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reflective hybrids®

Flow beyond Systems: Development through Somatic Intelligence

Editors: Maria Spindler and Tonnie van der Zouwen

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Trialogue among Andrea Schüller, Maria Spindler and Eva Wieprecht

Move the Future

Maria: Whoa – that was the COS Workshop "Somatic Intelligence in High Performance Teams"[1] in May 2017; I still feel the vibrations in my body and in my whole system. Indeed, it is time to systemise the experience and the knowledge we gained and write about it to share our discoveries and take this endeavour to the next level. There was a feeling of being in a state of flow and at the same time a clear framework plus various interventions, unfolding and impacting different levels: the individual level, the level of pairs and casual interactions, of small teams and of the system as a whole. Our core question for the trialogue is this: How can movement and dance invite the future into the present moment? How can the future emerge through movement whereby we, as a system, jointly generate new experience and new realities? If we take dance as intervention, what are the vital catalysts that allow movement to become fruitful in relation to the development of a community? How did you plan the workshop, what was the framework and which layers were central?

Andrea: My intention for our workshop was to generate and allow for a holistic experience, based on interaction on multiple system levels, grounded in everyone's own somatic experience. We set the stage for a learning journey to inner and outer systems and, most importantly, to their connections as well as to their incongruences. The golden threads were supplied by the multilayered systemic setting, the transrational mind-body-methodology (integration of somatic, cognitive and emotional intelligence) and plenty of space

1 This trialogue is based on the experiences of the COS Workshop "Integrating Somatic Intelligence in High Performance Teams" in Vienna, Austria, in May 2017. With: Steven Gilligan, Andrea Schüller, Maria Spindler, Liselotte Zvacek, Eva Wieprecht, Doris Wilhelmer, Georg Kunschert and 30 dancers between light and darkness.

for the new to arise. Countless intentional as well as unplanned interactions could and did take place in all of these spaces and in the realm between them. In practical terms, our daily structural elements were:

- Teachings: 1 body : 37 bodies
- Individual work and demonstration: 1 body :1 body
- Practice in pairs of what was learned: 1 body : 1, 2 bodies
- Generative transposition of 1:1 learnings in 5 teams with participating team leaders 4 x 1 body : 7 bodies and 1 body x 9 bodies
- Whole-system-movement/dance facilitated by 1 body: 37 bodies + music
- Whole-system-sharing: 38 bodies
- Dialogue: 38 bodies

We wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how all these threads of interaction accumulate and contribute to the growth of the whole system.

Maria: We had several ideas, with specific teams and organisations in mind, concerning the question how managers and people in responsible roles can invite the future into their business.

Andrea: Actually, opening awareness on both the system- *and* the individual level while working on the team level was the holistic twist of this setting. Teams represent cells of innovation and hubs for the future in organisations and in society, technically and socially. Teamwork is in itself a generative process, unifying different, even opposite positions, nurtured by a common ground of belonging that is carried forward by a shared intention or goal, in constant exchange with the environment. It is a microcosmos for planting, experiencing and reflecting the ingredients of social creativity and community building in a holistic way. Teams are reflected in all members, who in turn are entities in their own right and at the same time parts of a bigger whole. Each positive move, each disturbance on one level impacts the other facets of this holon.

Opening spaces Credit © Liselotte Zvacek-Schrefel[2]

In crafting the dramaturgy it was crucial to establish a good balance between setting foundations/grounding and freedom/empty space. A good setting should correspond with brain ecology. Also in the workplace! Structure is important so that participants can feel held enough to feel secure; and freedom is needed to allow them to become generatively present within the different relational realities we offered and that we've been talking about: with oneself, in pairs, as teams and within the whole system. The structure is the riverbed, so the river can flow and expand in its own way, but is restricted by its banks. The river will change its flow according to its surroundings and it will leave its mark on the landscape. At times it may overflow, get dammed

2 Liselotte Zvacek-Schrefel: Consultant and photographer. Design of experimental, experience-based contexts for social learning and inspiration, focusing on the present moment in interpersonal dialogue, social patterns and patterns of human life. Contemplative photography.

up and find another way. Movement and dance integrate structure and freedom through the unique ways of 38 bodies.

Maria: Our own future emerged among us through movement and dancing. I could feel how we developed together and got more and more connected and integrated at the same time.

Andrea: Movement in conjunction with bodily awareness is crucial for the creation of the future. We don´t *think* the future, but we receive it through our mind-bodies and craft it together with the help of our individual gifts and abilities. It is not that we cannot think the future – but it will be a different one if it arises from our thinking and planning only. For fresh futures to emerge – which means not suppressing the 80% of human existence which takes the form of shadows, vulnerabilities, emotions, physical and social needs, etc. – we rely on the intelligence of the whole body, including the head and the entire brain on top. You can call this holistic intelligence or transrational thinking, embodied thinking, whatever. In our workshop we called it "Integrating Somatic Intelligence". Inviting the whole brain to work, we are much faster and happier generating *new things* as well as communities *instead of doing more of the same, but with increasing speed*.

Maria: To differentiate between slow and fast is important in organisations. It is crucial for management to realise where to be slow and where to be fast. Often it is better to be slow – to trust one's gut feeling, to make time for it – as in the end it is much faster, because the intervention simply fits and one doesn't need lots of additional correction loops. It is often better for the organisation as a whole if I follow my intuition, if I am connected to the whole.

Andrea: Slow thinking is still often confused with intuition, emotions and all that soft, illogical fuzz, and the intellect is thought of as fast. But in fact – the intuitive, automatic, somatic mind associated with the right hemisphere of the brain operates fast; the intellect and rational thinking associated with the left side of the brain operates slowly. Intuitively you get the important

clues of a situation in a split second; whereas conscious, mental understanding takes much more time. Kahneman[3] calls the former System 1 and the latter System 2. The servant, System 2, is often mistaken for the queen in the brain, which in fact is the somatic, intuitive part, i.e. System 1. Whole cultures as well as organisations mix these two up and keep running on this track.

Maria: The differentiation between logic and automatic thinking is important for managers. They need to be aware which system they are operating with and what kind of interventions they want to set for which purpose. That's the reason why interventions in social systems are so much more complex than in machine models.

Andrea: If you try to solve this complex riddle through "thinking only" or "intuition only", then, indeed, your tasks as manager or consultant will not only be very complex but also complicated. Brain and nerve-wracking…! It's all about the quality of the connection between the two operating brain systems. Embracing opposites starts in your brain and in the nervous system. We can learn to cultivate these inner connections and become more sensitive and skilful in making good use of our whole brain. In doing so, managers might find that as a result, the next step, the next intervention, becomes fresh, easy and simple again. When your thinking is embodied and you are vertically connected, you can receive the future through different lenses. The body, with all its physics, thinking, sensing, feeling, and acting, is the learning ground for this kind of creative leadership and intervention.

Maria: So, when I am connected with my body, with a responsibility for others and a system, my interventions – and the possibilities for interventions in general – become more complex, more risky and therefore potentially more creative. More newness can arise, more innovation – but also disorientation and destruction.

3 Kahneman, Daniel (2011): Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York.

Andrea: Yes, creation is dangerous! So you'd better be connected to the universe of human perception and to your heart and reach out to others while doing so. The chances of entering this magic space "in between", where all the seeds of an unknown future can be received by fertile ground, are much higher if you do it together with others. ☺

Maria: Leaders or consultants face a conundrum: How present do I want to be? How much presence can I stand? Do I acknowledge my body-knowing or do I supress it? Do I bring in both my rational mind and my intuition or do I force myself into one direction only? In my experience, if you want to have an innovative impact on a bigger system, you will come across these questions and if you want to face the unknown in creative ways as a leader, you will have to answer them through your actions.

Andrea: I am called upon as a human being if my interventions are to be connected to the whole system. In our workshop we subsumed the whole system plus body intelligence in a structural element called "Whole Systems Somatic Movement Process". It was designed as a minimally structured, free space in which it was possible to digest, get rid of, free, explore, break, reconnect, act out, take in, interrupt and integrate the learnings of the day, plant the seeds for the next day and weave a network of relationships in intentional and spontaneous ways. Eva, you facilitated this process. What is movement, what is dance for you? How do you differentiate between the two in your work?

Eva: Everything in life is moving all the time; the life force is in constant flux. Life is continuous motion. Through conditioning we learn how to arrest this movement. This is where my work sets in. Dance is a culturally woven expression; dancing, we move together – this serves as a ritual for creating a sense of community as well as for other rituals within a collective. I work with dance in a culturally anchored way in order to become conscious of where we stop the movement, where we restrict expansion. Dance also helps us to gain experience by allowing things to happen: Give permission, sense

the freedom to grow and expand movement beyond the limitations of our selves and our relationships. In our work we use Milton Erickson's Utilization Principle – to accept whatever is in the present moment and to make creative use of it. So a stop, a pause or the act of arresting movement are gateways, allowing us to creatively move beyond the prevailing situation. There is no wrong movement but simply an opportunity to say yes to an unwanted stop or expression; a possibility for liberation, for using the energy for a new expression, movement or communication – whatever.

Andrea: A creative acceptance in the sense of acknowledging the unwanted part, free of judgement and self-sacrifice.

Eva: Yes, through dance we allow for a fluid, playful practice to explore various forms of connection, bonding experience, attachment, disconnection and enmeshment – all kinds of variations and qualities of learning in/from relationships and the possibility of opening up to a new expansion, leading to the establishment of mature relationships. Virginia Satir's metaphor describing this desire to create true, congruent relationships between family members is "making french fries out of mashed potatoes".

Andrea: What you just said about families and relationships in general – how does this apply to businesses, firms, and other social communities?

Eva: In organisations, we have to deal with a variety of functions and roles as well as with different levels of hierarchies; we are mutually interdependent if we want to achieve a goal-oriented collaboration. All of this is complex, challenging and demanding. In this challenging situation, which is partly stressful in a negative way, old and very often not fully integrated learned family patterns emerge – old habits, for instance, in relation to authority or siblings, are projected onto authority figures or colleagues. In this way – and very often unconsciously – old ghost-dances are being revived, causing suffering – often for extended periods of time. In dance, these old patterns are allowed to show themselves; they can then be resolved by transforming them into a new movement, into new patterns of relationships.

Movements on the open floor Credit © Liselotte Zvacek-Schrefel

On the dance floor we are all equal. Music issues an invitation to focus on movements arising from inside held by the rhythm; it can give rise to new movements. I use music to evoke, to awake and invite, not as the absolute focus of attention. You have a sense of direction and possibility that creates a safely held container within an open space; but it is not forcing anybody towards a specific experience. Full permission is given to all to stay on the open floor.

Andrea: Music as the riverbed…

Eva: Yes! Dance on an open floor can go in many directions. I could instruct the participants more firmly or give no directions at all. In each case, the outcome is totally different. I use my own person as invitation, prompting the others to cross thresholds; for instance to allow for greater expansion, more warrior energy, or more tenderness, etc. I am in search of complementary

energies, approaching them myself, inviting the group towards more wholeness with the help of somatic facilitation and the use of the self in a kind of danced dialogue.

Andrea: Within a team, an organisation, the movement from "Me" to "You" is the first step towards a differentiated wholeness. Many communities fall prey to the fallacy that there is a direct path from "Me" to "We". That way, anxieties, shame and dependencies very often remain in the dark. Eva, how do you introduce Virginia Satir's work at this point?

Eva: Virginia Satir's relational work[4] is based on her principle "in sameness we connect, in difference we grow". That's to say: psychological safety is necessary for a sense of belonging within a team; and "in differences we grow" signifies that we give each team member permission to fully and uniquely be themselves. When we achieve an equally held truth of both, we can create a differentiated "We".

Andrea: Giving birth to the "I", encountering the "You" allows us to find new ways to expand and grow within ourselves and with each other, which is fundamental for Co-Creation.

Eva: Dance is a beautiful way of understanding relationships and growing into them. We can explore these truths in action, for example, by dancing the Relationship Mantra I developed, based on a Native American prayer. These are the words: "I am ME and you are YOU. I am not YOU." We celebrate acceptance of our differences. With each physical step towards the other, we get closer in this "relationship space"; as a result, we learn to appreciate the fact that "I am like you"; we honour our similarities. We then take another step towards each other, getting even closer, speaking the words: "I am nothing but you." As a last step, we touch each other, speaking the words:

4 Satir, Virginia: The Satir Model (2006). Family Therapy and Beyond. Science and Behavior Books. Palo Alto.

"I am you". In this last phase we mirror each other, we honour our sameness on the level of the embodied life force.

Andrea: And from these encounters between Me and You we can discover the hidden wholeness underneath the opposites and separations in life and act from this spot. Inside a dancing body, which is turned in on itself, I find it easy to access these realms, and I see that with others, too. We learn to hold the tension without collapsing or "blowing up". We monitor what goes on inside us whilst executing an outer form. As a result, we get to know our bodies really well over time – the bones and how they should be supported, the muscles which work by counter-movement; the self as part of the surrounding space, subject to gravity, finding its correct and erect posture. Time and again, we discover something new – a never-ending process of development, a growing into paradoxes. Everything is in us, both light and shadow. Such open, grounded bodies, when they are connected, fuel the creative power of a group. The body is an experimental laboratory for the whole world.

Maria: The body holds all our vulnerabilities, as Brené Brown[5] says. And these vulnerabilities contain our positive energies. Through dancing, they rise to the surface. I could feel it when I got stuck, felt insecure, questioned myself, was able to re-connect with others, gaining new flow, and losing contact again. We can face and transform our Self, draw new energy by confronting and overcoming these painful shadows of our individual and collective lives. I found it very impressive how people and relationships developed and kept opening up during these four days, giving rise to a diversity of references and connections amongst the participants. I had lots of new encounters with individuals, despite feelings of insecurity and not knowing how the other person would react. When they didn't react at all or reacted differently from what was expected – for whatever reason – I would always

5 Brené Brown (2012): Daring Greatly. How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead. Gotham Books. New York.

find another partner, despite my irritation or uncomfortable feelings, even when I momentarily froze up inside.

Eva: If vulnerability, the shadow, stays suppressed, we lose tremendous creative energy which is needed for generative outcomes or to create something beyond the known. Plus it is the source of increased suffering, including bore-out, burn-out, aggression, depression, political correctness, cynicism – just to name a few.

Maria: On the fourth day, the people came in one by one; we started 10 minutes before the official beginning. We were playful, music was on. To stretch the rope with you, Andrea, happened naturally; we were in a state of flow; it was exciting; we were curious: What would happen? For a moment I had the impression that we might be using too much space; at the same time I felt the tension we created in that large room, like loading and spooling energy into the space and into the group at large. The flow turned into a crazy jumping, almost like sports, seemingly disconnected from the moment, somehow no longer right for that context. What was happening? I remember I tried to find out by listening deeply inside me, to establish what the system needed at that moment – observing both my inner awareness and the outer world – the system – at the same time. Through my resonance, I felt it was enough; so I went over to our technician and asked him to fade out the music – a process of following my intuition and turning it into an intervention for the whole system (group). My intention was to move the future as individuals and system and not collapse into simply acting out, meaning dancing mindlessly; allowing the presence of each individual self together with all the others and the system as a whole to manifest simultaneously as interplay of inner and outer space in movement.

Andrea: We walk a fine line using our selves as instruments in such a process. Our job is to "keep the vessel clean"[6] – both for ourselves and for those

6 Martha Graham (1991): Blood Memory. An Autobiography. Doubleday. New York.

who get too full of themselves, too wrapped up in theories and thoughts. A vessel that can hold all this is feral, wild and tender, individual, humane, transcendental – all connected by dance. That's demanding, and what helps me is to stay bodily alert when inner and outer movement starts to fall apart. This is the signal to pause and recalibrate my presence through emptying myself from concepts and prior motion. It is the moment for a new initiative, born from bodily awareness – I hold myself in such a way that the impulses and thoughts arise from sensing and that my actions and interventions come in a playful way. It doesn't matter whether we dance with the whole system or with just one other person, on the open floor or in organisations. The patterns are just more complex, the principle is the same.

Eva: In Somatic Facilitation, we dance very delicate and artful relationship dances. The challenge is not to re-traumatise when somebody leaves the comfort zone. I invite the other person three times and if there is no response from them, I let it go. My rhythm is: I try once, twice, three times – then let it go. If the person responds, I stay with them and continue the dance. Three times is important. Imagine: if an expression has been answered negatively in the past, the person will not display this particular quality. If there is no response, I let it go. When someone leaves the comfort zone, chaos is bound to occur, but this is indispensable for growth. To quote Virginia Satir: "there is no growth without chaos". I have to accept this chaos, and when it is accepted by the other person as well, I dance with that person until a new pattern starts to manifest in their movements, staying with it, holding it, giving it space for weaving new patterns.

Jump! Credit © Liselotte Zvacek-Schrefel

Maria: This trialogue-dance, both verbal and written, is so exciting – our joint state of flow is bound to go far beyond this COS issue, informing our individual and shared future. It is inspiring and liberating for managers and consultants as well as everybody in daily life to connect with their own bodies and its movements together with others – the shared dances of life within each of us, within our teams, and organisations. All bodies are treated the same, though they live a different rhythm. As this trialogue showed, our body can contribute a lot in terms of productivity if it is approached mindfully, and understood and treated well. How much cultural change would be possible in organisations, how much risk would have to be taken if we were to shift bodily awareness and made it the focus of our attention?

Dear Reader: We dare you! ☺

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Send your application for membership to office@cos-collective.com

Join COS, a Home for Reflective Hybrids

The future is an unknown garment that invites us to weave our lives into it. How these garments will fit, cover, colour, connect and suit us lies in our (collective) hands. Many garments from the past have become too tight, too grey, too something…and the call for new shapes and textures is acknowledged by many. Yet changing clothes leaves one naked, half dressed in between. Let's connect in this creative, vulnerable space and cut, weave and stitch together.

Our target group is reflective hybrids – leaders, scientists, consultants, and researchers from all over the world who dare to be and act complex. Multilayered topics require multidimensional approaches that are, on the one hand, interdisciplinary and, on the other hand, linked to theory and practice, making the various truths and perspectives mutually useful.

If you feel you are a reflective hybrid you are very welcome to join our COS movement, for instance by:

- Visiting our website: www.cos-collective.com
- Getting in touch with COS-Creations. A space for personal & collective development, transformation and learning. Visit our website: www.cos-collective.com
- Following our COS-Conference online: www.cos-collective.com
- Subscribing to our newsletter: see www.cos-collective.com
- Subscribing to the COS Journal: see www.cos-collective.com
- Ordering single articles from the COS Journal: www.cos-collective.com
- Becoming a member of our LinkedIn group: go to www.linkedin.com and type in "Challenging Organisations and Society.reflective hybrids" or contact Tonnie van der Zouwen: office@cos-collective.com

SAVE THE DATE
4th COS Conference
19. – 21. September 2019
in Venice, Italy

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The Journal "Challenging Organisations and Society . reflective hybrids® (COS)" is the first journal to be dedicated to the rapidly growing requirements of reflective hybrids in our complex 21st-century organisations and society. Its international and multidisciplinary approaches balance theory and practice and show a wide range of perspectives in and between organisations and society.
Being global and diverse in thinking and acting outside the box are the targets for its authors and readers in management, consulting and science.

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