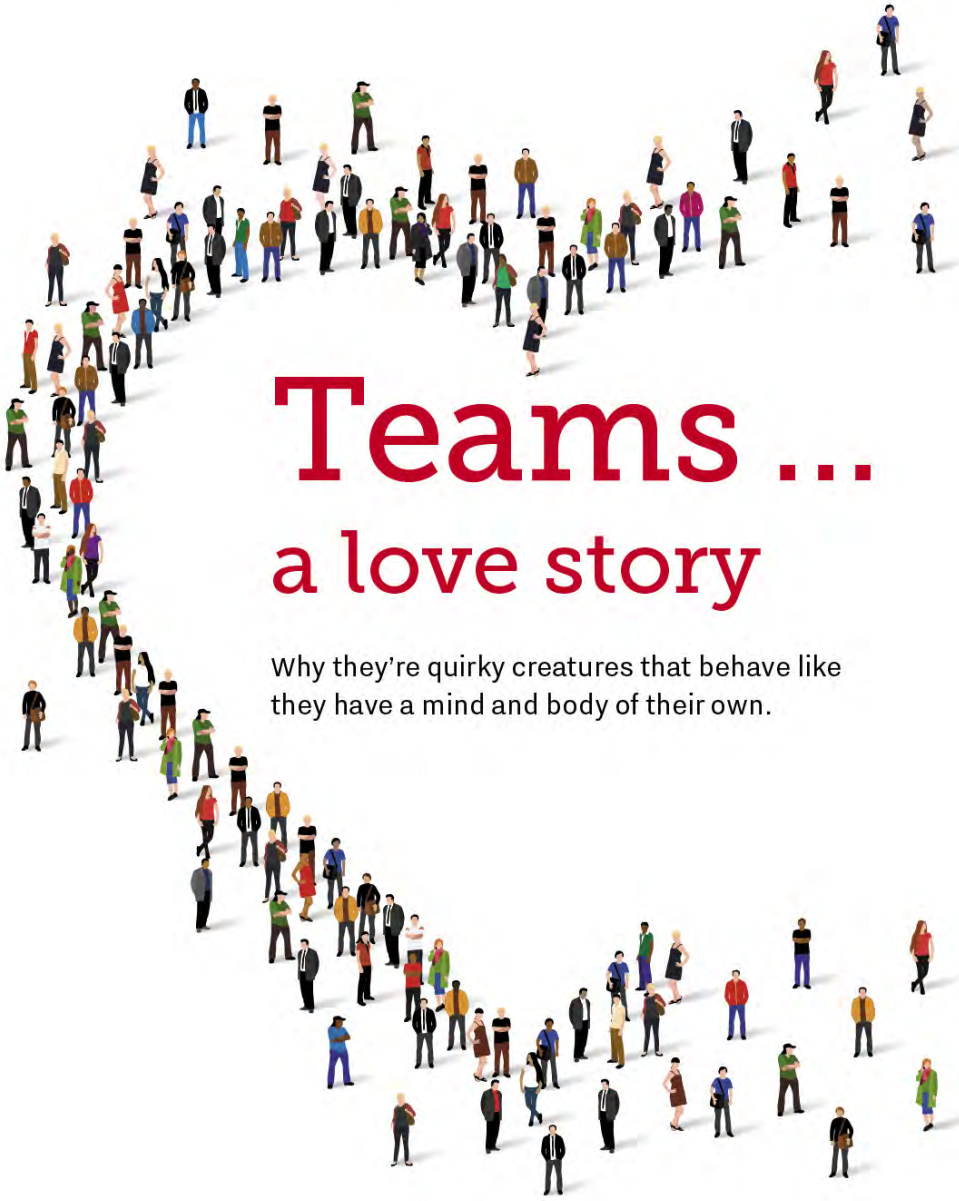
Jan Jacob Stam



Teams ...
a love story

Why they're quirky creatures that behave like they have a mind and body of their own.

Uitgeverij Het Noorderlicht

Teams...

a love story

Jan Jacob Stam

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Foreword

Connected to the evolutionary force: that is Jan Jacob's destiny. From there, 'new' always arises with him. Emerges ... yes, it finds him, rather than him finding it.

Even this book about teams wanted to be written. And apparently 'new' finds him preferably when he is in the mountains.

In no time, then, there is a book. The energy that comes with it is palpable in the document in my mailbox. I let myself be sucked in by the text from different perspectives. As a reader, as a team leader, as co-owner of our joint company TeamConnect, as a friend and as an editor. In this, the book apparently found me too, as an editor. Patterns attract patterns. If there is a lot of energy on something, my body says 'yes' even before it comes out of my mouth.

The words came from Jan Jacob. I was given and took the freedom to ask for clarification, to tie bits of text together, to connect. Together with Mirjam Strijbosch, who helped the book find its appropriate form and Michiel van der Ham, who co-created with us from Bali with his publishing experience, across time zones. Using the differences between us all, to make them productive for this book.

The book behaves a bit like a team itself: like a creature with a will of its own. In content, in title and in form. The title didn't want to be coined. Jan Jacob had a working title: Teams, a love story. When asked what the title should be, he was unable to answer. To my question, "What does the book wants itself?", came the answer

within two seconds. And so now you have it in your hands.

It is valuable to let Team take you as a creature every now and then. One of my favourite interventions in the book is the question: 'If Team could speak, what would it tell you?' You might be surprised, amazed or marvelled by an answer that presents itself.

Enjoy reading and anything that wants to unfold.



Dees van de Hoef

Introduction

This book is here for you, for you and for the teams you are part of.

This book wants to be a viewpoint-enhancer. Sort of what happens when you are somewhere in a beautiful or difficult situation, and you pull the curtains open a little further. Suddenly, out of the corner of your eye, you might see something special or a possibility you hadn't seen before. Maybe there are just a few sentences somewhere in this book that suddenly reveal something new to you. Something you can do something with. For you, for your team. Maybe something starts moving in you, a desire to do something, a desire to let your life energy flow a bit more, well, fill in the rest yourself.

This book is not a textbook. If you want to dive deeper into something, there are other books written by myself or colleagues of mine. At the end of the book, I give a few suggestions.

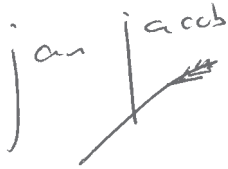
This book dawned on me when my back seriously gave out during a cycling holiday and I couldn't cycle for three days. 'Oh, it's that time again,' I thought as the book announced itself to me. Incidentally, what my back was trying to tell me is: 'Keep moving! As soon as you walk into a trap where you are somehow in danger of getting stuck, I'll let you know to free yourself again.' So I was bothering my back again ...

For a very long time, I had nothing to do with teams. Even though I worked a lot with teams, in teams and in organisations. As a 'lone wolf', I found teams difficult rather than fun. I didn't understand them either. And one of my patterns is to get sucked deeper into what I don't have a relationship with. Not because I want to, but it

just happens. It must have something to do with my childhood or family background. I leave that pattern as it is ...

And now? Now I do love them, teams. They are like quirky (self-willed?) creatures that sometimes do very different things than the team members would like. I can smile at that dynamism and liveliness.

I have no further reading guides for you, you will find your own way.



Jan Jacob Stam

Marlens, (French Alps) September 2022

Part 1

A team is like a living creature ...

In this first part, I focus on the team as a whole. What exactly is a team? And what happens in teams? How can you look at them? Maybe it will give you new insights, or maybe you will suddenly smile because sometimes it is a feast of recognition.

Teams

A football team, a family, a *startup*, a sales team. A team is the smallest unit that has something in common. Feel that for a moment in: 'has something with each other ...' You have something with each other. Something.

Sometimes against your will. But what is that something? Sometimes that 'something' seems very functional, something business-like because you work at the same organisation, or play sports at the same club. Regularly, it is very visible from expressions such as logos or workwear, such as uniforms. But 'something' usually also has something invisible, something that binds.

A team is something unique. Beyond the people and parts that make up that team. We often focus on the visible and tangible. I can tickle my colleague or slap him. But can I also slap or pet the team we make up?

We don't often stop to think about it, but that 'something' we have with each other may be quite secretive. And very often quirky. With a will that is sometimes at odds with what those on the team are aiming for. Sometimes unruliness arises when no one on the team wants it. That 'something' actually makes the team a creature of its own.

But wait, if the team is its own creature, does it also have a voice? If we listen carefully, it does! What does the team's voice want to say when something like obstinacy arises? Perhaps it is trying to warn us that we are going too fast or have missed a turn in our enthusiasm.

And if the team is a creature of its own, does the team also have a heart? Yes, of course. The team's heart beats for something. A purpose. Something that contributes to the world or something that brings movement. And if you ask yourself, "How many people does the team's heart beat for?" you may just find surprising answers. And if the hearts of team members are beating along in the same rhythm, then suddenly a beat or boost of energy and purpose can emerge. Not from our will to achieve that goal, but because the goal wants us.

If a team's heart starts beating slower or skips a beat from time to time, it is often an indication that the connection with the outside world is no longer quite right. The heart of a team is the engine for doing. Doing, imagining, making, producing, improving, delivering, taking, and taking again, but differently.

Hopefully, the team also has a soul. The soul is connected to 'being'. With being. With identity. The soul is a resource. The soul has power. You can feel directly how much soul power a team has.

When the soul is out of a team, it feels like a well that has dried up. Not nice.

The soul is real. And authenticity can be felt. But authenticity also often produces a mess. Sometimes it seems disordered, chaotic even. But real. Genuineness in a team or in a house or in a garden is a sign that there is a vibrant soul. Although the soul is powerful, it is also vulnerable. A re-organisation or a renovation can just as casually take the soul out of a team or a house. A new soul can then grow again, but that takes quite a bit more time than our impatience and drive for action allows.

A team, a creature of heart and soul, also requires structure. There are misunderstandings about how much structure is needed. *Energy needs structure*. Definitely!

It is mainly the energy of the heart, wanting to do something in the world, that needs structure. Like a river that needs a riverbed. Otherwise, it flows in all directions and thins. And loses power. The soul does not need structure. The soul cannot be tamed, cannot be packed, cannot be put into a category or another box. That makes the soul unhappy. Just like labels. And who wants to work or live in a team with an unhappy soul?

So if you want to introduce structure, look carefully at what exactly requires structure. Otherwise, you are just throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Can you love a team?

No, I don't mean the people in the team, but that invisible 'something' called team. Loving the team is very different from loving the people in the team. Or of the building or environment where the team resides.

Maybe you love the people, but the team is terrible, elusive or a millstone around the neck. And just when the team is not so nice for a while, the team wants to be loved. Loving it is also a good idea. Because loving the team means you want to be able to understand it, even when it is very hard or difficult.

Sincerely wanting to understand the team gives insights into why things are the way they are. It gives space. Space for solutions.

When you can understand the team by loving it, you can adjust it, change it, develop it, or even end it. When we look at a team petulantly, resentfully, or with disappointment, we do not see the team as it really is, but our projection of 'how it should be.' Then we cannot look cleanly at the team.

Loving deeply that, what in the team sometimes keeps you awake or visits you at night as a demon, is a special form of rebellion. You then don't put yourself above or below the team but become somewhat one with it. And then you can feel from within what the team needs.

And remember: loving something is different from liking the way something is. Loving something does not mean that you think it good or desirable. Loving something is an intense and genuine interest in something. But little remains closed off, when loved intensely.

Body and memory

We all know that a work team or a family or a volleyball team has no body and no brain. But a team, organisation or country (the latter two are just bigger teams) do behave as if they have a body or memory. This becomes most obvious when talking about trauma.

Trauma is an unprocessed but possibly covered or excluded event from the past. Then, when something happens in a team that reminds the team of that past event, the team reacts with an excessive reaction or rigidity. And members of the team get sucked into that reaction, unknowingly and without wanting it. Just think of the reaction when (in the Netherlands) curfew was imposed during the Coronavirus pandemic. Suddenly, we were back in World War II, the last time there was curfew in the Netherlands. And this, while that part of society that had such a strong reaction probably did not experience or feel World War II itself at all.

That memory for unprocessed events from the past is also annoying, of course. Annoying if you want to move on.

What's more, the people in a team all have antennae for the little creature called 'Team'. Only those antennae differ from each other. Some have antennae for where the team wants to go to, others more for where the team is coming from. We are all extremely sensitive to the subtle signals of the whole. And the team, as its own little creature, does make sure that all its interests are represented by the members of the team.

The team loves completeness. So, it may just be that one or a few team members are sucked in by some past events to make

themselves heard as soon as unprocessed events are touched. Often, we then think it is those team members who are being obstructive or sounding the alarm. That is the symptom, the visible, the behaviour. But it is the team itself that rings the bell through those team members. After all, the team does not have its own bell! It uses you or me for that.



Acknowledging what was

'If only we had never …', or 'if only we had then …' are loving and conscientious attempts to change the past. Sometimes full of remorse and regret. And sometimes with apologies to the team or society. It can't and it doesn't help.

It cannot be done because we cannot change the past. Sigh …

It doesn't help, because to want to change the past is to deny the past. And everything we deny tends to resurface somewhere in the future anyway.

If you want to do a team a favour, it is to acknowledge the past. Exactly as it was. AND how it was experienced by the members of the team. AND what could not be acknowledged then, is still palpable now.

So how can you acknowledge the past? Walk through history again, preferably literally, with the members of your team. And pause, again literally, at the junctions in that history. History? His Story! (Or hers, of course).

The art is to do that walking through the team's (origin) story without judgement. Why? Because judgement takes away the feeling. If you can remove the veil of judgement ('what a stupid move that was!'), then you can feel the pain or the intense joy of the moment in the flow of history. And that purifies. Purging is the consequence of acknowledgment. Purging may not always feel fun and is scary. After purging, there is more peace and calm …

The voice of the team

The voice of the team as a whole is quite different from the voice of the individual team members. The team itself is a being with its own character that is often different from the character of the individual team members.

Hearing and articulating the voice of the team as a whole is a bit of an art. Sometimes the team says something that its members are not so keen to hear. Extreme is when a team says or whispers, 'Pssst! The concept I was born and grew out of is over.'

Often, team members feel somewhere in their water that this is so, that something has reached its expiry date. But to really be able to face that is not always easy. The common human reaction of team members is to actually start working harder, setting more goals, doing more marketing and more of those dedicated things just to avoid seeing that something is over.

And by the way, wouldn't you also wish every team member could leave before he or she becomes too much past due, sour and undrinkable to colleagues? It is almost as difficult to say to a colleague, 'It's over', as it is to a concept.

But the energy released after the message 'It's over' has sunken in and is accepted, often makes all the pain of acknowledging and facing it more than worth the courage and effort. Only you don't know that beforehand.

Collaboration and co-creation

In collaboration, each team member puts her or his energy, knowledge, and professionalism towards a common goal. The goal contributes to the team and the team rejoices in achieving the result. The goal stems from the joint will of the team members. They own the goal, so to speak.

In co-creation, the team - the essence of the team - owns the goal. The team, connected with its full life energy, is the engine of co-creation. The members of the team open their mouths and are amazed what ideas roll out. Beyond themselves. They make themselves mouthpieces of the essence and potential of the team. And it is quite possible that what is then done is very different from what was originally planned. Often better. Like a child who is given space and takes a completely different direction than the family had thought or imagined.

In collaboration, each is recognised for his or her talents, dedication and contribution to the whole. In co-creation, the potential of the team is recognised and loved.

Decision

We decide something. Deeply, this means that we take ownership of our lives and our team.

Something has decided itself. Deeply, it means that life takes ownership of us and our team.

Both movements are possible, both movements are valuable, both movements are real.

Sometimes they dance around each other. Sometimes they produce tension and despair. Especially when what is decided is different from what we would like to decide.

To decide something requires willpower. That willpower makes the bed for what we will do. It keeps direction and control over what we think will happen or should happen in the future. The price is investing our energy. The payoff is the pleasure of achieving a planned goal or view.

To decide something, requires surrender and therefore soul power. And staying very much with ourselves. Regardless of what others think of it. The price of it is sometimes solitude. The payoff is uncertain but possibly joyful in alignment with what life has for us.

Either way, deciding means the willingness to leave your comfort zone. Even if you decide to let everything take its course.

Deciding means entering into the dance with life.

Every decision, every ‘yes’ to something, means saying ‘no’ or ‘no

more' to other things.

Often, saying 'no' or 'no, no more' to something is more painful than saying 'yes'.

How can we deal with that? By bringing the power of the 'no' into the 'yes'. Or to be more precise: by looking to that which we say 'no' to in the eye while saying the 'no'. How? Lovingly. In doing so, that which we say 'no more' or 'no' to is seen, acknowledged and at peace.

Deciding through the group-body

If you want to use the wisdom of the body and move a bit more in the direction of 'what wants to decide', you can do so using resonance in the whole of the team. We call that group-body.

> Practically, it can go like this: you write the decision to be made, or 'yes' and 'no', or the different alternatives with a marker clearly visible on sheets of paper. Then put them on the floor while team members stand around them.
>
> Without thinking much about it, ask yourselves all at the same time: in which direction is my body tending? The first impulse counts. So, you don't have to walk all the way to a sheet to make your preference clear. That is a movement that comes more from the will. Let the body indicate which tendency it has. Where is it being pulled towards or possibly pushed away from? Allow yourself to be surprised. Afterwards, there is plenty of room to engage in conversation or discussion as well.

Identity

A team, that invisible ‘something’, that being with a will of its own, needs an identity. This is actually said incorrectly because the team is a being in itself, it already has an identity. So, to be more precise, it is good if the team’s identity is brought to the surface and given a name that fits that identity.

The clearer a team’s identity is, the more the team can take its place in the bigger picture of the organisation or in the world. The better a team can take its place, the more what the team has to offer can flow. And the more effective the team can be. Because without taking a clear and recognised place in an organisation, it is damned hard to make a clear contribution. Because: where do you belong?

You read it correctly, by the way: taking place. Taking. Even if a place is given or awarded to you, you still have to take it. In this sense, taking comes before giving. Only when you can take life, life can start to flow. So taking place is a matter of taking life. And really taking life is not optional. When you take life, you have to do something with it. It is a step into the light, a step into the world, a step into individuality, a step out from under the protective umbrella of your creator, a step into adulthood. This is a ‘little big’ step, almost literally: as if you take a small step that immediately takes you into a different playing field. A step you sometimes take almost unsuspectingly, but which has big consequences.

Some people and teams unconsciously choose to stay forever in the protection of parents or a creator. It feels safer then to stay in the child position. This is to be respected.

Because stepping out of protection into adulthood is an irreversible process. We, or the team, can easily temporarily fall back though into the dependent child position in difficult or crisis situations.

A team's identity is best reflected in its guiding principles. That is answering the question: 'what is the team essentially to the outside world?' It is sometimes quite a chore to bring those guiding principles to the surface. When asked what the team is, you often get an answer to another question, which is what does the team do?. There is a substantial difference between those two questions.

A team can be a wake-up call, potential unlocker, spark bringer, safe harbour bidder, stabiliser, knowledge gateway, insight bringer or you name it. So those guiding principles are somewhat different from the product the team sells or the service it provides: the product the team sells or the service it provides is what the team does. Not what the team ís.

Usually there are about two, three, sometimes four guiding principles, the order of which also matters. A team that is 'knowledge gatherer' first and 'knowledge disseminator' second is a very different team from the team where 'knowledge disseminator' comes first and 'knowledge gatherer' follows.

The nice thing about those guiding principles is that they describe a relationship: 'what is the team for...?' The customers, the fellow human beings, the rest of the organisation. To flow requires a relationship. Guiding principles describe the relationship: what are we to you? And voila, the flow can begin!

Incidentally, the team is very happy when the guiding principles and thus identity are lifted to the surface. And are seen and recognised by the team members. That saves a lot of bickering between team members. Putting guiding principles on the table is a good recipe for synergy, for dealing with and exploiting differences between team members. And a source of commitment to the team as a whole. Yes, a team really does become a lot more fun, vibrant, and loving when it can let a recognised identity shine through.



Love at second sight

Love at first sight is like falling in love: you meet something or someone and immediately and very clearly there is a click or recognition. This is where I am at home. This is where my body wants to be. Love at first sight is recognising something as something like being my own. Or something that completes me. A new team, new work, a new place can feel like love at first sight. In some cases, the team or its context can also be almost like a family substitute home: you find something there that you haven't found elsewhere. The team becomes the partner you wished you had, the child you didn't have, the playground you missed, the sibling you couldn't frolic with, the school you couldn't learn from, or the missing parent who should have protected you.

Love at second sight is loving, but with all the positive ánd negative aspects. Without reservation. Loving what is possible and what is not. And enduring the latter.

Loving everything and everyone who has contributed to the team. Even if they are sometimes wretches. Love at second sight is acknowledging that the team's background, while different, is just as worthy as your own. So, love at second sight means being willing to become a little less loyal or even unfaithful to your own background. Love at second sight is being willing to become guilty. In this it differs from love at first sight, which primarily serves and maintains innocence.

Of course, a team is happy when people come who feel love at first sight. Who say: 'This is what I want to contribute to. This is cool what you are doing, Team, I like to participate and give myself'.

But Team also knows very well that if there are only people in (first sight) love, it eventually leads to more of the same. And it becomes more and more of a closed system, where it becomes important to affirm that what we are doing is good. Then the team becomes complacent. Fine, but rigidity lurks. As does losing contact with the world around us.

Love at second sight is grander. And more critical. Bigger because it can embrace the entire history of the team.

More critical because it lacks the blinding infatuation.

Products and services you offer in the 'love at first sight' category are easy to sell because the customer feels: 'This fits with who I am and reinforces that'. YouTube and other social media are super good at this.

Products and services you offer in the 'love at second sight' category are harder to sell. They fall into the product-range: 'Do we dare?' It is something different from what we usually do and feel safe. It's different and that instils fear, even though we may feel it will ultimately bring something good.

And love at third sight? Well, that is something like a fifth dimension. It is destiny. It is a place where real life can be lived. As rich and as raw as it is. Where anything can be said. And where the quality of listening and the quality of being are more important ingredients than the quality of speaking and the quality of doing.

Love at third sight is beyond death. With this love, you could bury a team. Love at third sight is a kind of transcendent love, beyond the personal. Doing what needs to be done. Why? Just because!

New team

Forming a new team in an organisation is more than putting a bunch of people together. There are a few essential questions that can be very helpful for such a new team to become successful. You can connect with the team by entering it yourself, so to speak. And from that place, from within asking the following questions, where we let Team itself do the talking.

'I am a new team and am going to be formed or possibly reformed within an existing organisation. If you want me to do well and make a lot of meaningful contributions, then I need a few things to go along with my emergence. What I need, I will ask in the form of questions'.

Am I needed?

Well, what a ridiculous question really, but you could give the team a living that is created but not really needed, or not needed at all. Created because, for example, a leader is left over, and he or she actually needs a team. Or a team that is created because it is the way it should be or because the law requires it. For teams that are not needed, the heart cannot really beat. After all, no one is really waiting for that team's products or results. And perhaps the team members are not waiting to be on such a team either.

Am I free?

Sometimes a team is created because there was a traumatic experience somewhere in the organisation or it simply wasn't working well. The team in question not working so well is then disbanded and a new team is formed. Such a team is burdened in advance and not free at all. So as a young and fresh team, one of my first Team questions is: 'Who or what do I need to replace? And

is that which I need to replace sufficiently completed? What do I need to be a solution for?'

Do I have a place and is that place acknowledged?

If I am new, I am sure I have a few sibling teams. Or cousins' teams. Someone, and that is usually the leadership of the organisation, has to make it clear to the others that there is going to be a new offspring. As a new born, I can't do that myself. And without an acknowledged place, it won't work. Or I can start biting my own tail. Nice for the others to see, but not really enjoyable or useful.

Am I pure?

What helps is if I have one core. One set of guiding principles. Sometimes a team is created from a hotchpotch of functions and tasks that don't have that much to do with each other. Then I am a mess and impure. Don't expect miracles from me then. At best, I can then apply a few band-aids here and there.

Answers of 'No' to the above questions are like those customs forms when you sometimes travel into another country: 'If you have answered No to any of the above questions, please report to immigration officials.' There are still a few things to sort out or complete.

What comes to mind now that you have read the questions about new team? What might require attention in your team(s), when the Team itself speaks?

Different modes.

We'll let Team speak to you a little longer. About the modes it can be in, about listening and leadership.

As a team, I can be in different modes. And now I'm not talking about happy or depressed or stuck or something. I mean modes that have to do with what I do for the world outside my team. Basically, about what I deliver to the outside world.

There are three modes that I draw attention to as a team. It helps me a lot when you and you, the team members, can feel in which mode I am more and in which mode I am less. And then especially in the face of the question: is this mode the right one? Is this where we want to be as a team? And what is the outside world asking and expecting from us?

First order

We call the first state 'first order mode'. When I am in first-order mode I look for and find solutions to problems and issues that arise. These can be everyday issues or bigger questions in the outside world. I am a kind of repairman. And above all, resourceful. A first-order team finds solutions not only by the book or according to the expertise they have, but mainly from creativity. And the client or those who take services from our team are grateful because they can move on. After all, their obstacle has been skilfully removed or bypassed. Professionalism, the pleasure of creativity and the gratitude of the clients are the engine and fuel for me as a first-order team. Sometimes people smirk about me that I only stick plasters, or even 'band-aids', but that does sell our kind of team short.

Second order

We call the second state ‘second order mode’. I look a level deeper and wonder why the same problems keep cropping up. The solutions do help, but are short-lived. And I realise very well: once is an incident, twice the same problem cropping up is glaring, three times is a pattern. And then I scratch my head and wonder whether I would not be better off addressing the pattern rather than the symptoms.

Yes, symptoms. Because with second-order looking, analysis, and investigation, I ask myself: for what is the problem, the symptom a solution? What is it trying to tell me? How is this problem a reaction of the system as a whole to something done or omitted?

Take high turnover or high absenteeism. If, for example, (first order) employment conditions have already been improved and nothing changes, then it becomes necessary to look deeper. Is it about a lack of bonding? Is it about not really being seen and heard? Are people unconsciously taking on too much burden that belongs elsewhere? Has the place of the team not been acknowledged? Has there ever been a mass layoff and employees unconsciously feel loyalty to those who were laid off at the time?

There are many possible deeper causes for the problem and often it takes time, deeper drilling, and also testing before you - bingo! - tapped into oil. That oil is the insight, the understanding for which our symptom is a solution.

That does require an attitude of loving the symptom. To be able to understand it. The more a symptom is loved, the more it is willing to share its secret. And again: loving does not mean agreeing with it. It means: acknowledging that it is there, that it exists.

If I am in second-order mode as a team and embrace a symptom, then of course I have to deal with all those other teams and people who suffer from the symptom and cannot love it at all. That too requires recognition. Otherwise, there will be a gap between those who suffer from the problem on a daily basis and those who look at it with second-order eyes.

Third order

When I am in 'third order mode' as a team, I am often an annoying louse in the fur. This is because I cause transformation. Transformation starts with the realisation that something that has worked well for years is coming to an end. Not because it is no longer good, but because the outside world has changed. A phone box transforming into a little library or self-service coffee place along the road. Destination reached. And instead of just touting the phone box more and more as a place to connect with other people, you resign yourself to the fact that that destination has been reached and seek a new identity.

As a team in third-order mode, I am in the service of the upcoming future. An evolutionary force. I'm not in service of the plannable future. That upcoming future that comes at us like a wave, whether we like it or not. The plannable future often tries to build a wall of safety against this tsunami.

When I am in third-order mode as a team, my deep love goes out to the ever-moving creative as well as destructive flow of future coming at us. I am already kind of there, without knowing what it looks like there. I sense even before I can think of what reaching its end looks like and may need to be actively demolished. Just think what happens inside the pupa when a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. All the parts of the caterpillar are taken apart

without the animal dying, after which a butterfly develops. Yes, we know it will become a butterfly, but the caterpillar does not!

That's the tricky thing about transformation. I only know what our new identity is after I have reached it. Until then, much is uncertain. And very unpleasant sometimes. And the reward of the process is also long overdue.

Listening and leadership

Besides different modes I can be in as a team, there are also different forms of listening and leadership.

First-order listening is listening to where solutions lie. Listening to solve a problem or issue. **First-order leadership** is making space for creativity and brainstorming.

So that problems and issues can be solved.

Second-order listening is listening to what a problem has to say about the deeper and bigger picture. It dives deeper, into the unconscious, the undercurrents. It provides understanding and insights. And with it, new perspectives and possibilities. **Second-order leadership** is making space for reflection, for loving the problem and wanting to understand it. Without immediately wanting to solve or fix it.

Third-order listening is listening for the subtle or sometimes brutal signals that something is coming to an end. This can feel very exciting. Especially if you don't yet know what will take its place. Third-order leadership is making space to welcome the upcoming future and to be able to say in the face of it: something is over... and for good. And with loving eyes to everything that was. And has

made the team or organisation where it is today.

As a team, I like that the mode I am in is congruent with what I am meant to be in. It has happened to me so many times that I was brought in for innovation and was allowed to be a 'pocket of transformation' and woke up one fine day and found that I had been in first-order mode for a long time.

Or that over time, as a first-order team, I began to feel and signal more and more that I can never actually do it well enough because the problems I was trying to find solutions to kept coming back.

Or that as a second-order team, in search of why things go the way they do, I am blamed for being too vague and not concrete enough. And I am confronted with impatience that something has to be done now. And then my own task is not to fall into the trap of ad hoc solutions.

What is nice is if there is leadership that understands that these three modes can co-exist in one organisation or society. And that each mode does something different and has a different assignment-giver but is worth as much as the other modes. In today's complex questions of society, society needs leadership that is both connected to all three modes and hovers above them, as it were.

On a smaller scale, such leadership is certainly worth trying.

Membrane

Now a little trip to biology. The team can be compared to a cell. Like a cell, a team is a smallest unit that forms a whole. And just like a cell, a team is part of a larger whole, such as a heart or a liver. The cell has a function, and the organ also has a function. All those organs together make a plant or animal or sometimes a human being. And those plants, animals, and people together in turn make a team or family or ecosystem. As a team, I am well aware- and that makes me happy - when I am something very natural. And not just a construct or something contrived. Because everything that is constructed also, according to the first law of thermodynamics,

tends to fall apart. What is not constructed but comes into being naturally, tends to stay longer, is more flexible and moves further and more smoothly.

A cell has two parts that I, as a team, draw attention to and would like to talk about now. A nucleus and a membrane. The nucleus gives focus, like our team's guiding principles.

The membrane gives connection to the outside world while keeping us together as a whole.

That membrane is something invisible to a team, but it is there. You could imagine the membrane as a kind of rubber band or permeable wall around the team. Feel how strong that membrane is, and how flexible or rigid. And above all, how permeable? How much contact is there with the outside world and how much flows through the membrane to the outside and inside?

A balance in outward flow and inward flow is important. If we as a team give too much for a long time without appreciation, materials and money flowing in, we dry up. And vice versa, if too much information and assignments are funnelled in, more than can be processed, we swell up and blow up. Or team members get overwhelmed or burned out.

The quality of our team's membrane is incredibly important. If the quality is high, we can remain one whole in the event of a crisis (and we have had plenty of those and there are a few more in store). We remain one team that can face the panic or burden together, share and handle emotions and stay connected and make more or less sensible decisions. If the quality of the team membrane is low, the people in the team process a crisis each in their own way or some go into survival mode. And suddenly we are no longer a whole but disintegrate into separate groups or parts. The whole then quickly becomes less than the sum of its parts. And rudderless.

Sometimes I have to deal with things outside me, with external circumstances.

For example, as a liver cell in a human body, I am confronted with the fact that the being I am part of drinks too much alcohol for reasons I may not even understand. But that alcohol does come our way to neutralise. In short: a team is confronted with the unresolved problems of the organisation or society. And if the team is not careful, it becomes just as symptomatic. The quality of the membrane also determines to what extent unresolved problems from the outside world can enter. Too open a membrane too much makes one vulnerable and dependent.

As a matter of fact, it is a common reaction of a team when problems from outside threaten to seep in too much, to make the membrane impenetrable and sometimes rigid. We'll sort it out ourselves! Quite understandable. But if you're not careful, you've just changed from a cooperating and cohabiting organism or organisation into a mall: many different companies under one roof. In itself no better or worse, but the question is whether that was the intention.

Keeping an eye on the quality of the membrane requires something usually called leadership. That leadership can come from anyone and need not be reserved for the person designated as leader. That means everyone can contribute in this.

However, it is good to be aware that that role of managing the membrane needs to be fullfilled. As a team, when this is done well, it makes me happy, more self-aware and much more productive.





Patterns

A team has patterns. Patterns are somewhat different from habits. Habits are about: how do we do things here? We have meetings every Monday morning. We make a habit of starting twenty minutes or so late. We don't ask about a sick colleague or other private matters. Things like that.

Parentification

Patterns are about the position from which you act. An example: as a staff team, we feel we are above the managers because of our expertise. The resulting habit is for us to dictate to managers how they should keep their accounts in order or how they are expected to fill vacancies. This pattern is called parentification. The parentified team has ended up to act from a place above the managers. If the managers find this annoying, very often the team is blamed for it, but it is often good to look back a step further. The team ended up there. There was once a good reason for that.

Perhaps because the management did not have these qualities and so the staff team was invited to stand alongside the management in this. Therefore, if this parented position no longer works, it is up to the management to reposition the staff team.

On the one hand, a parented position provides influence and sometimes status. But it can bring opposition and jealousy. Thus, each pattern has its benefits and its side effects.

Triangulation

Another pattern is triangulation. A triangulated team has ended up in a place to keep a good relationship between two or more other teams. For example, a customer service team standing between

customers and product development. Product development is mainly focused on new products and does not understand that the customer does not want those wonderful products, while the customers do not understand what exactly product development is doing. The customer service team understands both and is usually very sensitive to what both need. A triangulated team is often modest, working in the wings of the organisation and rarely gets open credit for their achievements.

Identification

An identified team is very much connected to its target group. It is, as it were, the mouthpiece and sometimes the advocate of its target group. Not always consciously, by the way. You can find out by asking the team: 'How many people are you trying to give voice to? Or how many people are you trying to give a face? Or a place?'

Carrying others' burden or fulfilling others' task

A carrying team tries to bear the burden of others. Perhaps from other teams in the organisation or from groups in society. Unconsciously carrying the burden of others or trying to fulfil someone else's task is tricky: if you fulfil your own task, you know when you are ready. If you fulfil someone else's task or carry a burden, you don't know when you are ready. A carrying team feels like a strong team. A carrying team feels very responsible and does not give up easily. They see the work ahead and are not quick to say no to a new task. Even if the price is sometimes high. It is a good recipe for a team to get overloaded with the risk of team members falling over one by one.

Burdened team

A burdened team or a burdened place in the organisation is like a place that has a blemish on it. Five managers in three years all

failing to make a happy and vibrant team. Often this has to do with unprocessed past or trauma. At the very least, it pays to delve into the history and sometimes even dig, because often the true course of events had to be covered up. A burdened team feels heavy. And while others around it don't want to burn their fingers on this team, they actually should.

Perpetrator-victim dynamics

A perpetrator-victim team often feels unaccountable. You don't really know what to make of them. Team members can make a lot of fuss among themselves and at the same time close ranks like an oyster when 'danger' comes from outside. Perpetrator energy and victim energy can exchange very quickly. Or even: by going into the victim position, the team becomes a perpetrator. The subordinate and superordinate positions are both there and sometimes alternate. In doing so, the team holds its environment hostage. A good question to ask such a team, especially when they are in the victim position, is: 'Has anything been taken from you, or have you had to give something away?'

However, it is important to ask that question with sincerity and with love. From the whole. Not out of fear or because there needs to be a solution, or something is broken. Very often, when a team is sincerely listened to, they can indicate what they have had to give up. And in that moment, the team is beyond victimisation and perpetration.

Double bind

A double bind team is trapped: if we do one thing it is not right and if we do another it is not right either. A double bind is that you are in two opposing orders. You see this in cooperatives or partnerships, among others. The management of the cooperative

has the operational management and is therefore above the members. But the members are the owners and are thus above the management. So it may be that the management comes up with a solution to a problem and the members reject it and say: come up with another plan. And that can sometimes become a lengthy game of ping-pong. You also see it with startups within a larger organisation. These are caught in a double message, so to speak: 'be successful' and 'don't be successful'. Because if the startup is successful, it can feel like the rest of the organisation has failed, preferring to say: don't be successful.

Society is also constantly sending out double bind messages to many sectors. To education: change! And don't change! Similar with healthcare, financial services and you name it.

How can you deal with these patterns?

Well, there you are with the patterns. So what can you do with them, with those patterns? First of all, become aware of them. Then we have the pattern instead of the pattern having us. You feel less at its mercy. That already makes the pattern more manageable.

Breaking patterns usually doesn't work very well. Breaking through demands a lot of energy. Patterns are many times stronger than our will. The function of patterns is that they provide stability, continuity and predictability.

What then? Growing beyond a pattern is a good option. You do that by acknowledging very much what the pattern has brought you so far and possibly being grateful for that. And taking qualities it has given you and taught you. And feeling that the pattern may now be over.

Perhaps there will then be room for a new pattern to crystallise.

Needless to say: a re-organisation usually does not help to get rid of an unwanted pattern. Nor does a new strategy. The harder you want to push something away or manage it away, the more it tends to reappear somewhere else, whether in a different form or not.



Team qualities

A team as a whole needs team qualities. Things that a team can do well. These are sometimes different qualities from those of the individual members of the team. Indeed, sometimes the members of a team are all very decisive but the team as a whole is just not.

Team qualities (capabilities) can be:

- The ability to be unified
- The ability to be decisive
- The ability to be proud
- The ability to achieve goals
- The ability to overcome major events
- The ability to grow and develop
- The ability to put things into perspective
- The ability to resolve conflicts within the team
- The ability to resolve conflicts with other teams
- The ability to set boundaries
- The ability to make a realistic plannable future
- The ability to respond to the unpredictable future that comes our way
- The capacity for courage
- The ability to say 'no'
- The ability to steer one's own course
- The ability to let potential flow
- The ability to take responsibility
- The ability to really want to understand each other
- The ability to face what is past

And many more.

By nature, all these abilities are present in a team, family or other

living system. In the right proportion. Not too little and not too much. They are there to cope with life and its challenges.

If one or more of these abilities are not there or are, on the contrary, excessive, that is not natural. There is a good reason why either these abilities were not there from the beginning, or were lost along the way. Or just grown out of proportion.

Too much

If a team is too decisive, there could be several systemic reasons for this. One is that the team is desperate and goes into survival mode. And then decisions come from both fight and flight tendencies. Being in survival mode also means getting into tunnel vision and no longer being able to calmly survey the whole landscape.

Another reason could be that the concept on which the team is built is coming to an end. We once experienced this with an organisation that worked with archives in the way that had been common for hundreds of years. To stem the tide of finiteness, they were making increasingly forceful decisions about how to keep archives afloat.

Too little

If there is too little of many qualities, it could also be because of survival mode. But unlike the example above, the team then went into freeze mode. A form of paralysis.

If one or a few key abilities are in short supply then, as mentioned, they may have been lost along the way. A good way to regain them is to ask where, when and what caused them to be lost. For example, if the key ability to courage is missing, you can ask:

where in the past did the team or a team member show courage and pay a high price for it?

If the splitting off and giving up abilities went unconsciously and unnoticed, it is not always necessary to be able to recall exactly who and what event it was about. But if it is palpable that a key-quality had to be given up, then as a team you can also retrieve that quality. Or rather, make the space for the quality to be taken back.

'Once upon a time, there were circumstances for this team that the capacity for courage had to be left behind. Those circumstances are now over. So, team members, feel invited to take back the capacity for courage. AND we will make sure that you will not be punished again. We know that when courage becomes part of us again, mistakes will also be made. Together, or from leadership, we will make the membrane that can contain those mistakes.'

Such a process creates the frame and conditions for new possibilities. You can imagine that this requires commitment. From team members, but certainly also from leadership.

What kind of team are we?

Here we now want to look a bit further than: ‘we are a team of consultants’, ‘we are the HR department’, ‘we are a product group support’... We now dive deeper into the different forms of teams.

A team of persons or a team of functions?

Do I introduce myself with ‘I am Jan Jacob’ or with ‘I am head of the sales department?’ The telecom company I once worked for was a system of functions. I was addressed not by my first name, not by my surname but by my function. I was cbbkn. And if you don’t know what cbbkn is, you look it up in the loa (loa is list of abbreviations). The function is like a coat or suit you put on over the person. A system of functions has a big advantage. If the person disappears, the function remains. The system remains stable, even if there are temporary gaps here and there.

A system of persons may have the advantage that personalities can thrive more, but the disadvantage is that if a person disappears, even temporarily, the team has to find a new balance. And that takes time and energy.

A system of founding remains in its infancy.

An organisation or team may exist for 20 years or more and still be a founding team. That may have the advantage that the sparkle of the young dogs is still there. But on the other hand: a founder is inalienable.

No one can replace a founder. There is a risk that the team will get stuck and not grow easily into the next phase and miss the connection to the boat of mature potential.

A team of religion

That same telecom-company where I worked was a system of religions. The people, regardless of their position, who belonged to a particular church made the decisions together. I realised this only after I had already left the company. But when I saw it, I suddenly understood the unwritten rules of this beautiful company

A team of family

Sometimes a team is like a family. Regardless of whether it is really family. Then the team feels familiar, and loyalty is strong. A family business can generally endure losses and hard times two and a half times longer than a non-family business. Dirty laundry is not easily hung outside. The downside of a family team is that parents always remain parents and children always remain children. In other words, maturing the team as a whole is not always easy, nor is the succession question. Finally: once you belong to a family, there is no way to stop belonging to it.

You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave ...
(from Hotel California by The Eagles)

A team of brothers in arms (or sisters)

Victory is victory and loss is defeat. That's how it worked for the management of a Spanish multinational founded in the space created by the end of the Spanish civil war. And adding a new market is a conquest. If you don't understand that and you work in this business then you're in trouble. You also don't really know how to relate and what the criteria are for belonging and whether your efforts are appreciated or not.

It is good to think about it: what kind of team are we? Of course, there are many more than the few examples we gave above. By

listening carefully to the language, the examples used in the team, looking at the clothing and so on, you might suddenly realise what kind of team we are actually about.

And then questions like: does it still fit that we are a team of foundership? And if we could ask the team itself, what would Team say and wish for? That's a great exercise by the way: if Team could speak, what would it say? Ask that question and you may marvel at what rolls out of your own or others' mouths.

Agency and Communio

Agency and communio are two forces. Every team and system needs both forces.

Agency and communio are twins. Like yin and yang and pepper and salt. Other names for agency and communio are autonomy and cohesion. And if you want to give them a job title, something like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior, could fit.

Agency is about the autonomy of the team as a whole. It guards the position of the team as a whole in the larger organisation or society. Agency protects the team from outside attacks. Agency also takes care of the team's strategy and is clear in what we do and do not do. If agency works well then it provides security without pampering. And it gives direction without being coercive.

Communio is about wellbeing within the team, the cohesion and the wholeness of the team. Communio ensures that every team member feels seen and acknowledged. Communio ensures that relationships within the team are good and talents can flow. Communio ensures that there is sociability at times, that there are good conversations among colleagues, but also that there are good work agreements, the workload is distributed fairly and little disappears under the carpet. Communio ensures that the differences between people are well used and possibly even exploited rather than averaged out.

And then, as a third force, we have the professional content of the team. Agency and communio together ensure that talents can flow. And therefore that the professional knowledge and

experience of the team can produce in a way that the products or services can land well in the world.

From any team, you can feel: does the team need more agency now or more communio? That changes with circumstances. After a big accident, obviously a lot of communio is needed: staying whole together, expressing emotions together. And agency is also needed: keeping the press and disaster tourists at an appropriate distance.

But even over a longer time span, you can sense what a team needs right now. Ensuring the right degree of agency and communio is both a responsibility of the team as a whole and of leadership, wherever that leadership comes from.

The origin of the team

Sometimes it helps to look at a team's origins to understand the dynamics in a team. That does not mean we have to go back to those origins but can look at them from the present. And when we talk about a team here, that can also be a small or larger organisation or a project.

We do that looking at origins through seven questions, and there are of course more. The nice thing about questions is that if they make sense, there is room for resonance: 'Oh, that could very well be the case!'

1. For what was the creation of the team a solution?

Every team and every organisation starts with an idea. Someone has an idea or there is an idea that found a person. That idea is always a response to something that is happening or not happening in the larger organisation or society. Or maybe it is a copycat and more of the same. Or wanting to have what the neighbours have. If, for example, an organisation arises from the idea of being able to do something better than others do, chances are that the team is parentified and may be looking down a bit onto others.

Delving into the question, "what was the team a solution for?" often also gives insight into the patterns in the team.

2. What were or are the patterns of the founder?

Often the patterns of the founder come along. If the founder is a school-teacher, then there is a good chance that the organisation will also be a bit teacher-like.

3. Did the team start with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’?

Did the team start to achieve something or to avoid something? In favor of something or against something? It makes quite a difference whether a team or organisation was started from a ‘yes’ to something or from a ‘no’ to something. Do you want self-employment because you want to be able to use your full potential, or, for example, because you want the freedom that comes with it? Or do you want entrepreneurship because you no longer fit into what feels to you like a straitjacket of employment and say no to the corporate world?

Systems work in such a way that what you fight against or what shouldn’t be there often knocks on the door and comes back in through the back door in disguise.

An organisation built on the idea that addiction should not be there is likely to be susceptible to forms of addiction. AND has a chance of attracting employees who know the same pattern. Patterns attract patterns.

4. What did society look like when it was founded?

Often patterns from society come with the team. Especially if the founding was a response to something that was going on in society. Earlier, we gave an example of a company founded in the final days of the Spanish Civil War.

5. Is there a founder behind the founder?

If a child cannot be helped by regular education, the parents can found a school where such children can learn. The child becomes the founder behind his parents, so to speak. Incidentally, the child itself is not always happy to be the founder behind the founder. It would rather be free and play. The founder behind the founder

should be acknowledged. We quite often saw that when this is not the case, the pattern of relationship between, in this example, parents and child, stays inside the organisation and eventually can lead to stuckness.

6. Who paid a price?

A woman and perhaps several women in the family pay a high price for the construction company her husband establishes. The husband is married to the company, so to speak. The women giving a lot of their life-energy. A price that is not acknowledged. This may perhaps lead to women in the construction business later finding it more difficult to be visible and become successful. There is an unconscious loyalty with the women who paid a hefty price for the company's success.



7. What qualities did the founder have?

Was it boldness with a twinkle in the eye? Was it a blanket of warm commitment and love? Was it a leap of faith? Was it undaunted courage? Was it warriorism? In any case, it was those very qualities on which the team was founded and allowed to grow. If those qualities somewhere

got lost somewhere along the way, it is worth bringing them back in.

It is a nice, engaging and often enlightening session to spend a few hours with a team on these questions. Often the insights roll over. Sometimes emotions such as sadness, regret, fun and euphoria can also be given a chance again.

Part 2

... and so do the members of the team!

Team members are often very different from the team as a whole. So the team is not a sum of its individual parts, although you might think so. Unlike the team as a whole, team members are visible, tangible, smelly and audible. As a result, we often focus on what we can see, hear, feel and talk to. Seen through a systemic lens, it is worth looking a little deeper at who or what those parts of a team are that make up the whole of Team.

Heart and soul

Heart and soul are important parts of us. They do very different things and complete us. The heart flows, can even overflow, of love, of admiration, of devotion, of compassion. The heart can also cry, another form of flow. What flows has a direction. What flows comes from somewhere and goes somewhere. The flow of the heart enriches, irrigates, and graces. Although the heart itself might never call it that, it has a purpose. The heart focuses on something. The heart opens itself to something.

In itself, the heart is beyond having an interest. It opens to that, which is somewhere in front of us, on our life path. Sometimes just because it is there. Like a beautiful mountain or a human being. Or something called a life task. The heart doesn't need arguments. We make those up when we feel we have to explain to someone

when we follow our heart. Following the heart has to do with doing. With moving. With acting. But doing by 'not doing' is also a way of acting. Like taking your paddle out of the water for a moment and letting the current take a certain turn. The art of feeling an impulse and then holding back for a moment.

The soul is. No word is missing here, by the way. The soul is. The soul can expand and sometimes contract again. The soul is like a star that sometimes shines brighter and sometimes is less visible, but it is always there. The soul is the smell, taste, colour, and timbre of something or someone. The soul pulsates like a supernova. The soul emits light and energy. The soul is actually even grander than life. Life basks in the soul's radiation. The soul is something you can always return to. Like to a home.

Being one. Just feel and taste and listen in how many ways you can say or hear these words: being one. One-ness.

The soul has us more than we have the soul. And by the way, the word 'have' is not such an appropriate word when talking about soul. The soul is. The soul is not so interested in having. The soul keeps us connected to who we essentially are.

The heart is more about doing. The soul is more about being. In some parts of our lives, we are more in the mode of doing. And in other parts more in the mode of being. They are always both there. Sometimes one more prominent, sometimes the other.

Can a building or a house also have a heart? Sure! You can even feel how it beats and what it beats for. Can that house also have a soul? Of course it has a soul, even if it is sometimes hidden deep down or painted over.

Heart and soul are sometimes intolerable. Intolerable? Yes, that is very common. A big heart is often intolerable to others. Loving very much, or loving something very deeply can be threatening to others. Not loving or even hating something is often much more acceptable to others. Perhaps this is why an inclusive society is something desirable above the waterline, but threatening below.

And a deep or radiant soul can also be threatening to others. How? A deep or radiant soul is both innocent, like a newborn life, and willing to be guilty of doing what needs to be done. That 'both in one' can make others insecure.

The heart says, 'We are going to do!' The soul says: 'We are going to be!' And the body?

The body decides.

Those who listen carefully can feel how the body - often at an early stage - has decided. From a wisdom that is often beyond the wisdom of our mind and ahead of it. A wisdom that holds the future, as it were, very common and very modest.

But with a small footnote: the body also remembers all the traumas from our own and our cultural past very well. And sometimes it wants to warn us not to fall into such trauma again. That is wisdom about the past. It is good to be able to distinguish both voices of the body. The voice of wisdom from the future and the voice of wisdom from the past. Both in the here and now.

The body, the heart and the soul ... Allies.

Every person is part of many systems

Every team member is connected to many systems. The family you come from and something bigger your family of origin, your father's or motherland, the education you have received and the concepts you embrace, the experiences you have had in your life and possibly travels, that which is indelibly burned into your retina or carved into your soul. So in a team, you are not a visible ten persons, but perhaps a few thousand or even several million.

Often, conflicts within a team are not a clash between team members but a clash between systems. I once publicly had a nasty serious clash with my dear friend Gunthard Weber. Until Gunthard said: 'I do know that I come from a Nazi family and you are a Dutch man …' Then it became clear that our clash was the clash between Nazi Germany and the Netherlands and not at all the clash between Gunthard and Jan Jacob. Immediately, all tension also drained away from us and from the whole room.

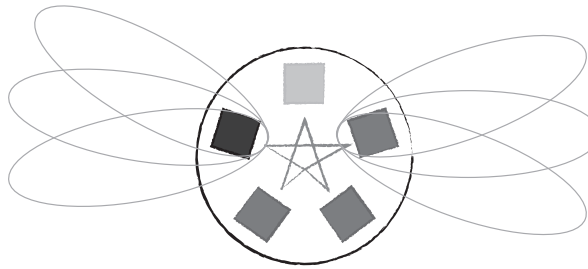
When you are ín a clash or friction, it is difficult to pull yourself out of it, as Gunthard could. But someone else in the team can start asking questions like: 'Could it be that a system or a group of people who have not been heard are speaking through you?'

It's a nice check-in to a team meeting to ask the question, 'What systems do we all have in the room?' Or to ask everyone: 'Feel for a moment: on behalf of whom or what are you sitting here today? Who or what wants to be heard or have a voice through you?' This immediately makes the meeting richer, as well as perhaps clearer and freer.

Or, as my colleague invented and tried at an online international team meeting: 'Rename yourself with the group or the concepts or principles that want to be heard through you.' With such an

intervention, you bring into awareness something that team members are often unaware of in the moment.

In doing so, the undercurrent suddenly becomes upstream and thus more manageable.



Every team member is part of many systems …

Which system speaks through her or him?

Multidisciplinary team

A young doctor tells me that she works in a multidisciplinary team in the care of people with mental disabilities. Several disciplines come together there to diagnose, treat and provide care to clients and their families in the best possible way. Each of these disciplines has its own background, concepts, and methods. The art is to make the whole more than the sum of its parts. But that is not always easy, listening to this doctor.

Craftsmanship and skills want to be used. They are expressions of life energy. If professionalism is not used or heard, then the representatives of those disciplines - the members of the multi-disciplinary team - will increasingly strive for their discipline to be heard. Logical! Something that is valuable deserves to be heard.

And often, defending your discipline happens unconsciously. And if several people and their input do not feel heard and then bring in their perspective all the more, you soon have a team that becomes less than the sum of its parts.

What does it take to become more than the sum of its parts?

De-identification. De-identification is the shift from: I am my discipline to: I have my discipline. My discipline and experience and I are not one, we are two. We stand side by side.

So how do you do that, what do starting processes of de-identification look like? At least one person in the team who has the courage to broach this subject.

And from where, from what inner place? From a place connected to

the bigger picture of the team.

What does the process require from team members? The courage to let go a little more of that which is so dear to you and possibly gives and gave you grip and identity.

What does it deliver for the team? Flow!

What does it do for clients? Also flow and more connection with their families.

Why? Well, patterns tend to jump over to other systems. If a team is fragmented, that

fragmentation can easily spill over to the client and her or his family. Conversely, we do regularly see patterns from a client system spilling over onto the multidisciplinary team.



Applying and arriving

Apart from the usual topics in interviews that might lead to a new job and thus a place on a team, there are also systemic questions you can bring along. These kinds of questions not only make recruitment interviews more interesting, but it also makes you more equal as interlocutors.

"Do I have a predecessor, and if so, what happened to her or him?" is a question I wish you could ask in a recruitment interview. It is the question of: is the place, the position I am applying for clean? If a predecessor has left in a nasty way or there have been incidents, then the place might be contaminated. If a place is contaminated it reduces your chances of enjoying yourself there. At the very least, it is good to know, and it is up to the leadership of the host team to 'clean' the place.

"Is the place free?" is another important question. Perhaps a beloved colleague has sat in that spot for years. And of course, that colleague is now gone and that's why you can apply here. But is that colleague really gone? It could well be that the rest of the team, subconsciously, looks at you as if that much-loved colleague is still there. This happens more often than you might think. If you hear something like: 'You are Antoinette's replacement', it is good to ask: 'Is Antoinette really gone?'

"How many expectations are there about the position?" This is a question of so-called double-image. Do they see me or do they see the expectations of the function? Do I want to be seen fully as a person and professional or is it OK for me to be seen through the veil of the expectations to the function?

“What are the teams’ guiding principles?” Of course, you ask this question a little differently, because chances are that this concept requires explanation. You ask for the essence. ‘What are you essentially to the outside world?’ The conversation about this can lead to the question: are our guiding principles compatible? Yours and the organisation’s.

“Is there room for creativity?” In other words, is something new allowed to emerge that is not more of the same and possibly takes the team outside its current comfort zone?

”Is there room for deconstruction?” This is perhaps the most important question in deciding whether things will work out between you. If something new is allowed to come, it also means that something has to be broken down. Something that might be finished or is over in the team. This could be habits or agreements, but also concepts on which the team is built and even guiding principles that need an update. Of course, you don’t know whether something needs to be broken down, but answering this question indicates how much room there is for your potential in this team. Conversely, as an employer myself, I have asked a job-applicant office manager, “Are you able to fire people? This is another way of asking: ‘Are you able to tear down what needs to be torn down?’

Systemic function

Besides the official function that is in your job description or that you have agreed upon, each team member also has a systemic function. That systemic function often works more strongly in a team than the official function. Because we are far from always being aware of that systemic function, it can lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

Think of systemic functions as:

- Keeping the whole together
- Keeper of a concept
- Placing the finger on the sore spot when everyone else keeps quiet
- Leading mare (leads the herd to new grassy pastures)
- Propagating stallion (drives the herd to safer places when in danger)
- Mediator
- Responsibility taker
- Jack-in-the-box
- .. etc

Your systemic function is somewhat different from your guiding principles. Your guiding principles are inextricably linked to the core, to who you are. For example, spark bringer.

Systemic function is much more the result of being sucked into a place or role in the team or system that you may have never asked for, but have ended up in. For example, the spark bringer may have ended up in the systemic function of holding the whole together, without ever having asked for it and it may not really suit her.

A nice way to clarify systemic functions is to use pieces of paper to first map on the table the two or three guiding principles of the team. Possibly also put papers on this map for customers or one or two other stakeholders.

Then each team member puts down a piece of paper (with viewing direction) that represents her or his own position in relation to the guiding principles as best they can. Then question each other:

'In that place where you are standing now, what are you doing there or what are you trying to do and what is your role for this team? What is your systemic function? Maybe an image or metaphor comes to mind.' And when the team member has been able to surface what her or his systemic function is, the other team members can also tell how they perceive that team member's function.

Together, you can ponder: are all the systemic functions we need fulfilled? And for each team member: is this systemic function I have ended up in also the function I want and that suits me?

With the pieces of paper you can shuffle where you prefer to be or what systemic functions the team needs. And if one is missing, you immediately know what kind of new colleague you need.

Patterns

In the first part, we talked about patterns in teams. This is about the whole of the team. That whole of the team usually has different patterns than the team members individually.

Usually in us, several patterns work simultaneously, but there are one or two that predominate.

Patterns also nestle in people. Patterns generally emerge in our early childhood, when we are 'employed' by the family or circumstances in which we grow up. Patterns arise because there is a kind of vacuum in a family or other system that you are sucked into as a child, so to speak. This is not the child's choice. The suction of the system is simply too strong. You can compare it to a hoover: it is not the fault of the dust that it gets sucked up. The engine is just too strong.

Growing up with a systemic function in the family or other context in which you may have been both born and raised, forces and enables you to develop all kinds of skills needed to perform that systemic function. Those skills can be immensely useful to you, including, or especially, in your work. Some of those skills, and the patterns they emerge from, are a blessing in one context, a curse in another. In your work a blessing and in your relationship causing hassle, for instance.

There are lots of patterns and here, too, we give a few. Not to be complete, but to give a sense of what patterns are. Perhaps you will recognise a few and you can take advantage of them.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the pattern where you are sucked in at the next-higher level. Usually to complete or compensate for what is missing in the relationships between the man and woman who are your parents or educators.

Father's daughters especially complete father. They develop a tremendous sensitivity to what father, and everything that has the same position as father, needs. Even before father himself realises his needs. In their work, father's daughters are not afraid of authority and know how to handle it well. This sometimes makes them smooth career moves because they are so quickly accepted at the next-higher level in the organisation. However, they do always act from the second place. For some women, this causes problems when they are offered a first place, for example as chairman of the board. That explains part of the glass ceiling. As if suddenly you bump your head after a smooth carrier up.

Mothers' sons complete mothers. They develop a form of service aimed at saving mother and everything equivalent to mother. Like the planet or the country or groups of people. Mothers' sons are also familiar with the second place and work from the wings. They feel insecure and watched when they are in the spotlight.

Parentification

Parentification is when your systemic function is to hold the family together because the parents or caregivers are unable to do so or are innerly elsewhere. Elsewhere? Think of a father who is internally with fallen comrades in Afghanistan or a mother who is internally with her mother who died incurably ill young. So as a parentified person, you end up above your parents, so to speak. This role produces a sometimes compulsive sense of responsibility

that goes far beyond what you can humanly be responsible for. Sometimes you feel better than others, than colleagues or competitors.

Carrying someone else's burden

Carrying someone else's burden or fulfilling someone else's task because as a child, subconsciously, you feel that a parent or grandparent cannot bear it alone, does not make you give up easily. Often these become strong or tough people. Rather marathon runners than sprinters, willing to work long hours. You see the work lying around and pick it up before anyone else lets it out of their hands. You are also prone to burnout because you don't know when you can stop when you are fulfilling someone else's task. If you fulfil your own task then you know when you are done.

Repaying someone else's debt

If there is a strong imbalance of give and take somewhere in the family system, you may well feel that as a child, grandchild or great-grandchild, you have to repay that debt.

Without ever even having heard about that debt.

It leads to sometimes great social engagement, a sense of justice and more giving than taking. So much so that your own body starts to suffer. Compulsive givers are naturally welcomed with open arms in jobs and projects which fuels rather than tempers the pattern.

Connected to both perpetrators and victims

Systemically, perpetrators as well as victims from outside the family become part of the family. However unpleasant, a rapist is forever a kind of relative of the one who was raped. That's how

bonding works. A child or grandchild may be bonded to both perpetrators and victims, even if they are not from the family. Being successful in work requires, among other things, perpetrator energy. Perpetration is a form of taking. Undertaking.

Victimhood is a form of giving. It happens that people who are identified with perpetrators and victims are successful one moment and do something the next moment where success is lost. People who can make money but can't keep it. If you suffer from this dynamic then a solution might be to take both equally into your heart, the perpetrators and the victims. After all, they are parts of yourself anyway. You take both tendencies: perpetrator energy and victim energy, deep inside you without judgement and regardless of what others say about perpetrators and victims.

Connected to a secret

Events in the family or village or country are sometimes covered up because the shame is too great. Very often this is covered up in order to protect the children. The effect is counterproductive. You don't have to tell a child that there is a family secret. A child feels that, knows that. Being connected to a secret develops people who are curious, who want to look behind shutters. Who make discoveries. Who want to understand unbridled.

Scientists, explorers. The other side of the same coin leads to mistrust, doubt, conspiracy theories and sometimes anger at the world.

Identification

Identification is the pattern of being connected to someone who was not supposed to be there. Someone excluded from the family. Or someone who has died and is no longer talked about, such as

a child who died young. Or someone has been excluded because she or he was looked down upon. And it is precisely because that person was excluded or looked down upon that makes it hard to find out who it was or who they were. Identification can lead to a lot of different behaviours and symptoms.

A child who had an older sibling who died may feel: I am living someone else's life. I am one too many. A grandchild of an excluded nazi grandfather may exhibit extreme political behaviour. People with strong judgements may do so in order to give voice to excluded groups in society. If you are connected to someone who was excluded by being looked down upon, you may develop the pattern of always standing up for the underdogs and bums in this world.

Someone who feels like a wandering soul is searching for a denied dead person.

Identification is a form of deep love. This type of subconscious loyalty may also be at the root of people to be identified with their work, their company or the brand name they work for. Loyal beyond death. Identified with your work or team is great. You will protect it with your life and health. However, if, for example, a crisis stops your work or your team, identification suddenly turns from a blessing into a curse. It feels like: my work is gone, so I am gone.

Identification is the main form of resistance to change in teams and organisations.

There is a form of conscious, rational resistance: 'I disagree.'

There is also this form of unconscious resistance. Unconscious resistance is, for example, protecting something that is in danger of being lost. You may then agree with the intended change and still not move.

With this kind of resistance, you can ask: 'What am I trying to protect? What should not be lost even if it is no longer functional now?' The more it becomes clear what you are unconsciously trying to protect, and your team members understand that, the less it is necessary to protect it.

How to help each other as team members move from first-order solutions to second-order insights.

Inappropriate behaviour you don't understand yourself. Outbursts of anger that scare you. The feeling of always making the wrong choice. Getting lost in certain situations. Having the question, "Are we allowed to succeed? Excessively pushing yourself away. Having the question: 'How come I keep getting ...?'

If there is an incident, something that happens once, such as getting sick or an argument in the team or a project that stagnates, then first-order solutions are appropriate. Taking time for recovery or taking medication, talking out the conflict and reconciling, stopping the project or reviving it.

If something happens twice its good to pay attention and with three times or more there is a pattern. Well, sometimes it is a coincidence but more often a pattern.

Patterns don't want to be solved, they want to be understood. Then you can help each other by going into second-order mode

and asking second-order questions. You switch from wanting to solve to wanting to understand the issue. You switch from wanting to help to wondering what the pattern is trying to tell you. You look at the problem open-mindedly and unbiased. And you start asking questions from that inner place such as:

- Who or what are you working so hard for in your failure, sickness, anger and so on?
- Where in the past was someone, or people, excluded, dismissed, not seen or denied?
- What was not allowed to be there?
- What secret could not be revealed?
- Who are you trying to give voice to in your judgements?
- Where was potential that could not or should not flow?
- Where is there outstanding debt?
- Where did people get rich at the expense of others?
- What is too painful to face now (what is the elephant in the room)?
- What is it that we will never give up?
- What price is too high?

You ask these questions to the unconscious. The unconscious of your fellow team member, to all the systems he or she is connected to, possibly to the essence of Team as a whole. The tone of voice is slow, almost hypnotic. The questions are given time to sink in and perhaps set something in motion. They are questions that open, with silences that want to be filled. And maybe then you stumble upon something that resonates, brings something into vibration. And sometimes that's enough.

Nasty selves

Nasty selves are those often dark parts in us that suddenly take over from us when we get cornered. Backstabbing, humiliating, going for yourself, putting yourself above someone, disappearing and you name it. Nasty selves are about five times stronger than our neat rational personality. They are a kind of instinct that wants to rescue us from threatening situations. Often, we are not proud of these nasty selves. But they are there. Whether we like it or not.

> In a team, it's also good to get to know them not only ourselves, but also from each other. First look them in the eye yourself and then introduce your favourite nasty selves to your team membersAbove all, tell them when they show up and what the nasty selves are trying to do and who or what kind of team members in particular are going to be very bothered by them.

I can guarantee that, provided you invite the real nasty selves and not the socially accepted forms, a lot of energy is released in such a session. I know an executive team of a bank that was able to get through a difficult period thanks to a session with their nasty selves. Every time the team or a team member felt cornered and her or his nasty self took over, others were able to recognise that and the situation became manageable. Six years later, they were still talking about it.

In fact, often the energy in a team is very muted because the nasty selves are not allowed to be there and are suppressed.

Potential

Potential is that which is released when you allow yourself to be taken along by what life wants with you. It is a kind of surrender to let yourself be carried away by the powerful breeze of full life energy. Perhaps even more than the life energy you feel for yourself. Potential takes you beyond what you yourself thought possible. Potential makes you do things you are surprised about afterwards. Letting yourself be taken away by full life energy does not take much account of your will. Potential does not mean that you are always in full wild motion, it does mean that you feel you are on a path that is right for your destiny. It is not about being more successful. Concepts like success come from the world of will that determines what is good and bad, what is wanted and what is not wanted, what is winning and what is losing. If you allow yourself to be carried away by potential, then you do things 'just because'. 'Om toch', 'just because' is the Dutch expression to indicate that you have no explanation, nor justification for what drives you. It has to be that way.

Potential is powerful stuff, though. As mentioned, it rises above the will and also above what we consider good and evil. People like Mao, Stalin and Hitler were able to unleash a lot of potential. But their consequences we consider disastrous.

This immediately brings us to the two groups of reasons why potential cannot flow.

The first group of reasons is that the consequences are too big. When I am paragliding (my favourite flying sport), I use maybe 62% of my potential as a pilot. At 100%, I would fly more, further, higher and longer, but the risks of an accident are too great. And I choose,

from my conscious free will, that I feel those risks do not outweigh the extra hours and kilometers in the air.

As mentioned earlier, every human being is part of many systems.

Allowing yourself to be taken by your full potential can mean being dragged out of your current job, for example, or out of your relationship or out of your country. Free will is there to help determine: what do I find acceptable? Who do I not want to hurt by allowing myself to be carried away with my potential? What do I not want to give up? If I accept the declaration of love from potential with: 'Yes, till death do us part', then it can take you to very special places and at the same time, the marital terms are that you take the consequences.

The second group of reasons by which potential is muted are unconscious, hidden loyalties. Without trying to explain it very precisely further, everyone knows how loyalties work in family systems and cultural systems across generations. 'Something inside me says it's not OK to have a very good life.' If you dig a little deeper, which constellations are an excellent tool for, you might come across: 'Out of loyalty to my grandmother, who could not unfold her potential, I hold back.' If you are reading these sentences, you are probably reading them with your conscious brain. And then this sounds weird and illogical. Yet many such loyalties, expressions of deep love, are stored in our subconscious. By making them visible and tangible and becoming aware of them, you can sometimes grow beyond these entanglements.

Promise and loyalties

When I promise something, I do so ín the moment with a view to the future. Promises give a foothold. And at the same time, they can lead to wanting to hold on to something that has reached its destination. If the future changes or circumstances change, the promise may become more of a reaction to the past than a response to the here and now. For example, promises on the deathbed of a parent, child or loved one can be both a lighthouse light or a beacon, and also a straitjacket on a path that the promise says cannot be deviated from.

Loyalty (or commitment) are also attitudes with an eye to the future. Loyalty is more flexible. You can be loyal to something or someone and at the same time have the freedom at any moment in the here and now to decide how that loyalty works out. That does mean a bit more work than with a promise, it is true. Namely making the translation each time, given the circumstances to find out how your loyalty will express itself.

Hidden promises

Seeing someone else suffer often leaves deeper marks than suffering yourself. From seeing someone else suffer sometimes come hidden promises. Promises that can give your life and work, without you being aware of it, a huge boost. And sometimes at a certain phase in your life, begin to pinch.

A young girl sees in the schoolyard how another child is being bullied and harassed. At that moment, within her, without perhaps being aware of it, she decides: 'If it is up to me, no child will have to endure anything like that again.' The girl grows up, goes to teacher training college and becomes a primary school teacher. She becomes a good teacher and in her environment, bullying does not occur or is resolved before it is scratched into a child's soul. Many years later, the girl of then, now a woman, feels that life wants more from her than being a teacher. And then she fails to follow her further destiny. Until once, someone asks her, "Have you perhaps ever, unconsciously decided on something that has brought you here, but also keeps you here?" And then perhaps the schoolyard event will resurface. And the promise that was made in a flash and then did its amazing work underground. A promise from which many, many children were able to reap the benefits. And perhaps becoming aware of the hidden promise also enables the possibility of revisiting the oath or pledge. Grateful for what was possible ... AND life now wants something different with me.

Hidden promises are somewhat different from dreams. Dreams come from the conscious part of what you want or expect from life. Your dream might be to want to eliminate breast cancer from the world. Or having a nice house in a forest. Or to take further and expand your mother's business. You are having the dream. And

you can adjust that dream at any time.

Hidden promises are having you. They unerringly lead you in a certain direction. They can steer and propel your career. In this way, they are an important driver of your choices. They can guide you in your work and your life from beginning to end. You can be grateful for them.

It's also possible that somewhere in your life, you will reach a stage where they start to pinch. Then it might be good and useful to ask yourself whether hidden promises have nestled somewhere, deep inside you. Often they are nestled so deep inside you that they have become a part of you. Then it is better not to break those promises, but to revise them. So, that your life energy can flow in a new direction.

Leaving and letting go

If someone is leaving a team, for whatever reason, you can ensure that the potential of both the team and the departing colleague remains as high as possible. This is good for both systems, that of the team and that of the colleague. The better the departure, the more likely a new colleague will be able to find a place and the departing colleague will also find another job or place in the rest of her or his life.

> How someone can leave in a good way we describe here from the departing colleague's point of view. You can transform it yourself to what this looks like from the team's point of view, letting go.
>
> There are a few steps I describe here.
>
> 1. 'Everything I contributed to the team I did with dedication.' 'It may all stay with you.' 'You may do with it what is right for the team, even if that means my contributions will change or even disappear.'
>
> The bottom line is that the departing team member hands over ownership of her or his contributions to the team. This seems simple but often isn't. Often this is very emotional. It is like releasing your children into the hands of others. It also means that the departing team member no longer rules over her or his grave. It separates the employee from her or his products.
>
> 2. 'One of us got more, one of us gave more.' 'I renounce any claim.'

Two sentences. Two sentences that can make a difference.

The first sentence wakes us up from the illusion that we can part in an equal balance of taking and giving. We would like it to be in balance and there to be sweet peace on that plane, but it almost never is. Truly being able to take: one of us gave more and the other got more, means facing an imbalance, an outstanding debt. In many situations, I see that such an imbalance, if not acknowledged, starts to eat away. Sometimes for years. And as a side effect, you stay inwardly connected to that organisation, team or relationship you've been separated from. It makes you less available for a new team or relationship (unless that team or relationship is afflicted with helper syndrome).

The second sentence means: I stop trying to balance the imbalance or being unhappy about it. I am willing, however painful, to really close the account. This is not always easy. When it succeeds, it has a purifying effect. And the consequence of purging is being free.

That imbalance can also be that the departing person has gained much more than 'deserved'. By the way, the soul does not tolerate that very well, unearned gain. One solution may be to return that profit to society.

3. 'I also gave something I need for the rest of my life'. My heart, my soul, the source of my creativity, my vibrancy, my humour or you name it.

That which I have also given and need for the rest of my life I come to collect and take that with me. Whether you like it or not.'

> People often give much more in their work than they realise. Even parts of themselves, often resources or qualities. Because you don't realise you've given that too, you sometimes accidentally leave it behind. And after a while you become matted. Or depressed. Without
>
> knowing why. It can be helpful if someone reminds the person leaving to collect and take everything that belongs to him or her.

As Sting sang: 'If you love someone, set him free.'

At the heart of these three steps is careful and respectful unravelling. I also call it systemic separation of property. Respectful to each other and to the potential that is there. Without making anything prettier or uglier than it is.



Part 3

Interventions

In Part 1 you were able to read about the team as a whole and in Part 2 about the parts, the team members. Perhaps it has given you insights, understanding and left smiles at yourself or your team. Or possibly a feast of recognition.

And now then, what can you do with it? Well, do interventions. That's what this section is about. It is neither a list nor a cookbook of recipes, but much more a description of interventions and their essence. My aim is mainly about getting a feel for what interventions can be and from which position you or someone else does them. Do them preferably in your own way and from your own heart, soul or professionalism.

Eleven questions about interventions in teams

We sometimes talk about it so easily, about doing interventions. But which interventions are promising and meaningful? And what does an intervention require from the person doing the intervention? To get a feeling and picture, first some questions and examples in advance.

1. What is an intervention?

Some time ago, when I was asked for a workshop on interventions with Russian participants, I received a long e-mail from a

participant beforehand. She wrote to me: 'We associate the word intervention with being forced to do or refrain from doing something. Besides, we have a history of wars, repression and purges, so our default attitude is not to trust others, especially when it comes to interventions.' That got me thinking.

Apparently, intervention is also a catch-all term.

For us, from a systemic perspective, an intervention is: something that happens or something is done after which a team or the people in the team act from a different inner place or perspective.

So, something changes from within. The helm changes from within. Maybe sometimes circumstances are more or less compelling, but you don't turn left because someone tells you to, and you simply follow that. Making interventions that change something from the inside out requires the person doing the intervention to really connect with the team and love it as it is. Even if it is not working well.

An example from one of my previous working lives: we feel that we, consultants, constantly come last for the office manager of our wonderful consultancy firm. Stuff comes late, things are arranged too late, in our opinion, and that pattern causes stress. Deeper questioning reveals that for our skilled office manager named Nel, clients are number one and her colleagues number two. She was actually not even aware of this herself.

But she did suffer from the nagging and stress of her colleagues. One of those colleagues almost casually asked Nel: "What would change for you if you also saw the consultants as customers?"

I can still see Nel's face as she tastes that sentence, so to speak. And apparently swallows and absorbs it. The atmosphere in the dovecote, as the office was called, had instantly changed and became a lot more relaxed. Apparently something had changed in Nel, but also in us as her colleagues.

Asking the right questions is a great tool to let interventions unfold in people and teams.

2. Intervention on the whole or on the parts?

Do you talk to each member of the team or do you make interventions on the whole? The whole behaves differently from the sum of its parts, so an intervention on the whole is somewhat different from interventions on individual team members.

As a young teacher, I did not know what to do with class 2c, where I liked every child but the whole thing called the class was a monster. I had love and tools to deal with each child, but that did not help in my helplessness to tame the monster, let alone love it.

Similarly, once after a summer holiday, there was suddenly a lot of irritation in the company I had founded. A lot of mistakes were being made. Too many. By me, by dear colleagues, by the staff. That was irritating, so we started addressing and correcting each other. Everyone did their best, but the shortcoming persisted.

One Saturday afternoon, I suddenly became aware of something. Over the summer, something had shifted in the positions of the three owners towards each other. A development for the better. But a development that we were not very aware of, and we had certainly not communicated about. It was a shift that also benefited the company as a whole. But which had also disrupted

things a bit. Resulting in mistakes and irritations. We began to correct on the parts, on the people separately. But that didn't soothe the issue.

That Saturday evening, I wrote an e-mail to all colleagues: 'We all know that we make too many mistakes, irritate each other and fortunately also hold each other to account. But, let us also keep in mind that as a company as a whole, as a team, we are going through a development that we all want. And yes, that disrupts a bit. Perhaps we can look at each other and each other's mistakes with gentle eyes and connect with the development as a whole.'

This seemingly simple intervention on the whole helped get the team into calmer waters. Later I reflected: if correcting those mistakes had been successful and everyone had stayed in their 'old' place, the development of the whole might have stagnated.

3. Interventions inward or outward?

A team may fuss or stagnate in its development. For instance, because there is no sincere support from outside or from the larger system, or because the team does not have an acknowledged place. Then it does not make much sense to make interventions in and with the team. That would only increase frustration. So, an intervention to the outside - outside the team - is needed first, to the management for example.

As a team or team leader, you are the asking party in this case. If you feel being in your right and this way above the management or the board and try to force a measure, as it were, it often doesn't work. To the management, something like this feels like an outside coercion. And with that, it is no longer an intervention as I mean it. What does work is to say to the management or board from your

place as a team member or team leader: ‘If you want us to do our work well, then we need something as a team. We need our place in relation to other teams to be clear, solid, and acknowledged. We cannot do that ourselves. We need the stable and secure place and then you can count on us and build on us.’

4 In what time do interventions land?

Do interventions land in the here and now? In the future? In the past? Yes, they can land in the past. If there is undigested past, there is a chance that interventions land there in that past rather than in the here and now. The ‘curfew’ intervention in 2021 landed in 1944 and led to very strong reactions for that reason. Even among people who did not live in those times at all.

Some other interventions run very far ahead and thus land in a future that is not yet palpable to everyone. Interventions in the light of the upcoming future sometimes have such an effect. The upcoming future is the future as it comes at us, whether we want it to or not. And because we regularly like to keep that upcoming future far from us, we would rather build dykes than look the approaching storm in the eye. This kind of visionary intervention requires translators between that, as yet, unimaginable future, and the palpable here and now.

Interventions in the here and now, in the face of both the upcoming and plannable future, are of course an attractive option.

We once had a visionary architect when we wanted to renovate and future-proof our house. This architect sketched. Actually, he didn’t even sketch designs, but the ideas behind them. Two questions from him changed our living forever: ‘Mmm …, it feels like the neighbours (to whom we had rented part of our house)

are also sitting at the table and are unconsciously very strongly influencing our ideas, could that be so?'

And the other question: 'The street is the most public part, and your bedroom is the most private part. How do we ensure a gradual transition from the most public to the most private, without getting into a rollercoaster of abrupt transitions coming?' To translate these ideas, we needed a translator: a second architect who drew everything out neatly and delivered a building specification.

5. What order of interventions?

As you know by now, a team can be in different modes: first order, second order and third order. First order is focused on solutions to a problem or issue. Second order is focused on insights, shifts in perspective and what led to the situation being as it is today. And third order is in the service of transformation, of that which may be coming to an end and where there is room for new. If a team is in one of these states, you can make corresponding interventions with it.

First-order interventions provide quick solutions that allow the team or system to move forward. They require creativity, follow-through and give air. Vaccinations against Coronavirus are a first-order intervention.

Second-order interventions provide insight into what caused the problems or the current situation. And which patterns are helpful or, on the contrary, turn against us. They require courage to see, to slow down and give new freedom. An example of such an intervention is a timeline with storytelling. Or re-insourcing (team-) qualities and capabilities.

Third-order interventions give awareness of which structures and concepts are reaching their expiry date in a changing world. It requires the willingness of a team, organisation, or society to take apart what has held them together for so long and then let go. Third-order interventions give breakthroughs and transformation. Here you can think of questions like: what might be over for good?

6. Is the team intervenable?

If a team is not able to absorb and process interventions, then there is not much point in making interventions. Then something else must happen first, namely working with what is causing the team not to be able to process interventions now.

A few reasons for not being able to incorporate forward-looking interventions are:

- Undigested past
- Survival mode
- Split-off qualities
- Lack of trust and cohesion
- Strong patterns
- No stable place as a team

Suggestions on how to explore this in a team and how to create the conditions for interventions to land can be found mainly in Part 2.

7. Is the team in a decisive state?

There is not much point in making forward-looking interventions if a team is not in a decisive state. Then the interventions will have little or no effect. So that decisive state must first be achieved. If something changes from within or if a different perspective emerges, then it means that the team acts from that new state and can then make decisions continuously.

It is not always easy to distinguish and determine whether a team is in a decisive state, or whether the alternatives to a decision are good enough. If there is doubt and wavering, or no knots are being cut, you can easily ask that question: 'Are the alternatives still too unclear or are we not in a decisive state?'

It was the same with the title of this book: the options were heartily clear, but I was not in a decisive state to tie the knot. The book itself dared, but I didn't. Until my colleague Dees casually asked me: 'And what does the book itself want'? Then the decision was made in a quarter of a second and it was crystal clear.

8. Who is doing the interventions?

That's a good question. Interventions can come from within or from outside. Basically, anyone can make interventions from inside or outside the team. This is not just reserved for a team leader or management or a consultant. The question is more: does someone find the appropriate intervention or does the appropriate intervention find someone who can carry it out? Is there room for creating interventionism?

And if that which is necessary to do or to address in a team happens to find you, it does require the freedom, love AND courage to do the intervention as well.

9. Who is the owner of the intervention?

As soon as you start thinking in terms of the owner, you are already far from home. Because then you think in parts and not in the whole. If the whole and all parts can feel ownership, you are well on your way together.

10. Who is the assignment giver for the intervention?

A very illuminating question is that of whose assignment the intervention is. Who do you consider to be your assignment giver? Or where does the assignment come from?

- Is it a manager, employer, owner, founder or identifiable person, group or institution?
- Is it a concept, purpose or belief?
- Is it a need in society?
- Is it the past, the here and now, the plannable future or the upcoming future?

An example is a leadership project at a school. One part of a school team sees the Inspectorate's report as the assignment giver for this leadership trajectory. The other part of the team sees the deepening of the Dalton concept as the assignment giver. Then there may be a lot of ambiguity about where the team is actually going and when they can be satisfied with results. After all, both parts of the team are focused on a different principal. And so may be doing very different things. And then the whole thing may just not progress (properly) and stagnate.

11. What does making interventions require of the intervener?

Having interventions in mind is one thing. But some more is needed. At least three things:

1. For yourself, answering the questions:

- **What am I or do I want to be for this team?** This question may not be so easy to answer. But at least you can be very mindful of it. Are you a helper? An advisor? A mirror? More of a compass or a guide? Or an unraveller? A confrontationalist? A builder? A

potential explorer? A spark maker? A (de)constructor?

- **From what inner place do I make interventions?** This question answers: where am I internally? Are you connected to the team? And where do you stand? Next to them, behind them, in front of them, close to them, further away? Are you connected to the organisation? With a big picture? With your own, non-negotiable essence?
- **Who or what do I consider my client?** Again, understanding this, as mentioned in question 10, is very helpful for yourself. And it can give clarity.

2. Insight into which of your own patterns may come into play.

Patterns attract patterns. And it can therefore happen that you get sucked into a team's pattern fairly silently. Without realising it yourself. A familiar pattern, after all. So understanding your own patterns is very valuable for recognising them when they rear their heads.

3. Daring to act lovingly ruthlessly.

Doing what is necessary. Something like what a surgeon experiences when she or he makes the first cut through the skin with a scalpel.





Building of interventions

When building a house, we usually start with the foundation and end with the roof. There is a logic to that. The walls build on the foundation. With interventions, there is also that kind of logic. And with that, a sequence of interventions also emerges.

Perhaps that is not the order that is most fun, nor does it always mean picking the low-hanging fruit first. Often, making the foundation of a house is diligent work whose results are ultimately the least visible. When working with and on a team, it is no different. But you can always enjoy the foundation work because you know it is there and because the solidity of a team is built on it to a large extent.

Of course, incidents or calamities require interventions appropriate to what needs to be done at the time. These are often first-order interventions aimed at ensuring that we can get on with each other.

The structure

The construct of interventions must meet a number of conditions, which also have an order.

1. Decision

The first thing needed is a decision. Are we going to continue like this, or do we want different? “Different!” is soon heard.

This response seems obvious, but it is not at all. If you ask, “Do we want different?” many people are all too quick to say “yes”. ‘Yes,’ is often the socially desired answer. ‘No’ is often the real answer.

In any case, know that the patterns in the team as a whole and also the patterns in the team members especially tend to say 'no' to doing things differently. Why? Patterns are stronger than our will, are moreover often in the unconscious and above all want things to stay as they are. The function of patterns is to provide predictability, stability, and continuity.

The main reason to be careful with an enthusiastic 'yes,' is that there are very good systemic reasons that things are the way they are now. Even if the current team feels heavy, unsafe, fragmented and goals are not being met and agreements not being kept, there are good reasons why it is the way it is.

Take, for example, a team with a lot of cynicism. It doesn't feel nice, for anyone, including the cynics. 'Do we want to be different?' 'Please!' 'Then shall we agree not to be cynical anymore and that when we call each other on it we won't be slapped around with a cynical response?' 'Sure!' Agreement made and noted. A good first-order intervention, you might say.

But wait a minute. How did that cynicism come to be? What are the reasons for it? Let's take a second-order jaunt. People who react cynically often feel cold. As if they have closed their hearts. And why would people close their hearts? To protect it! To not let it get hurt (again). In a team with a lot of cynicism, you can immediately ask: 'What ever happened to people opening their hearts and then getting hurt?'

It's good to know that an event doesn't even have to have been experienced by current team members. It could be older. But the team as a whole has a kind of memory and almost creates a kind of field of cynicism with which it infects new team members.

Since the cause of cynicism is often in the undercurrent, it is not so helpful to ask, “Why are you so cynical?” Moreover, this question goes to identity level. Whereas someone is doing much more of something, namely cynical behaviour. The more systemic and second-order questions are: “What is cynicism trying to do? To what is this phenomenon a reaction? Being cynical is hard work. Who or what are cynical people working hard for?” Dwell for a moment on this, on the effect the different questions have.

The team’s decision has to be truthful. Because you know that if you want things to be different, there is a price to pay.

The gripes and habits of now may be lost. And you are not yet sure what will come in return. Is it really worth the investment? I have great respect for teams who say, ‘The price is too high for us, we won’t do it.’

2. Is the past clean?

If the decision has been made to want to do things differently, the next question is whether the past is clean. If there is a lot of old pain, people have left in an unpleasant way or there is trauma, you have to deal with that first. The reason is that as long as the past is not clean, all subsequent interventions will land in that unprocessed past. They can lead to reactivations: much stronger reactions than logical to a given intervention.

Cleaning up the past in no way means processing all undigested events. It does mean that those events must be named and the effect they had and have in the team and the organisation acknowledged. Acknowledgement is healing. And acknowledging is different from apologising.

One systemic intervention to clean up the past that works well is a ‘timeline’. One of the main effects of trauma is that it breaks up, it fragments a system. There are often team members who have worked in the time for a long time and others shorter. The latter group sometimes has no idea why the past is not clean and why the team is fragmented.

Doing a timeline, where events are literally written down in chronological order and laid down on the ground, has an added advantage. Through the timeline intervention, not only are wounds cleaned after which space for healing is created, but the team also becomes one again. It is no longer ‘their story’ or ‘his/her story’ but becomes ‘our story’.

> A timeline is literally placed on the ground. There is a beginning, for example the birth of the organisation or of the team. And then sometimes you suddenly come across a year - like once 1875 - that just pops up and is apparently important. That which is mentioned by team members is the starting point of the timeline. On the other end, there is the now. As a facilitator, you write those timelines and put them down. By the way, it is essential to ask where in the space is instinctively the future and where is the past! Otherwise, you are working in the wrong direction.
>
> Then all team members each write down on (coloured) notes, preferably A5 with marker, all the events that are striking to them. The special, impactful, nasty, sad, fun and ‘you name it’ events. Inviting people to start writing requires the facilitator to create holding space: inwardly standing next to someone in such a way that the other person feels safe enough to be vulnerable. It can feel difficult, or exciting, to write things down.

Then everyone puts their own notes on the timeline on the floor. When all the notes are in the right place on the timeline, look at them with the team. Several team members may have written down the same event(s). Then put those notes all together so that all the notes remain visible. You can have team members walk past them to look at the notes, in silence. And ask questions like, “What catches your attention?” “What strikes you?

Then, in order of seniority, i.e. who was first, second and so on, have everyone literally walk the timeline and tell about their own written-down events. Other team members may ask clarifying questions, but do not enter into a discussion or express their own opinion about an

event of another person. Thus, everyone tells their own story in front of the other team members. With the invitation to all members to listen with the intention of wanting to understand the other (second-order listening). Even if an event has a completely different connotation for someone else. All those stories that are then superimposed, as it were, make one fabric: the team’s story is complete again.

This process takes all the time it needs. And space for the emotions that come, from sadness to euphoria.

3. Solid place of the team

The third question of the 11 questions on interventions is about inward or outward interventions. If a team’s place in the bigger picture of the organisation is not clear, or not acknowledged or accepted, then it is very difficult to produce good work that can land in the outside world. Then an intervention to the outside world

is needed first. A team might then say something like: 'If you, management, want us to do good work, we need you to give us a firm and acknowledged place. It is up to you to tell that to the rest of the organisation as well'.. It is worth remembering, though, that the team is the asking party, and cannot force to have a place. The right tone of intervention does matter here.

4. Identity

Besides an acknowledged and accepted place, the whole of a team needs an identity. This is much more than the team's name. With team identity comes at least two key interventions.

1. The first is clarifying the guiding principles of the team. **Guiding principles** answer the question: what **are** we essentially to the outside world?

Guiding principles are quite different from the products or services the team provides. For example, one hospital may have 'quantity of life' at the forefront, while another has 'quality of life' at the forefront. Both hospitals provide more or less the same services, but they ARE different. Their guiding principles are different. In Part 1 on Identity, I also talked about guiding principles.

2. The second intervention at the intersection of team and the organisation around it, is to clarify who or what is the **systemic owner** of the team. Systemic ownership is answering the question: who or what are we ultimately doing it for? Amsterdam AirPort Schiphol's legal owner is a limited liability company. The systemic owner of this main Dutch airport is most of the Dutch people. Even non-airline passengers can feel: Schiphol belongs to us!

5. Interventions within the team.

If the previous conditions are met, then it is quite possible to make interventions within the team. This may sound rigid, but I often see that team interventions are carried out immediately without anyone asking whether the previous conditions are also met.

Interventions within the team can be many. There are interventions on the whole, and interventions on the parts, the individual team members or sub-groups. A valuable intervention, for example, is the **re-insourcing of lost qualities**. These can be team qualities, in which case it is an intervention on the whole. Or personal qualities, in which case it is an intervention on the parts. The latter can also be done very well in a form of coaching or a process of personal development.

Suppose a team has lost the ability to be proud. That was not a conscious decision: 'OK, so now we will abolish our ability to be proud.' That does not appear in minutes, nor in the conscious part of the team. But it did happen, that sacrifice of the ability to be proud. It is usually the result of being hurt or some other event. To endure the hurt, we split-off abilities.

We also outsource abilities or responsibilities to laws, protocols, rules or management. Usually because it's more efficient to outsource some abilities to other entities. The pandemic confronted us with the fact we had outsourced many responsibilities. Some of them would be good to insource again.

> You do the insourcing, by first going back to the event and then asking the question: 'Could it be that you or you had to give something up then?'

You speak, as it were, to the unconscious. Then it often surfaces: ‘Darn. That’s when we lost the ability to be proud’. You can write that down on a piece of paper or make it visible in another way, with a symbol or something tangible. And literally take it back, put it on your desk or in the team room. For as long as is appropriate.

‘We want different’: zooming in on seven forms of ‘different’

We want different. We are going to change. Change has become a container term. Development, transition, transformation. All terms that are often lumped together and used interchangeably.

Too bad, because they are too precious to be treated that way. Through the systemic lens, I unravel and distinguish them. And from that unravelling and differentiation, I’ll ask you now the questions I repeat at the end: which of these processes does your team need? What would Team say if it had a voice?

In the little drawings I use below, the star each time symbolises the patterns. The cubes represent the parts, the team members. The circle around it represents the identity.

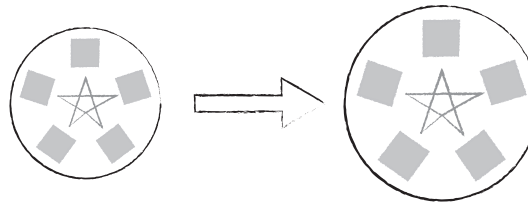
1. Not doing

Don’t change what works. Not doing is different from doing nothing. Not doing is an act. An act of great commitment. Of being very present and very observant. Observing how things are going inside the team, observing how things are going outside the team and observing the relationship between them. Not doing is sometimes greater than doing. In not doing, you stay in touch. Nothing stands between you and your team. Not doing is also staying in touch with the potential of the team.

Doing something sometimes puts something between you and your team. A goal or a trajectory. Then contact with the essence of your team can sometimes be lost for a while. You then no longer see the team, but the goal.

On a small scale, but no less important, you can do this by creating a silence in a meeting or gathering. Shut up for a while, while being fully present. That is a living silence. A silence that wants to be filled. Sometimes with something new or something that couldn't be said before.

2. Development



In developing, both the patterns in the team and the composition of the team remain the same. Developing is the process of reaching your maximum maturity. Like a tree becoming mature and spreading its branches majestically. Or an ecosystem reaching full maturity, diversity, cooperation, and dynamic balance.

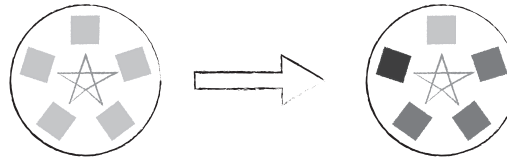
Development is quite undervalued in organisations. Why? As you develop, you always encounter moments when you are at the end of your current capabilities and ability.

You lack the skills or ways of interacting to take the next step in development. You have to admit: we have now reached the limits of our own ability. In other words: we need to become vulnerable. Like a lobster growing out of its shell and being very vulnerable for a while before the new coat is sturdy enough.

To develop is to go from your current version to your upgraded

version. And many people and many organisations cannot cope with people and teams being temporarily vulnerable. Mottos like ‘strong together’ are not very encouraging to become vulnerable. ‘Whole together,’ is much better.

3. Change



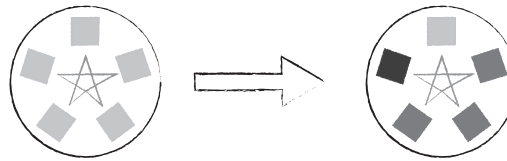
In change, the patterns remain the same but you do different things with them and perhaps the composition of the team changes as a result. Change is getting from A to B, or from current situation to desired situation, preferably with clear goals. Change is like a journey where you know where you want to end up.

Change is, systemically speaking, relatively easy. In fact, the only assignment to team members is: contribute to getting to B. And you may already feel it: change can be kept completely outside yourself. You don’t have to become vulnerable to it. Perhaps that makes change more attractive than development for some teams. Even if there is still a lot of potential in developing.

The beauty of change is that, for example, when you have successful patterns within your organisation and with the market, you can sell lots of other services based on those patterns or expand to other countries. After all, patterns don’t just break down. You really have to do something for that. And you can turn that toughness of patterns (providing stability, predictability and

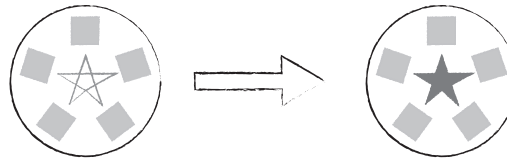
continuity) to your advantage nicely.

4. Transition



Transition is change on a large scale or across an entire sector. In transition, the patterns remain the same. In energy transition, for example, the patterns between energy producers, energy consumers and government remain the same. Only the sources of energy change.

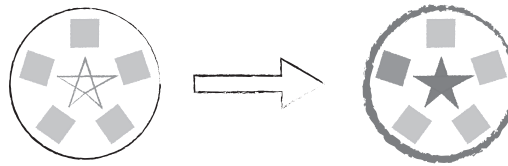
5. Reset



At a reset, there is still a lot of potential in the members of the team, perhaps also in the services and products, but the patterns that were once helpful now start to pinch. A reset requires new patterns. A reset is not easy, but it is an attractive alternative when there is still a lot of potential. A reset requires time and attention because the patterns are often underwater and tough. Moreover, they reappear at the slightest sign of trouble.

A reset sometimes literally means to say during a meeting: ‘Hey, stop, it’s happening again! Just reset.’ And then you have to go back a few comments and start again from there in the pattern or relationship you do want. I know teams that have a stone in the room and every time the old pattern resurfaces, someone can stand up, take the stone, and put it in the middle of the table. There it is again! Reset requires looking at each other with a smile every time the old pattern resurfaces.

6. Transformation



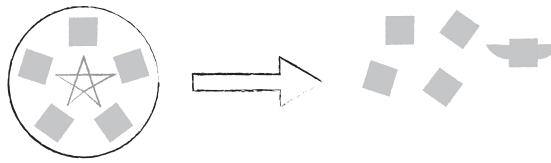
Transformation is the process where, when it is over, the identity of the whole is different. You are something different as a team. But you don’t know beforehand what that is. Usually, patterns change too. Transformation is like an adventure, you don’t know where and what you will be tomorrow. There is no B or dot on the horizon you can head for.

Transformation requires a lot of commitment from team members. We stick together, we stay shoulder to shoulder, even if it is not certain that there will be a place for each of us in the new team. In transformation, order becomes fluid.

Hierarchy no longer provides a foothold. Transformation demands a lot from leadership. In any case, that leadership stays, from the beginning until well past the point of no return.

Connecting with what naturally wants to transform because a holding date is approaching is doable but requires a lot from you, namely enduring the not-knowing. Wanting to transform against the flow of nature is a perilous undertaking for which humanity may pay a high price.

7. Stopping



Stopping is a worthy and full-fledged alternative for when something is nearing its end. Better to stop while there is still energy, than to let all the energy drain out. The art is to be able to use the energy of quitting for something new. In many cultures, there is shame in quitting. But wouldn't we allow every person and every team and every organisation to stop before the energy runs out? And wouldn't you wish every person, every team and every organisation to have someone with the courage to say in time, 'Your time is coming to an end'?

At the beginning of this chapter on seven forms of 'different', I posed two questions. Here I repeat them again.

- Which of these processes does your team need?
- What would Team say if it had a voice?

List of interventions

There are a lot of interventions woven into this book. My main concern is that you get a feel for what interventions can be, and from what position you or someone else does them. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, this is also not a cookbook with recipes for interventions. Do them mostly in your own way and from your own heart, soul or professionalism.

I do list here the interventions that came along in this book and the pages where they are described or touched upon. Feel free to try everything out and adapt it to your style and what is appropriate for your team, from your own un-under- acting essence.

- De-identification
- Nasty Selves
- Insourcing
- Timeline
- What speaks through you
- Clarifying guiding principles
- Making the voice of the team as a whole heard
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd order interventions
- What does this team need
- Not doing
- Developing
- Change
- Transition
- Reset
- Transformation
- Stopping
- Leaving and letting go, systemic estate separation
- Apply and arrive

- Acknowledging what is and what was
- Dealing with patterns
- Reviewing hidden promises



Part 4

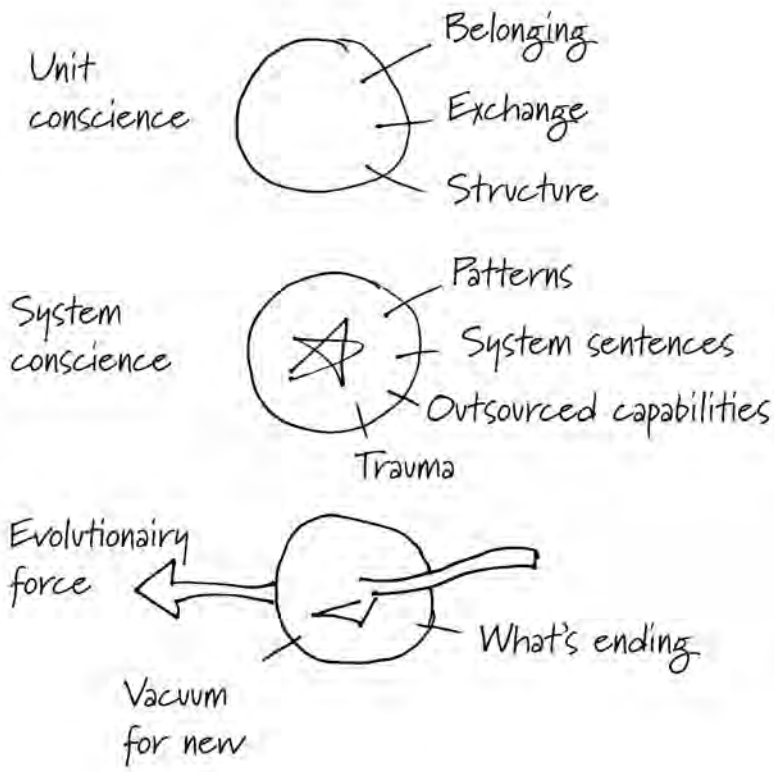
Underlying theory

Bert Hellinger (1925-2019) may not have invented the method of constellations, but he did bring it to the intensity and worldwide fame it has today. Through all those thousands of constellations and through open, unbiased and phenomenological observation, a number of principles and mechanisms emerged of how human social systems work and, just as importantly, what causes them to stagnate.

Briefly, here is an overview of which principles have surfaced after 25 years of constellations.

1. Systems are leading us. Perhaps more and more powerfully than we lead systems.
2. Unresolved issues from society spill over to subsystems such as government, organisations, teams, families, and individuals. Usually without us being aware of it.
3. The whole moves differently from the sum of its parts. The parts may feel like they are moving forward while it feels like the whole is moving backwards.
4. Symptoms in society, organisation or team, try to tell us something about what has not been digested by the system.
5. Clean, open-minded looking and perceiving give us insights beyond opinions, judgements, wanting to help, good intentions, power or other filters.

6. There are three so-called consciences: the unitary conscience, the system conscience and the evolutionary conscience.



7. The **unitary conscience** tells who belongs and who does not. It divides the world into good and evil. It excludes people and events, which cannot be digested.

- Acknowledging what we don't want to be true is the most healing force.
- Gratitude is the most powerful fuel in the life swing of taking and giving.
- Loving that which you fight is the most promising attitude to allow rebellion to reach its destination.

Either way, the **system conscience** tries to keep the system as a whole alive. Family, organisation, team, tribe, country and so on. To this end, the system creates patterns, hidden systemic phrases and splits off important abilities. This happens unconsciously.

- Saying 'Yes' to all aspects of a pattern helps to grow beyond it.
- Saying hidden system phrases out loud confronts, is painful, purifies, reconciles, and allows love to flow.
- Awareness of what we have outsourced over the past millennia, centuries and decades transforms complaining into a renewed flow of taking responsibility.

The **evolutionary conscience** is a great, incomprehensible, often mysterious force beyond life and death, beyond prosperity and crisis, beyond war and peace, beyond faith and science, beyond individual systems. It shakes us up about what has reached its destiny and offers vacuums that want to be filled with something new.

This evolutionary force constantly causes natural processes of transformation; it does not think in terms of gain and collateral damage. From the personal conscience, we do. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the evolutionary force puts us in touch with potential.

Surrendering to that

what life wants with us

gives both enormous energy and requires us

to face the many consequences.



Read more

On organisational trauma - Philip Bailleur: Bailleur, P. (2020, July). Stuck: Trauma in organisations.(1st edition). Lannoo. ISBN number: 9789401470087

Systemic Leadership on systemic principles, patterns, transformation - Jan Jacob Stam and Barbara Hoogenboom: Stam, J. J. & Hoogenboom, B. (2017, September). Against the current: systemic leadership (1st edition). Publisher Het Noorderlicht. ISBN number: 9789492331427

Systemic Coaching on systemic principles and patterns - Jan Jacob Stam and Bibi Schreuder: Stam, J. J. & Schreuder, B. (2017, February). Systemic coaching: systemic work without constellations (2nd edition). Publisher Het Noorderlicht. ISBN number: 9789492331366

Or watch

Link to spontaneously made videos about teams on the TeamConnect website: www.teamconnect.global/stories/

Or feel and experience

If you want to feel or experience more, contact Jan Jacob Stam or Dees van de Hoef.

We offer from TeamConnect:

TeamConnect survey with feedforward session

Team interventions

Team or organisation set-up www.teamconnect.global/ and info@teamconnect.global

Or learn

For this too, please contact Dees or Jan Jacob:

Training/masterclass systemic interventions in teams

www.teamconnect.global/ and info@teamconnect.global

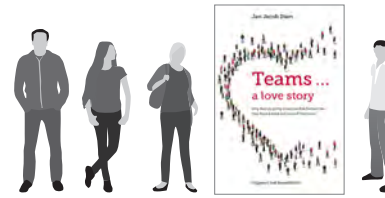
The Team

Exactly 11 weeks after the first letters found their way onto Jan Jacob's iPad, we had the paper version of this book in our hands. What a team! Four people and a book, all with their qualities and quirks. What a treat how the whole could be more than the sum of its parts! How cool not to try to bridge the differences between us but rather to use them. The pit-stops were lightning fast, with no loss of flow or momentum. Of course, in the first version, there was still plenty to correct and the book wanted itself a little more breathing room and playfulness. Is that an existing word, playfulness? Probably not, but it is real.

Like the whole team was real. Not prettier or uglier than it is, nor bigger or smaller than it is. But lived through.

How lucky this book was to be able to gather such a team around it ...

Want names and numbers to go with them? You will find them on the following pages.



Jan Jacob Stam



Jan Jacob puts people and teams in touch with their full potential. From authenticity and loving ruthlessness.

He has had his heart set on systemic work with people and organisations since 1996 and has now worked in more than forty countries with many teams and (social) organisations. As a biologist, manager, consultant, founder of several companies and now TeamConnect and janjacobstam, it is curiosity that constantly drives, or draws him.

'My pattern is to dive into phenomena I don't really have anything to do with. I want to understand and feel through them with my mind as well as my heart. And especially what living systems need to do what they are meant to do. If, after a seminar or working with a team, I have new insights into how teams work, that gives me energy and I have a fantastic day!'

'Deep down, I actually feel like a nomad'. Jan Jacob has been an avid paraglider pilot since the early 1990s. With his paraglider wing, he has flown and enjoyed hours over many countries, mountains and terrains around the world. And made many wonderful long (including more than 200 kilometres) flying trips. He enjoys being on the road, on adventures, in a VW camper van.

Dees van de Hoef



Dees makes the world bigger for other people. With great energy, she likes to colour outside the lines, with humour and always respectful.

From the very beginning, she connects with what it looks, sounds, feels and functions like when people in teams and organisations can live and work as they are meant to. From a deep trust in people's own potential.

Her language, meaningful silences and interventions are simple, clear and effective. But always surrounded by a deep compassion for the human in teams and where there is work and living together, even in the toughest circumstances.

In late 2019, she co-founded TeamConnect with Jan Jacob, where she conducts systemic trainings and workshops and trains people to become TeamConnect partners. She has also been working as an independent interim manager since 2014.

And then there is an almost primary life need: flying. Whether it's hang gliding, paragliding or teaching as a motorised flight instructor: in the air, she is completely free.

Mirjam Strijbosch



When you say Mirjam, you say co-creation. In shaping, in letting what wants to emerge come into being. She is a kind of midwife: she has been there with every Jan Jacob book, from start to finish. From the first draft, adjustments, corrections, to the moment the manuscript goes to the printer and beyond. Carefully and patiently, she asks the right questions, shapes the book and suggests ideas, creating a book that makes you very happy when you hold it in your hands.

She follows her creativity, does what needs to be done and follows impulses. These do not stick to working hours, so sometimes the most beautiful thoughts take shape at special times.

Besides being a designer, Mirjam is also a glass artist. In her own studio, she makes her pieces and gives workshops with glass, ranging from glass fusing to stained glass and tiffany.

She lives and works by the water, with open views over the countryside, is the mother of a daughter and grandmother of three grandchildren.

Michiel van der Ham



As owner of Het Noorderlicht publishers, two great passions come together for Michiel. Entrepreneurship and systemic work & constellations.

Michiel is a business economist and has been trained as a family and organisational constellation facilitator and systemic coach since 2003. And he has been an entrepreneur for more than 25 years. For a long time mainly in his marketing communication agency Zorgt, and as a systemic coach for entrepreneurs. Since 2018, he has been the owner and publisher of Het Noorderlicht publishing company .

The common thread in his entrepreneurship is, at the intersection of the personal and the business, to mirror, look at the essence and bring new movement. In doing so, he always uses his business acumen, his broad work experience, coaching skills, life experience as husband, father, son, entrepreneur, traveller, photographer, golfer, yogi and life hacker. In which systemic coaching, working with (organisational) constellations and intuitive entrepreneurship are the essence of his vision and methodology.

Michiel is passionate about creative collaborations and he loves making beautiful things that grow people's (systemic) awareness.

Welcome to the field of Het Noorderlicht

Publisher Het Noorderlicht (The Northern Light) has a special place in the world of systemic work, personal development and coaching. Emerging from the field, over the past twenty years we have published dozens of beautiful books in co-creation with various specialists. We regularly organise successful workshops in which we deepen the knowledge from our books and put it into practice. We do this with authors and a selection of professionals from various fields. The Noorderlicht remains deeply rooted in the passion to share knowledge with you as a reader, to inspire you and encourage you to 'make big steps' in the field of systemic work, personal growth and awareness.

Some of the books and workshops in our webshop were developed by ourselves. In addition, we have made a broad selection of books that are often used in various courses and are favourites among the authors, professionals and trainers connected to Het Noorderlicht.

Our webshop is the place to buy your books and attend interesting workshops. Because of our unique place, we can make wonderful combinations of authors, trainers and professionals with a wide selection of books and workshops. Deepen your knowledge and be inspired by interviews, podcasts and more.

See more at www.hetnoorderlicht.com.

More information and contact: contact@hetnoorderlicht.com
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