

Introduction

'My major concern goes to the processes of joint action in which, and by which, people construct between themselves 'organized settings' of enabling-constraints 'into' which to direct their future actions, and how it is that sometimes those settings can become more constraining than enabling.'
John Shotter (1993)

Recently, we were asked to support a team aiming to become more self-organizing. The team leader had prepared a set of power-point slides providing an introduction, an overview of the objectives, and a road map. We were taken through the slides, with the expectation that we would work through an agenda stating the exact order and timing of the exercises (with some fluidity, of course). As we listened, a feeling of dissonance grew. What seemed strange to us felt very familiar to our client. 'Look', we said, 'we don't work this way. We wonder what you need us for. You have a clear structure for the workshop, and you have a view of how you want to work through its agenda.' 'No, no,' the client responded, your role is to help the group work with the new operating model I have designed, not to facilitate the meeting. Some discussions we will be getting into could become quite charged, and that is what we want you to handle.'

Silently we were questioning the team leader's implicit rationale. We did not voice this but turned to her and asked whether she could keep the slides as back-up and start the meeting by talking directly with the group about how things stood so far; how they conceived of self-organization; what *they* felt needed discussion at this workshop. We did so because we were convinced that engagement in conversation itself is the key process through which teams are dynamically sustained and transformed. We believe that how team members optimally work together is the result of their untrammelled conversations. It is this point that we want to unfold in full in this book.

This book aims to provide new answers to the question of how organizational teams become self-organizing. We are fully aware that, depending on the topic and scope of their discussions, different teams operate in qualitatively different conversational spaces. We call these spaces *We-Spaces* -- focused alternatively on continuous improvement, rethinking value streams and operational models, and rethinking business models. Within this framework, we draw conclusions from what we have learned from our work with teams, both regarding individual teams, groups of teams, and society at large as the largest *We-Space*.

The summary concept we choose to make explicit what we see occurring, or not occurring, in teams, is that of *collaborative intelligence*. It is our intent to leave pure description behind and enter as much as possible into the actual structure of the mental

processes based on which teams succeed or fail. From this dynamic vantage point we speak of how teams unceasingly either broaden or limit the potential of their collaboration, creating or destroying the social capital they need to succeed.

To become as specific as possible about teams and the risks of team failure, we utilize the resources of research in adult development since 1975 (Laske 1999, 2005, 2008, 2015). This research delves into the effects on behavior of adults' life long journey to higher levels of emotional as well as cognitive maturity. Empirical findings from this research show that most if not all teams are *developmentally mixed*, meaning that they comprise divergent levels of individual maturity and different ways of making sense of reality. We demonstrate that this circumstance generates either an upwardly or downwardly directed spiral of team effectiveness and productivity.

When speaking of *team maturity* and *team division*, we have in mind both teams' social-emotional and cognitive dimension. (In section 3.7 we also look at their psychological dimensions.) The first essentially concerns acting together in trust, based on the capability of self-authoring, while the second refers to how closely a team's or group's thinking approaches the "real world" by way of transcending purely logical, and embracing, 'deep' -- holistic and systemic -- thinking.

Essentially, then, our book makes clear, by example as well as reflection, how based on members' level of adult maturity teams are either capable or incapable of self-organizing. All interventions we propose are meant to turn downwardly divided teams -- in which a less developed minority or majority creates a downward spiral of team cohesion and effectiveness -- into We-Spaces that follow an upward spiral leading the team to act in a self-authoring way, and thus become self-organizing.

Much of the book is focused on how senior managers can become the guardians of processes that create collaborative intelligence anchored in self-organization, and in that sense also become leaders. We give manifold examples of how Bart, Emy, and Roger acted in situations that were initially *over their head*, and how by deep reflection on developmental issues they succeeded to turn downwardly directed team situations around.

Our notion of maturity, of senior managers as well as teams, is based on empirical findings about individuals' *lifelong journey of adult development*, a journey that is both (social-) emotional and cognitive. The findings show frequent discrepancies between the two different strands of development. (For instance, a person can be less mature in her emotional capacity than her cognitive capacity would lead one to expect.).

Importantly we see *development* as qualitatively different from *learning* because research shows that the former sets limits to the latter. We see team members as unceasingly and naturally making emotional meaning as well as cognitive sense of their

experiences, both in and outside of teams. Consequently, we see the level of adult development attained by team members, especially when understood and fostered by senior managers and team coaches, as a crucial factor in shaping teams' self-organization.

The central concept we introduce in this book -- that of *team division* based on levels of developmental maturity -- also shapes our notion of what organizational teams essentially accomplish or fail to accomplish. As we see it, team work is the essential process by which what members bring to their work -- their *human capital* -- is transformed into *social capital* at every step of the work process. Based on our experience over the last years, we propose a series of the interventions in each of the distinctly different configurations of self-organization we call *We-Spaces*.

Given the research we follow, we see self-organization as a natural outcome of individual team members' level of *adult maturity*. By extension, we understand what is referred to as *collaborative intelligence* as a natural outcome of the self-organization a team is capable of, given its members' maturity.

The enterprise of scrutinizing the structure of self-organization in teams derives from our ability to measure the *quality of team dialog* based on Laske's *Dialectical Thought Form Framework* (DTF; Laske 2008, 2015, 2017e). (By 'measuring' we refer to scorable structured interviews and workplace questionnaires.). DTF lets us understand sense making in teams as well as enhance it through deepening and re-directing team dialogue.

The DTF framework also provides a precise language for inviting team members to explore how they communicate in terms of the TFs they use in real time. Our experience has shown us that the quality of dialog measured in terms of TF complexity determines the quality of interactions between team members, and equally those with stakeholders and other parties involved (Laske 2017c).

The interventions we propose for use by senior managers and team coaches are processes of reflection on what is being said. Reflection disrupts the status quo by creating new awareness, new knowledge, and new narratives with the potential of heightening teams' self-organization and, as a result, its members' collaborative intelligence which derives from it.

Interventions we propose start when team members are able to observe the *movement-in-thought* they are presently engaged in. As we have experienced over many years, this kind of self-observation and -reflection is learnable by attending to the internal, instead of only the external, dialog team members are constantly engaged in.

Although notions such as *self-organization* and *collaborative intelligence* are abstractions, they are very potent. We think of the first as being the foundation of the second. Throughout the book, we scrutinize both as they come to life in three measurable dimensions: (1) social-emotional, (2) cognitive, and (3) behavioral.

We refer to the first two dimensions as *vertical* (i.e., developmental), and the third one as *horizontal* (i.e., learned). The reason for this is that the vertical dimensions shape people's fundamental *world view* in alignment with their maturity level. This makes vertical factors into determinants of (horizontal) behavior, so that one and the same behavior can have different developmental roots (regarding which to intervene). Our experience shows that senior managers who have a good grasp of the developmental dimensions are a step ahead of their exclusively behaviorally thinking colleagues.

The capacity to self-organize originates in individuals where it refers to their ability to cohere in their identity and ceaselessly transform that identity over the entire span of their development as adults. Thus, when we speak of 'self-organization in teams', we are metaphorically *referring to team members' ability to carry their own self organization into teams*. This ability is developmentally anchored in the experience of human relationships and their accompanying emotions as well as in what individuals are aware of and pay attention to, in life as much as in working together.

The first, *social-emotional*, dimension is one in which team members *make meaning* of their personal experiences in starkly different ways as a function of their maturity level. Since their relationship toward themselves changes over the life span, they position themselves toward others, their team, and organization *based on their own value system* only at high levels of maturity, with salient effects on their effectiveness.

The second, *cognitive*, dimension is that of *sense making*, often referred as *thinking*. In this dimension, team members make sense of their world, including their work experiences, in terms of degrees of the conceptual clarity and thinking complexity they are (presently) capable of, and consequently in terms of how they see (or do not see) their own and their team's function as part of a larger whole that they constantly reshape as much as it reshapes them.

In this book, the third, *behavioral or psychological*, dimension -- the major focus of the existing team literature -- is seen as derivative since developmentally determined. (We give this dimension its due in Section 3.7 where we deal with recruiting members of self-organizing teams.) Behavior is for us a symptom rather than a force by itself since it is shaped by developmental factors. The distinction of the behavioral from the social-emotional dimension of work is therefore a crucial one.

Fortunately for work in organizations, developmental researchers have arrived at profound insights into the two developmental dimensions and its links with behavior

(Kegan 1982; Basseches 1984 and others). They have created a large repertory of *tools* presently unknown to most senior managers (and human resources professionals) by which to make individuals and teams more effective. These insights help us distinguish between **three possible spaces of team awareness**, or *We-Spaces*, that will feature prominently throughout the book: (1) the space of *making continuous improvements*, (2) the space of *re-directing end-to-end value streams*, and (3) the space of *transforming business models*.

In each of these spaces we have before us distinctly different universes of discourse as well as capabilities, in which challenges are framed by team members in decidedly different, developmentally appropriate, ways. This is so since at different levels of adult development individuals show different degrees of self-awareness, self-authoring capacity, and complexity of thinking, and consequently contribute to a team's social capital in starkly different ways.

We-Spaces are essentially *dialog spaces* that reflect team members' level of meaning and sense making. As a schooled observer -- which a senior manager can be taught to become -- easily detects, dialog spaces have a discernible structure that can be empirically detailed (for instance by *problem behavior graphs* that, based on listening, show how thought forms used in team work transform over measured time).

When using the empirical evidence provided by schooled listening, addressing the challenge of self-organization in teams becomes easier, both for managers and team members. In terms of training, a developmentally schooled manager can show team members what is presently absent from their way of thinking, not primarily in terms of content but in terms of the thought forms that generate team members' content. Consequently, team members -- and contributors generally -- can be taught how to lift the discussion "to the next level", not only of cogency but of holistic scope.

As the foregoing makes clear, our basic hypothesis in this book is *developmental*, in two different but related senses of the term: first, we determine the level of a team's maturity by listening schooled in assessing the complexity of thinking ('ontic development'); and second, based on such calibration, we design and carry out commensurate interventions geared to helping teams thrive beyond their present level of handling complexity ('agentic development').

Our developmental hypothesis has been confirmed by yearlong experience in working with teams. We have observed again and again that some teams, based on insufficient self-organization, destroy collaborative intelligence more than they create it, and that this is closely linked to the level of emotional and cognitive maturity of their members. We therefore put behind us the fiction that all team members see work challenges and

delivery in the same way and have the capability to address them equally well -- even in the same We-Space. This is indeed never the case since teams are *developmentally mixed*, i.e., composed of different maturity levels. Team members decidedly differed in their self-image, emotional intelligence, and cognitive fluidity whatever team we encountered.

More precisely, differences between members of one and the same We-Space give rise to **two distinctly different team dynamics** which we refer to as *upwardly or downwardly divided*. This distinction reflects how a team's majority situates itself toward its minority, and vice versa, in terms of social openness, cognitive agility, and actual behavior, as briefly described below.

The first dynamics emerges when a team majority follows a minority operating from a lower developmental stance and set of cognitive tools, thereby relinquishing not only its own better grasp of what the team needs to achieve, but simultaneously its grasp of the social whole the team functions within. We speak of a *downwardly divided* team. As a result, the challenge the team ends up posing for itself is narrowed so that the team may become the victim of a downward spiral of self-organization. The second team dynamics creates an upward spiral for members who succeed, based on a high degree of each member's self-organization, to uplift less developed members of the team towards collaboration. In the second case, we speak of an *upwardly divided* team.

To achieve self-organization, team members need to address two main challenges: (1) understanding the social surround in which they (unconsciously) operate, as something they constantly contribute to either constructively or destructively; and (2) to become aware of differences in self organization between each other, both in terms of handling emotions and engaging in thought. The first challenge operates 'from the outside in' (requiring evaluation), while the second operates 'from the inside out' (requiring reflective action). **Only when these two challenges are met equally well are teams able to create what we refer to as *collaborative intelligence*.**

An important way of formulating the challenge of team members in creating self-organization, is to conceive of it as being naturally twofold, consisting of a *Job 1* defined by the immediate work they are engaged with; and of a *Job 2* that consists of doing their work while simultaneously safeguarding their self-development and integrity as individuals, thus essentially defending against intrusions experienced as counter-productive by them (Kegan & Lahey 2016). In this context, the most important insight for senior managers to absorb is this: collaborative intelligence comes into being only when Job 2 and Job 1 are in equilibrium, or at least when Job 2 does not overwhelm Job 1 in importance for the team member.

Balancing team members' Job 1 with Job 2 requires managers to ask the following question: "can members of my team get Job 1 done without experiencing a disconnect between their work and their own self-developmental agenda and need for integrity (Job 2)?" If the answer to this question is *No*, managers will find that their teams get stuck in incommensurable goals, strategies, and organizational development plans, whatever teams' cognitive agility and emotional cohesion might be. We address this issue as that of creating a *deliberately developmental organization* (Kegan & Lahey 2016), or humanistic management throughout the book.

Having taken note of the thematic highlights of this book, the reader will appreciate a short glance at the book's structure. The book comprises 5 chapters and *Concluding Reflections*, each of them briefly outlined below.

Chapter 1 explores the *adult-developmental* perspective on teams, so far not to be found in the literature. It provides a basic introduction to the notion of developmental differences, outlining how such differences determine the way self-organization and, based on it, collaborative intelligence, is created (or not). The chapter also elucidates the mental and social processes involved that affect the relationship between Job 1 and Job 2 in the experience of team members.

The purpose of chapter 2 is to teach new ways of improving team dialogue and thus minimize the risk of team dysfunctionality. The chapter explores the different We Spaces and their associated practices. It describes the dynamics of the upward and downward division of teams. The chapter focuses on the guiding principles and leverage points needed to develop self-organization in teams in each of the three We-Spaces.

Chapter 3 addresses the *organizational* perspective of collaborative intelligence, the question of how companies can create *enabling environments* that facilitate the transition to self-organization in different We-Spaces. An *enabling environment* is much more complex than a *learning environment* because the former needs to be based on insight into developmental differences between team members (Laske 2005, 2008, 2015) and the corresponding 'Zone' of functionality each achieves (Vygotsky 1978, 1986). The chapter clarifies developing ownership by way of story mapping, amplifying feedback on task accomplishment and interpersonal behavior, different coaching roles in the different We-Spaces, and deliberate dialogical collaboration principles and values required for strengthening self-organization in teams.

Chapter 4 moves from organizational teams to society at large. We discuss the form collaborative intelligence takes in social networks and social movements. We address

the creation of trust and authenticity, co-mobilization, and requirements for creating mutual expectations on a societal level.

Chapter 5 brings together key insights from previous chapters to establish a comprehensive view of how to scale up collaborative to *collective* intelligence. We establish five principles for building such intelligence. We see self-organization at the societal level emerge through quality dialog as it does in teams, whether supported or hampered by available social media technology. Regarding the latter, we postulate a need for developing *dialogically savvy* apps that can support a team's internal, not just external, dialog, based on Laske's DTF Framework.

The book's closing section postulates requirements of attaining freedom based on dialog. We focus on a set of concrete *attentional strategies* by which to guide appropriate conversations.

In what sense, the reader will ask, is this book necessary and timely?

The book brings to bear on teams and organizations findings of social science research since 1975. These findings are still largely unknown or neglected in the business world, especially insight into individuals' and teams' cognitive development. The book opens organizational and societal thinking to a focus on the crucial importance of individuals' lifelong development (Job 2) toward maturity for the delivery of work (Job 1).

Equally, the book is timely in nurturing thoughts on *deliberately developmental organization* (Kegan & Lahey 2016), especially in the context of distributed leadership and organization designs such as holacracy. In line with cutting edge research, we switch from a *horizontal* perspective on behavior and learning to that of adults' vertical development that sets limits to learning.

Most simply put, we think that a book like this is needed since it can't be found in the extant team literature. In that literature (voluminous as it is), a developmental perspective is never taken. Therefore, important distinctions, such as that between qualitatively different *We Spaces* and up- and downwardly divided teams, fail to be made.

In addition, the cognitive intervention techniques we propose for amplifying the quality of thought structures in team dialog – taught at the *Interdevelopmental Institute* since 2000 --- are known only to a small minority of senior managers and coaches. Due to missing the developmental perspective on work and work delivery, the distinction between Job 1

and Job 2 of individuals and teams is lacking, which hinders organizations from addressing the true challenges of distributed leadership.

In short, we think that the book's approach to teams is novel in an exciting way. Readers of this book, especially managers but also consultants and team coaches, will discover ways of supporting the transition towards increasingly mature kinds of self-organization at different levels of an organization. They will therefore become able to prevent teams from remaining stuck in confusion, by assisting them in building truly collaborative intelligence.