressed having to guide her colleagues through. Great that she takes the lead. It triggers me, great, so I have something to work on later."

I experience that Carola really enjoys going into her feeling side, she seems to enjoy sharing her experience. While I am wide open to the experiences that Julia shares with us, I cannot really relax when Carola talks. I am too occupied with balancing my two inner voices. When it is my turn on question 2, I am ready to process what is there right now.

Simone, out loud: "For me deep self-appreciation includes setting boundaries and sharing what I do not appreciate. And that is what I want to talk about. Actually, I feel pushed into this experience without my own drive. I would have liked to be included into the selection of the questions and I would love to verbally share and reflect on our experiences. Unfortunately, this strict setting is not allowing this."

My inner dialogue calms down while speaking. I have my eyes closed as I am working on my inner dialog. When my 10 minutes are over the atmosphere has shifted. Julia wants to relate to what I have said, but Carola stops her as she has her second 10 minutes still left and wants to go for her self-appreciation as well. This time, I can listen with inner calm and I am really happy that I made my inner dialogue transparent.

Then Julia suggests that we talk about the experiences instead of going to question 3. I support this suggestion, and Carola gives in. Julia shares that she had a similar reaction to the experience of "being directed" as I had. Unfortunately, Julia has to leave. Carola asks me to stay an extra 10 minutes. I assume that she wants to speak about my openly processed reaction towards her style, and I agree. My assumption is wrong.

Carola: "I have the impression that I do not land in this network. The leader always seems to be irritated with me no matter what I do. Why so? I do not understand? When I wanted to join this working group last week he told me: 'Are you sure you want to join?' in a specific tone of voice where I had the impression he is hoping I say no. Do you have any idea? You know them better than I do?"

Simone, surprised about the topic switch: "Hmm, I have no idea about his attitude but I can share my process and view on it. You are kind of new in this network, at least till now you have not worked one single day for them. So far, there is no shared experience. And like with us today, when you make a suggestion it sounds a little bit like an order. Today you had prechosen our questions. I assume you meant it as a support to be able to get right into the exercise. But talking about it would have given us a chance of deciding together how to spend our time. We would have invested in our relationship first before going into that deep personal work. You seem to care a lot about the facts and results and not so much about the people."

Carola, after a short pause: "Yes, that's true but only in some way. I do not want to work by myself any more. I have always been the leader. My whole corporate life I spent in leadership roles. I never had to work

my way up and never was forced to make friends. I have always taken responsibility straight away."

Simone, surprised by her clear and straight forward reaction: "Wow, that is a great skill to take responsibility. I guess it is more about how you do it. In our group meeting the other day when we were talking about this new project, I had the feeling the conversation was ping - pong, ping - pong, ping - pong. We found our way into the new concept in a shared process. You were silent at the beginning and did not share the ping - pong. In the very moment, we had a sort of agreement, regarding the next steps, you came in. In my experience, you did pong, pong, pong. The group went silent. Remember? The network leader ignored you and framed our consensus before you came in and asked how we like to go further."

Carola: "Exactly, another example where I did not feel heard and actually excluded. He ignored me."

Simone: "In that group experience your suggestions that came in late, what I just called the pong, pong, pong, downed the work the group did before. It was your tone of voice. Like, 'okay guys, now the real stuff comes in, that's the way to go'. Like some managers do, they let the group work out stuff and then put their ideas on top of it. Usually they are at least officially the leaders of the group and this behavior has some effect. You behaved like the leader. In this context, that was overstepping your rank. There was no followership in the group for you, your suggestions came too late and not in a very winning style. The designated network leader just ignored you and took the lead back by organizing next steps."

Carola, now smiling: "I have always been like that and ... my customers like it. ... (pause) ... And actually, me too."

Simone, laughing, surprised: "I guess. But then you just have to live with the responses to your behavior."

Right after the call, I feel some kind of admiration for Carola's guts to stick to her power. She is following her own way of being, being honest about it, and at least in this moment, seems to accept the prize she has to pay for her behavior. Even if it means, not getting what she wants – more teamwork in her life.

7.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Phases

Arnold Mindell uses the concept of phases to better understand and describe the flow of processes. In his model, he differentiates between four phases.

A person that is in **phase 1** has the attitude: "me, me, me", it is just about enjoying ourselves and the world while forgetting or ignoring all the conflicts and problems.



Phase 2 is the phase: "There is the other and I do not like him or her." Even if this world is full of conflicts many of us are not good at really expressing our own side in opposition to another person or group. Out of fear to hurt the other person or out of fear of not being liked any more when we take a stand for our own opinion. We rather keep our "grrr" inside of us, silently poisoning the atmosphere in the

interaction with this person. When we take our stand, and become aware of what we like or do not like, it is easier to move into phase 3. Phase 2 helps us to clarify what it is, that we are opposing and what it is that we stand for.

In **phase 3** we can feel into the other side. *Today you, tomorrow me*. We can, maybe only for a split second, find the part we do not like in the other also in ourselves. Phase 3 is, according to Arnold Mindell, also a phase that is more complicated to be in. It is not easy to switch to the side that we do not like and find it in ourselves as well. Going back to my discussion with Tara in the hour before, we have to find all the pain making and feeling also in ourselves to support the connection between all we are.

In **phase 4** we feel one with the universe, connected to everything, feeling the two sides of the coin at the same time. The universe might move us and give us a sudden insight in how to go further.

These phases are constantly flowing. No one can decide to stay in one phase only. Life dances us constantly through the four phases. The phases are not fixed like in a clock, where we always go around from 1 to 4. We can go forth and back, and there are even tunnels from one phase to the other⁴⁵.

These phases apply to individuals but also to groups and organizations. For example: Often, in a start-up there is the mentality "we are going to disrupt the whole branch". This is phase 1. Followed later on, in phase 2, by the thought "All the established companies are done. We are way better than them." Then, again later in phase 3, there might be a realization that some players also have good ideas. They might be even better regarding one specific area. Then there is a thinking "Well they are good in a, and we are good in b. Maybe we should think about cooperating." In phase 4 not only the competitor is taken into account but the whole environment: customers, employees, stakeholders, the

⁴⁵ *Conflict: Phases, Forums, and Solutions: For our Dreams and Body, Organizations, Governments, and Planet*, Arnold Mindell, 2017

environment ... It is all interdependent and nothing can be done without effecting the other. (That is also described as evolutionary leadership in chapter 9).

Edges

Phases are one aspect to look at this interaction. Another one is looking at the current and the emerging identity, the X and the U. We already talked about that aspect in chapter 5. The X is the future me, the emerging one. Whenever I am able to integrate the very thing I am opposing right now, my identity expands and becomes enriched by the X-factor.

Between the U and the X is a cliff, a communication block, called the edge. That is the differentiating line between my known identity and the very thing that I identify as "not-me". In phase 1 you do not see it at all, in phase 2 the edge becomes very crispy. We are on one side of the world, and there is something happening on the other side that we do not like. There might be a small river in between or a Grand Canyon. That's the edge.

Edges come in different forms, sorts and appearances, all created to keep the unknown away⁴⁶:

- Fearing the unknown or xenophobia. This makes us create rigid hierarchies and barriers to protect us against new things. Our xenophobic behavior makes us look angry and unwilling to change.
- Avoiding emotional issues at all costs. Making it all about "facts and figures".
- Avoiding your own opinion because we are afraid of what it might cause, maybe risking relationships or status in a group.
- Avoiding the present, past or future. Not looking ahead or reflecting what has been because we do not like to look at certain topics.
- Fearing that if we allow us to realize something, we invite chaos in, we might be forced to change our status quo.
- Fearing that we have to adjust our view on ourselves and might not be able to like ourselves any more.

Hellene Gronda writes:

We can see the edge as the product of an activity (marginalization) which generates our everyday identity or conversely that the function of an edge is to marginalize perceptions, behaviors, experiences which do not go along with your identity. It is also a place of meeting the "not-me". The edge is "the boundary" and "a point of contact". The

⁴⁶ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

edge delimits what it is possible to do, feel and imagine about yourself, on your own and in relationship to others⁴⁷.

I like that description, especially the term “a point of contact”. Conflicts, disturbing thoughts and ideas are means with which information attracts our attention, information that is part of our process and wants to make more contact. The way to facilitate this contact is to allow self-reflection. Self-reflection to increase the awareness around the U and the X. Carola with her method allowed me 10 minutes of time to become aware of what is happening within me.

I love Hellene Gronda's drawing which describes that the integration of something on the other side of the edge is not a linear approach of just getting a bigger U. Instead, it is an alchemical process that evolves around the U and the X and both together. Phase 3, in which you can integrate the other at least a little, is more holistic than $1 + 1 = 2$. The addition gives at least 3.

This is Hellene Gronda's drawing to explain the growth or better unfolding of our identity:



Josef Helbling, my coach and travel guide of this thesis ride, told me lately, that big edges stay edges, especially when they are linked to our childhood myth. The only thing you can do with them is realizing the edge sooner “ah, there it is again”. Josef called it “reduce the time of resistance”. And then “process it faster”. I like that formula: “reduce the time of resistance” and “process it faster”.

Tara Brach, an author and meditation teacher, also emphasizes that our edges reappear throughout our lives. The more we work on them, the softer they get. Arnold Mindell points out that at a given time, when you worked long enough on a problem, the problem is no longer the point but the implicit energies and viewpoints are. He writes:

When old diversity tensions reappear in your life, it is because nature is trying to tell you that those powerful, different energies in you are still there and are part of your beauty and your overall process. From one viewpoint, the different figures and energies represent problems but from another

⁴⁷ *Growing, Dying and Relating – Exploring the Concept and Experience of “the Edge”*, Hellene Gronda, 2013

they are part of the wave going up and down. Those energies are part of your beauty. They are what makes you look like an ongoing, amazing process⁴⁸.

Rank

Max Schupbach pointed out in a seminar: “Most conflicts are rank conflicts.” Rank relates to the power that is allocated to a certain role, and which other roles do not have. The distribution of power is usually uneven. Deep Democracy supports rank, power and leadership, following the aim to use the power well as so many conflicts arise because power is used poorly⁴⁹.

Owning power has an effect on people. Julie Diamond explains:

As we attain power, we develop an illusory sense of control. Our belief in our own ideas increases while our interest in others' feedback and emotions decreases. ... Our capacity to feel empathy for others lessens, just as the influence we have over them increases⁵⁰.

Thus, it is no wonder, that the use of power very often turns out poorly.

Rank is in one way a synonym for power. But on the other hand, it is not absolute but contextual and splits in many different ways of how to own power.

Process Work differentiates between these levels of rank:

- Social rank: The rank that comes with the role you play in your daily life, like your job title (the higher up the better), class (manifested in the part of the city you are living, which school your kids attend, the kind of clothes you wear, whom you know and call friend, gender (you have more privileges being a man than any other sex), sexual orientation (heterosexual is still the most privileged orientation), education (apprenticeship or university degree and which university), age (the younger the better due to the ageism in our society), skin color (marginalization of all colors other than white in most societies), and so on.
- Psychological rank: This refers to how well a person can build and maintain relationships, how comfortable the person is in conflict and heated situations, how much she can track her own process and stay fluid when she is attacked.
- Spiritual rank: This rank relates to the ability of a person to connect to a higher purpose of life itself and how well this is manifested in daily life. It is also related how well a person can detach in a

⁴⁸ *Dance of the Ancient One. How the Universe Solves Personal and World Problems*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

⁴⁹ *Multi-dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁵⁰ *Power – A User's Guide*, Julie Diamond, 2016

stressful situation and about keeping an inner cheerfulness in rather dense situations.

- Democratic rank: This rank is often owned by marginalized groups. It is the rank of justice. If the world would be a fair place than this group would be better off than in the present moment.
- Street power: The ability to feel okay with yourself and safe under strong attack, either physically or emotionally⁵¹.

Social rank is always contextual. You can be the smartest person in a public panel discussion, owning the high rank of intellectual capacity. But if you walk home later that evening and you see five guys in dark clothes hanging around at the next corner, you might want to trade in your intellectual rank for more rank regarding street power.

In an organization, some parts of the social rank are displayed in the hierarchical order of the organizational chart. The other ranks we get to know only when we interact with the people.

It is important to be aware of our own rank and privileges and use them consciously. It is not at all common that people do so. In Germany, I live in a culture where people tend to suffer loudly and enjoy silently. There is a saying in Southern Germany where I grew up: "Sisch halt immer äpis." I translate this sentence not only for the English-speaking readers as it is a hard to understand dialect: "There is always something to complain about." With this view on life we do not easily admit our high rank. Only awareness of our high rank and power allows us to use it consciously and in favor of ourselves and the people around us.

Again, an excursion in another field: Terry Real, an internationally recognized family therapist and author, picks up his rank as a white, heterosexual, well-educated, successful man to speak about something that men hardly speak about in public. The oppressive behavior of men in the ongoing patriarchy. He states that the patriarchy is in the way of societal change as men did not update their role like women did in the last decades. He uses his awareness and his rank as a white male to criticize the way men behave in a humorous way and has therefore a lot of female fans. His statements are also digestible for men as he does not talk about it but from within. Below is the link to a one hour discussion between him and Thomas Hübl⁵². I had a fun time watching it.

He talks about the need for women to embrace their power and the need for men to allow themselves to feel their vulnerability. He talks about the need for "soft power" on both sides. For me these are two words that also refer to the two sides of my life myth, so I feel directly addressed by his talk.

In my experience while working with organizations, the unawareness regarding the privileges of a high rank role is found very often. I just read

⁵¹ *Multi-dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁵² Thomas Hübl Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3laltZB_do

in a study that if an employee challenges a person of higher rank, the response, even if it is acted out with the same level of energy, is felt like 1.4 times higher than the first action. Just due to the higher rank of that person.

To illustrate this, I want to share a story the director of the Hamburg Business School told us during a talk about innovation:

The German Minister of Economics Peter Altmaier visited Silicon Valley to get to the bottom of its success. During his visit, he met Frederik Pferdt from Google. Talking about the success formula, Pferdt asked Altmaier to close his eyes to really listen deeply to the answers. Then he calculated: $1 + 1 = 2$, $2 + 4 = 6$, $6 + 7 = 13$, $13 + 3 = 16$, $16 + 4 = 19$, ...

Hearing the last addition, Altmaier shouted: "wrong!"

Pferdt then said: "That's what distinguishes the Valley from the German economy. We see the four right answers and not the one that's wrong. And then we are interested to understand which thoughts might have brought our colleague to the result of the last addition. And if a high-rank person gives critical feedback, it's never in front of an assembled team".

A short exercise regarding rank

- What are your privileges? Which advantages do you enjoy compared to others due to your privileges?
- Which of your privileges is the one you forget frequently?
- How could you remind yourself?

Eldership

Eldership is the ability to care for ourselves, others and the whole system simultaneously and enables us to facilitate the situation and increase awareness. That means addressing rank issues or responding consciously to double signals in a non-offensive way, that helps the individual and the community to create larger awareness around it. (I go deeper into the concept of metaskills in chapter 11). Eldership includes:

... awareness of which role you are in, a feeling connection with others, and an ability to demonstrate fluidity.⁵³

What makes rank often so disturbing is that people are not aware of the rank and power they own and consequently they use it unaware and often poorly. Eldership includes the attitude to help to make rank visible. The challenge to do that is, you have to love the rank of the other person. Max and Ellen Schupbach write:

⁵³ Schupbach, *Multi-dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

You have to think, "this person does this and this and this and she can't see it and can't love it yet. That's why it is so irritating." If you can love it in the other person, great. Then you can praise it and congratulate her for it and encourage her to use it more consciously. You have to momentarily be her therapist even though she has more rank. Eldership is learning to love every signal, which also means learning to love it that you hate certain things⁵⁴.

7.4. Unfolding and Reflection

Phases

I was lucky to have had my 10 minutes of inner work in front of the others, so I was pushed in phase 2 by the method we were exploring. The method also gave me a more or less safe frame to work out my inner conflict. I knew I could unfold my inner struggle 10 minutes without being interrupted. I was not opposing her leadership. I opposed her style that was not at all interested in our viewpoints regarding the application of this method.

I was in phase 2 when I expressed my viewpoint, that I didn't like Carola's style. I allowed myself to take a stand against it. This made me more aware of what is going on. I assume, it was easier for me then to move into phase 3, trying on her style as well. I already used her directness in the 10 minutes she asked me for advice how to land in this network. After our talk, I even felt a kind of admiration regarding Carola's ability to just state her ideas and direction in a very clear and direct way. I found it amazing that she does not accuse herself for being directive but likes this trait and takes the risk of unpleasant feedback. In the interaction with Carola, I went through phases 2 and 3.

Looking at Carola's journey through the phases, I assume her process was similar to mine. It just happened at different stages and started in phase 1: "This is what I want to do here. This is how I set it up. This is how it works. These are the rules. Just follow them."

That is an expression of the "me, me, me" in the first phase. After the exercise, she went to phase 2. She shared, that she does not like what she called "being excluded" from the network. Then, in the course of our dialogue, she discovered that she is doing kind of the same: just going for what she thinks is right, "excluding" the relationship level from her acting. It made her even smile. So, she got more aware of her inner "excluder" and seemingly from the smile, likes this part. That is what happens in phase 3.

⁵⁴ Schupbach, *Multi-dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

Edges

The U of a person is the way that she identifies herself. The X refers to less familiar and therefore more challenging ideas and experiences, the things that are not yet consciously included in her identity, as said before. In between is the edge. I will use an adaption of the exercise I wrote down in chapter 5 to work on the energy which I didn't like, to find the edge between my more known identity and the new emerging part.

Exercise to work with a disturbance

- What was the disturbance? What did you not like? Be as specific as possible.

My reflection: It was Carola's way to do her thing. She went straight forward with her method and her way to guide us. Not caring too much about the relationship or our feelings about it. Not even negative feedback or resistance could stop her. When Julia wanted to interact she just cut her off and did her 10 minutes.

- Make a hand movement that expresses the energy that caused the frown. And make the gesture a few times... without words or interpretation. Just the energy of the movement.



- Until something new emerges, a thought, a feeling, an idea.

My reflection: Wow, what a power to get things done! To make an impact.

- How is this energy familiar to you? Where do you use it, no matter if you like using it or not? Where could you use it more?

My reflection: It is this energy of being bold and getting stuff done, no matter what others think. I know this about myself. When I am convinced of something or have a clear goal, I go for it, sometimes in a really unrelated way. Nevertheless, I have an edge to really identified with my forceful self and to just go for things that seem to be right for me. An edge to offend others by being my forceful self.

I could use this energy more in groups, stating my thoughts, ideas and feelings more clearly. Not hiding myself. And I can use it right now in building up my new business identity. Even more, I can use it in going forward with my thesis. I need this energy in order to create space, to concentrate on my thesis.

Carola was convinced of her way to move forward. If we are convinced of something it might happen that we look down on other things. That helps us to keep going and overcome obstacles like a bulldozer. We could not continue if we would be open to anything. Carola, in hindsight, is a teacher for me of how to proceed, when something is really important to me, more than the relationships. I want to check in with myself on a more profound level to increase my awareness around the question: *What is most important here?*

Rank

In this statement, I am referring to rank. She aimed to be the leader but the group did not follow.

Simone: "Carola, in that group experience your suggestions that came in late – what I just called the pong, pong, pong - downed the work the group did before, it was the tone of voice. Like, 'okay guys, now the real stuff comes in, that's the way to go'. Like some managers still do today, they let the group work out stuff and then put their ideas on top of it. But usually they are at least officially the leaders of the group and this behavior has some effect. You behaved like one, that was in this context overstepping your rank. There was no followership in the group, your suggestion came too late. The designated network leader just ignored you and took the lead back by organizing next steps."

In this group, she did not own a high rank, being the new kid on the block and obviously not tremendously close to the leader, which is also in many organizations a currency of rank, the centrality, the closeness to the high rank person. It was quite obvious that she acted as if she would have high rank but she did not in the context of this network. Rank is always contextual. The network leader might have been irritated for a short moment by her style as she was not rank aware. If he would have had

my edges he might have been a little sharp and putting her back in her hierarchical role. But he does not have my edges and my process. He was relaxed, he just decided to ignore her and continued in his normal style without any escalation.

I sketched our rank differences. It is only an assumption. Actually, I know too little about her. I often do a rank comparison as a preparation when I work on a conflict between two people to get a

| <u>Social Rank</u> | | |
|--|---|---|
| > length of time being part in this network | | ✓ |
| > closeness to the leader | | ✓ |
| > professional background | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Psychological Rank</u> | | |
| > ability to build up and maintain relationships | | ✓ |
| > being comfortable in conflicts | ✓ | |
| > being relaxed in walking to your own drums | ✓ | |

better understanding of the actual situation. Remembering Max Schupbach's sentence:

Most conflicts are rank conflicts.

I have a higher rank in the network. I know the people and I know the leader quite well, he trusts me. And I care about the people in the network, I know our relationship is a huge part of the quality of the work we do. Carola is really good at walking her way, and she has a remarkable working experience, at least as good as mine.

In the one-to-one interaction, I was aware of my rank in the network. She as well, she addressed it directly. She assumed I could help her with her relationship to the network leader. And I tried to make my relationship with Carola work out somehow. I addressed my issues with her behavior and tried my best to explain my view on things. I assume I did not do it mainly for her, but for the group we both are part of.

Eldership

Looking back at the one-to-one conversation I had with Carola, I used the same method as she did. I just told her bluntly what I thought was happening. I did that without thinking, as a reflex, I just matched her straight forward energy. I am sure it made her comfortable, it was her style. And I assume due to her reaction, she felt okay with our interaction, she smiled in the end.

Afterwards I was puzzled why she did not say: *oh well, then I probably have to work on my tone of voice and be more relational with the group and more aware of my rank to better fit into the network.*

Instead she was smiling and stated that she likes herself the way she is. Now, in this reflection part, I become aware that her X was in the beginning the thing that happened to her:

"They do not want to have me in this network, I feel excluded and not heard."

Often, we have the feeling that secondary processes *happen to us*. And in our conversation, she might have realized, that the very same role she felt the victim of, the one that marginalizes and does not include every voice, was her very own behavior in this group (phase 3). Maybe she befriended this part more.

During the course of our interaction I tried to support her, myself and also the network we both were part of. I supported Carola becoming more aware of her rank and the consequences, when she just acts the way she did. I supported her to relate to her role and rank more in this moment and explained which effect it has for the people in the network.

I assume it worked because I really was able to appreciate her style in the second part of our conversation. I was not accusative but clear. When I said: "a great skill to take responsibility", I really meant it. I think, that it is great that she is part of the network. And I wanted to support her to fully land in the network.

I wrote in the concept part, that eldership is the ability to care for yourself, others and the whole system simultaneously and enables you to facilitate the situation and increase awareness. Thus, in this interaction I showed some elements of eldership. I cared for her and wanted to keep her in the network. I wish I would have been more aware and more courageous in the situation Carola and myself are talking about. I assume processing this back then would have been more useful in terms of creating awareness for myself, her and our network.

For me eldership also means, really being in the process together with the other person. Max Schupbach said in a seminar something like:

You really have to be IN the river with the person or organization. Swim in the same water, experience the same currents in order to facilitate. Don't stand at the river bank and give good advice how to swim.

I guess my tone of voice and energy was in the river with Carola, not my conscious me. That part was standing at the river bank and shouted: "be more relational ..." and other good advices. The good thing is, Carola's process took care of her. It took what was needed from the intervention and made the rest dissolve in the water of the river. I have an idea now, why she smiled in the end.

It is so relieving to experience over and over again that the process takes what it needs. I do not have to understand the process, I can trust it, I just need to open up to the experience.

Postscript

I had a supervision with Josef Helbling regarding this happening. He asked me if I had a second encounter with Carola. He reminded me that working on our interaction might have had some field effects as everything is interdependent.

Right after this session I met her in a call with the network we talked about. She was extraordinary supportive to the group. She had some beautiful straight forward thoughts and framed them as:

"I know I am totally new to this project and actually I do not know how this might work out but I have an idea I like to share ...".

I sat there and was again astonished and delighted about the interconnectedness of events.

A couple of days later we would have had another women's quartet, but one of us wrote she cannot make it. Carola replied: "Good morning, dears, I was also just about to come in and sign out. I don't have an appointment tomorrow but I want to invest my time in what nourishes me and makes sense. I was very happy to have met you and wish you all the best for your future path, much joy in all your activities and now a wonderful summer! Cordially Carola".

Not at all accusative and fully taking her own side, bold and clear. That was also my response to her mail. Thank you, Carola!

8. 11:30 am: The New Normal

In this chapter I allow myself to dream. As mentioned in chapter 4 *dreaming* is one of the *levels of awareness* in Process Work. Dreaming, inspired by different books and essays I read and conversations I had. All based on the insight I gained by my Process Work studies, how important dreaming is for creating the new.

8.1. The Event

My first look at the mail inbox today. Quick check, nothing that needs today's immediate attention. Good. I grab my purse and hurry out of the apartment to the small grocery store around the corner as I have a team workshop with my biggest (in Corona times still active) client at 1pm. I need to land in their world at least half an hour prior to the meeting. Tomorrow is a public holiday and all shops will be closed. I have to get some bread and vegetables.

We live in a nice little neighborhood. Small stores around, some cafes and restaurant. Today the café at the corner of our street has reopened. Due to the Corona limitations, it was closed since the middle of March. Now people are sitting outside, enjoying a cappuccino in the sun, relieved faces. It was kind of depressing to pass by the last weeks and see the tied-up chairs and tables where there usually sat lots of people. I am relieved that the area breathes again. The waiters wear masks, the tables are at a much larger distance.

I get bread, a sandwich for now and some vegetables. I do not like to be rushed during my lunch break. I love to sit in one of the many small places at midday and enjoy lunch there. Either with a friend, colleague or most of the time by myself. Just sitting, eating, dreaming, reflecting, writing, watching people,

But today, unfortunately, I have not the time to dream too much.

8.2. Dreaming

Dear reader, I had little of the following thoughts in this 45 minutes but I make up for the missing dreaming time and allow me the dreaming here. As the restaurant had reopened that day this was an invitation for my dreaming on what I want to reopen after the Corona-limitations and what I might want to change. I want to create my new normal instead of waking up in one version of it.

When I talk with people about how massively life changed since Corona, I hear quite a diverse mixture of voices. A friend, single mom, also

organizational consultant said: "That's how I normally live. From home, mostly in contact via video conferences and my main speaking to person is my son. The beautiful thing is, people now stop saying: "lucky you" but also understand the isolated side of this life style. Actually, I feel now more connected to the world again."

My neighbors, both now in the home office and three kids in home schooling mode, don't look so relaxed these days. While he is enjoying not having to travel so much and being more with the family, she is somehow in survival mode as it seems to be her task to get the family schedule organized. Now with the decrease of restrictions and the possibility to send the kids to the grandparents her mood is significantly improving.

My other neighbor just recovered from Covid-19 after five heavy days of illness & suffering.

I am aware that these voices sound all harmless compared to the people who got seriously ill by the virus or got depressed because of the situation, lost the foundation of their living or lost a loved one. I live in Germany, I deeply feel the privilege of living in a country with a state of the art health system and a government that offers financial Corona-effects-support to all businesses, no matter how big they are. I know, compared to other people and other countries and other communities, my experiences, my overall situation is extremely comfortable: working from home, having enough financial savings, my partner and myself healthy, living in a supportive community. I am grateful for my situation and deeply sorry for the hardship others go through right now.

The Corona virus stopped our normal world. I lost income as trainings got canceled and already scheduled projects did not start or were reduced to a minimum. Conferences that I wanted to attend were cancelled. With all that cancelling I got a lot of time. After the first weeks of being super busy to reorganize and adjust free space opened up in my life. Space to feel, dream and restart to write my thesis and learn. In a way, my normal world stopped.



"Stopping the world" is what Master shaman Don Juan teaches his student Carlos Castaneda in the book *Journey to Ixtlan*⁵⁵. Stopping the constant inner dialog that puts concepts on things to make them what we think they should be. Stopping the world is self-emptying as you start to see the world how it is instead of how you make it by your concepts and views. There is a beautiful scene in the very same book where Carlos Castaneda has to look at the leaves of a tree. His task is to look at the shades and spaces between the leaves that are as much the

⁵⁵ *Journey to Ixtlan*, Carlos Castaneda, 1972

tree as the actual leaves. He does not want to stop with the task. Don Juan comments this:

I've told you, the body likes things like this [Not-Doing]

After a while Don Juan asks Castaneda to get up and find his own notebook that Don Juan had thrown before somewhere in the chaparral. Castaneda gets up and goes more or less straight to where his notebook lies. Don Juan explanation is, through the soaking of the body with Not-Doing the mind got company by another way of knowing. This access to another kind of knowledge guided him straight to the notebook.

Somehow Corona stopped for some of us the automatic repetition of our daily routines and the same inner dialogue. It paused or even changed the way we used to see the world, and supported us to see the world with fresh eyes and rethink our doing that builds the world we live in. There might be the chance to recharge by Not-Doing and getting access to other sources of wisdom and knowledge.

Charles Eisenstein wrote in his essay *The Coronation*⁵⁶:

Covid-19 is like a rehab intervention that breaks the addictive hold of normality. To interrupt a habitual behavior is to make it visible; it is to turn it from a compulsion to a choice. It creates awareness around it. When the crisis subsides, we might have occasion to ask whether we want to return to normal, or whether there might be something we've seen during this break in the routines that we want to bring into the future. We might ask, after so many have lost their jobs, whether all of them are the jobs the world most needs, and whether our labor and creativity would be better applied elsewhere. We might ask, having done without it for a while, whether we really need so much air travel, Disneyworld vacations, or trade shows. What parts of the economy will we want to restore, and what parts might we choose to let go of?"

For sure a systemic change is needed in my view, and when I think about it I feel overwhelmed by the size of this task. In the realm of non-locality if you start changing yourself with changing your daily thoughts, actions and habits you change the world:

Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your identity. This is why habits are crucial. They cast repeated votes for being a certain type of person,

⁵⁶ *The Coronation*, Charles Eisenstein, 2020, <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation/>

wrote James Clear in one of his 3-2-1 newsletters⁵⁷.

I am convinced I am the person that is propelled by my unique childhood myth. That is who I am from deep inside and I can co-create the world with my thoughts, feelings and actions from that place. As we are all living in a realm of non-locality and parallel worlds exist due to quantum physics I want to do my share to co-create the world I want to live in. I wish I would know where I heard the sentence I wrote down in my diary:

While your higher mind communicates with you through your experience of passion, your physical mind and physical body have to speak the language of the physical world and that's action.

Right now, the world shows its polarities quite clearly. It is time to take a stand and dream into the world you want to live in. This quote is said to come from Lao-Tzu:

Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream.

Knowing your side, it is also necessary to make an effort to also understand the other side, to be able to facilitate the connection between the different polarities and to de-escalate. The world seems to have enough conflict. Talking about sexism, racism and all the isms and also about the abridgments of civil liberties that the Corona pandemic brought with it and which would have otherwise been hard to justify such as the tracking of people's movements at all times, restrictions on travel and the freedom of assembly, avoiding social contact, hugs and handshakes, the migration of life from public to private spaces.

I do not want to co-create the world again where consumption is the cure for sad feelings. But instead put a stronger emphasis on relationships. The relationship with ourselves, with the people around us, with our communities, with nature, with the whole planet. This could be the positive side deriving from the overall Covid-19 situation.

These days I watched a video interview with Scilla Elworthy, the founder of the Oxford Research Group and author. She was leader of a non-governmental organization that promotes dialogue between politicians of nuclear powers and their critics. I am blown away by her eldership. Unfortunately, this video is not openly available, only a snippet. I want to emphasize two statements she made in this interview.

⁵⁷ *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*, James Clear, 2019 // <https://jamesclear.com/3-2-1>

She pointed out, that all change she could help to happen was based on relationship building. Very early in life she knew her mission is to help to avoid a nuclear war and she spoke to the United Nations several times, but nothing happened. Then, she and her team decided that they have to get in touch with the people in power. They researched the persons that had the power to decide about war and the use of nuclear weapons.

She said it took her years to work on her inner attitude to not dislike them but understand their role as well. Only then, she was able to accept the person and make contact and build real relationships. Relationships that then made many mighty people come to meetings with other mighty people, initiated by Elworthy and her team.

Furthermore, she pointed out that the future belongs to those who can see it. And what we need is a vision for this world, a picture of abundance. As only then we have something to work towards instead against so that we know for what we are doing all the necessary inner work⁵⁸.

My girl in the nightdress and my longing for the yellow roof are celebrating these words.

I cannot resist to have some further thoughts on this. The two Oxford scholars Ian Goldin and Chris Kutarna describe in their book *The Second Renaissance*⁵⁹ that we are in a second renaissance in Europe (sorry for marginalizing all other parts of the world), a period of many opportunities but also of great risks. A period in which the society will make decisions about which world it wants to live in, as there are many open questions. The Corona crisis has added many and made others more transparent.

For example, many of the current jobs are threatened by the advancing automation and digitalization. It is open whether new jobs will be created or whether there will be many more underemployed or unemployed people in the future. It is equally unclear whether the benefits of the many innovations in the world of work will benefit only a few or will be shared with those less involved in working life. Corona also makes it very clear that we are facing a balancing act between the public security and privacy of individuals. We can help shape the direction. There are many suggestions in the book, I would like to share three:

- Be open to new ideas. Faced with strong opinions ask for facts and sometimes the question helps: What must happen, which argument or fact would convince me/you to change my/your opinion? If there is none in yourself or the other, it is pretty likely that you stuck in a role.

⁵⁸ <https://pioneersofchange-summit.org/slp/scilla-elworthy/>

⁵⁹ *Die zweite Renaissance- Warum die Menschheit vor dem Wendepunkt steht*, Ian Goldin und Chris Kutarna, 2016

- Encourage creativity, also with financial means, for example through crowdfunding. And have the courage to experiment yourself. Risk failure.
- Take a long-term perspective that gives you confidence in the future besides all the negative news. Exchange views with others about this.

9. 12:15 pm: Facilitating an Organizational Process

In this chapter I am *facilitating an organizational group process*. I will refer to the *structure of the group process* and *role theory* as it is applied in a corporate setting. In chapter 3 I wrote about the *life myth of a person*, now I take a look at the *life myth of an organization* or *organizational myth*. Furthermore, I introduce the concept of *Evolutionary Leadership* and relate it to the current process of the organization.

9.1. Prelude

I have been working for about a year for a software development company, which I will call SDC, as an organizational consultant and facilitator. The CEO Dirk is a visionary leader. The company is growing fast and it is getting harder for everybody to know what's going on and where the organization is heading to. In order to address this, the CEO decided to decentralize the decision-making process and support the leadership team to take their own stand and responsibility more fully.

Since Covid-19, the regular leadership team meetings take place via video call. From time to time, dependent on the agenda, I facilitate those meetings. The main purpose of those meetings is to support the relationship and communication among the leadership team and throughout the company in order to get an alignment regarding the overall direction of the company and to decide on company-wide issues.

Before Covid-19, when we met in person, the interaction often took place as a group process. We made space to listen to the different voices and opinions on the topics being discussed. Now, that we are meeting online, the interaction is more difficult for me to facilitate. The meeting tends to focus more on practicalities and consensus reality results.

I am still in the process of adjusting to facilitating online meetings which bigger groups. I am so used to feeling the atmosphere in the room and gathering information from the people's responses, moods, movements and small side-chats with my whole being. I feel limited by the video call format, where the people are reduced to pictures in the size of postage stamps on my screen. This new way of interacting through a screen is still an X-energy, a challenge, for me meaning something I do not like yet, but has a possible hidden gift.

The event takes place in three steps. The group meeting is accompanied by a call with the CEO of the Company before the group meeting and afterwards.

9.2. The Event: Part 1 – Pre-Call with the CEO

I arrive back at my home office when my phone rings. It's Dirk, the CEO of SDC, the company I am going to have a team meeting in half an hour. Obviously, I am not the only one who needs to land in the context of the team meeting some time before it starts.



After a short warming up conversation, Dirk says: "You put all the open questions of our last meeting on the agenda. But we do not have solutions yet. Why are they on the agenda of today's meeting?"

There is a sharpness in his voice. It is not hard to get that he does not like the open questions on the agenda which I put together.

I take a deep breath and remind the Process Worker in me: *Pick up the accusation, go on his side first!*

Thus, I say to him: "Sorry for not checking in with you before. Yes, there are no answers yet. At the last meeting, the group

decided to talk through the approach to find answers to the questions today. Some questions are decisions you and the CFO have to make, but most of the open questions are actually headlines for discussions the team wants to have. At least that is what we talked about last time. Any other thoughts on this for today?"

Dirk's voice is changed, sounds relieved, when he says: "Oh yes, that is what we decided, I remember. We will check where we are at and how to address the things. Great. That's fine." He adds with a little laughter: "I am so used to solving problems on my own that I forgot we said we will talk about the approach to the open questions in the team. See you there."

I am relieved as well. I am glad that we spoke and clarified his topic before the call. At the same time, I have the impression that this call was a kind reminder that I need to be more aware about how I can support him as a leader, in general but especially in the upcoming team meeting.

The Event: Part 2 – Team Meeting

Here we are in the video call with about 20 people. As usual, there is teasing and laughter in the group before we start. Before I even have the chance to introduce the agenda for the meeting, Dirk jumps in and says: "Before we start, I have to hijack the meeting for the first couple of

minutes right away as I need to make some announcements regarding the new Covid-19 regulations in the offices."

A part of me is fascinated by his elegant move to turn the agenda to his topic and acting out his rank as the CEO of this company. Another part of me is confused. I have the following inner dialogue:

One part of me: "Well, I am in charge of the agenda, so I am the leader for the process of this meeting. He could have told me in our call before that he needs time for these announcements".

Another voice in me: "He is the overall leader of this meeting and he acts out his rank when it is necessary. Support him."

I am grateful that we had a very similar situation in the call before, where I got the insight that my role is to facilitate and to support him as best as possible.

I say out loud: "Sure, one of the most important topics right now, go ahead."



After 15 minutes, I use a silent moment and say that it would be good to ask further questions via mail later as the big points seem to be communicated and there are quite a few topics on today's agenda. Dirk wants to add something, but pauses and then says with a smile: "Yes, Simone, we should make up some time."

And I think: *Great. Now he handed the role of leading through the meeting to me.* The Covid-19 topic is done and we turn towards the agenda.

In the last meeting, a small team that worked on how to explain our core values to new employees, shared their work. They got a lot of feedback that this first version is great in terms of content but much too long and hard to access. Today, the updated presentation is "to the point". Most of the approximately 20 people in the call strongly support the results. There is a lot of feedback and ideas how to communicate the work throughout the whole company. Four critical voices included. There are statements like "I am 100 % behind this work". "It's great. That's exactly us." The small team that spent hours and hours with this work is beaming. Most of the people are unmuted, there is a celebrative mood in the whole group. I try to frame what I think just happened:

"Wow, what an amazing piece of work to make the values of the company as clear and easy to understand as possible. You must have spent a lot of time on this project. Obviously, a large part of the leadership team resonates strongly with the content and the way the values are stated. This seems to be very close to who SDC is. There is a shared wish to make it known in the entire organization as it is really *gelungen*".

Gelungen means something like being successful but it is more a working all the way through, overcoming obstacles, finding alliances were needed, having the right kind of support and having some good fortune on the way.

There are more items on the agenda. And I invite the group to move on. The next small group of people is already waiting for their turn. Finally, the large group calms down, people mute themselves and it feels like the right time to move on.

This second group tells the team that they see the need to write down some basic process guidelines as there are none at SDC. Thus, with every project the procedure and the documentation has to be reinvented by each and every project leader. Three people out of the twenty strongly support the idea on the spot. Till now only comments in favor of the proposal have come forward.

I know from previous discussions that there are at least as many doubters as proponents of the idea of higher standardization in this highly creative company. As it is important in a group process to bring out the different voices, I say something like:

"As far as I experience this company one of its core strengths, that is also expressed in the code of communication we just heard, is its ability to dive deep into the specific needs of the customers. And somehow live up to them. By all rational reason for standardizations this might be a limitation to this core skill of meeting customer needs. Any thoughts on this?"

Fortunately, now one project leader speaks up that he really doubts that this brings any lasting advantage at it is more of a burden than a help. Now a discussion around it arises. Others join in. Still half of the group stays silent. One member of the standardization group asks Stefan, the most critical person that just spoke, if he would join the standardization team. He explains that if Stefan would be part of the team, they would

be able to challenge the standards and find the minimum line. Stefan, slightly surprised, agrees to join.

Before I can frame what just happened, the CEO jumps in and highly appreciates this solution:

"I think that this project is really necessary. With Stefan involved, this should not become a huge limitation and burden but a useful guideline. Like the code of communication. What do you think? Simone, let's make a decision if we want to go for it?"

Even if most of the people are muted, I see smiling faces and sense a giggling. In Process Work terms this is an indication there may be a hot spot. There is a strong reaction to something that just happened. I just say:

"Thank you Dirk. I guess with your clear statement you just made the decision to go along with the project. You are the CEO, you have the overall responsibility. So, you seem to have made a decision to go for this project."

He laughs and says:

"Well, then next time, I first rather hear what others have to say before I make my opinion the decision."

There is a kind of calming down of the atmosphere, a cool spot. Later on, I will realize that I overstepped a learning opportunity for the group here as we did not unfold the hot spot. In this very moment, I feel relieved. The CEO acknowledges the need to hear other voices and viewpoints in order to make the best decision. And there is an awareness that his rank sometimes shuts down the discussion.

Next point on the agenda are the open questions, that Dirk and myself had talked about before this group meeting. Dirk listens to the team's discussion and decisions about how to address the open questions. He only joins the conversation sometimes to add a point. He seems to already give more space for the different voices to be heard. When it comes to a question about the strategic direction, he clearly claims the lead.

We are at the end of the two hours. I just ask for a short one sentence feedback regarding today's meeting. I have the impression that with these online meetings the facilitator has to be quite precise how to move forward. So, I ask the people to go by the participants list.

The feedback focuses mainly on the first interaction around the code of communication. There is a special warmth of appreciation. As usual, I hand over to Dirk to make the final statement and close the meeting. He is very appreciative and announces that the strategy session is coming soon. I feel a special warmth myself and would love to just sit and try to understand what happened. But I am already late for the next call which is also important to me. Unfortunately, I cannot pick up Dirk's call right after the meeting but I text him that I will call him back as soon as I can, which is about an hour later. He sends a "thumb up" back.

The Event: Part 3 – Post-Call with the CEO





9.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Group Process and Roles

Deep Democracy uses the format of a group process to bring the different roles that are part of an organization forward and therefore into the awareness of the group. Thus, the organization can learn about its diversity and enhances the relationship between its different parts – made visible in roles, that are represented by individuals. This is an important step to broaden access to the different parts of the organization, which can then feel more holistic and alive. The group process provides space for the exchange of different perspectives on a topic. The aim is to bring as many different points of view as possible into consciousness. The different points of view refer to the different roles that occur in pairs. When the proponent of an idea appears, the role of the opponent is also present, outspoken or not.

When individuals keep silent in a group process there might be a variety of roles (compare chapter 5) behind. Some people might hold the pot and give space to the process, others are just less verbal or more introverted and some might represent roles with which the group is not identified yet or does not like. In a group process, also the silent voices speak, meaning that they represent roles of the group. Arnold Mindell points out, that:

... group awareness means understanding that all roles are necessary to create and differentiate a field, and that everyone is needed to fill these positions⁶⁰.

Sometimes roles are occupied most of the time by one and the same person. When this person leaves the organization, the group discovers that the person is gone, but the role is still there. For example, the one that is always against. When this person is fired because she seems to block progress, all of a sudden, another person starts to be the one that blocks. The role belongs to the organization, it is not personal. Nothing is solved in the long run by firing this person because usually roles live longer than people.

Awareness, when working with a group, also means noticing when groups repress emotional issues and disturbers. When they abandon difficult issues, don't talk about it or change topics. These are all methods to avoid uncomfortable aspects of the group's identity. The X energy of a group, the energy that is not yet known or not yet liked, often appears in recurring conflicts, gossip and also in dreams and body symptoms of individual members of a group.

Max Schupbach mentioned in a seminar in 2012 that roles can be compared to river currents that everybody sees and agrees upon. *Ghost roles* are like an undercurrent, not visible above but a lot of people feel that it is there. People speak about it but nobody wants to represent

⁶⁰ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

it. It is hard to identify with a ghost role. Usually, when a ghost role appears, the interaction gets heated. Process Work calls it a *hot spot*.

Now, a new information is on the table, one that usually lives under the table, in the invisible field. Now it is there, and an interaction seems possible. The unspoken power, pain, feelings and emotions around that role can be made tangible. A person has to take the role to make an interaction, a moving toward, possible. At the beginning, this might be the task of a facilitator, just to start the interaction. In order to step into the role congruently, a person is challenged to find that part, that role, inside of herself.

As everything is non-local what is outside of us is also inside, we all have every role inside as well. Some are easier to gain access to than others, but they are all there. It might already be a relief for a group when the ghost role appears. It validates our own feeling side as we sense ghostroles in the field, we feel their power and at least inwardly react to them. If the interaction with the ghost role is successful, the group atmosphere often relaxes and calms down. That's called a *cool spot*.

We often address ghostroles when we talk about the famous pink elephant in the room. The role that everybody sees, but nobody speaks about. The ghost role concept of Process Work is also used in investment banking, probably they would use different terms.

Adam Robinson, an author and a global macro advisor to the heads of some of the world's largest hedge funds, watches out for ghost roles in the financial field. In an interview, he shared that he is watching out for the undercurrents to define which direction to go. He says:

One of the key things with investing ... is to be aware when you hear a voice in your head that says ... 'It doesn't make sense,' it's always a sign of something really powerful. So, if somebody says to me, "It doesn't make any sense why gold keeps going lower", I know that it is going a lot lower. This person has a dozen logical reasons why gold ought to be going higher and it's going lower. For him it doesn't make sense. But the world always makes sense. What doesn't make sense is his model⁶¹.

These voices that say "It doesn't make any sense" talk to the ghost role, that is not yet visible. When the ghost role is represented, a new insight might be gained about the identity of the group, community, organization or market. A new aspect of the self comes forward and the organization can relate to it. In a way, it enlarges its identity.

These processes support the overall process of becoming aware. According to Arnold Mindell, a self, an individual or an organization, changes when it changes its awareness about itself. So, a facilitator's role is to help that happen. Awareness itself is a change agent.

⁶¹ The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts: Adam Robinson Interview (#219), <https://tim.blog/2018/06/22/the-tim-ferriss-show-transcripts-adam-robinson-interview/>

The change comes by appreciating both sides, for example, the ghost role and the role that is talking to or about it, and helping them to relate. In this connection lies the access to the systems wisdom

says Max Schupbach in a video about the whole-system approach of Process Work⁶². The challenge for a facilitator is to become aware of what is going on and help the connection to happen.

This process of inviting all three levels of reality and bringing in the different voices and roles in the system is not a research project where you count all trackable voices and put them on the list. It is mainly a relationship process. It is all about connection: to the different levels of reality, to the different roles within a person and within an organization, to the field, to the group to the facilitator and to the organizational myth.

In the connection lies the access to the system's wisdom. It is more than just singling out the different voices. Helping them to relate is an art in itself. The picture of the process only becomes colorful when the pieces of information relate to each other, make connection. This might then lead to new ideas how to engage and solve organizational problems.

From my viewpoint, a lot is written about the necessity of taking the other person's side and of understanding the other person's viewpoint and feeling in order to enhance the connection. Process Work offers an approach HOW to do that when working with individuals but also when working with groups, which in my view is rare. To help a group to become more aware of marginalized parts, it is important to be aware of the role structure of the group, as Max and Ellen Schupbach describe:

Process structure is the symmetry between the signals, their informational patterns, the underlying processes, and the way they manifest in terms of individual behavior and group dynamics. Understanding structure is the key to understanding difficulties, recognizing and supporting emergent leadership, and helping groups find more sustainable and creative solutions⁶³.

In a Keynote Talk at the IAPOP Conference 2012 Max Schupbach offered an approach to identify the role structure of a group before a group process:⁶⁴

- Catch the purpose of the interaction. Find out what is it all about.
- Find the main polarities.
- Get the main ghost role. Who are we talking about that is not represented?

⁶² *Processwork – a Whole System Approach*, Max Schupbach, 2018
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsC1NXHWp6I>

⁶³ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁶⁴ Keynote Max Schupbach at IAPOP 2012
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=648VMBs93pw>

- Bring in the ghost role as a key to the emerging future identity.

Role of the Facilitator

In Process Work, there is no concept of a neutral facilitator. It cannot be, if field theory is correct. The facilitator has always an effect on the group and the group has always an effect on the facilitator. This is already described in chapter 3 using Schrödinger's experiment with the cat. As long as no observer is present the cat is both alive and dead. The observation leads to the collapse of the superposition which embraces all options and leads to an either or state.⁶⁵

Max and Ellen Schupbach explain⁶⁶:

The facilitator's first task is to notice and explore the signals, but the real task is to follow them into something unknown and intimate and mysterious. This isn't a trivial distinction. Self-organizing forces can't be controlled. ... Anything that you see has meaning for the organization; although, frequently, the meaning isn't clear. Empowerment happens through understanding the meaning of the person, event, or signal and reframing it in terms of its meaning to the group and to the organization as a whole.

The facilitator is also part of the larger system. The experiences of a facilitator while working with an organization belong to the organizational process as well, and might help unfold important information about the organization. Ellen Schupbach wrote that the inner experiences of a facilitator can create an access especially to the spiritual level of the organizational field⁶⁷.

And Amy Mindell said in a seminar in Berlin that it is the facilitator's job to connect the organizational process with the larger creative space of the Processmind by being aware of one's inner experiences and bridging the worlds by moving between these different levels. To be able to do that, to be the bridge, it is important to have worked on our own inner issues and triggers, likes and dislikes, to have burned your wood. Becoming more and more fluid between the polarities is a prerequisite to help organizations to work with their polarities.

So, it is important to become aware as a facilitator of your own viewpoint regarding the organization you are working for as you might be in favor of one side of a polarity. Often a facilitator is more drawn to the people with lower rank in an attempt to support their viewpoint rather than supporting the leader's power.

⁶⁵ <https://www.giga.de/filme/the-big-bang-theory-handlung-charaktere-videos-alle-infos-zur-serie/specials/schroedingers-katze-erklaerung-fuer-dummies/>

⁶⁶ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁶⁷ *The Gold at the End of the Rainbow: A Hermeneutic Study of a Therapist's Spiritual Experience*, Ellen Schupbach, 2004

Max Schupbach said during one of my first Process Work seminars a sentence that I will never forget as it hit my identity as a change consultant right into the heart:

When you still believe in change you haven't understood the concept of flow.

This sentence stayed with me ever since. The idea of change assumes there is a fixed state and that it takes expertise and energy to move it to something more desirable. Process Work understands change as a continuous flow process. It is taking place anyhow – the process is happening, with or without a facilitator. The facilitator can help to create more awareness and understanding around it.

This very thought is supported by the findings of Gerald Hüther, a German neurobiologist and author. He said in an interview in 2018:

We begin to understand that there is no cause, but that life invents itself. One cannot bend this process, but only create a framework for how the process can unfold best. If an arm is broken, the doctor can splint it, but he cannot heal it. He creates a favorable context. That's all we can do⁶⁸.

Each organization has a basic direction in which it is moving, its organizing principle or organizational myth, comparable to the life myth of an individual. From a Process Work perspective, one of the tasks of the facilitator is to support the reconnection of the organization to its myth, to make it easier for the organization to gain more access to its own vitality and creativity. If a facilitator does not take the organizing principle into account and acts against it, consciously or without knowing better, an unfavorable result seems to be more likely than if the process is in line with the organizing principle.⁶⁹

Organizational Myth

Each individual is organized by his or her life myth. The same is true for organizations. Max Schupbach calls the organizational myth the organization's

biggest potential and source of power . . . The organizational myth is a hyperspace, meaning it is an unnamable thing that organizes a group, that will appear in as many forms as there are participant's mindsets looking into it"⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ *KenFm im Gespräch mit Gerald Hüther*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzHhHs2bmvg>

⁶⁹ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁷⁰ *What is Organizational Development from a Process Work Perspective?*, Heike Hamann, 2007

The organizing myth is not a plan about how to build an organization. It is a unique constellation that is in motion, not a fixed thing that is identified once and then written down in a mission or vision statement that lasts for decades. This river-like being, same river and never the same water, makes it so complicated to grasp it and then put it into words. Every organizational myth and every organization is a unique expression. It is an organizational myth and not a personal myth because this myth, this universal song line, needs more than one person to be expressed completely.

The organizational myth is like an inner navigator for the organization, a reference point that always points to the north (or south ... depending where you are on the planet), no matter how wild and dark the storm is. In times of crises the myth becomes especially apparent, for an individual and also for an organization. For example, when people don't know how long the pandemic lockdown situation is lasting and revenues are low. There is no book to read about it, that book is not yet written. The inner navigator gives impulses for how to respond to this unprecedented situation. An inner knowing that affects decision making in real time.

The experiences in peak situations (low or high) are an indication regarding the myth. A peak situation feels like a "genuine experience of connectedness and mutual understanding" describes Max Schupbach.⁷¹ This essential moment contains the information for the basic direction of the group. This is one way to approach the group's myth. Stories that people tell about the organization also contain hints about the myth. Recurring conflicts within the organization show the polarities as well, like the Tao that can be said, the two sides of the coin, the polarities within the organizing principle that form a superposition.

The organizational myth attracts the people that fit into the task of the organization. There is a feeling of alignment between the person's life myth and the organizational myth. I have heard about so many cases where the hiring process was anything but rational.

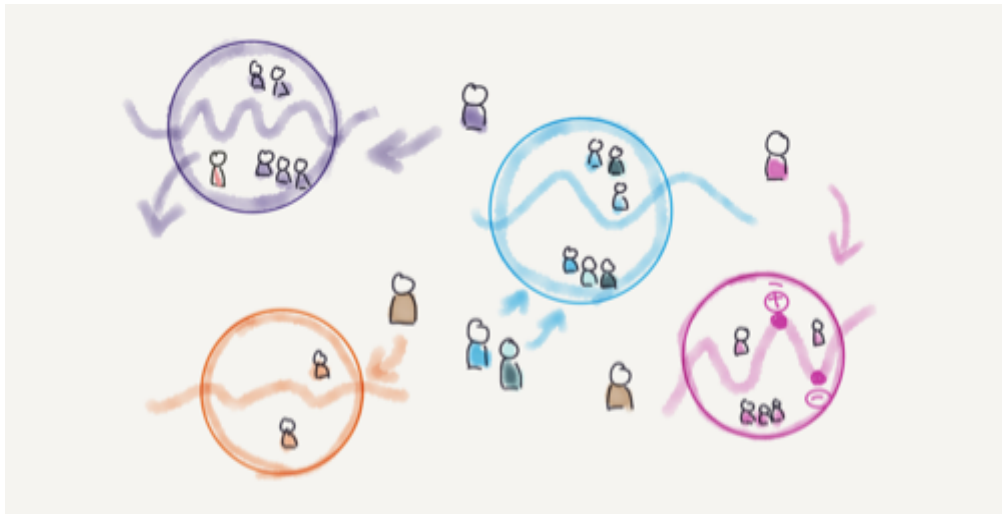
An example:

When I first met Dr. Philipp Wachs, the CEO of *Haus Rissen*, an education institute for International politics and economics, he told me:

When I started at Haus Rissen the organization was held together by dirt and ivy only. Actually, nobody wanted me to be the new leader of this organization, neither the board nor the employees. But they had nobody else who was willing to do this job. My friends thought I was crazy to take this job. Me too, but it felt right. Now, 10 years later, there is only one aspect missing and then the organization will be back to its original founding purpose.

⁷¹ *Evolutionary Leadership and Quantum Strategy*, Max Schupbach, Ukrainian Business Journal "Strategy", No. 9, 2010, www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF_DOCS/Articles/Strategy_Ukraine_English.pdf

I had the feeling, back then, the organizational myth itself has hired him.



Individual organizational myths hiring people

And the other way round is possible too. When an individual's myth no longer matches with the phase the organization is in, in the here and now, the person might sooner or later leave the organization. Maybe she is bored or does not like the job anymore or gets promoted to some other role or place. Some people are really good at founding a company and have great fun as long as the company has about 20 people. Later on, the founder often leaves as the next development phase of the organization is no longer matching her strengths and her life myth. Roles are always bigger than an individual and an individual is always much more than just one role. When both overlap it is a match. When the individual or the organization develop and change, this match might not be working out any longer.

Max Schupbach said in a seminar that most big companies have no reason to be afraid of their similar size competitors. Instead they have a lot of reasons to be afraid of startups that have the same or a similar organizing principle but are more congruently living up to it. Over time, most companies move towards mainstream. That leaves space for new companies to come in and fill the space. I worked most of my corporate life in media companies which were heavily disrupted by digital media which is faster and cheaper and relies on a broad variety of people than on journalists only. Right now, a lot of new ventures take place in the financial industry with the aim to make banking more trustworthy and sustainable like Tomorrow (www.tomorrow.one). They advertise with the claim: "mobile banking for a better tomorrow".

For sure there are big companies that are focused on their organizational myth, such as Apple. Apple has a clear focus on entertainment, ease of use and playfulness. Way back, Steve Jobs realized that customers preferred digital cameras with big screens in order to have a better view of the photos they have taken. He wanted to have a full screen display for the mobile phone as well, to make it easier and more fun to watch. The engineers said that it is not possible as the standard system was based on keys, and keys need space. But Jobs pushed them to find a solution. They did. Now it is hard to remember that there was a time

when smart phones had keys. Staying true to one's organizing myth pushes innovation.

Groups and organizations who are connected to their myth perform better on many levels. First the myths give direction, there is a sense of mutual knowing in which direction to go. Furthermore, people within the organization feel more connected and therefore work more efficiently. They might develop new relationships with their competitors and business partners⁷². Being connected to the organization's life myth means being connected to the very purpose of this organization which gives meaning to all stakeholders involved.

9.4. Unfolding and Reflection Part 1 and 2

Organizational Myth

First, I want to look at the organizing principle of SDC. In my opinion, it came forward in the team meeting in this very moment of mutual understanding, warmth, appreciation and relationship during the presentation of the *Code of Communication*. In this interaction, the group was close to its organizational myth or organizing principle. I used the word before in the description of the event: there is something like *Gelingen* in the organizational myth of this organization. (Noun for the word *gelingen*) The German word *Gelingen*, as I explained before, means being successful but it is more a working all the way through, overcoming obstacles together with everyone involved and having good fortune on the way, like the climbers on the mountain in the photo.



The focus is on the end result: making it work by all thinkable and unthinkable means with the involvement of the related people. That was a *Gelingen* moment in the call. I could have framed it even more strongly, if I would have been more aware of it in the very moment.

Shortly after our call, I was present when a customer gave feedback after an all-night software release process, in which there was a huge amount of problems. The customer said that this eight-hour nightshift was the biggest learning experience of his life. How it was possible to address each and every problem step by step, and to find, in a collaborative way, solutions that not only fixed the single problem but added value to

⁷² Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

the overall process. Here it is again: going all the way through, mastering the challenges in a collaborative way.

SDC's main projects fall into two categories. One is innovation. They build very innovative software applications. Usually the first step in this process is to find out what the customer really wants. The next step is the translation of the idea into software code. This process needs clarification, constant communication with the client, creativity and precision. In the other category, SDC is taking care of huge back-office-systems for big companies where reliability is the most important thing, like in the eight-hour nightshift example right above. These two types of projects seem to be on the opposite sides of possible software products, but both types need the same ingredients to be successful: finding a solution for a complex problem or task, maybe in an as yet unknown way, to make it work. Additionally, in case of a crisis or problem, work all the way through to the end, thinking about the most pragmatic and stable solution to solve it. Without stopping before the solution is found. All of this is happening in collaboration with the customer's team.

The organizing principle shows itself in the biggest conflicts of this company as well. SDC has an ongoing conflict, like in the call, between creative freedom and standardization to implement quality standards. Both sides of this polarity are important to build a software product. Ideally, they go together, then *Gelingen* can happen.

As in many expert organizations, there is a conflict between the role of the expert, the one who knows, and the one who does not yet know and is still learning. Regarding their software development competence, the majority of the group call themselves experts. The problem becomes visible, however, when one considers the direction in which the company wants to develop. Many project managers are experts in software programming but beginners in the role of team leader. In this new role they are learners, and for some it is not easy to admit that they do not know what to do in this new role. Dirk is a really present and full-hearted leader and has strong views on what leadership should look like. However, he is sometimes unaware that his people are still discovering this role and do not yet know how to fill it. This leads to an ongoing conflict.

Structure of the Group Process

Looking at my calls with the CEO and the team meeting I will basically follow the structure which Max Schupbach suggested:

Purpose:

The main purpose of this project and these calls and meetings is finding a way to empower the leaders to take more responsibility and build up their decision-making capability.

Main Polarities:

One role is about *learning and growing and making mistakes* on the way. Especially in the context of becoming a leader. This role is visible regarding the team that took their leadership role seriously and intended to start a standardization project to improve the overall project quality.

The other role is the *one who knows*. Dirk already knew what to do with the standardization project. And the silent group in the standardization discussion maybe also knew something, which they did not share. Dirk also knows what it takes to be a leader whereas the rest of the newly assigned team leaders are in the process of befriending this role.

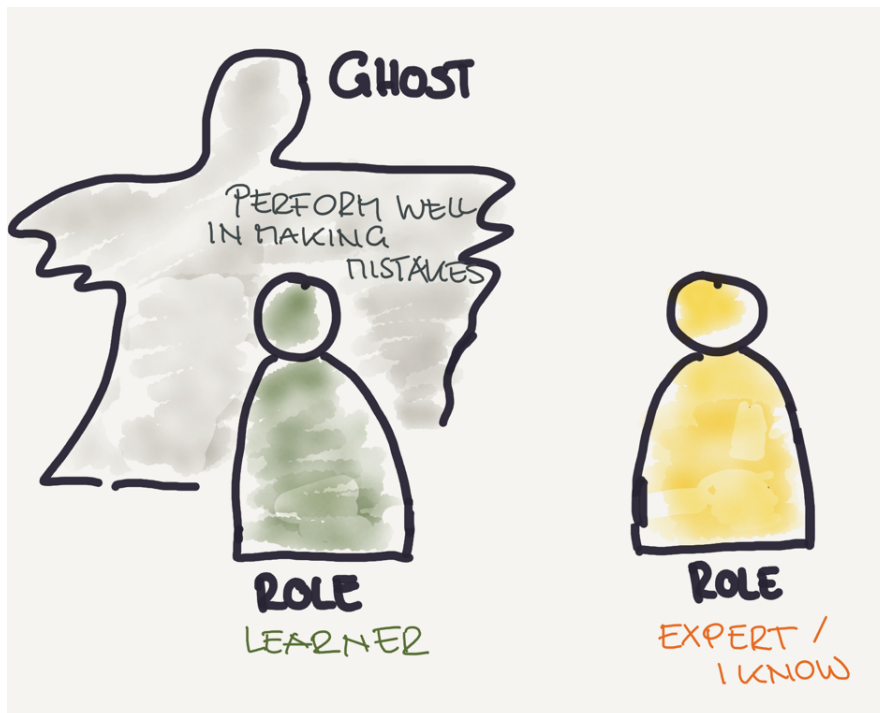
And on the other side, Dirk took the role of the learner in the team meeting, by saying "Well, then next time, I first rather hear what others have to say before I make my opinion the decision." That was his insight from learning in the moment. He took it seriously right away, by letting his team find solutions and approaches to the open questions that needed answers in the last part of the call. The team leaders, in a very short amount of time, picked up that role and defined possible approaches to the open questions.

Ghost Role:

Often when the ghost role appears a hot spot happens. The hot spot in the group meeting was when Dirk stated clearly his opinion to go for the standardization project and then asked the team to decide. The atmosphere got a little heated at that moment, there were smiling faces and some giggling. Back then I thought the ghost role is "As long as you make decisions in my favor, you can make your own decisions. Signed, the CEO". This might be the role of a dictator. But now after many hours of trying to understand what happened, I think about it differently.

In my view, the main ghost role is the voice that says "Perform well in making mistakes. Learn, but take care you have a reason to make this mistake. Mistakes that happen because you did not make the effort to think twice, are not allowed. Our performance paradigm also applies to mistakes". In the discussion about the standardization project many of the arguments against the project were already stated. Obviously, Dirk was clearly in favor of starting it. Being against it could have been viewed by him as an avoidable mistake.

I could sense that ghost role also in my interaction with Dirk before the group call. It was in his accusation that I had included the questions on the agenda, without having answers yet – *a well-performed mistake*. It might have seemed like a stupid mistake. And it was in how he calmed down as soon as he realised we had already agreed on those questions in the agenda before, and so it did make sense. Another signal confirming the ghost role, was his calming down when I took on the *well-performed mistake* as mine. In his view, it might still have been a mistake to include those questions, but a thought through one at least.



Bring in the Ghost Role:

During the meeting, my hypothesis was that the ghost role is “As long as you make decisions in my favor, you can make own decisions. Signed “the CEO”. I wanted to embody the ghost if I could, so it doesn't burden the group as an invisible outsider. I had the intention to frame out loud, that Dirk already made the decision about the standardization project before he asked the group to make one.

Before I got to it, the giggling happened, showing a *hot spot*. But instead of framing the ghost role and giving space for the interaction underneath the hotspot, I reacted and opposed the leader on behalf of the group. I missed the chance to offer the group a learning opportunity to take their side themselves. I could have said: “Well, it seems that the CEO has a clear vote for one direction, which is great. And he asked you to make a decision now. What would be a good way to move forward? Any thoughts on this?”

Possibly the group would have then had the chance to interact around the roles and learn about themselves.

In hindsight, having this different view of the ghost role than I had in the meeting, I might have said: “It seems there is a tendency to go for the standardization, as Dirk is also on this side. But as this side might be open to good arguments, does anyone have a thought or information that, could be included in how we move forward, to make sure we have a great result in the end?”

Even so, after the interaction, the group atmosphere relaxed. There was a cool spot. Dirk picked up the role as a learner on the spot by saying “Well, then next time, I first rather hear what others have to say before I make my opinion the decision.” He modelled the role of somebody who made an un-thought through mistake himself.

My Role as Facilitator

Group Process

Besides the fact that I missed the moment to offer the group a big learning possibility around the ghost role as I shared above, I want to look at further aspects of the facilitation of the group process.

It is part of the beauty of a group process to make the group more aware of its different voices, of its own diversity. When the group was talking about the standardization project and everybody seemed to be in favor of this project that promised more efficiency and performance, I knew that only some voices were being represented. The creative spirit, that is looking for the optimal solution in exactly this case, no matter what rules are there, was missing. I invited this role in by framing the two sides of this polarity. And it worked out. The discussion started.

Even so, half of the group was silent. I could have asked, what's in the quiet side? But my inner performer wanted to get the agenda done in these two hours. I marginalized my own creative spirit, that might have taken a deep dive into the silence.

Fostering the Connection to the Organizational Myth

It is part of the facilitator's role to support the connection to the myth of the organization. I did frame the special moment when there was this special warmth and appreciation when relationship, creativity and performance came together when the group talked about the code of communication. I framed it as a special connection to the organizational myth. I could have done it more explicitly for sure, but I only became aware of it later on. I did support the group to really feel the special gift of that moment. I know that, because that moment came up quite often in our discussions in the following meetings.

I also talked about this moment in my call after the meeting with Dirk and translated it into his concept of situational leadership. I named it *reference point* to create even more awareness for it on his own terms. I got good feedback.

My Personal Process

When I talked with Josef Helbling about this interaction, it was he who pointed out that I missed offering the group a learning opportunity. In our discussion, I understood more about the risk of having this edge towards *walking to my own drums* when working with powerful people who have no problem to do so. As they act out my secondary process I might be irritated by some of their behavior. This is what I experienced with Carola earlier that day. But I also might be sending double signals. My primary process is irritated, but the part of my identity on the other side of the edge sends positive signals. I could have framed what was happening, but in that moment, I didn't think of it. I took sides without being aware that I was doing it. This might be even more true as I had

worked on it and befriended my powerful side that very morning in my interaction with Carola. I really enjoyed the interaction with the powerful Dirk in the afternoon. And maybe even flipped to the side of the powerful one myself!

Sometimes, when groups and individuals discover their secondary process when working on emotional issues it can be such a pleasurable relief that the group or individual crosses the edge, and does not return to the old identity. In the meeting, when Dirk wanted to make a decision about standardization, I occupied the role of the one opposing the leader. In hindsight, I discovered that perhaps if I had simply framed the roles present, it may have opened up the space for the group to interact.

I quoted the paper *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*⁷³ so often already, but I want to here again because it helps me understand my role in the group's development, in the meeting:

Unfortunately noticing and trusting in our own experience is not always so easy. There is only one problem a person can have in a group, not knowing the deepest part of himself or herself and not bringing it out and making it more transparent. The group needs this from its members for its own self-organizing development. Groups also need to learn and develop their own ability to notice, track, and process things and understand how entanglement and rotational symmetry are part of the process structure of the group's role dynamics⁷⁴.

Facilitating the group's learning by bringing awareness to the role dynamics in the moment, is a continuous and important learning area for me.

Often the process in the team of facilitators mirrors the client's process. Therefore, this reflection does not feel complete without sharing that I started this facilitation project together with a co-facilitator and friend. We processed our tensions often, but it did not work out in the end. Our team dissolved during that period. Our internal team building process was not successful. Looking back, my secondary process of *wanting to walk to my own drums* showed up in my implicit way of wanting to lead and set the tone. Part of me insisted and deeply believed that this is not the case, while my double signals showed a different story. I always underlined that I wanted us to work as peers while behaving as the leader without admitting it. This caused a lot of confusion and pain. This is not the only reason we split, but for sure an important one. I wish I would have known better.

⁷³ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

⁷⁴ *Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership*, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

9.5. One more Concept Applied in Part 3

Evolutionary Leadership

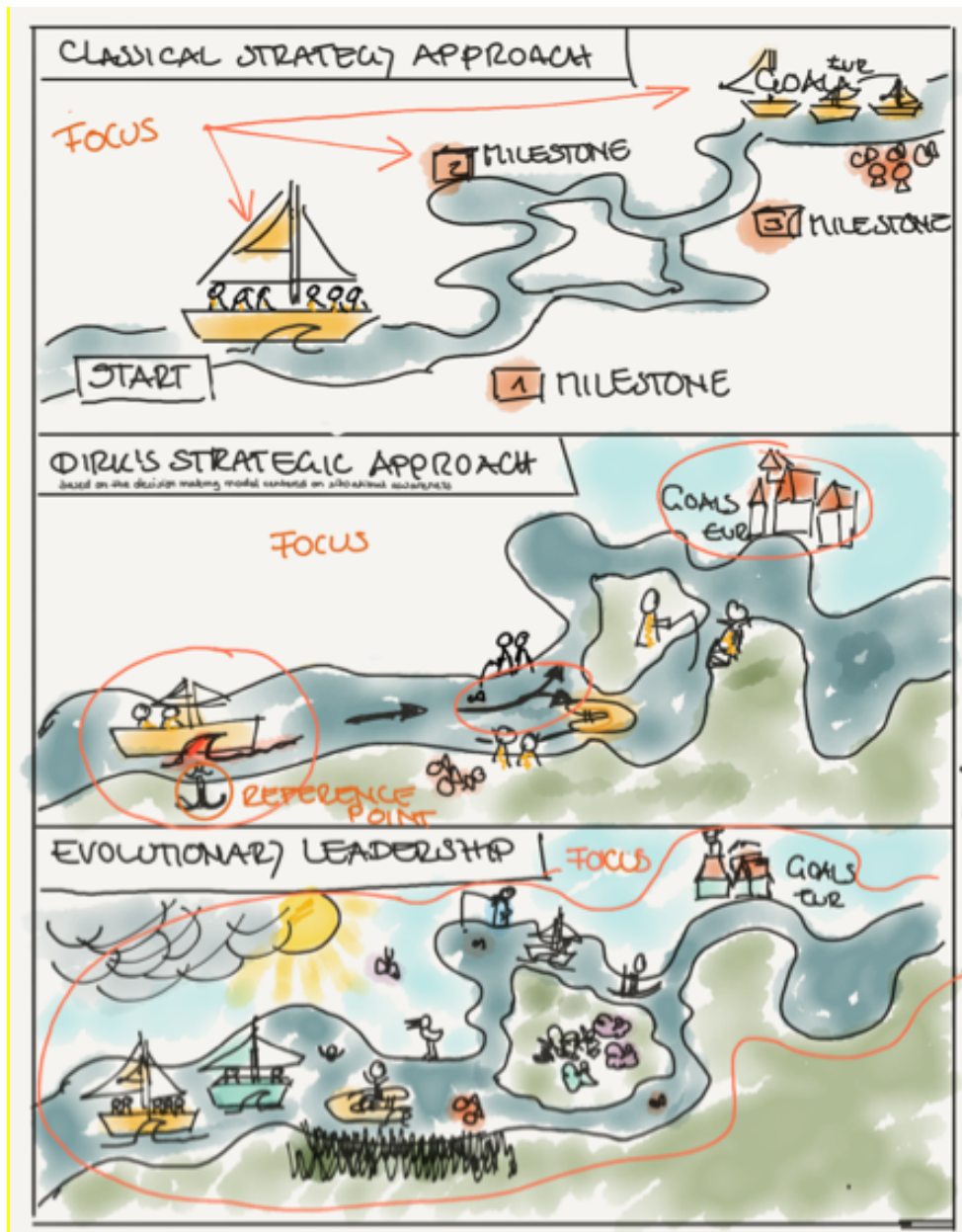
I am deeply inspired by Max Schupbach's article about *Evolutionary Leadership & Quantum Strategy*⁷⁵. Based on the principles of Deep Democracy Schupbach writes:

The Evolutionary Leader understands that we need sustainable relationships in stakeholder organizations. Businesses, vendors, distribution networks, customers, and policy makers must work together within a larger context that includes the entire society and the environment. Business evolves into community building, where profit is no longer the primary goal but a necessary side product of a vision that brings something of value to the world.

I studied economics because I had no better idea to pursue, and thought it was a good base to make a living (old paradigm). Recently I met a young leader from *Gaia*, a company that produces and sells sustainable products. She studied economics because she thought, economics is the skill she definitely does not have. She chose it in order to serve the planet. In her view, it is essential to have some idea of how economic contexts work.

I bring this example to underline that Evolutionary Leadership is not in contradiction to economic thinking, it is an enlargement and places it within the overall social responsibility of the organization. From this viewpoint, competitors, market trends and stakeholders are not seen as disturbing factors but as aspects of the whole system, that thrives when everybody is taken into account. As in the Deep Democracy approach, each voice is needed to get a better understanding of the whole context.

⁷⁵ *Evolutionary Leadership & Quantum Strategy*, Max Schupbach, 2010, https://www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF_DOCS/Articles/Strategy_Ukraine_English.pdf



In the view of Evolutionary Leadership, the aspect of *growing corn* – the aim to make money, as far as I understand it, is only one part of consensus reality. And the least stable one. The Corona pandemic makes this very clear. Who would have thought six months ago, that air travel would decrease to less than 10 % of its pre-Corona status? Or that working from home became the new normal within a couple of weeks? The consensus reality changes very fast.

Relationships and the roles of an organization are the next most stable aspect. There might be other people filling the roles but the structure stays more stable than in consensus reality. The most stable part of an organization is its organizing principle, it's myth, it's superposition, to use a term from quantum physics. It allows the organization to navigate in unknown waters. It enables the organization to adapt strategic steps according to the actual situation and:

to use readily available opportunities and survive hard patches or even thrive on difficulties and to grow in previously unimagined ways!⁷⁶

This organizational myth, expressed in the purpose, needs to find its way into the strategy of an organization. Max Schupbach called this *Quantum Strategy*. From this perspective, situational leadership as framed by Dirk, is part of the story.

In addition, Max pointed out that the development of a strategic approach has to be linked with the underlying organizing principle, which inspires the strategic approach, right through to implementation. Connecting with the underlying core principle that drives the entire system, helps to bring this principle out in the world. The organisation as an interconnected system is situated in the world, and this enables the ideas to *grow corn*.

And the other way round. The action steps have to be guided by the direction of the strategic approach and have to be aligned to the organizations overall purpose. Schupbach named this the "Dynamic Trinity" in which vision, strategy and implementation are interdependent and symbiotic⁷⁷, and the energy of implementation has a clear direction:

- Vision informs Strategy (I use the term organizational myth or purpose, for vision)
- Strategy informs Implementation
- Implementation re-informs = reforms Vision (purpose)

Max Schupbach wrote:

A quantum-oriented view allows us to understand society, the world economy and business as interrelated units within a self-organized system. Instead of fiddling with one aspect only, we try to figure out what the whole system wants. ... Businesses can no longer hope to survive, even in the best of times, with strategies that are not related to a more meaningful vision for society⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ *Evolutionary Leadership & Quantum Strategy*, Max Schupbach, 2010

⁷⁷ *Evolutionary Leadership & Quantum Strategy*, Max Schupbach, 2010

⁷⁸ *Evolutionary Leadership & Quantum Strategy*, Max Schupbach, 2010
https://www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF_DOCS/Articles/Strategy_Ukraine_English.pdf

9.6. Unfolding and Reflection of Part 3

In my view SDC is an example of a company developing over time, in the direction of Evolutionary Leadership. What Dirk called *Leadership of Situational Awareness* or *Situational Leadership* is an essential part of the puzzle in an Evolutionary Leadership process. No fixed plan but responding to what is, right in the moment.

In Dirk's view, the situational leadership approach needs situational awareness and reference points, to be useful. The reference points inform the leader what to do with the information and with the signals he becomes aware of, in order to move in the direction and context he wants to go.

In my after-the-meeting talk with Dirk, he explained the concept of situational awareness to me and mentioned the necessity of reference points. I brought up the concept of *Gelingen* as an organisational principle. And he nodded. I took his nod as a positive feedback signal that this organisational principle is an accepted reference point for the strategy. This fits well with Max Schupbach's description of Evolutionary Leadership, where the organisational principle = vision = purpose informs the strategy.

Gelingen, meaning to make things work all the way through to the end while dealing with many difficulties and unprecedented questions along the way, does require of the leader situational awareness. To adjust to crisis, conflict and also opportunities that appear, without losing the direction. That belongs to my understanding of Max Schupbach's description of *Quantum strategy*.

Dirk talked about the enemy, the *other* that all of a sudden appears and brings the necessity to change plans. To Dirk in this situation, the market place and society is the *other*. He is focusing on the company and its ability to make favorable decisions right now. I wonder: *Maybe I am being too short-sighted in focusing beyond the now*. Focusing on the survival of SDC and bringing out its individual strengths might be the best thing to do in favor of the overall system.

Looking at the interconnectedness of purpose, strategy and implementation – the *Dynamic Trinity* as Max Schupbach calls it – the relationships between these three elements seem to be important. SDC highlights its relationship building capability strongly at the level of customers. Due to the challenges of different locations and the increasing number of people involved in the company, the need to address the relationship building process within the teams has become more important and focus is given to it. The current expectation is that project leaders work with and deepen relationships, so that they connect more on the relationship level with their customers, teams and also with their peers. The idea behind it is to make the internal relationship building capacity and learning more fluid and creative.

Dirk also mentioned the job sharing between him and the team. Together with the CFO he will do the strategic work. The team is responsible for the implementation which is definitely a practical way to move forward. Thus, strategy will inform implementation as in Max Schupbach's trinity approach. As implementation also needs to reinform or reform the overall purpose, this job differentiation only works if the relationships between the team and the different levels allow the reinformation and readjustment. The links have to be there to make the trinity work.

Several weeks after this call, the strategy session took place and some team leaders came forward with the idea to work on their tasks, regarding the implementation and operationalization of the strategy, not as individuals or separate teams. Instead, they wanted to meet in mixed teams to talk their ideas through and make them more fruitful. The interaction starts to happen.

10. 3:20 pm: The Missed No

In this chapter I give an example of how restricting our way of looking at the world sometimes is. There can be clear *signals* right in front of us. The job of our *assemblage point* is to filter them out when there is no openness for this kind of information. We tend to see what is congruent to our experiences and belief system, no matter whether we are in a conversation or reading our Facebook streams. Then, instead of taking the effort to *unfold signals* or *double signals* and allowing oneself to be surprised by the results, we interpret them in favor of what we anyhow think. We look for confirmation. That is what I did in this call. This can lead to unexpected surprises, as my next story shows.

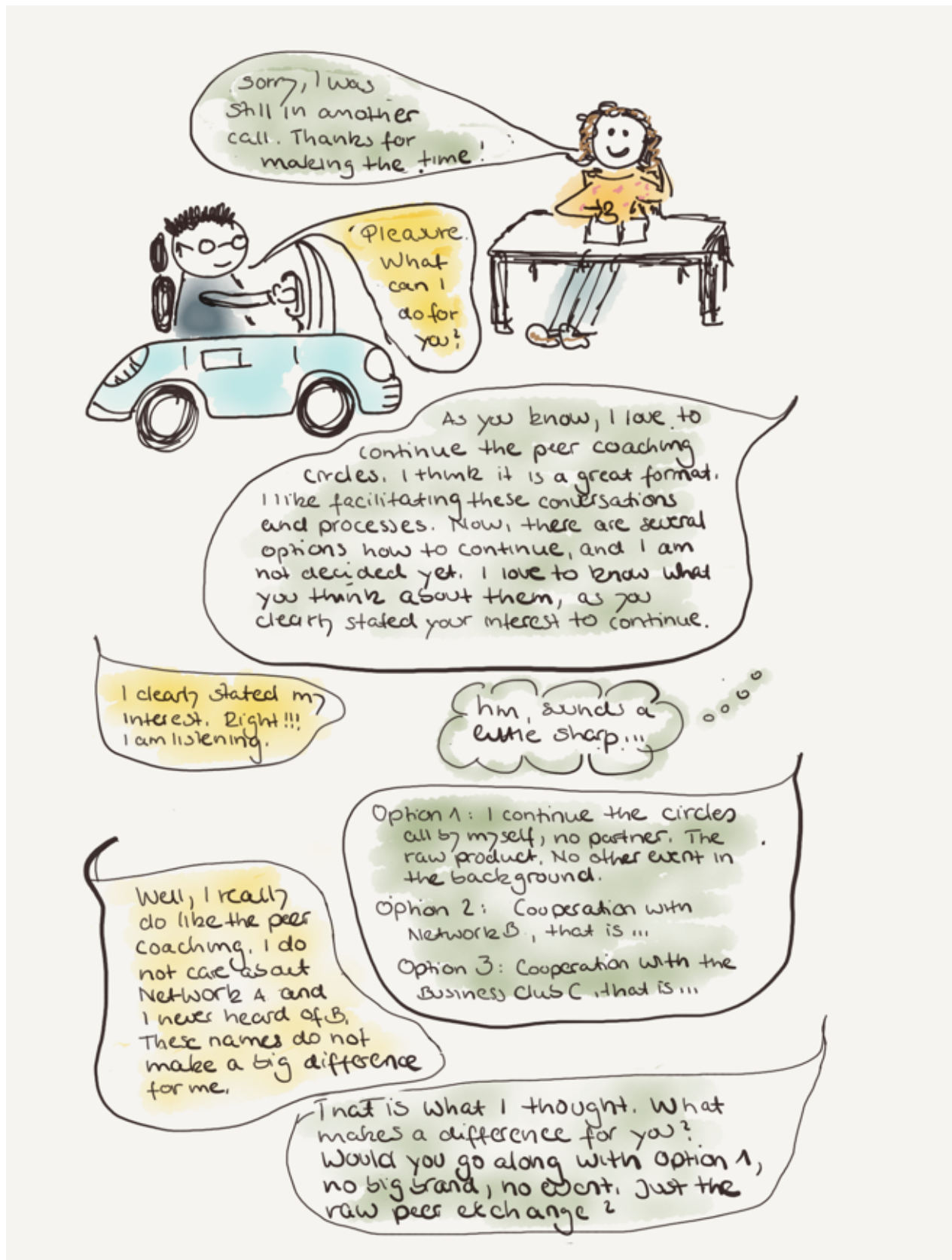
10.1. Prelude

I used to be the facilitator of a peer coaching network of top executives in Hamburg. 12 high rank executives met every second month to talk about personal and organizational problems, and share ideas about how to solve them. I loved to facilitate this group. Unexpectedly, the company that organized these peer meetings and which had hired me as a facilitator, discontinued their activities. They offered that I could take over the peer coaching network myself, under my own company. I said immediately “yes”, as I experienced these meetings to be really beneficial to the people joining them, and I enjoyed facilitating them. I sent a proposal regarding the continuation to the executives who had joined the network. I learned in several discussions with these executives that they loved the facilitated peer coaching. But only at this point, in these discussions I also found out that they especially loved the access to the greater network of colleagues and additional special events. The former organizer offered those in addition to the peer coaching, but I neither would be able to do so nor did I want to.

After receiving the discontinuation message from the former organizer, approximately half of the executives told me that they are really interested in the continuation of these peer network meetings. Around the same time, I contacted two different business networks, checking out if they were interested in cooperating with me. Both signaled interest as for them the network approach we had developed could be an interesting product for their portfolio.

As I was not all sure what to do, I asked Torben, one of the corporate leaders and committed peer networkers, to have a closer look with me into the actual options and give me his feedback. Torben contacted me right after he heard about the discontinuation and said that he really wants to continue with these meetings and that I can count on him if I plan to stick to this idea. I was really interested in his opinion about which path to follow. This is what the following call is all about.

10.2. The Event – Part 1: My Call with Torben





Hmm, the self developer in me would. And that's probably true for most of the executives. I love our meetings. But now, in Corona times, all the training budget is frozen. Fortunately my fee is not payed by HR but by the Marketing budget.

Marketing? Oh, that's interesting. How so ???

I could say, there is a group of powerful and colorful people from different branches. With some I might end up having business with. This story is harder to tell if I join "your" circle.

Ups, it is not only the missing events, it's a different story all together...

Well, with this story you are most likely not the only one. I was not really aware of that. I was focused on the self development shared problem solving part.

To be honest, I have no idea if this budget will be approved again. What about asking the others as well. Why not postponing the decision. Let's meet when it is possible again to meet in person and talk it through ! ! !

That might be a good idea ... the situation has some more aspects than I thought ...

And I am not at all sure if I want this to be a group decision

See you soon!
Stay healthy!

The Event – Part 2: The Email from Torben

Four weeks after this call I get an email from Torben. He regrets not being able to continue the peer coachings, no matter whether it is going to be option A, B or C. He explains that so many things happened due to Corona and he has to focus on other priorities. He hopes that all will turn out well for me and that we see each other soon in another context.

I am deeply surprised at first and disappointed:

All of a sudden, Torben changed his mind. How come? And he does not even call me to tell me about it. He just writes a mail. It's a super friendly mail, but he could have called me.

Later, when I read through the notes I made after our call on May 20th, I see some signals of hesitation which I realise now did not pick up during our call. Signals I ignored. During our conversation, I had some question marks in my mind and a grumbling in my stomach, but I did not ask for further information. For me it was so clear, that he will be on board. All the signals that already showed some signs of this cancellation did not reach me on May 20th. Back then, I was so sure that he would be interested to find a new frame for this peer exchange. My assemblage point, my perception of the situation, did not allow me to be aware of the signals.

10.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Signals and Double Signals

We send signals all the time: the tone of voice we are speaking in, incomplete sentences or movements, body posture, mimicking, eye movements, our way of walking and so on. If a signal goes along with the intended information, then it is a congruent signal. Congruent here means that all communication channels convey the same message.

If the intended, mostly verbal, communication transports a different message than for example the tone of voice, that is called a double signal. This signal comes from the other side of the edge, our X, our not-yet-known identity. I already introduced the concept of edges in chapter 7. We are not aware of these signals. They convey a second message that is not congruent with the message that our identity wants to transmit. We are sending double messages all the time. There is nothing bad about it, it is a natural phenomenon. We always identify stronger with one aspect of the experience and one is further away in dreamland. But this aspect is not silent, it expresses itself as well, in signals.

For example, you are asking a colleague how she likes your idea. She might say "yes, great idea" and her eyes are sparkling – that's a congruent message. But if she says "yes, great idea" and her tone of

voice is kind of sharp or she avoids looking at you or her lips are pressed together, that might be a signal that on the other side of her edge, the less known part of her identity, there is another attitude towards this whole idea. These mixed signals are confusing for the receiver of the information who is receiving two conflicting messages: the explicit verbalized "yes" and a non-explicit but perceptible "no". You as the one receiving the message might feel confused. And your colleague just realizes your confusion and starts to wonder herself.

Mindell writes:

If you are not conscious of your double signals, peoples' reaction to them are likely to surprise you. If you know your signals, you will never be surprised by anyone's response⁷⁹.

Back on the side of the one receiving the message, without awareness of the double signals of the other person, we might just react, we may be confused or disappointed. But if we are aware of the double signals of the other person, we might respond consciously and give feedback to both signals we just perceived separately and help to clarify the situation.

The most successful interventions are those which appreciate and use the conscious and unconscious methods an individual or group is already employing in the moment. These interventions validate the primary process and respond to the secondary process as well. Therefore, it is easier for the individual or the group to allow the enlarging of the identity as it feels less threatening. The information in the secondary process might then be perceived less as opposition, and more as an addition.

These Process Work findings are supported by research in neurobiology. Neurobiologist Gerald Hüther pointed out in an interview that our brain, besides all its neuroplasticity and ability for lifelong learning, actually never learns something totally new. It is not able to do so. It always has to enlarge or make connection to something that it already has learned. Hüther said, that we learn during nine months in the womb how to use our body, even before we are born⁸⁰. This might be one reason people respond usually more positive to a "yes, and ..." sentence than to a "yes, but ..." sentence.

Catch more from the other stories of the person we are interacting with, than our everyday mind allows, in an awareness training. Process Work is a sensory grounded awareness training, and as such is phenomenological, meaning its based on *noticing and following* experience rather than *interpreting* experience. Signals and experiences appear in different channels of perception. To increase awareness, it is necessary to have awareness about the channels of perception that the information arrives in. Often, additional information,

⁷⁹ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

⁸⁰ Ken FM interview with Gerald Hüther, 2018,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzHhHs2bmvg>

other than the intended content, is transported in a less occupied channel. Meaning, a channel that we are not so used to using and therefore are less aware of the information in this channel. For example, I might notice the sound and song of the bird on that tree, more than its actual appearance, even though it is in my visual range of sight.

Usually we are focused on only two or three channels. The visual channel is well trained in most people. In addition to experiencing the world through our eyes, we hear, feel and move. For most people body feelings (proprioception) and movement are less central than seeing or hearing. Two other channels are how we relate to others and how we interact with the world and the world with us.

It is not always easy to really go for perception and unfolding instead of interpretation. I remember my Tai Chi teacher saying that when we really want to experience something, it is better not to assume that we know. When in the knowing state, the danger increases that we use concepts of how things are or what things mean instead of really experiencing the actual moment. We know how a Tai Chi movement should be when we get attacked in a certain way. When this happens, instead of really responding to this specific moment and movement, we think about the concept of how to respond best in this situation and then make the movement according to our "how to"- guide in the mind. Thus, the movement does not happen naturally. It is an ongoing training to really unfold and go with what is happening than with your ready-made interpretation what it means and what should be done now.

Assemblage Point

Arnold Mindell defines the assemblage point as:

the way you identify, assemble and conduct yourself and your sense of reality⁸¹.

Thus, each person's or group's inner assemblage point:

arranges the perceptions and experiences a person focuses on, the flow of information and energy she elicits and, based on that, how she constructs her identity and reality⁸².

Most of the information that is around us just passes by. This is because our assemblage point only filters a small amount of all the available information. We create our own piece of what we call reality. The quantum waves collapse into different variations of our individual worlds. In a conversation for example, each of us marginalizes information that

⁸¹ *The Shaman's Body: A New Shamanism for Transforming Health, Relationships and Community*, Arnold Mindell, 1993

⁸² *Shifting the Assemblage Point: Transformation in Therapy and Everyday Life*, Salome Schwarz, 1996

does not fit into our construction of how the world is. Mindell describes it like this:

We could say that as soon as you enter into a relationship with that view of the world you are focusing on, a particular event comes out of all the potentials because of the interactive nature of the observer and the observed. At that point, you marginalize all the other views⁸³.

Max Schupbach said in a seminar (Kyiv, 2014) that in relationships, having different assemblage points is one of the major problems. I always like to listen to holiday stories of couples. Even the weather report may vary, depending on their assemblage points: one starts running in the cool early morning and the other one gets up at 11am when the sun is already burning.

We experience this phenomenon in our daily interactions and when we are polarized. Polarisation is a big part of what is happening right now in the world, regarding so many topics, like climate change or Covid-19 protection relevance. We filter information and select sources of information that support our point of view. The huge diversity of all kinds of news allows us to live in our own bubble for how we think the world is, stabilized by information of like-minded people. And we think we are right, because there is so much evidence, and all the others are wrong. For me it is hard to imagine that in 2020 there is an increasing number of people that are convinced the earth is a flat disc. It all depends on your assemblage point.

The assemblage point is not a fixed thing. It is contextual and may change over time. But not by choice, rather by an increased awareness and integration of more unknown information that makes the shift happen. Salome Schwarz writes in her dissertation about shifting the assemblage point, that a shift is most likely when we are at our limits. When we feel stuck and have no idea how to deal with a situation. She points out that it is very difficult to be open to extreme-state experiences, because they are frightening, and they challenge us to change the way we see ourselves and life. But if we can manage to go to the limits of an extreme experience and to unfold our feelings and thoughts, shifts can happen⁸⁴.

⁸³ *Quantum Mind: The Edge Between Physics and Psychology*, Arnold Mindell, 2000, S. 235

⁸⁴ *Shifting the Assemblage Point: Transformation in Therapy and Everyday Life*, Salome Schwarz, 1996

10.4. Unfolding and Reflection

My Assemblage Point

My expectations about what I wanted to get out of my conversation with Torben and my expectations regarding Torben's support created my reality. It narrowed my ability to pay attention to the different elements of our communication. My assemblage point was relevant for this conversation.

The fact that Torben was the first to tell me that he is really interested in the continuation of these peer coaching sessions and also his willingness to reflect with me on the different options, supported my assemblage point that whatever happens, he will continue. My intention in this call was to get his view on the HOW. It did not even occur to me that the *if at all* is in question. So, I ignored all signals that were related to this aspect. Actually, without this thesis I would still be surprised by his so-called sudden no.

My assemblage point was kind of unmovable as in my world a commitment is hard to negotiate. I put a lot of pressure on myself to keep a commitment even if it does not feel right any more. I expect the same behavior from others. For sure, this is something to get more relaxed and realistic about. Till now, this is hard wired in my assemblage point and it is not easy for me to get out of something which I said once yes to. In my world, it was unlikely that Torben would not be on board, because he told me he is.

Signals and Double Signals

I am focusing on a phone call. As a Process Worker, I am trained to pay attention to signals. I could have paid extra attention to Torben's tone of voice, pauses, incomplete sentences, the way he structured his sentences. In addition to the information he was intending to convey (intended communication), these other signals might have shown me some additional information he was expressing but was not noticing or intending to convey: his double signals (unintended communication).

I will look at Torben's intended and unintended information in my conversation as far as I am still aware of it today. Foremost, I will take my reaction to Torben's sentences as a guide for mixed messages. In these moments, I might have been reacting to a double signal.

In a coaching, everything is already present in the first five minutes ...

This is one of the sentences I wrote down in my notebook in a seminar with Max & Ellen Schupbach. I try to be really awake in the first interactions of a coaching session, really listen how a question or problem is presented. And be open to what additional information, other than the content, is available. The tone of voice, the sentence structure ... all hints about what process wants to happen. I try to adapt that style to important phone calls and meetings. The good thing is, even

if I miss it the first time, signals repeat themselves in a process that wants to happen. So as a facilitator, coach or just as a dialogue partner, there are several chances to catch something. The prerequisite is curiosity to find out something new and openness to be surprised. The consequence if you miss signals is that you might get a reaction later that surprises you, which is the case here.

Referring to the statement that "everything is already present in the first five minutes," I have to say, it is true for my interaction with Torben as well. When I said right at the beginning that he had clearly stated his interest in the continuation, he repeated that part of my sentence "I clearly stated my interest" in a tone of voice that made me sit up straighter. It was a spoken "yes" but his tone of voice had a little sharpness in it, as if keeping a distance. His sentence said "yes", but in a non-verbal way, a *no*, or at least a question mark was conveyed. A double signal. Probably there was one part saying "yes, I am on board, I like it and I want to continue." Or "yes, it's true that I said back then, that I would be on board." The other side might have said "But it is really dependent on the context and that is not yet clear, so I have to take a look if it makes sense for where I am heading to."

I got the second message only later in his mail. My body somehow noticed the incongruence, it made me sit up straighter. I ignored it, as the content of his words underlined my assumption that he will be part of the new format. The little sharpness did not make sense to me at that time.

The next clear signal: He said clearly that none of the options appeals to all of his parts. ... I did hear his words, but I thought it is just not the right option yet. In hindsight, I hardly can believe that I did not ask further.

I guess he was as uncertain as I was, and so he came up with the suggestion to discuss the options with the whole group at a much later point in time. I assume now, that he wanted to get out of the situation: me slightly pushing and he not really sure and not wanting to offend me. All assumptions. He sent me a mail with a "No" and did not call me, so he avoided the necessity to deal with a disappointed me again. This is what my assemblage point tells me today.

For me one of the main learnings is to pay more attention to my body feelings. If a tone of voice makes me sit more upright, I should take it more seriously and ask instead of assuming or just continuing.

Perhaps I was too invested. Maybe if I had noticed his hesitation with a little more openness, I could have related to him at the place where he stood. Instead, I might have been too pushy from his point of view and thus put him under pressure and enforced his pulling back. In this reflection, I become more aware that my style in this phone call strongly resembles Carola's style in our conversation earlier on in the day. I was kind of a bulldozer in this interaction with Torben, with little success. It is good to be careful with the bulldozer approach, I am full of compassion towards my hesitation to use it.

The other main learning is, that before I can be careful about my bulldozer side, I have to become more aware when I act it out.

11. 5:30 pm: Surfing the Not-Knowing

In this chapter I share one of the many conversations I had in the first months of the Covid-19 limitations where my business and the businesses of so many colleagues shrank significantly. It is about dealing with the not-knowing in these times and our struggle to befriend these *X-energies* that are right in front of our doors. From having to deal with digital techniques to facing the necessity to reinvent our businesses from scratch. It is about our shift of *assemblage points* and the reinventing of not only the business but our whole *identity*. This chapter is also about different ways of dealing with the uncertainty and how to support myself and friends in going through these challenging times, and referring to the concept of *metaskills*.

11.1. Prelude

For years I have been offering once a year together with Melanie, a colleague, an executive training for female managers of a bank. This program, like so many others, is now postponed to the second half of the year. Melanie offers Presence trainings, coachings and also works as an actress. She built up a successful training and coaching business over time and used to be fully booked throughout the year. My business is down but Melanie's contracts are mostly gone due to the pandemic restrictions – in two of her three professions. No trainings and no theater. Melanie is an expert in all facets of the topic of Presence. She wrote a book about it and studied this topic in depth – the inner attitude of Presence, the many ways of breathing, as well as performing on stage.

Melanie developed a new marketing profile for herself to address new coaching clients, the only part of her business that is still working. I am one of the people she asked for feedback about it. I have sent a warm and very frank feedback to her last version of her profile a couple of days ago. I have the impression she marginalizes her competences and experiences, in order to please a more digital oriented audience.

11.2. The Event

After the call with Dirk I take a little break on the balcony. Breathing and having a cup of tea. What a day ... Carola, Dirk and the team, Torben ... When I reach for my phone, it indicates a missed call from Melanie.

I remember that we have a loose appointment for today. I feel some kind of exhaustion, and at the same time I am so full of adrenaline due to the busy-ness of this day. Thus, I just call her back. I do not speak much in these 30 minutes. Melanie gives me an update of her current situation,

which is full of grief, uncertainty and anger at the world that forces her to rebuild her business and to learn new skills. I just try to listen as well as I am able to and support her.

I have the feeling of talking with two persons. Her known trainer-self and some kind of a warrior-Melanie. She is moaning and furiously addressing the things that she does not like but she is already flirting with some kind of new identity. I try to understand her grief and take her side. I have to remind myself continuously to really take her pain seriously and meet her where she is. Today, it would be easier for me to just support the emerging part of Melanie, her warrior energy that is going to conquer the new land and befriend the X-energies over time. I strongly feel the emerging identity in the call and have to stop myself from saying sentences like "Who, if not you, is going to make the best out of this situation." A sentence like this would marginalize the suffering part of Melanie. And I feel her suffering. Hearing her saying and deeply meaning a sentence like "Does the world need my skills anymore?" is heartbreaking for me. I dare to say to her, that for me, her moaning feels



full of energy. She ends the call with the sentence: "I have to hurry up. I have an appointment with the new leader of the art school. She is interested in having some kind of Presence training."

During my conversation with Melanie I write down some of her sentences and a couple of keywords. In this drawing, I picked the ones that in my personal view give a taste of the story Melanie tells about her assemblage *point*, her identity and her current being in this world.

11.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Not-Knowing and Uncertainty

Dealing with not-knowing and uncertainty are big topics right now. Our lives seem to get more dynamic and more complex every day. Internet and digitalization permeate all areas of human life and change society, economy and culture. Crises like the actual Corona crisis not only show us the interconnectedness of the planet but also the volatility of our existing system: from a virus that appeared first in a Chinese province to a global pandemic with severe health issues and death. The result of fighting against it will probably be economic deaths of many companies and small businesses. This will shake up the economy of whole countries.

We face unprecedented challenges on a global scale. If you look at the current climate debate, there are many voices saying that the human species can be lucky to have 100 more years on this planet. Climate researchers call this decade the make-or-break window for avoiding temperature rises of more than 1.5 or 2 °C:

If carbon emissions are not drastically reduced by 2030, we will be entering uncharted territory, including the possibility (...) of passing irreversible tipping points ...⁸⁵.

Meaning the destruction of an atmosphere in which humans can live in. The Corona crisis demonstrates that CO₂ increase definitely is also caused by humans. Now as airplane traffic is reduced and factories are closed, there are some signals that nature is recovering. There is a highly controversial discussion about the implications and future forecasts, because so many things are unknown.

Not-knowing leads to uncertainty. And uncertainty is mostly accompanied by fear. Humans are hard-wired to perceive uncertainty rather as a threat than as a chance to grow and find new ways of doing things. Since the times of the sable-tooth-tiger little has changed in our human operating system. If there is movement in a bush, better run. It could be a tiger. Don't check out if it is only the wind. It could be your last action in life. Nathalie Knapp, a German philosopher, points out that

⁸⁵ *The Scientific Events that Shaped the Decade*, Nature Magazine, 2019, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03857-x>

a sudden change in a complex system can be a catastrophe or an anastrophe (a counter term to catastrophe: a turn for the better). The likelihood is the same, but we usually never hear the second term.

In the climate discussion, we see all the typical responses to fear coming out of uncertainty. There is a rush to control or rather pretending to be in control which goes along with referring to experts; or a rush to action which is seen in some climate packages with little proven effect. There is also resistance which becomes visible in denial and words like *climate hysteria*, meaning, "It is not all that bad, people are just exaggerating the consequences".

Some people give in or cling to catastrophic thinking: "We cannot avoid the climate catastrophe as most people are not willing to go for the needed changes. At least we should face it as well as we can with dignity and doing our best."

On the other side, there are views that embrace more confidence. One argument from this side is, that not only is global warming increasing, but also the human capacity to deal with unprecedented challenges:

The 2010s saw breakthroughs in artificial intelligence via deep-learning technologies, in life sciences through the reprogramming of mature cells into stem cells, in physics with gravitational-wave detection and progress on quantum computing. While this was remarkable, now with new knowledge, and a renewed dedication to social and environmental responsibility, the 2020s must be transformational", write the editors of the Nature magazine⁸⁶.

Some spiritual groups keep referring to a recent frequency increase on planet earth that enables an easier access to an increased capacity for a global awareness.

Each uncertain situation is also an opportunity. Nathalie Knapp points out:

Most things in life are painful and fulfilling⁸⁷.

Margaret J. Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, authors and organizational consultants, wrote:

We saw life in motion and called it uncontrollable. We saw life's unending newness and called it unpredictable. We saw life's unceasing desires for discovery - we saw the dance - and called it disruptive⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ *The Scientific Events that Shaped the Decade*, Nature Magazine, 2019, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03857-x>

⁸⁷ Talk at *Pioneers of change*: Nathalie Knapp, March 2020

⁸⁸ *A Simpler Way*, Margaret J. Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers, 1999

Nathalie Knapp uses a beautiful picture. She says, as human beings we are stretched in time. We draw from the past and from the future and experience things in the now. That's the only place where we are able to act, standing on the shoulders of all evolution⁸⁹.

We all are creating this future with what we are doing. The story we tell ourselves has an enormous effect as it creates our reality, informs our doing and therefore the future we live into.

Zuversicht and Story Telling

Reading about not-knowing and uncertainty and the human negativity-bias I became more aware of the difference between optimism and confidence. Optimism means faith that things will turn out well. Yet because of this faith we might forget to act. *Zuversicht* (the English translation is confidence but it's not quite the same, I guess) means facing the situation and thinking about how to live and act well within it, in the hope that acting well in this situation is possible. Confronted with the not-knowing – *Zuversicht*, seems to be a more successful strategy than pure optimism. Both terms include an attitude of hope.

Hannah Arendt, a Jewish, German American political theorist and publicist, says about hope in an interview:

That we may have hope has to do with the fact that life is unpredictable. And it is only because we are all so unpredictable that even the most unlikely topics are possible. The uncertainty of the future is the best thing we have.

This is the way many artists and entrepreneurs of start-ups look at the unpredictability and uncertainty of our times. Seeing these events as opportunities for creating something new, the path towards the new may include disruption of the old. Many of them see uncertainty not as the beginning of something bad but as the beginning of something new. It is risky, no doubt. According to Forbes Magazine nine out of ten start-ups fail. So, there must be *Zuversicht* and hope involved in the story they tell themselves about their ventures:

Anna Yona, founder of *Wildlings*, a company that creates barefoot shoes for children, had no idea about shoe making. She just did not find adequate shoes for her children, who did not like conventional shoes. She is in her fifth year of business and profitable⁹⁰.

Muhammad Yunus, social entrepreneur and banker, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the Grameen Bank and pioneering the concepts of microcredit and microfinance, says in an interview that he owes his success largely to his not knowing anything about the banking business. He succeeded through doing everything differently than conventional banks. They were focusing on men as customers, he

⁸⁹ Talk at *Pioneers of Change*: Nathalie Knapp, March 2020

⁹⁰ *Starting a Revolution*, Naomi Ryland and Lisa Jaspers, 2019

went to women. They were focusing on rich, he focused on the poor. He said that he could try because he did not know⁹¹.

The founders of AirBnB where just looking for a cheap way to sleep while they were travelling. In just 12 years the platform has grown from nothing to a \$30 billion company. Critics say Airbnb's rise has come at a huge cost to urban life, definitely it disrupted the hotel business.

In terms of roles, mainstream companies and businesses which are part of the powerful establishment meet the risk-taking entrepreneur. The first ones have a lot to lose and the second ones a lot to gain. They are therefore more radical and risk-taking in following their organizational myth (see chapter 9).

Buddhism and Taoism teach us, and Process Work as well: The only thing that is constant is change. We read it, we nod. We even experience it constantly on different scales. During the life-span of my grandparents the sequence of times of stability and times of huge changes and crisis were called a normal life. During their lives, they lost everything due to wars, sudden death of loved ones, fires ...and had to start over again and again. These changes happened to them. Give up or restart – there was not much choice back then. While I am living in a rather safe place, so far, I am aware that many people live in war zones, refugee camps, extreme poverty and climate challenges, right now. They are confronted with the choice *give up or restart*, sometimes daily.

These options are clear and force the individual to make a decision. We humans have a hard time in making bold decisions towards the new, the not yet known. Even when faced with a life-threatening situation, people tend to resist change despite knowing the repercussions. Studies reveal that when heart disease patients, who had undergone traumatic bypass surgery, were told if they did not adjust their lifestyle they would die, or at best undergo the life-saving procedure again, only 9% modified their behavior⁹².

The core of the challenge is changing the behavior patterns. Our brains are extremely effective in tenaciously maintaining the status quo. Patterns that worked for us so far are hard to change. Having said that, at the same time we wouldn't be human if we couldn't change. Human society is one of constant change and reinvention. We evolved from single cell organisms over eons, so adaptation is in our DNA. As modern humans, we are geared to life-long learning and growth. Meanwhile it's a proven fact that our brain has the capacity to adjust and build new connections until the day we die. Our brain cells are continually forming new connections, restructuring our perceptions and physiology over time. This process of neuroplasticity happens thousands of times a day, giving us enormous potential to change, if we engage with "discipline, longing and grace", as Amy Mindell pointed out.

⁹¹ *Not Knowing*, Steven D'Souza and Diana Renner, 2018

⁹² *Change or Die: The Three Keys to Change at Work and in Life*, Alan Deutschmann, 2007

This path of changing our own behavioral habits can be supported by telling ourselves a different story about who we are. In this process, we might dare to look with fresh eyes at our perceived identity, and our emerging identity. We might walk through the open doors of the things we are not familiar with or afraid of and find out more about ourselves. Author Michael Lewis wrote about the stories we tell ourselves:



As I've gotten older, I would say starting in my mid-to-late 20s, I could not help but notice the effect on people of the stories they told about themselves. If you listen to people, if you just sit and listen, you'll find that there are patterns in the way they talk about themselves. There's the kind of person who is always the victim in any story that they tell. Always on the receiving end of some injustice. There's the person who is always kind of the hero of every story she

tells. There's the smart person; he delivers the clever put down there. There are lots of versions of this, and you've got to be very careful about how you tell these stories because it starts to become you. You are, in the way you craft your narrative, kind of crafting your character. And so, I did at some point decide, "I am going to adopt self-consciously as my narrative, that I'm the happiest person anybody knows." And it is amazing how happy-inducing it is⁹³.

But first you have to let in the option that your identity could be different than you think today.

Metaskills: Compassion and Beginner's Mind

Metaskills refer to the concept that the attitude and essence of a coach or facilitator or leader or listener manifest themselves in the process she is assisting to happen. Our deepest convictions and feelings towards life manifest themselves in the process we facilitate:

The subtle way of being the therapist (coach, listener) can be examined, identified and actually considered to be skills

writes Judi MacDonald in reference to Amy Mindell's book *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy*. The term *metaskill* also refers to the ability to

⁹³ Michael Lewis on the Crafts of Writing, Friendship, Coaching, Happiness and More, Tim Ferris Show # 427, 2020, <https://tim.blog/2020/05/01/michael-lewis/>

consciously use these attitudes while interacting with others. In Amy Mindell's video about metaskills the professor says:

Skills don't happen in isolation. Their usefulness depends on the feeling behind them⁹⁴.

It is about perceiving our current feelings from moment to moment. And at the same time having the ability to move fluidly between them to be able to use emerging emotions as useful information. The facilitator might use her feelings to make a secondary process of the client more tangible for the client⁹⁵. Metaskills are innate in every person, our own presence is a metaskill. To be able to use them more consciously in interaction with others requires awareness and practice.

In this context, I want to highlight two out of the broad range of metaskills: compassion and beginner's mind. I talked about the metaskill of eldership already in chapter 7.

Compassion in Buddhism is understood as:

[the] trembling or the quivering of the heart in response to pain⁹⁶.

It is a deep understanding of pain through a deeply felt contact to one's own pain. In psychotherapy compassion means seeking to understand the nature, the texture of another person's feelings. It means really trying to share the world of the other by feeling the other's feeling in yourself. Process Work's view on compassion is based upon these descriptions but adds another ingredient, writes Amy Mindell⁹⁷:

... nurturing, caring for, and attending in a loving way to what is happening. This means attending both to what we are aware of and what we are not aware of and helping these experiences to unfold.

She points out that compassion becomes a metaskill when a facilitator can relate and feel with and helps to unfold what the client is aware of and at the same time has the same capacity for the experiences, feelings, thoughts that the client is not yet aware of or even against. A compassionate facilitator can embrace both and let the person have her full experience⁹⁸.

To really open ourselves up to the wanted and unwanted, aware and unaware experiences of a client the prerequisite is to be in the

⁹⁴ *Consensus Reality Methods: Metaskills*, Amy Mindell, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeOn7qX0z-8>

⁹⁵ *Metaskills – The Spiritual Art of Therapy*, Judi Mac Donald // "Moon in the Water", Amy Mindell, 1991, <http://www.sonic.net/~billkirn/metaskills.html>

⁹⁶ *The Nature of Compassion*, Sharon Salzberg, 1995, <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/the-nature-of-compassion/>

⁹⁷ *Moon in the Water*, Amy Mindell, 1991

⁹⁸ *Moon in the Water*, Amy Mindell, 1991

interaction with an open mind. Process Work calls this *beginner's mind*. It refers to the ability to follow the process without judgement or evaluation with unbiased support of the process and the curious question in mind: "What process wants to happen here right now?". It is an open and playful attitude towards the current moment, being open to the unknown and not having ready-made concepts in mind to interpret what is happening. It is about being open for the subtle signals of the secondary process⁹⁹.

Einstein referred to this metaskill calling it "being surprised by life itself". He said:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. [She or] he to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.

I had to copy it from the text about multi-dimensional leadership from the International Association of Process Oriented Psychology (IAPOP) website because I think it is a stunning quote¹⁰⁰.

A lot is written in recent times about the art of listening with a beginner's mind and with compassion. Arnold Mindell wrote:

It is virtually impossible to separate belief from method. Thus, the belief that everything necessary for a solution can be found now in the person asking for help is already an intervention¹⁰¹.

This is good guidance for any conversation. Max Schupbach once said in a seminar:

The problem is not the problem. The problem is what you call the solution.

The attitude that there is something to fix and you know how to do it, is the problem. If you are aware that the client offers a problem and the inherent solution is maybe not yet conscious in the very same moment, the approach you use will be different. Then the support is not about fixing but about unfolding the client's inherent but yet still emerging solution. To be able to do that is easier if you have a beginner's mind, and compassion for the other person's process.

⁹⁹ Kriterien für die Diplom-Prüfungen am IPA, 2000

¹⁰⁰ Multi-Dimensional Process Oriented Leadership, <https://iapop.com/facilitation/>

¹⁰¹ The Year One, Arnold Mindell, 1989

11.4. Unfolding and Reflection

Shift of Assemblage Point, Roles and the Emerging Identity

I witnessed 30 minutes of a process that probably will change Melanie's assemblage point (see chapter 10), a shift of identity. This happens more likely when we are at our limits. Melanie used to have a strong identity as a successful trainer, coach and actress in the offline world. She has been fully booked since I have known her. In our call, she asked herself if the world needs her skills anymore. She is still going through a time of not-knowing with huge uncertainty and probably has to reinvent herself again. She did that before. Due to the volatility of the theater world, she built up a training and coaching business when she became a mother, in order to have more time for her children. I felt her entrepreneurial energy strongly in our call. It was in the background, her secondary process, something that is still emerging. The suffering of her known identity was in the foreground.

In this reflection, I try to relate her statements to the roles in the field. (See chapter 5 and 11 to read more about role theory).

Melanie's process is unique if we look at it purely as her personal experience in her context. But the roles don't just belong to her. I know most of them very well myself. There were signals from her known identity and there were signals from her emerging new self – the X-energies, that are still unknown or not wanted, but are already coming forward as a new part of herself. The main role polarity that I see is:

Known identity: **Expert** for trainings, coachings in the field of Presence.
X-Energy/Emerging identity: **Beginner** in the digital field.

In this phase of her process she was full of self-doubt and she looked at the world from an emotional perspective full of anger, despair and fear. She strongly marginalized her core skills and overemphasized the digital skills. Shown in sentences like:

- “Does the world need my skills anymore?”
- “My old profile sounds so arrogant. So, self-assured. I have no clue about digital trainings”.
- “How could I do this new stuff all by myself? I need a team, somebody for marketing to support me”.

And going a little deeper into the roles:

Known identity: **Successful, established business woman** with a fully booked calendar.

- “My revenue is down to zero. My schedule is empty.”
- “Does the world need my skills anymore?”
- “Presence trainings need meetings in person. I cannot do this online!”

X-Energy/Emerging identity: **Entrepreneur**, building up businesses from scratch with *Zuversicht*. She did that before.

- “I have plenty of time for myself now. I want to offer a course for Graceful Ageing. Online and offline.”
- “I have to hurry up. I have an appointment with the new leader of the art school. She is interested in having some kind of Presence training.”
- Melanie's tone of voice was energetic throughout the conversation. Even her moaning sounded full of energy.

Known identity: **Offline-focused** trainer and coach

- “I never spent more than one hour a day in front of the computer. I don't like it. It's depressing.”
- “I love meeting my clients and my audience in person. I am not an accountant, doing computer stuff all day long.”

X-Energy/Emerging identity: Trainer and coach for Presence in **digital and offline formats**

- Melanie's new profile polishes her digital experiences.
- “I want to offer a course for Graceful Ageing. Online and offline.”
- “How could I do this new stuff all by myself? I need a team, somebody for marketing to support me.”

These roles were all taking to me and through me in these 30 minutes. Fortunately, I am working in a similar field and they sounded familiar. These roles are part of the field of transformation right now in the trainer and coaching scene.

Metaskills of Compassion and Beginner's Mind

Compassion

In the conversation, I needed to stay focused on *feeling with* her instead of convincing her that her skills are more needed than ever, which I believe. They just might need to be offered additionally in a different, more digital, way. I told her my thoughts already in my feedback email regarding her new profile. It became obvious in our call that she did not quite buy into my assumptions.

In these 30 minutes, I had an inner struggle. I wanted to really feel with her but on the other hand, for me, her warrior energy of jumping into the unavoidable new challenges was very strong. The thought: “If somebody is going to survive this phase then its her” came to my mind. Fortunately, I could resist telling her this. In the state she was in, it could have been an offense as it would have marginalized the suffering of her

more known identity, which was also very strong in our call. Instead I connected to my own uncertainty and not-knowing in order to feel with her.

A Process Work definition of compassion includes feeling into the known identity and supporting the unfolding of the new, emerging identity which was very apparent for me in our call.

Beginner's Mind

I tried to be open, looking with a beginner's mind, not pushing her, not giving her good advice, remembering that I have no idea about her process. Trying to understand, feel and frame her process instead. Help her to develop more awareness of what she is already doing and creating.

When I look at my decrease in revenues in business through Covid, I don't feel despair or fear any more. At first, I was confused and afraid as well. A full schedule turns to a really spacious one in a few days. On May 20th, I already felt a lot of relief and freedom.

I reinvented my business identity quite a few times in my life. I sense it is about time to do it again. I have had this feeling for about a year now. Probably the implications of the pandemic will help me to act on it. My personal process made it tempting for me to connect with Melanie's emerging identity and her warrior energy of reinventing herself again. And it made it at the same time harder to connect to her despair and pain in that moment. Especially, as connecting to pain is one of my learning fields.

I got the impression she is not running away from her challenges but really takes a lot of time to address her pain in her newly gained free time and tries to find ways through it, not around it. I could do more of that myself.

Running through this reflection and looking at the known and the emerging identities of Melanie and myself through the lens of Process Work, I like to add a quote from Charles Eisenstein, a philosopher, activist and author:

Before they are able to enter a new story, most people and probably most societies as well, must first navigate the passage out of the old. In between the old and the new there is an empty space. It is a time when the lessons and learnings of the old story are integrated. Only when that work has been done is the old story really complete. Then, there is nothing than the pregnant emptiness from which all being comes. Returning to the space between stories, we can choose from freedom and not from habit¹⁰².

¹⁰² *The More Beautiful World our Hearts Know is Possible*, Charles Eisenstein, 2013

12. 6 pm: Breathing, Cooking, Relating



Time for a walk in the small park next door. When I do so much mental screen work, I have to move my body a lot to feel grounded. When I come home from my walk, Uwe, my partner, is already there. We cook together. Before the pandemic, we only cooked on the weekends. Now we prepare food almost every evening, eat together and talk.

Uwe is also a consultant and trainer, and in earlier so-called normal times we saw each other mainly on the weekends. Either he was travelling or I was. Now we are both at home in the evenings mostly without any plans. Our relationship is changing. Most of the little joys and annoyances of a day I discuss with him in the evening and get some frowning and laughing. We are getting to know much more about each other. In our whole relationship, we have never spent so much time together. Fortunately, we both enjoy it. In short, he hears some of the things I have written so far. I am in a really good mood, a full but exciting day. Crossing the edge with Carola and the colorful meeting with SDC. Uwe tells what he experienced during the day. The little big things make a difference.

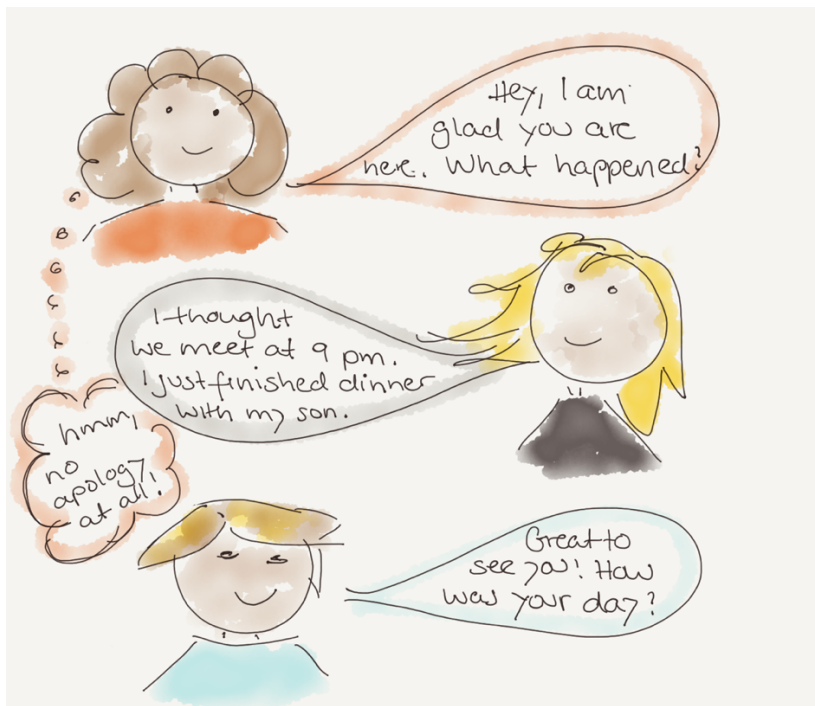
13. 8 pm: Dealing with Difficult Emotions

After we have talked so much about *X-energies*, this chapter is about how we approach, meet, and interact with the *X-energies*. I also talk about our reaction to them, which often leads to *altered states*. This chapter focuses on finding the gems hidden in these difficult emotions. It also deals with conflicts and how to deal with them from a Process Work perspective.

13.1. Prelude

Digital meetings with friends open up the possibility to see friends who live at different places, a clear advantage of these settings. Today I have an appointment at 8 pm on Zoom with Nele, a close friend who lives also in Hamburg and Tanja, a friend of ours who moved to Berlin a year ago. Tanja is on time. We start chatting about life in Corona times. Since Nele did not show up five minutes into our call, Tanja tries to call our missing friend, but cannot reach her. I try the same after 10 minutes, no result. Tanja sends her a Whats-App message and we wonder if there is a reason to worry, but continue our conversation as there is no response at all. It is some minutes after 9pm. Tanja and myself are close to saying "Good-Bye", when Nele joins our call.

13.2. The Event





I am angry after I quit Zoom and I am venting in my mind:

How could she just appear when it feels right for her? I had a full day as well and was on time. I even hurried up with dinner to be on time. Not even an apology for being late. What a selfish person. And Tanja, avoiding any heat and bad vibes. Ignoring what does not fit into the picture of harmony. The first sentence: "Great to see you, how was your day." Incredible, as if it would be the most normal thing to be an hour late!

I tend to suppress negative feelings often, but as today is thesis day, I sit with this anger and engage with it. I have talked myself into a rage, I feel it like hot lava in my stomach and breast. An inner voice tells me:

Come on – it is just your friend being late. There is nothing to be angry about. Don't behave like a child!

But today, I am not willing to bypass these negative emotions. I accept that this reaction may be childish, but it is my reaction. I just let the hot rush flood over me, silently. I allow myself to be angry because of so-called nothing. After the heat waves calm down, sadness remains. I feel

hurt. Not seen, not appreciated as a friend. This call was not as important to her as it was for me. She did not check times and maybe she even pretended to not have checked, because she consciously did not give it the priority.

I am not sure whether it is the disappointment that she probably lied to us or that she just seemed to not care at all about being late, no need to be sorry for keeping us waiting. Finally, I discover it is not about this call. It is just another of these moments where I do not feel treated with warmth and care as a friend but rather as a designated spectator of her life. I am also disappointed about myself that I did not treat myself with warmth and care and did not find a way to speak up. I need to further process my relationship issue with her. This incident just opened a door that I have ignored for quite a while.

I feel exhausted. It has been such a swirling, energetic day and now this. Amazing how one negative switch has so much power. Just pushes the smiles of the day in the background. I am not done with this, but I need to get some fresh air. I hope Uwe will join me, I need loving company. It is clear that I have to talk with Nele about our friendship. I notice, that I already feel burdened to have a conflict talk on me to-do-list. I have a hard time with taking my side fully in conflicts with loved ones in a non-aggressive, related way.

Thank you, thesis, for adding this training camp to my day.

13.3. Concepts Applied in this Chapter

Altered States and Dealing with Unpleasant Emotions

Arnold Mindell stated:

The central element behind all Process Work applications is the concept of nature, and that the flow of even painful or difficult events can become useful if we follow them exactly, compassionately, and with awareness¹⁰³.

This sounds encouraging to me.

Usually we are not really prepared for relationship problems and fall into an altered state the moment we encounter difficult emotions like anger, fear and aggression in ourselves and in others. Thus, working on these aspects of our personality is good preparation for handling conflict. One reason why people get blocked in relationship conflicts is that they do not allow themselves to feel or bring out the not socially favored emotions, statements or needs as they are often considered as infantile or inappropriate.

¹⁰³ *The Leader as Martial Artist: Techniques and Strategies for Resolving Conflict and Creating Community*, Arnold Mindell, 1992

Arnold Mindell suggested to experiment with changing the self-image until it corresponds to the emotions and needs in the background as they are evidently part of who we are. He pointed out that maintaining an image in which there is no place for these emotions will freeze the person into an altered state whenever the person gets into conflict. As these emotions are not allowed into the everyday identity. Mindell wrote: “

One way to understand conflict is to understand that it forces us to integrate the feelings behind our altered states into our identity¹⁰⁴.

If we get angry or if we avoid pain we need to allow ourselves that this is how we react sometimes and that its information is as valid as any other feeling.

An altered state is a state of consciousness which is different from the state connected to your so-called normal identity – Process Work's term for this is *primary identity*. For example, if ordinary waking consciousness is the normal state, altered states are more secondary to us – less familiar, not as connected to our everyday primary identity. These might include dreaming, music, dancing, nature walks, drunkenness or drugged states, as well as states centered around emotions like anger, panic, depression. Meditation can also induce altered states¹⁰⁵.

The first step in this process is staying with that feeling. Recognizing and allowing that I am angry, sad, disappointed. Neuroscientific research has also shown that when we try to suppress so-called bad emotions, our ability to experience positive feelings also decreases, even more than the negative ones¹⁰⁶.

In his book *Sitting in the Fire* Arnold Mindell wrote:

If you work on yourself or the conflicts in the world, you are slowly led to the conclusion that negativity and aggression are as central to human nature as love. Being good or bad no longer seems to be the problem. You begin to think that the spirit, or whatever you call the origin of life, is more than opposing forces; it is the process of movement between the polarities. Eventually, it erases them. You no longer think it's a sin to be angry, or that only bad people raise their voices. You understand that everybody is needed to help express what's in the air¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁴ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

¹⁰⁵ *City Shadows*, Arnold Mindell, 1988
and *Shamanism, Process Work and Extreme States*, Kate Jobe, 2001

¹⁰⁶ *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*, Second Edition (English Edition), James J. Gross, 2013

¹⁰⁷ *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell, 1995

Similarly, in Rumi's well-known poem *The Guest House*, the necessity of being open to all voices inside of us is beautifully described. In Rumi's view each emotion is a guide sent from beyond.

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

(Jalaluddin Rumi, translation by Coleman Barks)

The Deep Democracy philosophy is referring to this very attitude that focuses on the awareness of voices that are both central (usually what we call the culturally accepted emotions) and marginal (the one that we do not like to be connected to). This concept aims at helping the various parts of a group or an individual come forward and interact with each other, including those parts that have been silenced or seen as disturbing or not wanted:

Deep democracy is our sense that the world is here to help
us become our entire selves, and that we are here to help
the world become whole.

wrote Arnold Mindell. No matter if the group is an internal or an external group process. As internal and external are anyhow related.

So, there is no good and no bad voice. Just voices. But that is hard to live. All the voices are part of our entire self, the loving ones and the angry ones. Most of us avoid conflict and mistrust our own aggression, believing that if we get angry, someone will get hurt or might lose control. Or we ourselves get stuck in the altered state of anger. So, it is essential,

in order to avoid suppression, to get more familiar with this state. To get trained how to use our own state of anger or despair as an information that belongs to us but also to the larger field and to be able to deal with other people's anger or despair.

Arnold Mindell recommends therefore two first steps in working with a conflict, if you can: avoid it, and avoid identifying with only one side. Conflict work begins with being afraid, avoiding the fight, mistrusting our altered states, and waiting until we can identify with all the parts in combat. Therefore, inner work on the conflict is necessary to create a detached position from which to enter the conflict later. It is about working with our altered states, with our fears, anger and dizziness. Only when we know these states from the inside, we might be able to enter into the conflict and process the tension to an insightful conclusion¹⁰⁸.

It might be good to leave a heated situation, and get used to how to deal with intense emotions. Meeting them, not suppressing them and not acting them out immediately. Meeting them, inviting them and finding what they want to guide us to, like Rumi said. Then acting the findings out in the outer conflict, as over time only working on conflicts inwardly, will not create sustainable change.

Below you find an exercise to work on relationship conflict. It is an adaption of an exercise of Max and Ellen Schupbach in the seminar *Relationship Dojo* in Amsterdam in April 2012. It is made for any kind of disturbance in a relationship. This is the exercise I did later on, to work on my reaction in regard to Nele's behavior and my anger, which you will find in the reflection part. I love the Process Work exercises around conflict, as for me, they usually offer some surprising insights into the conflict.

Process Work exercise: working on a conflict by yourself

Part 1: Dreaming into the Disturbance

- 1) Describe your relationship disturbance. Take a relationship disturbance and describe it. This could be a direct confrontation or a general sense of doubt about a signal or behavior.
- 2) Dream into the *other*. What is the very thing that is disturbing you? Make a hand movement for it. Do not describe your reaction but the actual energy that causes your disturbance. Drop all content and just go with the hand movement. Play with it, make it bigger, let it move you, dance with it till you have a new mood and a possible new insight.
- 3) Use the insight: How can you use that insight generally or in this relationship?

¹⁰⁸ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

Part 2: The Unknown

- 1) Discover your own dreaming. Look at the disturbance, and dream into it again. To what unintended communication/vibe/feeling from your side does it correspond? Hypothesize, even if to begin with it feels wrong. How do you unintentionally “encourage” the very disturbance?
- 2) Discover this deep part of you! When you have found it, play with it and amplify it as a ghost role in your field, until you understand it as a wonderful and deep part of who you are, that has been marginalized by you! Unfold it. Walk like that part. Talk like that part. Dance like it.
- 3) How do you need to identify more with the essence of that part, live it even more, or more consciously? What would change, how would you be different? Appreciate this about yourself, to assist you to bring it out more!
- 4) Advise yourself on the relationship issue! From the viewpoint of that part, look at the relationship issue. Give yourself some advice!

Tara Brach, an American psychologist, author and teacher of Buddhist meditation, calls her meditation approach towards working with unpleasant emotions *RAIN*. It works very similar to the Process Work approach. She suggests opening up to the actual feelings with the whole body, mind and heart and have the courage to really feel what is going on, right now, inside of you¹⁰⁹:

It does not mean that we say to ourselves: 'This situation is okay as it is', and at the same time we don't really mean it. This is a form of resignation. It is not about breathing the unwanted emotions away and turning towards more favorable emotions. That is not the purpose of this meditation practice. That would be bypassing the experience, bypassing the intensity of the emotion and ignoring our 'guide from beyond'.

Brach suggests a five-step approach in the very moment, *right now*, when we notice we are triggered by something. The first thing is pausing to stop your reaction pattern. As Arnold Mindell is also pointing out. This pause between the trigger and your reaction gives you the freedom to choose your behavior and not act automatically.

Victor Emil Frankl, an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, who survived four different concentration camps during the second world war, including Auschwitz, once said:

¹⁰⁹ “Genuine Acceptance”, Tara Brach, Dharma Talk, August 26, 2009 and <https://www.tarabrach.com/rain/>

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom¹¹⁰.

Tara Brach's RAIN meditation:

After the pause, it is about going into the emotion:



Recognize what is happening with a clear intention to go there and sit with it. That leads to an immediate softening of the momentary feelings, it is a conscious turning towards.

Allow the experience to be and engage with curiosity to find out what is there, no need to breathe it away, just allowing it to be. Allowing creates a pause that makes it possible to deepen attention.

Investigate with interest and care, letting go into what is there and find out more about it. You might ask yourself: What most wants attention? How am I experiencing this in my body? What am I believing? What does this vulnerable place want from me? What does it most need? It is important to not only think about it, but bring your primary attention to the sensory grounded information in the body.

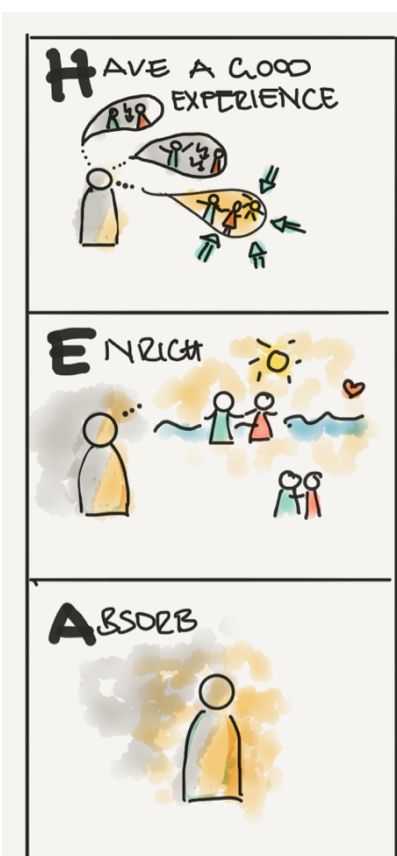
Nurture what you find with self-compassion. Self-compassion begins to naturally arise in the moments when you recognize you are suffering. Try to sense what the wounded, frightened or hurting place inside you most needs, and then offer some gesture of active care that might address this need. Experiment and

see which intentional gesture of kindness most helps to comfort, soften or open your heart. It might be a mental whisper of self-love or gently placing a hand on the heart or cheek. This supports the integration of some aspect of yourself that you did not like so much before.

¹¹⁰ ... trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen - Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager, Victor E. Frankl, 1998

Tara Brach, like Arnold Mindell, emphasizes that this is a continuous awareness practice¹¹¹. We can train ourselves to work with those emotions. They might appear around your *edges* – secondary processes that are not easy to integrate. For example, one of my edges is to state my personal needs to people who are close and powerful (friends, teachers). The edges and the attached emotions do not vanish all of a sudden. We just get more relaxed around them and know better how to meet them¹¹². (More about edges in chapter 7).

Dr. Rick Hanson, a neuropsychologist, author and expert in neuroplasticity, encourages his clients and readers to not only deal with the bad emotions that are more likely to occur according to the brain's negativity bias. He advocates working on changing your brain by using the very fact that “neurons that fire together, wire together”. That is an active doing. We can train ourselves to let the positive emotions sink in more. As a prerequisite, we need to be really aware of them and feel them. Here the embodiment topic from the beginning of this thesis comes in again. He calls his exercise HEAL:



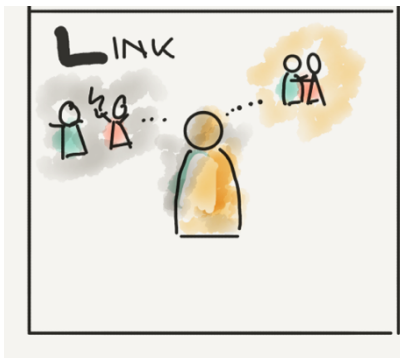
Have a good experience: Remember where you had a great situation around that topic, where you dealt well with the situation. Let it sink in for at least 10 to 20 seconds. That leads already to the next step.

Enrich it: Let the thought be felt in the body. Which body feeling goes along with it. Feel it. Dive into it.

Absorb it: Just feel your actual state consciously.

¹¹¹ <https://www.tarabrach.com/rain-practice-radical-compassion/>

¹¹² *Dance of the Ancient One. How the Universe Solves Personal and World Problems*, Arnold Mindell, 2013



Link positive and negative material. That is an optional step. Step by step you can link negative experiences around that topic with the good ones. Only little by little, not to overflow the positive state. And so be able to integrate pain. As neurons that fire together, wire together.

Hanson points out that the more we allow ourselves to see the favorable side, the clearer we can also see the less favorable side without getting overwhelmed by it. As we are sitting in the driver's seat¹¹³.

Reducing Emotional Reactivity as a Leader or Facilitator

In our world, the social expectation towards a leader or facilitator is to be an apparently powerful but peaceful person who does not show conflict or internal tension. A more realistic picture would be leaders who are not only propelled by their automatic stress responses, and can show that they are also perturbed by internal stresses, anger and fear. Arnold Mindell wrote in 1989:

Groups, leaders and facilitators need to demonstrate a more realistic behavior by allowing some of their internal doubts and tensions to show...The best way for leaders to deal with their edges and fear of chaos is to learn how to work through strong emotions and tensions rapidly to minimize pain¹¹⁴.

This thought is also strengthened in current leadership literature. Joana Breidenbach and Bettina Rollow state in their book *New Work needs Inner Work* thirty years later, in 2019, working with inner and outer conflicts is a core skill of leaders to surf successfully the increasing uncertainty in businesses¹¹⁵.

In my view that leads to the thought that leaders should make it a priority to understand themselves and those they lead. There is a need to recognize and intentionally choose to respond (or not) to what they are feeling and thinking, and to what others are saying and doing (or not doing). They can more or less calmly observe how their words and behaviors affect other people and groups and are able to see and

¹¹³ *Hardwiring Happiness*, Dr. Richard Hanson, TED Talk, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgleh0>

¹¹⁴ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

¹¹⁵ *New Work needs Inner Work*, Joana Breidenbach & Bettina Rollow, 2019 <https://beispielwiesen.com/2020/02/13/new-work-inner-work/>

acknowledge that they share responsibility for disappointments, conflicts and misunderstandings with others.

That leads to the assumption that leaders and facilitators must learn to be aware of their thoughts, feelings and triggers and be able to meta-communicate about them. They must be able to tolerate their negative emotions and act consciously around them and not automatically. Showing these emotions can be the right thing to do in many situations. But showing means having reached an inner place from where the leader can talk about the anger and not act out the anger. Or in these uncertain times a leader can share his uncertainty and also fear of what might come up in the future without being controlled by the fear itself.

As negative feelings are not well-liked in our society and especially not in a high rank position, and the expectation towards a leader is often to be rational and logical, it seems to be easier to push through negative emotions, ignore them or shut off the feeling completely. There is the belief that our emotions no longer influence us if we don't pay attention to them. Leaders often suppress the feeling of their own pain. This decreases the awareness to their own painful behavior towards themselves and others. You have to feel the pain to process it within yourself¹¹⁶.

That is also true for facilitators. If a facilitator is not familiar enough with her own pain, she tries to make the pain go away within herself and while working with a group. Either she feels helpless when pain occurs, or she tries to do something to make the pain vanish. What would be more helpful for the group, is to experience the pain by just acknowledging it. "I hear you and I am sorry!" is more helpful than "Well, it is not that bad, on the other hand, there is so much stuff that works well." This can even be an escalation as the pain is not taken seriously.

Processing one's own negative feelings and pain takes the courage to sit with it. To really feel the emotions in the body, to intentionally open up to the discomfort and anxiety some feelings can cause, and enlarge one own's capacity to hold, process and articulate these feelings.

Dealing with Anger

Anger does not have a good reputation in the society I have grown up in, as white, middle class, German, well educated, cis woman. But it is just a power, a life force. Prof. Dr. Verena Kast, former professor of psychology at the University of Zurich and till March 2020 President of the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, puts it like this:

¹¹⁶ DDI Intensive Cairo, lecture of Max Schupbach, 2019

Anger arises when someone crosses my boundaries or does not allow me to expand my own boundaries. Anger is good for seeing what is going wrong¹¹⁷.

René Hurlmann, a neuroscientist and deputy director of the clinic for psychiatry and psychotherapy in Bonn, describes anger as an "impulsive expression of aggression", often as an exuberant reaction to an offence or disappointment. From the point of view of social neuroscience, anger creates distance to fellow human beings:

If our necks are frequently bursting, this is not accepted in the professional world, in which social competence plays an important role. It shows that you are an uncontrolled and unpredictable type. The choleric boss has had his days. What is needed today are collegial and socially acceptable fellow human beings¹¹⁸.

Looking at the functional mechanisms of our brain, anger is formed in the limbic system and in the hypothalamus, the evolutionarily older parts of the brain. They react to emotional cues in the environment and generate reactive anger and aggression, to ensure your survival. No matter whether you are facing a physical or psychological challenge. On the other hand, there are newer brain regions, such as the prefrontal cortex, which tries to regulate and keep negative effects in check. Anger prepares the body for fight. Thus, mobilized for immediate action, any thoughtful reflectiveness is a handicap in a really dangerous situation. So, anger affects your thinking capacity as powerfully as it does your body. Therefore, the prefrontal cortex is unable to control all stimuli, which sometimes leads to angry impulsive outbursts.

Our cultural context and our social environment have a strong influence how we deal with anger. In Northern European countries, the feeling of rage has been associated more with powerlessness and shame. There is an assumption that a person becomes angry out of one's own weakness. Whoever is angry is weak, irrational and occasionally looks ridiculous. It is different in Southern European countries where the interaction is more emotional and lively, and expressing anger is natural, it is allowed as one possible emotion.

How the impulse brake in our brains develops in children depends on various role models and social contexts, such as the presence of a person we bonded with, external guidelines or experiences in everyday school life. Children learn in their families and early surroundings the so-called appropriate, socially accepted behavior around anger. If it is acted out like a thunderstorm and afterwards all is good, or if a kid is brought up in a household with suppressed anger or if the parents talk

¹¹⁷ "Der Ärger muss raus", Susanne Rytina, Spiegel Magazin, 2014, <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/uni/wut-forscher-erklaeren-wie-man-mit-aerger-richtig-umgeht-a-1004733.html>

¹¹⁸ *Machen Sie mich nicht wütend*, Michael Graupner, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2017, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/stil/leib-seele/die-rehabilitation-der-wut-14599489.html?printPageedArticle=true#pageIndex_5

about their anger without acting it out, all this is part of the learning and teaching field. According to Michael Graupner, playful-aggressive behavior is particularly important in childhood and adolescence, as it serves to learn and maintain one's own position in social group structures¹¹⁹.

In the culture I am living in, uncontrolled anger is hardly accepted, even less for women. The development of particularly strong regulatory mechanisms might lead to being judged as having a passive-aggressive attitude of refusal. Although one is boiling with rage inside, it is not expressed outwardly, but still strongly influences behavior or is shown in double signals. For example, a person explodes with rage because of a decision by the boss. Instead of talking to him or questioning her own rage, she prefers not to go to work. Maybe she is even aware of the connection between her inability to go to work and the boss's behavior. If conflicts have not been discussed for a long time, and no attempt is made to resolve the tense situation, then it can happen that suddenly at some point the behavior changes, and all the anger comes out in an affect. Recent research has shown that unprocessed anger can lead to a higher susceptibility to heart disease or depression. This is very individual, depending on your social context, culture, family and your own personality.

Current studies about emotions at the workplace have shown that where anger and annoyance can be expressed, the teams are more lively and creative. Teams with a strong tendency towards harmony less often fight for the better solutions¹²⁰.

13.4. Unfolding and Reflection

First, I am grateful to myself and this thesis process that I allowed myself to sit with my anger and discovered the sadness and the pain behind it, in my experience of the call with Nele. I took my experience seriously and worked with it and told my inner oppressor who said, "Don't be childish, move on.", to shut up. The following relationship process is based upon this "turning towards" the anger and unfolding it.

I did the following exercise to understand my own reaction better and to prepare for my conversation with Nele. I intended to do my inner work first and then apply my findings in a talk with Nele, following the recommendation of Arnold Mindell.

¹¹⁹ *Machen Sie mich nicht wütend*, Michael Graupner, Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung, 2017, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/stil/leib-seele/die-rehabilitation-der-wut-14599489.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_5

¹²⁰ *Der Ärger muss raus*, Susanne Rytna, Spiegel Magazin, 2014, <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/uni/wut-forscher-erklaeren-wie-man-mit-aerger-richtig-umgeht-a-1004733.html>

Exercise: working on a conflict by yourself

Part 1: Dreaming into the Disturbance

- 1) Describe your relationship disturbance. Take a relationship disturbance and describe it. This could be a direct confrontation or a general sense of doubt about a signal or behavior.

My reflection: To join our call with one hour delay, without any apology, without any sign of regret. There was not even a sign of astonishment. This made it hard to believe that she really assumed we would meet at 9 pm. If that was the case, there should have been some kind of surprise. But there was not. There was a very nonchalant *Here I am, let's start* attitude.

- 2) Dream into the *other*. What is the very thing that is disturbing you? Make a hand movement for it. Do not describe your reaction but the actual energy that causes your disturbance. Drop all content and just go with the hand movement. Play with it, make it bigger, let it move you, dance with it till you have a new mood and a possible new insight.

My reflection: Notice the attitude: *Here I am, the show can start!*



A big arm movement. I start to dance and swirl around. It is fun. It feels like dancing with life. Embracing life. Living fully. Celebrating life.

- 3) Use the insight. How can you use that insight generally or in this relationship?

My reflection: Celebrate life! Yes, I could certainly celebrate life more, my life more. Sometimes I am too focused on the *should* and *must*. Instead of celebrating the joy and the sparkle. I use the words *I should* more often than *I want*. I hold myself back to give space to others (I love that), but also to be polite (why?). I also do it in this relationship, I play small. Example: Nele has been single for a few months, and since then, I don't talk with her about my relationship with Uwe anymore. Which is crazy, because I'm happy about how we've really gotten closer in the last months, a new liveliness. I don't talk much because I'm afraid of hurting her. I discover that I am guided by an inner belief and a collective role that says: *It's better to be a couple than a single!* I notice how in doing that, I really make her smaller than she is. Why would she be offended? She really knows how to enjoy her life. She would probably be happy for me.

Part 2: The Unknown

- 1) Discover your own dreaming: Look at the disturbance, and dream into it again. To what unintended communication / vibe / feeling from your side does it correspond? Hypothesize, even if to begin with it feels wrong. How do you unintentionally “encourage” the very disturbance?

My reflection: This becomes very clear to me now. When I hold back with my own liveliness, it is as if I withdraw from the stage into the audience and offer her the full stage that she so gladly takes. Nele does not do this to me, I do this to myself. If I want her to listen to me, I should talk. I know that it works, I have experienced it many times. Nele is not keen on having the whole stage to herself, she just takes up the space offered. She would rather blame me for holding back, not sharing enough, compared to her who shares her life. That makes me smile ... (Now I notice I am on her side.)

- 2) Discover this deep part of you. When you have found it, play with it and amplify it as a ghost role in your field, until you understand it as a wonderful and deep part of who you are, that has been marginalized by you! Unfold it. Walk like that part. Talk like that part. Dance like it.

My reflection: The gesture is similar to the one that was my disturbance. It is smaller and more embracing. I can give space to others. I really like to be with others and get to know their stories. I am uttermost curious about the life and stories of other people. So much to discover and learn.



- 3) How do you need to identify more with the essence of that part, live it even more, or more consciously? What would change, how would you be different? Appreciate this about yourself, to assist you to bring it out more.

My reflection: I want to be more aware with which intention and in which intensity I offer space. I do not want to marginalize myself. As the world is non-local and a relationship works best when all parts are present, I want to become more aware that my stories belong to the process as well. In a friendship, in a business partnership, whatever.

- 4) Advise yourself on the relationship issue. From the viewpoint of that part, look at the relationship issue. Give yourself some advice!

My reflection: I want to take my needs and my part of the story more seriously. It is about OUR relationship. Offering space for the process – yes, but I am included in our relationship process as much as Nele is and I have to take responsibility and care for it.

I am really glad, that I did not bring my accusation into our Zoom meeting. Nele did not act *against* me, but for her own good. I could have addressed her immediately in a friendly tone, but I was not able to do so. My irritation about Tanja's relaxed reaction had disappeared 10

minutes after the call. I accused Tanja of simply pretending that nothing was wrong because I didn't like that about my own behavior.

After this reflection, I had a long talk with Nele, not about being late, that was just one aspect of the whole relationship process. I have to say that I prepared for it with my coach Ellen Schupbach. Even being prepared it was hard for me to really find the courage to say: "we have to talk". It was more a fight than a talk, a real escalation about who needs what in our relationship and who expects what of whom. It escalated, slamming doors, coming back together, tears on both sides. Sudden understanding. Hugs. Love.

Since then, I feel much closer to Nele than before and I feel freer to address my needs. She shows more strongly her caring side. I am sure, I could have been much better at facilitating our conflict, but I am really happy, that I addressed it at all and that it deepened our relationship. I created a mess, but I also cleaned it up.

Thinking back to my childhood dream and also my childhood memory, it is a major effort for me to show my vulnerability, my needs, my own stories when there is somebody who, in a way, *sets the rules*, feels more powerful than I feel at that point. It is especially hard for me, as I already have a hard time to really feel my pain and be kind and loving towards it, not marginalizing it. Then even admitting it in what feels like an unfriendly environment is a huge edge for me. I rather would play tough and ignore my feelings. A lifelong learning process. Admitting it here is not easy but helpful. Hopefully the edges become milder one day.

As said before, Josef Helbling, my thesis coach, told me that over time we get better at dealing with our edges in terms of discovering them sooner, accepting faster that we need to turn towards them, again and again. We might even become more skilled in processing them more quickly.

I close this chapter with a quote from Arnold Mindell:

When we are in a state of conflict, we are best prepared if we think that we are not just working for ourselves, but processing problems for the Anthropos, the real earth. In this moment, inner work, spiritual training and global work are the same. ... Having seen so many of these experiences forces me to make a hypothesis. Groups, communities and even our local relationship conflicts all have one thing in common. The boredom, tensions, cold war, open conflicts, aggression and madness which amaze, hypnotize and terrify all of us are unconscious attempts to reveal and discover the powerful and exciting, electric and holy heart of the dreambody we live in¹²¹.

¹²¹ *The Year One*, Arnold Mindell, 1989

14. 9:45 pm: Grounding and Dreaming



Uwe joins me for a walk. I tell him about my experience in this call with Tanja and Nele. I tell him about my anger and my sadness and disappointment. He just listens to me.

Since Uwe is also a consultant, we have – way back – made an agreement. There are moments when you want good advice from a consultant who happens to be your partner, and there are moments when you just want your partner to listen. We then agreed to tell each other which one we wanted to talk to. Tonight, it is clear that I want the listener. He just needs to listen to me.

It is a relief to talk about the last hour. Talking and walking and breathing. It is a small park with a café at one end. It is still open. We are standing on the other side of the small lake in the middle of the park, and at this very moment I think it looks like a Japanese teahouse. I think of the dream in the morning and the Japanese businesspeople who have something to do with my thesis. As I stand there, I have the feeling that it was an amazing day, full of everything. I sense that it is a good signal from the *world channel* that the café in the park tonight looks like a Japanese teahouse.

15. 11:00 pm: Connecting as a Bedtime Sweets



It's bed-time. Just one more thing to do.

A friend invited me three weeks ago into a Whats-App based meditation challenge by Deepak Chopra, a popular contemporary author of books on spirituality, alternative medicine and Ayurveda.

After one week, the participants of each group are encouraged to start their own group. I had to process my irritation (well, there it is again) about this forced way of building reach, as I experience it. In this process, I discovered that I want to guide people who are important to me through this beautiful experience of connection to universal abundance through daily messages, tasks and meditations.

I am with my group in the final week. Every evening around 11 pm I send the message for the next day. For me this is a good night message to my friends. Every day, before I go to sleep, I like to think of this group of

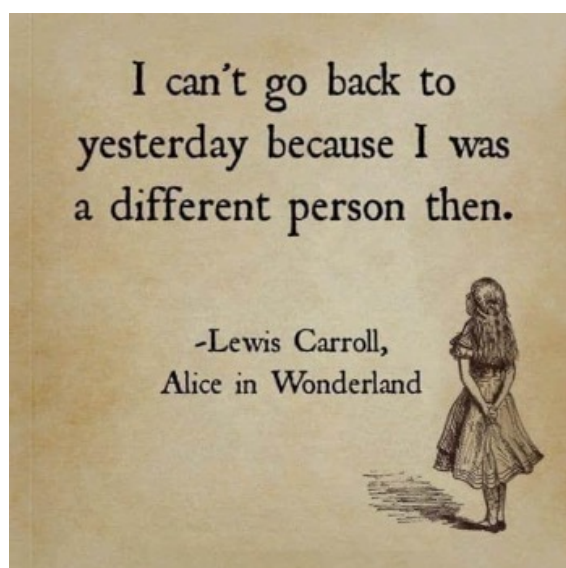
people all over the world. It is like weaving a web of friendships. Tara, Nele and Tanja belong to this group. In the morning, I can enjoy the first messages from friends who live on the other side of the planet and are already busy with their daily tasks. Tomorrow is a holiday. My plan is to write down the diary of this day as detailed as possible. The message of Deepak Chopra for tomorrow makes me smile.

Epilogue

The path of knowledge is a spiral staircase, not a straight line. Those who have walked the whole distance and turned around several times, look again in the same direction as at the beginning. But they have reached a higher level.

So writes Stefan Klein in his beautiful book *Das Alles und das Nichts – von der Schönheit des Universums*¹²².

After being through the process of writing this thesis I feel exactly as



Stefan Klein describes. I am looking in the same direction, yet I feel changed. It was really hard for me to reread the written pages without changing them over and over again. Because every time a different person read the pages, like Alice in Wonderland describes it.

It was just one day in my life. One single day. And I learned so much, especially about myself and how I behave in this world during these days. I am more aware of my patterns and

how my life myth shapes my life. After studying Process Work for quite some time, I am surprised how intensively my own edges and secondary processes create large parts of my experiences and how important it is to become more conscious and work with them to gain more freedom to be who I am.

Through this process I became even more aware that I have edges to both sides of the polarities of my life myth. I do not respond to the full momentum of my dreaming, and I hesitate to put my foot on the ground. The theory of Process Work says that these polarities will be learning fields until the end of my life. I am deeply convinced that with time I will become better at being myself. The direction in which one looks for improvement lies within.

When I started way back to think about this thesis, I intended to make this thesis an expression of my childhood dream in my business life. That idea got smaller and smaller each day, to give space to something more colorful, where work is only one part of the whole process. In a peer

¹²² *Das Alles und das Nichts – von der Schönheit des Universums*. Translated as *The Everything and the Nothing – About the Beauty of the Universe*, Stefan Klein, 2017

group call with Julia W., Yuliya F. and Anton E., we processed the role of a business person and Yuliya came up with a beautiful way of framing it:

Walking my own path is the most important business on this planet.

I am growing into the essence of this sentence. In these terms, this thesis is an expression of my childhood dream in my business life. Through this process I have also understood that my business identity is changing. Yet I have no idea what this means. In my dreams, it is more colorful, tender and radical, and it is more collaborative. If I follow myself curiously and check frequently what feels right, I might find out.

Brené Brown, writer and vulnerability researcher, says:

Curiosity is really the superpower for the second half of our lives because it keeps us learning, it keeps us asking questions, and it increases our self-awareness¹²³.

I cannot resist to end this thesis with a story that I put on the first page of my first of many versions of the thesis. I want this story to be the last in this version, as it never fitted better than now. It is also from Stefan Klein's already mentioned book¹²⁴:

The great physicist Richard Feynman was once asked by a friend, an artist, whether a scientist would not destroy the beauty of a rose by examining it. Feynman replied that he did feel the beauty the artist felt. But he also sees a deeper beauty, which can only be discovered through understanding: for example, in the fact that flowers in evolution took on color to attract insects. This knowledge in turn leads to new questions, such as whether insects experience something like aesthetics. Getting to know the flower better does not deprive it of its beauty – on the contrary, it adds beauty and makes the rose look more impressive and mysterious. Feynman could have continued that the researcher's sharp eye reveals a beauty itself in what at first seems ugly or even repulsive.

In the sense in which Feynman describes the exploration of the rose, I looked at May 20th of this year, with many discoveries about myself and many open questions and mysteries. There is the saying: "When you take care of the minutes, the years take care of themselves." The process of this thesis was and still is a huge training camp for me to take care of the minutes. What I learned through processing just the little big things of this single day is incredible. As Arnold Mindell wrote:

¹²³ Interview Tim Ferriss and Brené Brown, "Striving versus Self-Acceptance, Saving Marriages and More (#209), 2020, <https://tim.blog/2020/02/06/brene-brown-striving-self-acceptance-saving-marriages/>

¹²⁴ "Das Alles und das Nichts – von der Schönheit des Universums" / engl. „The Everything and the Nothing – About the Beauty of the Universe“, Stefan Klein, 2017

The deepest teacher is our own process, not anything outside¹²⁵.

This thesis process was a great teacher and an expression of my life myth as well.

Thank you for joining me on this journey.

¹²⁵ *Dance of the Ancient One*, Arnold Mindell, 2013

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