

# Challenging Organisations and Society

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## Mental Leaps into Challenging Organisations and Society

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# How to Awaken the Potential of Organizations to Act as Societal Transformers

## Abstract

This article provides a theoretical and methodological framework for how to support leaders as they learn to observe and interpret relations between organizations and society and to act more consciously and responsibly. Internal decision-making and hybrid structuring to differentiate an organization from society and connect it inter-independently with society becomes a central focus. This is the key to taking responsibility for the conscious survival of the organization and society. By making (conscious or unconscious) decisions, organizations eliminate some opportunities and create new ones both for themselves and for society. Through functional abstractions and decisions, leadership as a system creates a capacity to maneuver. This requires “communitized learning” by leadership as a system. Thus organizations can perceive themselves not as victims but as self-responsible entities.

## I Introduction

My consulting work swings back and forth between theory<sup>1</sup> and practice, and I especially appreciate Kurt Lewin’s statement that “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”. Theory widens our horizons; it helps us to see the bigger picture. Theoretical categories are like different pairs of glasses we can look through to observe various

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<sup>1</sup> My interest in this topic was awakened by “system theory”, especially by the book “Organisation und Entscheidung” (“Organization and Decision”) by Luhmann (2006).

aspects of organizations. Theoretical categories help to reframe and enlarge the landscapes we look at. Moving back and forth between theoretical concepts and clients' realities is a fruitful approach to supporting organizations in their learning process as societal transformers.

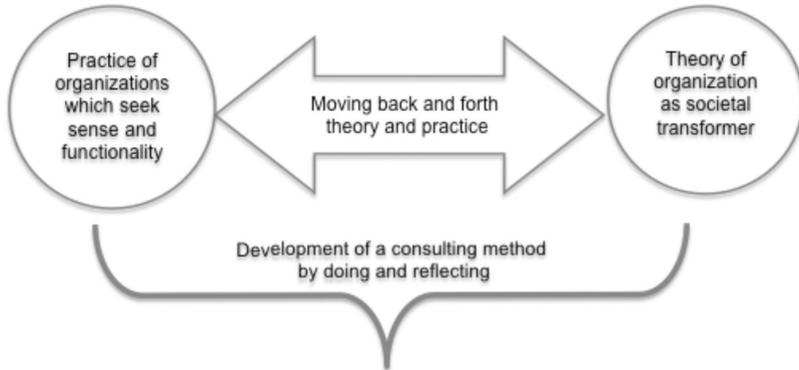


Figure 1: Consulting as moving back and forth between theory and practice

This article demonstrates how I use my theoretical insights in my work as a consultant for organizations and leaders: how I translate the concept that organizations transform societal complexity<sup>2</sup> and uncertainty<sup>3</sup> into intervention, and how I help create awareness that organizations drive the dynamics of society and are driven by them. Organizations decide, include and exclude, intensify, transform, facilitate, and frustrate. They span the globe with their patterns of action and affect our private lives. Areas of conflict, dynamics, and demarcations are flexible and dynamic hot spots for the development of organizations and society. Linear-causal leadership patterns alone fall short when they attempt to parallel the interplay between our complex society and its organizations.

2 Keywords are globalization, financial crises, questions of human rights and the environment, the knowledge society, computer technologies, etc. Baecker (2007) locates the transition from “modern society” to “the next society” primarily against a background of the effects of computers on our social order.

3 See also “Risk Society” by Beck (1986), Baecker (2007), Luhmann (2006).

Organizations point out areas of conflict in society for which they can desire to create solutions through their structuring and leadership concepts. Self-ascription, self-direction, and self-responsibility are central to assuming an active role within society.

## 2 Communitized abstraction on an organizational level as potential

One key to helping organizations act in a conscious and self-directed manner is collective learning by their leaders on an organizational level. The degree to which the leadership system is able to abstract collectively becomes a central leverage for increasing responsibility and the capacity to act as an organization. Through the shared effort of abstraction, a picture of the organization as a communicative entity of action<sup>4</sup> is created. Potential for collective action as an organization is also created—with all the differences this entity (the organization) contains.

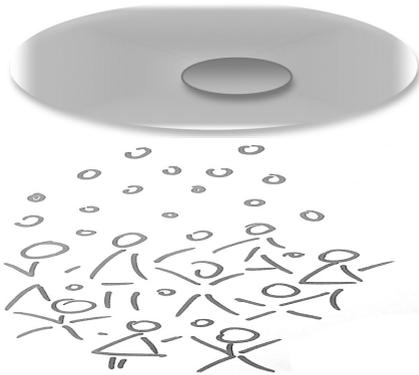


Figure 2: Communitized abstraction of the inter-independent organization

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4 Communication becomes the object of observation: communication between organization and society, between management systems and organizations, between employees, between teams, between organizations and their markets, etc. “If we want to know how communication works, we have to learn to observe not only the participants and parts but also a third entity, the opening and closing of room to maneuver.” (Baecker 2007, p.9) In this way more communicative complexity in the sense of the relationship of the parts to each other can be comprehended and a leadership intervention can be conducted. Communication is not assigned to the individual actors (“He or she communicates well.”) but communication (and of course organized communication, organization and leadership as well) is observed as an object, a third entity. (“The communication between him and her is good.”)

With the introduction of the observation<sup>5</sup> perspective, the requirement of having *one* truth is relinquished. Everyone can observe, recognize, and interpret various facts and truths about the organization. There is no one single truth in this collaborative process; participants observe and interpret mutually and equally in order to take the step to the organizational level of an attitude of multiple perspectives of observation and interpretations. This shared process requires that the participants learn how to exchange different truths (a dialog), especially when these truths are in conflict.

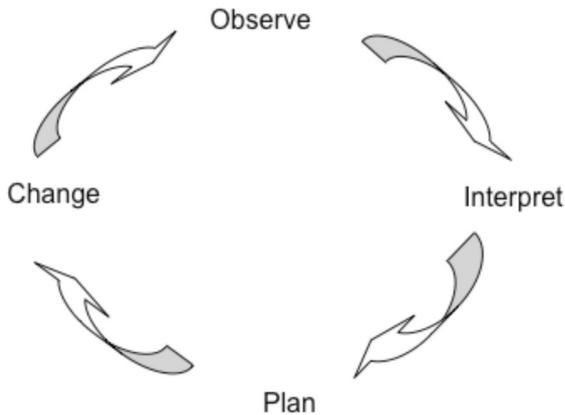


Figure 3 Action Circle – according to Lewin<sup>6</sup>

What leadership as a system observes and interprets on an organizational level can be planned and changed on the organizational level. Communitized abstraction unites the awareness of the individual leaders into a leadership system. This system is able to observe, interpret, plan, and, finally, act or change reflectively on a bigger scale.

<sup>5</sup> Since Immanuel Kant, the observation perspective has been seen as a central starting point for science and scientific awareness. In “system theory” we speak of observation as 1. Orderliness, 2. Orderliness, 3. Orderliness.

<sup>6</sup> See further Lewin (1946).

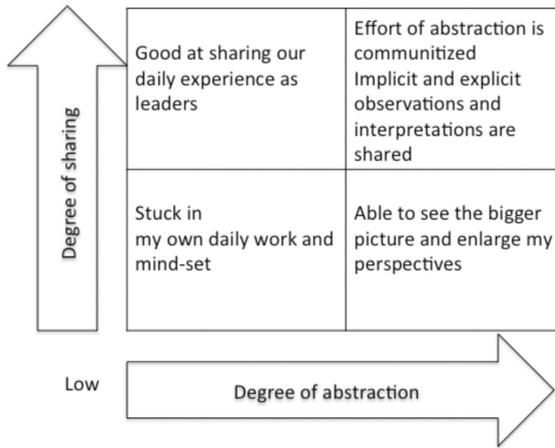


Figure 3: Effort of communitized abstraction

Abstraction creates a distance from one's own leadership actions, and critical questioning becomes possible<sup>7</sup>. This enrichment as a leadership system forms a culture of looking as an entity at the bigger picture. It supports questioning of internal decisions, structures, leadership concepts, processes, and forms of cooperation in their interrelations, and changing and developing them appropriately in response to the requirements. Functional, self-responsible decisions and forming of structures can then be placed at the center and:

- approach the inter-independent relationship of the organization to society from a new perspective;
- provide freedom from sacred traditions;
- focus usefulness as defined by goals and/or strategy;
- broaden or limit possibilities for action through decisions and structure<sup>8</sup>;
- provide learning through “leadership errors” without assigning blame, enabling mutual learning in terms of the development of the complete system.

<sup>7</sup> This concept refers to Peter Senge's “system thinking” (2006), Luhmann's “the system as one unit and its parts with their differences” (2006) and Scharmer's “ecosystem as the system for innovation” (2009).

<sup>8</sup> Baecker (2007) speaks of form and forms of communication.

### 3 Theoretical and methodological framework

In order to encourage this communitized abstraction, I move back and forth between theoretical and empirical truths during the consulting process. As a consultant, I have experienced how theoretical concepts help me and help others to broaden and renew observations and interpretations. Theory makes things visible that were not visible before. I have developed constructs and questions that offer landing points<sup>9</sup> for encouraging communitized organizational abstraction<sup>10</sup>. The method presented here has been developed with more than twenty clients over a period of nearly ten years. It increases capability for abstraction, focusing on handling the boundaries between the organization and society and on the process of defining a leadership system. This section of the article presents the following elements:

- the theoretical construction (six dimensions) is my input for the clients;
- questions that support communitized abstraction;
- quotations that have influenced my work in the long term and that are selected from the minutes (flipchart photos) of workshops with various companies;
- an example of a workshop design.

#### Dimension I: Society and organizations

Organizations can be considered to be parts of society<sup>11</sup>. Society interacts with “functional subsystems” such as politics, economy, law, science, education, media, health, religion, etc. Each subsystem follows a “code” in order to fulfill specific functions for society: economics–have/have not; science–true/false; health–healthy/ill; law–right/wrong; education–development/certification; politics–having/not having power (opposition); religion–immanence/trans-

<sup>9</sup> See further Scharmer (2009), creating “landing pads” in order to be able to “lead from the future”.

<sup>10</sup> I base this on Kneer’s (2001) theoretical appraisal. He hypothesizes that autopoietic system theory allows us to see the connection of subsystems of society in empiricism.

<sup>11</sup> I refer here to developments in system-social theories; see further Kneer (2001) and Luhmann (2006): the social system differentiates into functional subsystems that follow a particular code.

scendence; media–information/non-information. It is impossible to imagine the political system without organizations such as parties, associations, administrative units; the health system without hospitals, doctor’s offices, health insurance companies; the society’s economy without banks and companies. We can assume that organizations are structurally linked with numerous subsystems of society.

In order to function, society is inter-independently connected with organizations because they can reduce complexity. Through decisions, organizations reduce society’s opportunities, risks<sup>12</sup>, uncertainty,<sup>13</sup> and the unexpected<sup>14</sup>. Societal opportunities<sup>15</sup> are transformed through decisions. Before the decision there are multiple opportunities for the solution. After the decision the opportunities exist as fixed form. The opportunities are transformed into a new opportunity. That means, every internal decision creates a transformation of opportunities.<sup>16</sup> Organizations are decision machines: by making decisions, they reduce the opportunities (complexity) of society and transform them into new opportunities. Thus organizations, as self-contained and simultaneously intensively networked entities of action, contribute actively to changing society.

Questions to support communitized abstraction:

1.a. Awareness of inter-independence organization-society

- How does X’s perceive social responsibility?
- What questions are we (still) searching for social answers for?

We are caught between the requirements of economy, science and religion. This turns us into lame ducks. This old

12 See also “Risk Society” by Beck (1986).

13 See Weick, K. E. & Sutcliff, K. M. (2001).

14 See Baecker, D. (2007); Beck (1986); Luhmann, N. (1996) and (2006); Sheila M. Puffer & Daniel J. McCarthy (2011); Spindler, M. & Steger, M. (2008); Steger, M. B. (2010); Striwerka, J. & Stoelhorst, J. W. (2009).

15 In this context “opportunities” means options for choice that are still undecided, open, uncertain, contingent, unfixed. The relationship of the parts to each other is not determined (see “communication” above), but rather still to be decided. System theory speaks of complexity that is produced by contingency.

16 See Luhmann, N. (2006).

- Where do we act on behalf of ourselves and where on behalf of outside entities?
- On what sub-systems (organizations) of society do we especially focus?
- Which do we completely disregard?
- How successfully do we fulfill our social responsibilities?
- What demands will society place on our leadership system in future?
- How do we want to and how can we behave in relation to these demands?

dilemma originated from the conflicting requirements of science and religion is now further complicated by the requirement to find funds for our scientific work.

#### 1.b. Self-perception in dealing with boundaries

- What images and solutions have we as a leadership system developed on our boundaries with society?
  - Observation of our potential for perceiving society
  - Identity and concepts of the future
  - Culture/norms/values/governing ideas, images, stories
  - Product logic
  - Internal dealings with external/societal differences
  - Dealings with external and internal mistakes and learning patterns
- What dilemmas and contradictions do we have to overcome when dealing with society? How do we accomplish this?
- Which characteristics of our self-perception have gone solid over time?
- What are we collectively well prepared for? Where are we less well prepared?

Over the last eight years we developed the ability to deal with risks in response to the coal mine accident we had years ago. Now this gives us the opportunity to deal actively with employees' needs and hostile media. Our people were part of and cooperate with our recent developments.

## Dimension 2: Mechanisms for managing boundaries and expectations

Organizations<sup>17</sup> come into being and sustain themselves through decision-making and differentiation with their macro-environment/society. All external points of reference used by an organization are, as a result, treated as internal decisions. A decision is that which the organization internally regards as a decision. However, internal authority can become dependent on the source it expects to provide the best access to resources for its own survival (clients, contracting entities, political instances, etc.). The decision<sup>18</sup> for self-attribution generates boundaries with society and leaves that for which the organization has not decided outside. All parts that find their way into the process of linking a decision with another decision belong to the organization's system; all others are seen as macro-environment. Consciously and actively managing boundaries<sup>19</sup> defines organizations as systems and determines the inter-independent relationship with society and between sub-systems within the organization. Deciding reflectively creates boundaries and enables effective inter-independent functioning.

### 2. Management of different expectations: inter-independent

- How do we as a whole system manage expectations from our macro-environment: society?
- What does the organization expect from its parts? (micro-environment)

Team of Continental Officers: "We didn't dare to bring this topic up again because you were insulted back then."  
CEO: "If I had been insulted, I would have ex-

17 Luhmann (2006) developed a theory of the organization as a social system. He saw organizations not as content-relatedly rational earmarked categories that orient themselves toward goals, like for-profit entities, but rather from the aspect of survival and adaptability. He sees organizations functionally, based on the principle of survivability (adaptability).

18 Here "decision" in relation to organizations does not mean a mental process or a conscious determination. A decision as an element of the organization is a social event and is thus communication. It arises and disappears immediately at the moment it comes into being. Since a decision is not capable of continued existence it cannot be changed, but it will provoke subsequent decisions.

19 See Schneider (1987).

- Which units (departments, etc.) expect what from each other?
- How do we deal with differing external and internal expectations?
- To which expectations can we react better or not as well?
- How are contradictions and dilemmas handled and managed?
- What tasks does this produce for the leadership system?

pected you as senior management team not to be concerned about that. And by the way, I was not insulted. So let's talk about how to balance the contradictions of local rooting in your continents with the strategy of headquarters."

### Dimension 3: Structures and decision-making

Structures grow historically<sup>20</sup>. Everything that serves to bridge from one decision to another functions as a structure. Organizations build structures to limit what can follow what, in order to make decisions<sup>21</sup>. Processes are defined, offers obtained, financial plans checked, discussions conducted in meetings, three-option suggestions produced for the decision-makers, decision-making criteria decided upon, courses of action presented, assessment centers established, positions stated, expert opinions obtained, etc. Organizations decide which structures they will build, how they will reach decisions: which advance information will be given to whom, who will be asked, who will be involved, how decisions will be communi-

20 This means they determine which decisions will be made, and thus do not have to decide anew every day who will be CEO, whether there will be a leadership team, who will be a member of IT and with what function, at what time which colleagues will arrive, who will work in production and who in marketing, what will be produced and which market will be served, which social responsibility will be served, how values and identities will be defined. As a rule these questions are decided in a linear timeframe, with reference to each other.

21 Every decision first acquires meaning through reference to other decisions of the system. Internal links between decisions are created in a continuous process of recursive interrelations among decisions. This is a stream and should not be thought of as fixed or objective, like office space, production facilities, computers, etc. Static, objective observation corresponds to the organization as a machine model that is repaired when it does not meet expectations; that would be the image of the hierarchical model. See also Gareth Morgan's image of "flux and transformations". For further discussion see Weick, K. E. & Sutcliffe K. M. & Obstfeld, D. (2005), Luhmann (2006), Wimmer (2009). Decisions within the organization refer to each other; the result is reciprocally determined space for opportunities.

cated, etc. Structures provide limits and make decisions possible. Through the formation of structures, decisions become more independent of external demands. Organizations form themselves and in this process inspire sense. They can change, specify, and renew the structures for their own decisions only through their own decisions; they can only change themselves and can only learn from themselves. Of course they are always embedded in and act within society, but they decide how to connect to society, which makes them inter-independent.

### 3. Structures and decision-making

- Which structures have sedimented between the decisions?
- What preparatory steps are taken prior to decisions (structures)?
- What is decided where, when and by whom?
- Which decisions are described by whom (which unit) as beneficial and which as obstructive?
- Where and by whom are decisions and structures questioned, newly defined, and changed?
- Which decisions do we fail to make?
- What is our responsibility as a leadership system?
- How do the sub-units decide among themselves?
- Which interfaces have developed?
  - Horizontal
  - Vertical
  - Closed-club networking
  - 360°- open networking
- Where are the central linkages located?

I am in a management position, but when it comes to decisions like marketing strategy or project responsibilities, things become unclear, although we have the processes defined ... nobody wants to touch the hot potatoes.

The huge programs and projects I am responsible for are like satellites within the company. The line management avoids risk and is stuck in old power games. I go my separate way, try to avoid the sandbox boys, and create my own

- Internal or external to the organization
- Teams
- People
- Steering vehicle
- Where do we need more self-steering?

internal and external networks which are helpful for the decisions and purposes of my enterprises.

#### Dimension 4: Questioning the functionality of structures

Leadership has to counter external societal complexity with internal structural complexity. To do this it has to develop a sense-making functionality instead of a sacred order<sup>22</sup>. Historically determined structures must be checked for functionality. Companies usually exhibit various types of structures<sup>23</sup> in parallel and superimposed on each other. For example, a hybrid organization might:

- exhibit a matrix structure to support the international connection of clients on various continents, and
- commission projects that span parts of this matrix for development and implementation of innovation, and
- appoint teams who decide on a heterarchical structure, and
- have a production and warehousing system that is primarily hierarchically structured, and

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<sup>22</sup> Schwarz (2007) discusses the holy order of men, which is not questionable. Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr (1992) refer to the boundaryless organization, which means destroying the holy, God-given order: they call it breaking the restricting chains of organizational structure.

<sup>23</sup> Different types of organizations structured according to their decision-making are listed here in progressive order from inflexible complexity-reducing to flexible types. Naturally they are all functional for certain purposes:

- Hierarchical structures: Opportunities and uncertainty can be greatly reduced through hierarchical decision-making patterns.
- Matrix structures lose a central reference point but gain in putting different interests (center – market) on an equal footing.
- Heterarchical structures: the multi-poled expert-based units, group-wide functional centers of competence.
- Project structures: assembled for a set period of time in order to accomplish a concrete task. Functionality in decision-making is essential to reach goals.
- Network structures: competence units that are connected with each other through win-win relationships, voluntary participation, and trust.

- co-operate as needed in a networking style within a supply chain, among experts, with clients to develop ideas for innovation, etc. Making hybrid, multidimensional<sup>24</sup> structures useful for desired goals (the future of the company's own identity) requires questioning and scrutinizing dysfunctional structures.

#### 4. Question and create hybrid structures

- Which structures have become inflexible over the years?
- Which structures are variable/flexible/functional?
- What advantages and disadvantages does the solidification or variability have, and for whom?
- Which units/facilities/functions are (formally or informally) placed beside, above or below which others?
- What structures have been actively formed, with what advantages and disadvantages?
- Which types of structures are not functional anymore and have to be questioned?
- What function does the leadership system fulfill in questioning and creating multidimensional structures?

We (the headquarters, together with the continental and regional managers) converted the structure from hierarchy to matrix and during the last three years adapted all our processes throughout the entire corporation to be better connected and to serve the client. We still have no clue how to collaborate. The structures are so artificial. They don't fit our needs; we are still in the hierarchical communication patterns.

### **Dimension 5: Inter-independence Systems: Society – Organization – Individuals**

Concepts like 'system theory'<sup>25</sup> and 'system thinking'<sup>26</sup> define an organization as a decision-making entity. They recreate and define

<sup>24</sup> See Strikwerda & Stoelhorst (2009).

<sup>25</sup> See Luhmann (1986).

<sup>26</sup> See Senge (2006).

themselves again and again. Ongoing self-reference leads to identity building and sense-making.<sup>27</sup>

This system-concept can be applied to individuals, teams, departments, organizations, and society<sup>28</sup>. Systems are, on the one hand, self-steering, and, on the other, dependent on their environment. They have the potential to choose their dependence consciously – they are inter-independent. Questioning dependence relationships and dealing with expectations, contradictions, and dilemmas between inter-independent sense-making entities (society, company, sub-systems, employees as a system, the individual as a system) create the potential to act more consciously.

### 5.a. Inter-independence:

#### Individuals – organization

- What kinds of people does X attract? What kinds doesn't it attract?
- What values and norms are identifiable for these individuals?
- How and how much do individuals shape X?
- What is consciously shaped by the people and what is not?
- How can individuals relate to the company?
- To what extent do individuals represent the company?
- Which advantages and disadvantages does this have for individuals and the company?
- What impacts does X have on individuals?

Our network with local politics and the higher education system came naturally because we were a nationalized steel enterprise. This network provides us with loyal experts. They were grateful to have well-paid international jobs which enabled them to combine family and success. Now that we are in the free market we have to foster this network and reconsider it in order to raise it to the level of the holding company.

As we are an aid organization and want to save the world, it is expected that we

<sup>27</sup> Here this concept parallels Schein in the way he describes structures as cultural patterns of organizations.

<sup>28</sup> See Schneider (1987).

- To what extent are individuals changed by the company?
- What consequences does this have for individuals? What consequences does it have for the company?

are passionate about our work without burning out. Most of us struggle with this tightrope walk; we have a high burnout rate, which decreases our motivation.

5.b. Inter-independence: leader – leadership system – organization

- What influence do I have on the organization in my function?
- What norms and values shape my leadership?
- With what contradictions am I confronted and how do I resolve them?
- What role do I have in the leadership system?
- How do I bring my values into the leadership system and vice versa?

I am a pioneer – the lonely hero type. I need this team to realize my ideas and values and understand that we can help each other even when our norms and values are not the same. I brought you on board because we are different; we can challenge each other. We have to work this through, and I am not just saying this – I mean it.

## Dimension 6: A functional leadership system

A functional leadership system of an organization reflectively embraces all possible (hybrid) structures and leadership concepts and is able to put them in place as functionally needed. It uses structural concepts from hierarchy through network and hybrid leadership concepts<sup>29</sup>. The logic of homeostasis is in the foreground. The intention is to keep the actions of others and their otherness in bal-

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<sup>29</sup> See further leadership and intervention concepts such as linear – circular, trivial and non-trivial (Förster 1988), management and leadership (Kotter 2005), technical and adaptive leadership and organizations (Heifitz, Grashow & Linsky 2009), or in the German language: Führung und Steuerung, linear und systemisch (Malik 2002 and Spindler & Steger 2008).

ance, assess them on the basis of superordinate common goals, and steer them by regulating conditions inter-independently, e.g., by (shared) decision-making and structuring, both limiting as well as enabling. Peripheral matters and risks (e.g., societal requirements) are taken into account reflectively, determining structure as a functional necessity.

When a leadership system abstracts, functional questions can be asked: what structures, what kind of leadership, and what cultures will help us to move as a whole toward our future? Situational, functional, and structural aspects influence each other in the realization of different structural forms<sup>30</sup>. More fragmented, hybrid, and segmented organizations with greater diversity of structures, as well as cultural and communication patterns, require greater reflection, active design, or creation and integration of those multiple structures and communication patterns. A ‘helicopter perspective’ enables them to gain an overview and see the entire picture<sup>31</sup>, including society.

## 6. Functional leadership system

- What leadership patterns can be recognized, and by whom are they kept alive on a daily basis?
- How are our images of decisions, structures, leadership, and change communitized?
- Where and by whom is X as a complete organization moved, maintained, changed, stabilized, released?
  - from outside/the environment/society
  - by sub-systems, departments, teams

We have a lot of formal authority, but not enough leadership and steering. We are ‘under-steered’ as an entity; although we attend a lot of meetings, we don’t talk about the important topics. The important ones are how to deal with legal requirements and whether we want to be the good

<sup>30</sup> See also Strikwerda & Stoelhorst (2009).

<sup>31</sup> Spindler, M. & Steger, M. (2008).

- by the leadership system (crew)
- by individuals
- What is our biggest challenge as a leadership system in order to balance the whole system with all its differences?

guys or the bad guys.  
There is a lot going on behind the scenes and we should bring it into management meetings.

### **Example: A tailor-made design – how to fit this framework into a workshop<sup>32</sup>**

1. Preparatory work: every leader prepares him/herself for the workshop with the help of the dimensions above. They are given a short theoretical introduction – 3 to 5 lines.
2. Workshop starts: set the scope, goals, overview, etc.
3. Selection and assignment of the dimensions to be dealt with in working groups.
4. First overview of the introduction of the working groups to their assigned dimensions (theoretical input as framework).
5. Work in groups.
6. Oral presentation of the central points from the working groups in plenary with the goal of networked, equivalent work and determination of the systems to be observed.
7. Consolidation of the abstraction in the working groups.
8. Artistic interpretation (picture, poem, opera, play, sketch, song, etc.) of the current situation as dilemma, contradiction, gap, challenge, uncertainty, or important unanswered question in the area of conflict leading to the future.
9. Presentation of the results on the flip chart in plenary in different dialog settings.

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<sup>32</sup> A presentation of the complete consulting process would be beyond the scope of this article. The consulting process in whose context this workshop took place was called “identity building process” and lasted nine months. The workshop lasted three days and involved forty leaders and experts of an international company with a matrix structure spread over five continents. The goal was joint creation of organizational abstraction in workshops in order to move beyond speaking and writing to emotional and spiritual shared success in learning. See further the concept of large group intervention Zouwen, T. van der (2011) and Königswieser & Keil (2000).

10. Derivation of an identity slogan from each performance and its mutual interpretation.
11. Development of a plan—which values, goals, themes, questions and actions:
  - are of great importance and must be carefully dealt with in the long term?
  - are of central importance and must be faced with full energy in the short term?
  - are of less urgency and importance, but place and time must nevertheless be reserved for dealing with them?

#### 4 Conclusions for consulting

The potential to act as a self-steering and inter-independent organization in a relationship to society and individuals can be enhanced when:

The leaders as a system work together through a conceptual and emotional process, a shared dynamic on the organizational level. This means dealing with contradictions and paradoxes – there are no simple truths. It also means scrutinizing well-known patterns in order to find functional solutions for the future. The differences require movement back and forth within and between different systems: society, the organization, and the leadership system. It is a productive zone of discomfort, disturbance, and stress, as there is no quick fix for this issue.

Communitized abstraction as a process of collective learning with highs and lows is introduced. Theory (the six dimensions) can be helpful as long as the consultant does not proclaim it to be the one truth. It can help to widen and abstract the perspective if seen as one possible story about organizations and society. Working by inquiring can form a leadership system through the process of questioning and scrutinizing the leaders' own organization (decision-making, structuring, leadership culture).

A laboratory situation for collective learning provides landing pads for communitized abstraction, dialog, and planning. Through the six dimensions, a workshop within a transformation process

brings the mutual work of creation from past, present, and future to the here and now. This is especially important where international work is concerned, because the abstraction of time and development perspectives is experienced differently by different cultures. This affects the short- and long-term sustainability of thinking and feeling by the individual, organizational, and social future.

Making the mutual effort to communitize abstraction regarding the relationship between organization and society gives leadership the chance to bring their values and movements of the organization to life. The self-responsibility of the organization and of its leadership as a system can thus converge in a common flow of learning with differing truths. This process increases their potential as societal transformers.

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