IN RECENT YEARS LEARNING HAS PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS ARTICLE WE WANT TO LOOK AT THE ROLE ITS SHADOW FIELD, UNLEARNING, COULD PLAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY ORGANISATIONS. WE ALSO PRESENT TWO VERY DIFFERENT APPROACHES FOR DEALING WITH UNLEARNING.

# Growth Through Unlearning

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We live in a world where one of the undeniable laws of nature is growth. Traditionally, we think that growing as a person means adding new insights to what we have already learned. Most people would imagine a 'steep learning curve' as a curve leading to the top right-hand corner of a graph. However, in some situations, successful learning curves point rather to the bottom-left corner or zigzag or resemble a circular image much like Kolb's learning circle of conceptualization, action and reflection. Information and knowledge, whether generated externally or internally within a person, are subjected to perceptual filters made up of a person's norms, beliefs, expectations and worldview and manifest themselves as deeply ingrained and unique, individual routines (ways of 'doing'). These influence what information and knowledge the individual ultimately attends to and ultimately accepts (ways of 'being'). The Australian psychologist and coach Alan Sieler calls this way of being 'ontology': the combination of our emotions, our body, and our language.

In this article we want to examine how 'unlearning' eventually leads to growth. In some contexts one is better off focusing on reconditioning old patterns before adding new learning. Take a computer as an analogy where in some situations, an old program has to be removed first, before a newly installed program can work efficiently. In the case of a virus scan, the old scan will slow down the new one. A field which we will draw most analogies from in this article is the field of criminology, particularly restorative justice within that field. A criminologist works with victims or crime perpetrators and helps them to unlearn destructive beliefs, destructive emotions and destructive behaviours before proceeding to embed new ways of 'doing' and 'being'. We will examine what organisations can learn from this field.

## THE PROBLEM WITH VICTIMS IN ORGANISATIONS

Research in the criminal justice sector has shown that both committing a crime and/or being a victim of a crime can be sources of shame and the restorative justice methodology of 're-integrative shaming' has been initiated to deal with such pertinent issues. The methodology's aim is to effect restorative justice by assisting perpetrators and victims to 'process' their shame in a way that does not lock them into a permanent stereotype of being a criminal or victim. We will examine the value of restorative justice for the practitioner in a later part of this article.

There are other, less overt sources of shame including sexism, racism and the 'othering of people who are different', the treatment of employees as cogs in a capital-driven machine (without taking into account their emotions and spirituality), and employees taking a transactional view of work that boils down to it being a 'form of suffering' which they endure each day for the sake of financial gain. Victims of abuse, whether criminal or organisational, typically suffer from low self-esteem, low self-confidence, neurotic, and/or obsessive behaviour. Their behaviour is dominated by destructive emotions which seem to work as a fence that limits the individual to a safe but small circle of dominant behaviour patterns or routines which often are stumbling blocks to full-potential learning.

Poulson's research in America has linked workplace violence and shame. It has shown that a workplace culture where shame and shaming are strong can lead to reduced productivity, increased workplace dysfunction and employee turnover. In South Africa there is an equally high level of shame and high level of workplace violence, partly attributable to the history of

Apartheid. The Work Trauma Foundation website indicates that 'a whopping 78% of employees in South Africa confirmed that they had been bullied or victimised at least once in their careers'. A recent study in the UK now shows that 45% of Britons lose their tempers at work and it puts Britain behind South Africa as having the highest levels of road rage in the world.

Aside from costs associated with workplace violence, shame incidents have other negative impacts on the workplace and productivity. These relate to the three other responses to shame incidents: 'withdrawal', 'avoidance' and 'attack self'. In the case of 'withdrawal' and 'avoidance', the costs are related to staff retention, poor teamwork, increased politics, loss of contributions and poor individual performance. In the case of 'attack self' responses, the costs relate to poor performance, addictions, loss of contributions and lower levels of staff retention. In the Netherlands, it is estimated that up to 22% of employees each year take off 'stress days' from work because of reasons that ultimately are linked to feelings of 'suffering' and being a 'cog in a perpetual machine'. This figure is equally disturbing in the UK where it is estimated that 38% of men are unhappy at work, and 60% of employees being absent from work are claimed to be the result of stress.

If people in organisations show the same behaviour traits as the persons criminologists deal with in their work, this would then imply that employees in organisations let themselves be abused or at least are unable to identify their 'slipping' into situations that ultimately lead to forms of abuse.
The organisational challenge therefore lies partly with looking at how to reduce shame and shame-triggers in organisations.

When we say 'let themselves be abused' we want to stress that we assume that no reasonably-functioning manager consciously wants to abuse their employee. In today's labour market, labour organisations keep a close eye on the ethics of organisations and often employees are represented by a workers council for this same reason. This implies that there are many possibilities for employees to take action should they feel abused in their work; however, much of the abuse we are talking about is not overt but has the same impact over protracted periods of time. In a contract between an employer and an employee it is the responsibility of both parties to be responsible for their own well-being in order to fulfil their part of the labour contract. Why then do employees show signs of abuse and endure rather than change the situation? We want to examine two factors which might contribute to this:
(a) the organisational system, and
(b) the person's belief system.

*(a) the organisational system*
The triggers for shame are quite varied and organisations cannot be held responsible for managing all of these. Organisations are also not responsible for the 'fullness' of an employee's shame-tank on arrival in the workplace. However, it can reduce the number of shame-triggers an employee is exposed to and where appropriate, assist the individual to process their own shame thereby reducing the pressure within individuals' shame-tanks. Processing shame, the root of engaging true learning in a positive and productive way, requires the creation of a safe space to allow staff to express their feelings, either as a group or individually. Safe spaces which are necessary when there is risk of failure, can be achieved in organisational settings through:

- Empathy ('stepping into someone else's shoes')
- Confidentiality
- Reassurance
- Caring
- Equality / Democratisation
- Respect
- Sense of Team (opposite to 'survival of the fittest')
- Attending (really attending to people; taking care of; nurturing)
- Attentiveness (paying attention to; listening intently)
- Discernment (sense of non-judgement)

In an unhealthy organisation, individuals start playing roles according to what the unwritten company rules require in order to be successful. Non-authentic behaviour emerges as people suppress natural routines for dominant and more acceptable workplace ones. In order to guard our shame, communication takes the form of a game: "I know that you know that I know that you are cheating and therefore I say nothing"; "I know you are unhappy, but if I bring it up I will expose that I too am unhappy". People with integrity start to twist their value system in order to comply to the company culture.
Braithwaite comments, "when people shame us (or when we shame ourselves) in a degrading way, this poses a threat to our identity. One way we can deal with the threat is to reject our

## Box: Criminology and Restorative Justice in Africa

In some African countries like Uganda and South Africa, restorative justice has been successfully applied to abusers and victims alike. The theory behind this is that if you treat a criminal as a criminal and a victim as a victim, they will live up to the expectations the people around them have of them. However, if a victim or criminal is treated as a normal person they get the chance to see themselves as a normal functioning human being again and one creates the possibility for them to live in this new mindset.

Sometimes in criminology, depending on context and the individual situation, an incremental structure is created where a person gets ever-increasing chances (accretion) to be normal and to share what they have done or experienced. This is the foundation of the most basic form of restorative justice methodology. Not total re-scripting, but building on what is positive and worth preserving, incremental behaviours are added to existing constructive/positive routines. In this sort of case where double-loop learning cannot be achieved, single-loop learning, as Argyris & Schön call it, is preferred (it is still a way forward though not as effective as what is described above).

In essence, unlearning is therefore about reframing mental models by tackling embedded routines and deconstructing the cognitive and emotional-supportive structures. If dysfunctional presumptions and assumptions are not continuously held up for scrutiny by oneself and others, it is unlikely that the overall learning will be sustainable.

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rejectors. Once I have labelled them as dirt, does it matter that they regard me as dirt?" Diversity training, for example, could therefore provide an appropriate space to air and process certain forms of shame.

Organisations learn through encoding inferences from history and aggregated individual experience into routines which guide behaviour. Not being able to live out one's values but adhering to accepted behaviour eventually leads to a state of suffering. Typically, people who suffer look for an outlet and often that outlet (which is negatively affected) is in the domain of shared social systems. In criminology, pain of abuse is typically suppressed and vented in drug and substance abuse, aggression, and depression. In organisations, the form of abuse might not be physical but 'sick' organisational structures lead to the same reactions that a victim of abuse shows. A radical shift in approach, particularly in sense-making, is required; one that enables people to process sensitive issues concerning shame safely in groups. Re-integrative shaming, liberation theory, process-orientated psychology, depth psychology and other approaches provide some insight into how this could be done. Personal development coaching models, like ontological coaching, could also enable people to process their shame. This would include accessing the shame-tank through current shame incidents and processing them sufficiently so that people do not react as forcefully to shame-triggers. Just as in criminology, organisations which want to lay a foundation to become learning organisations will first have to provide space for the individual to unlearn beliefs and fears which block learning.

*(b) the individual- and group belief systems*
For organisational unlearning to occur, it must first take place at the individual level. Individual emotion (shame, pain, suffering and hurt) tends to transcend the organisational setting; so only changing the organisation and/or removing abusers does not lead to changed behaviour in individuals. In criminology, the aim is to create a vision for the individual of themselves as healthy individuals with a constructive view of the potential of others in order to offer new alternatives to the negative outlets. Often it is the crises of the crime which shocks perpetrators and victims to reflect on their assumption-driven behaviour and in organisational settings, it is often issues such as stress, health dysfunction, family dysfunction and productivity-impacts which act as the crises. The approach is to treat abusers and victims from the point of view of a normal person and deconstruct, even eliminate 'old logics' to make room for new ones. At its heart, it is an attempt to reorient individual values, core assumptions, norms and behaviours through changing cognitive and emotional structures (the latter being equally important and often missed in organisational learning processes).

If shared learning is to proceed successfully, a necessary shift in the group belief system is equally important as one in the individual belief system. Group members should be invited to test the validity of their beliefs about the organisation, about other people and about how they themselves 'show up'. This is an important element in overcoming the liability of (previous) success. Day argues that "the presumed correctness of past actions and interpretations is reinforced by repeated success and the ensuing complacency breeds rejection of information that conflicts with conventional wisdom". This important group work lays the groundwork for and invites new responses and worldviews/mental maps, mostly by allowing individuals themselves to 'discover' (a critical learning element) the inadequacies of their cognitive and emotional maps and initiate new responses as opposed to offering solutions upfront for them. What we are calling for is not total abandonment of past certainties but rather a balance of past certainties with new possibilities akin to Argyris & Schön's double-loop learning or, what Senge terms as generative learning. Part of the important work to be done is making individuals accountable for their own unlearning, and making groups accountable for shared unlearning therefore making it possible for the change and learning to be sustainable over time. It must be stressed that this is not quick fix, "do-it-in-a-course" work, but takes time, resources and purposeful commitment by organisation and employee alike.

### CONCLUSION

Criminology, ontology, unlearning … currently foreign concepts in organisational development. However, analogies from other fields often serve as a mirror since organisations are nothing more than a network of human beings. For example, people feel the same shame at work as in their private lives due to the fact that they have potential but don't live it out. Or they feel the squeeze of the lack of congruence in their lives. People with strong family values for example, who want to be with their family but are unable to be with them and choose not to. At work and in private life, the same law holds true: shame manifests as abuse. Shame is triggered by individuals choosing to play roles, or even ambiguity about role clarity, and their knowing that the genuine (deeply held individual value system) diverges from what they pretend to manifest (their personas). As we have seen, before an organisation as a whole can learn, it has to make sure that its employees get the opportunity to let go of old patterns and routines which block learning. This, quite naturally, involves an emotional healing process (and often a spiritual/meaning-making one too). As we stated earlier, individual emotion tends

to transcend the organisational setting; thus, only changing organisational structures and/or removing the abusers does not lead to changed behaviour in individuals. Re-integrative shaming, restorative justice and ontological coaching are examples of approaches which deal effectively with victim behaviour. The result in all cases is the same: they provide the opportunity to unlearn unconsciously adopted beliefs and behaviours which block growth. They foster genuine communication instead and eventually create feelings of congruence and personal power – vital ingredients for generative learning.

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LEARNING AND CHANGING ARE INCREASINGLY SUBJECTED TO A MECHANISTIC APPROACH. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO MORE ESCAPING INSTRUMENTS (!)SUCH AS COMPETENCE MANAGEMENT AND POPS FOR FURTHER EXPLOITING AND TRANSFORMING THE HUMAN RESOURCE TO SUIT THE SPECIFIC DEMANDS OF THE SYSTEM. IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY ALL WITH GOOD INTENTIONS AND INTEGRITY, UTTERLY RELIABLE IN TERMS OF BEING MEASURABLE, BUT IS IT KNOWABLY BETTER? KNOWABLY? YES, KNOWABLY. IT IS ALSO CALLED KNOWLEDGE AND NOT MEASURELEDGE? BASED ON THE PROTEST CD (2006)OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN – WE SHALL OVERCOME: THE SEEGER SESSIONS – DIRECTED AGAINST THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICA UNDER PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH MBA (NO JOKE), I WANT TO MAKE A CASE HERE, VIA THE CHAOS THEORY, FOR RHINELANDIC LEARNING AND CHANGING.

# Knowably better (With Bruce on the Edge)

## *A protest against Anglo-Saxon learning and changing*

**JAAP PETERS**

### POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ALBUM

There is a lot going on with and in America and many artists feel obliged to record a protest-CD about the abuses under the regime of the Bush administration: Neil Young (Living with War), Elvis Costello & Allen Tousant – from New Orleans – (The River in Reverse) and Van Morrison (Pay the Devil). Bruce Springsteen (We shall overcome – The Seeger Sessions) makes a political statement with his album about the erosion of the democratic values of America. His world tour with the folk band also started in New Orleans on the 30th of April 2006. An emotional beginning because it is still an enormous 'war zone' there. 'If this is the game as Bush plays it, it is unbelievable. Making mistakes is one thing, but not fixing them up is a crime'. He suspects the Bush administration of playing games. 'George Bush and his clan misuse 9/11 to do whatever they have decided to do and it appears that these are terrible things', according to Bruce. But, sings Springsteen, very subdued and almost emotional: 'We shall overcome'. Probably the most well-known protest ever sung.

### UNIQUE METHOD OF WORKING WHILE RECORDING THE ALBUM

On the accompanying DVD, Bruce explains why he has chosen to re-record these country folk numbers. Initially, the rocker Springsteen wanted nothing to do with pure folk. He started exploring this genre after a request in 1997 to perform 'We shall overcome' for a tribute-to-Pete-Seeger-album. After a quest, he has since then drastically altered his view of folk music. Modern pop music is as far as he is concerned too smooth. The highs and lows have been polished and evened out and that has robbed the music of its energy. It is, by the way, for precisely the same reason that the grass in the Ajax-stadium ArenA in Amsterdam simply will not grow. The surrounding organisation, the concrete colossus with sliding roof, are in the way to such an extent of the highs (sun) and lows (wind and rain) that the grass does not want to grow anymore. The energy has been organised away. This selection of Pete Seeger numbers still has the raw sounds of the 'real' America. You also notice immediately that this CD has enormous appeal for some (highs), whilst others detest it (lows). The melodies float via your speakers through the room and take

possession of it as though they have always been hidden away there. Bruce has dusted them off for you and provided them with a contemporary context. You have never heard most of the numbers before and yet they seem familiar to you. As far as he is concerned, you must play the music on 'the edge of opportunity & disaster'. On the edge of the known and the unknown is where creativity and renewal emerge. There too is where the energy is, there is the soul and it is the source of the 'flow'. One of the many wonderful observations of Bruce on the DVD is also how beautiful the process is of making music oneself. In three one-day sessions, the numbers were recorded at Bruce's home on the farm; never before was a Springsteen album so quickly put together. It was like a 'casual Sunday afternoon session'. There was no sheet music, there were no arrangements and nothing was rehearsed beforehand. The album was 'spontaneously' recorded with professionals on the spot. The arrangement emerged while playing; the aeroplane was built while flying. The Pete Seeger method of working was the source of inspiration: direct presentation and aimed at audience participation. That is the reason for the addition of Seeger Sessions as subtitle

on the album. Bruce admits: we didn't play any instant recipes, we made music on the spot even though they were old numbers. 'We mixed strings (violin, guitar, banjo), brass (sax, trumpet and trombone), gospel (vocals) and I probably added the rock 'n roll toe and turned it into something which could have been written yesterday'. Actually, you have to have heard the original numbers of Pete Seeger in order to experience the enormous difference. 'An thereby I learned a lot myself and probably most of all about myself', said Bruce in an interview with NOVA TV.

Bruce Springsteen is a professional in heart and soul, knows what he is talking about and in-between (read: between the songs) you get a literal impression on the DVD of his style of management and why he is called 'The Boss'. He immerses himself completely in the essence of the number (empathy) and then indicates what he hears ('now I hear the brass') and the musicians subsequently fill in what he believes he has just heard. He gives them all the space in the world and the interaction between leader and performer is one of moving top-class: after 'immersion' comes 'enjoyment'. The passion of craftsmanship is noticeably present. A CD is always a vague substitute of the real process, but even here, the soul of the numbers has been burnt in. Jackson Brown once said: 'good songs are constantly rewritten during playing'. It must have been a pity for the band that the CD was already finished after just three days. The journey was for them more important than the destination; luckily for them there is an extended tour.

### CHAOS AND SPONTANEITY

What can we learn from Bruce Springsteen? In his account of how the album came into being, I recognised, as a board member of the Stichting Chaosforum.com, many of the basic points of the Chaos & Complexity Theory. There are clear links between spontaneity, learning and energy for change. Here follows a brief explanation.

Lets consider the making of this successful CD as a learning and change project. You can then do a number of obvious things: write everything out beforehand from A to Z (from sheet music to arrangements). The Change Agent, preferably hired in, subsequently becomes involved with the implementation ('interesting job') and in the end, it appears to have become a soulless piece. It appears from research that 70% of implementations fail. The American D. Connor came in his own research at the beginning of the nineties to a staggering 90% of failed implementations. Lets take a look at how Bruce did it during his Pete Seeger-project.

The preconditions were fundamentally different: He had become inspired himself by the idea. Bruce sought out the musicians who supported him; 'I wanted the sound of a bunch of people just sitting around and playing. I counted off the opening chords to the song Jesse James and away we went. It was a carnival ride, the sound of surprise and the pure joy of playing'. He did not contract out his idea to an external project manager who subsequently had to make the most of it with the existing crew. On the DVD you can see and hear that he 'felt' what needed to happen to bring about the redesign of the Pete Seeger numbers. And the musicians felt what The Boss meant. No sheet music was needed for that. The arrangements were developed in the here-and-now. He organised coincidence by combining various disciplines which are by definition not usual in the folk genre. The result: a sort of Dixieland-Country-folk with a gospel sauce. As far as I know, never done before: post-modern folk. Nevertheless he remained true to the real roots and identity of folk: everything unplugged. What is funny is that Bruce explains 'unplugged' as follows: these are the instruments which you used to have to take with you during travels in order to be able to play wherever it may be wanted. The ideal instruments for a tour.

Bruce consciously searched for the border between opportunity & disaster and tried to get his band to do the same. In Chaos terms, this is called 'the edge'. On the edge of the system is after all where change is to be found. If a system is on the edge, that means that more-of-the-same is no longer possible. For instance, a parking lot is full and subsequently another few cars drive up anyway. What happens? Do they drive off to another parking lot to repeat the same old trick? Or …. Do they double-park? Do you park the car in front of another with a note behind the windscreen-wiper saying 'If you unfortunately want to leave, call me on my cell number 0031-6-53-272347?' or do you leave the handbrake off so that it can be pushed away if necessary? There are countless more or less unpredictable possibilities, in other words chaos, when a system is on the edge. Chaos means then in fact creativity (and not disorder). The choice of an interactive solution is dependent on 'the quality of the actors', they cannot fall back on known patterns because that doesn't work anymore: on this edge is where real learning is, the real change and the eventual unpredictable outcome while certain patterns remain nevertheless recognisable. The process up until the time that the edge is reached is a more routine kind of changing. There is no learning process, you repeat actions which you have already carried out before. In the Chaos Theory this is called an 'Equilibri-um situation'; if the system nevertheless gets to the edge, one speaks of a Far-From-Equilibrium situation. Some call this a crisis situation, others call it an opportunity. Improvising on earlier obtained craftsmanship is then your best friend. Your enemy is everything that an average project manager would do: the word crisis for him (M/F) means that everything gets fixed and controlled within a context of mistrust instead of 'letting go' and trusting. In this case this means letting go of old trusted rules and the matching norms and values and subsequently being open to the self-ordering of the system. In a Far-From-Equilibrium situation, the leap to the new only comes about if the characteristics of the separate parts, in this case those of the musicians, find one another in interaction and so to arrive at new combinations: people jump almost unnoticed to a higher level. In his book entitled Organisatiedynamica [Organisation dynamics], Thijs Homan speaks about: 'Goh, we zijn veranderd!' [Gosh, we have changed!]

## THE SOUL IS MISSING IN CHANGES

Project leaders and consultants often maintain the fiction that a project and passion can be combined with each other in a controllable way. Their customers after all want very much to hear that. In their method, employees become some kind of actors, role-playing is practiced in a mapped out decor, see the film The Matrix, who with a few overblown words (American management jargon) are put to work by chefs (Agent Smith) who themselves do not understand the profession but are nevertheless set on a too large stage. Renewal only takes place via external impulses: new techniques, new procedures, new concepts and the all overpowering question for those who think it up without experiencing it themselves: what must I do to reach the top?

Spontaneous characteristics do not exist in the 'well regulated world', the planning & control cycle forms the backbone of these kinds of systems. Coincidence is indeed preferably rules out and controllability is the basic principle. There is then indeed a chronic lack of innovation skills in many organisations. There is too much on the outside (in the form of structure, rules, procedures, etc.) and too little on the inside (such as intentional, behavioural, cultural and social characteristics). I summarise the inside here under the words 'passionate craftsmanship'. Doing the right things at the right moment without thinking about it, that is the result of passionate craftsmanship. That is what Bruce Springsteen refers to. Making your arrangements as you play. Changing as in a playful way and thereby learning new

things from each other, motivating each other, bringing each other into the flow. Great …. , but there is none of that in thorough (Prince 2) project management.

## BEYOND THE MACHINE MODEL

What can we learn from Bruce Springsteen and the Chaos- & Complexity Theory and how can we gain an advantage from this? In these following paragraphs, I shall try to make this non-linear approach understandable in a linear (tricky) way:

In the first place it is about recognising another paradigm about Change & Change Management. We start by letting go of a few deeply embedded assumptions:

- **Change always starts at the top:** On the DVD the sax plays along unasked in the passage, the rest of the band are in the living-room; he couldn't resist this form of anarchy in a number where Bruce had indeed himself said that he wanted to take the lead alone. It appeared to be a golden idea and can be heard on the CD (track 6) later on;
- **Efficiency comes from control:** apart from the fact that you must organise control of control, the side-effect is further that you must take every form of energy and creativity out of the system whilst the legalistic herd grows and grows. The managers and jurists together turn it into an intensive people farming. The only creativity which remains is procedure-intelligence. Cleverly dealing with the rules in such a way that you yourself gain an advantage (how do I become a rat?);
- **Prediction is possible:** The future is not knowable. Detailed plans will not help you any further in that. In 1993, there was an exhibition in Den Haag about the Chaos Theory under the telling title: The end of predictability. Let what that means really sink in well. We will never be able to predict today the weather in a year's time! Patterns are however recognisable such as the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter.

In the second place, it is about using different language with which you can better recognise and describe the other paradigm, the alternative for the machine model. The concept Complex Adaptive System (CAS) has been chosen here as a starting point. Compare a CAS with the way in which we leave in the morning for our place of work: on foot, by automobile, bicycle and/or public transport. There is no central planning before or after, there has not been anything exactly mapped out beforehand and there are constantly spontaneous actions with which one can react. There are however certain patterns known about for instance frequently occurring traffic-jams. It is complex and adaptive at the same time. In a CAS semi-autonomous entities work together in time on the optimisation of their activities: (1) order emerges thereby spontaneously and not via a previously fixed hierarchy, (2) the history /identity of the system cannot be rubbed out, (3) but will never repeat itself in precisely the same way in the future. A Portugal – Netherlands match of an arbitrary championship will never be exactly the same. There are in fact too many facets which have influence. From the literature we know that three elements play a role in which a CAS spontaneously moves to self-organisation: (1) when more of the same does not work (think about the parking lot example earlier in this article), (2) when subsequently significantly different behaviour emerges between two actors (for instance a note behind the windscreen-wiper: 'my handbrake is not on') and finally (3) that through the open connections which exist between the actors /agents a process subsequently evolves through repetition. These shared activities lead to change or otherwise transformations not only of the separate parts but also of the whole. Eventually a system emerges n which a component, a musician, has an influence on the whole and the whole, including the public, has an influence on the separate musicians. It is like love; when you share it, it grows. We recognise this most easily with artists and team-sportsmen who improvise. In organisations it is not any different.

The huge advantage is that if you give CAS the space, processes do have energy and a soul. In the end, spontaneous changes of images of reality are always at the bottom of 'real' change (stopping with smoking for instance). The disadvantage is that the outcome of that type of process is experienced as less controllable and therefore also not exactly predictable beforehand. Simply applying rules which have been thought up elsewhere versus giving space for own interpretations in the here-and-now is a problem of choice. Those ultimately responsible choose increasingly for the 'rules thought up elsewhere' and avoid the 'uncontrolled' spontaneity. No wonder that so many change pathways consequently fail. If it doesn't have a soul, it is literally kicking a dead horse.

## MEANING AND CHANGING

The consequences of all this are out of proportion for the traditional company professional. The change takes place spontaneously and is there before the strategy (the music arrangements are being thought up simultaneously rather than afterwards). The genius is stitched on later (also according to Henry

Mintzberg). This is probably for many managers, project leaders and consultants an extremely awkward recipe. As soon as we, as a bureau, write out tenders according to the new paradigms we receive a lot of praise but certainly do not always get the assignment. 'We were not completely unanimous within the management team (read: highs and lows)'. If we, as a bureau, simply don't discuss it and come up with a traditional approach (step 1, step 2, ….., step 5 Implementation), the process is termed transparent and measurable and we often do get the assignment. The outcome is a soulless process with the employees and a ditto boring report of which people rightly say afterwards: we could have done that ourselves. The client has learnt nothing and we as bureau have learnt that successful writing of tenders is mostly a question of a detailed step-by-step plan with previously determined 'deliverables'. This is not only our personal experience/frustration; you also come across this problem often ion the professional literature. People ask consultants for change, but people want more of the same ('we're not going to do anything crazy, are we?'). Most managers do not trust the outcome of an open process. A devilish dilemma for a professional consultant and instructor. It is precisely through confusion that learning and changing directions of thought evolve.

Bruce Springsteen chose his musicians on the basis of craftsmanship, estimated competencies, trust and not on the basis of a written plan of action: 'how would you make a CD in the spirit of Pete Seeger in five steps?' This is however the reality in many organisations. We would rather have meetings about making music by others in five steps instead of ourselves joining in the music-making. That is precisely why energy and fun are missing in the conductors (they don't do what I say) as well as in the musicians (they don't understand what it is really about).

**HOW THEN TO LEARN AND CHANGE?**

Just a few sound-bites from the Chaos Theory with a short explanation below about how learning and changing in organisations can go hand in hand and a brief link back to the CD/DVD of Bruce Springsteen. Chaos Theory and Rhinelandic organising go as far as I am concerned hand in hand here. Jaap Jan Brouwer and Piet Brouwer make a link in their book 'Angelsaksen versus Rijnlanders' [Anglo-Saxons versus Rhinelanders] between the Chaos and Complexity Theory and Rhinelandic organising. Below, I will deal with six assumptions which are a part of the discourse about change within the Chaos thinking. In the final paragraph, I will further explain the link with Rhinelandic learning and changing.

*Change through connection*

This is about the discrepancy with top-down change. In a CAS, a spontaneous change evolves which can survive and which can later be further facilitated. This occurs because all actors/musicians are connected to each other at the same moment. The role of leadership does not then lie in the splitting up of the organisation into controllable parts. Organise the 'chaos' itself and remove hindrances to achieve this. What is important thereby is to give the internal feedback free rein and to continue to take reality as the starting point rather than a personal imagined reality from the top. The leader encourages learning, deals with eventual conflicts and the continual newly available information. So there is certainly a leader; we are not talking here about introducing so-called self-directing teams.

Look at the DVD and experience how Bruce, himself a specialist in the field, does this with his musicians, even if the brass are in the passage so as not to drown out the other instruments. I would want to call it organic music-making.

*Dealing with uncertainty*

We are looking here at change without a linear step-by-step plan since then the envisaged self-organisation simply cannot come into being (planned versus spontaneous) because the actors /musicians feel themselves constantly limited in time. Their intrinsic qualities are not at their best if you turn them into puppets. Linear change is possible but then we are discussing processes in which the outcome is precisely known beforehand. Anyway, according to our experience, it is too easily supposed that linear processes are applicable to any arbitrary change and that thereby the wrong tool (project management) is hauled out of the toolbox. Contexts change after all constantly. In an earlier article 'Bij welke reorganisatie werk jij?' [For which reorganisation do you work?] I wrote together with Michael Geerdink in detail about this.

Bruce not only indicates that there is no sheet music and that no arrangements have been made beforehand, but that there were not even any rehearsals before the recordings. He started to play and the musicians filled in and subsequently an interactive game came into play. He achieved a number of things: renewal of folk, learning, success, energy and for a manger perhaps the most important: finished on time and within budget. Within three days it was done. With his own backing band, the E-Street band, that has never been achieved.

*Spontaneous goals, plans and structures*

This in contrast to goals, plans and structures which are set as norms beforehand. One of the biggest problems is that distinguishing between complicated and complex is barely known in practice and is thereby not identified. In the Machine Model everything is complicated. You can take the reality apart and put it together just like a machine (for instance a clock). In a complex world however, parts are connected to each other in the same way as plants, animals and humans. By separating things into pieces (fragmenting), you remove the connection and the soul literally disappears. Organisations are complex rather than complicated by nature. If something doesn't work, it is often supposed that this is because the rules have not been followed sufficiently or at all. However, it is through following rules thought up elsewhere that the chaos on the work-floor increases. On the 20th of June 2006 two Dutch ministers and two state secretaries published these conclusions in a Dutch newspaper. This is how they worded it: "De paradox is dat als iedere organisatie haar werk individueel goed en volgens de regels doet, er collectief iets misgaat"[The paradox is that if every organisation does it's work well and follows the rules, collectively something goes wrong]. If you cut up reality into bite-size pieces, the chance is high that you will organise out the natural connectedness. Walter Beats wrote a book from the perspective of the Chaos & Complexity Theory: 'He who sows order will reap chaos'. He is right. You might think that the world would change after these shocking revelations by the four cabinet ministers, but nothing is further from the truth.

Planning, setting goals, developing visions and structuring are different in a CAS than what we are used to. A misunderstanding for the reader now could be that planning is not necessary or is even undesirable in Chaos thinking. Laissez-faire is then quickly supposed, but the planning stays exactly the same. The conclusions during the process, the tour with unplugged instruments in your backpack are however fundamentally different. Not attaining the planning is seen as a possible new direction, an innovation which was not foreseen. Signalling deviations is then not by definition disastrous. At that moment one simply starts at the beginning again. After Step 1, Step 2 follows only if the circumstances have not changed in the meantime. If the circumstances have changed, then after Step 1, ... Step 1.
The same applies to the placing of goals to be reached. The end of your working career is the beginning of your pensionable age. Is reaching a goal an end or indeed a beginning? Is the new folk

CD of Bruce the beginning of a new music career or does this CD herald the end of his rock period with the E-Street band en is he now a real rock veteran? Or is it both? There are no set goals. Winter doesn't exist by itself but is the period between autumn and spring. Perhaps you don't attain certain goals you set beforehand but you do reach 15 others which you had foreseen. Focussing too much on your goals or putting on blinkers makes you blind to the developments in the environment. You can think them away or ignore them in a step-by-step plan, a model or a spreadsheet, but in reality they just continue to exist.

This Chaos discourse also incorporates vision development but this is more concerned with the way of organising: producing the organising. Visioning has a lot to do with direction and less with actual filling in of the future. If the future already becomes visible then it is a possible outcome (for instance, a scenario). The vision is about 'the nonsense of a clear and explicit vision'. The genius is after all stitched on afterwards. An important reason for not making too much fuss about the vision is that in the meantime, reality will have overtaken much of the 'imagined reality'.

Designing and structuring are also extremely important in this paradigm. But compare it with the structure of a school of fish or a group of cyclists. One can hardly speak about definite forms, the existing forms are aimed at action. Every year we make a ten-day trip with a group of clients to Canada. On the one hand, there is a set outlined programme, on the other hand, the group is prepared to make room for things which we encounter on the way or interesting people we meet. Nothing is exactly planned during our hike over The Rockies except that there must be room for coincidences which everyone is sure will occur on the way. It sounds logical but goes against the trend in organisations in which more and more is set down and coincidence, at least procedural and thus legal, are banished as far as possible. The people on the work-floor have an unbelievable amount of trouble from this in carrying out their daily work. There is quite simply too little room for them to regulate anything.

Springsteen determined together with the band while playing what would happen. Actually, playing is constantly composing the number again and again. Old ideas and goals disappear behind the horizon and new goals emerge on the spot. In 2004, Robert E. Quinn wrote the book 'Building the bridge as you walk on it'. This is now indeed also the added value of the DVD. On the CD the bridge is completed; on the DVD you see aspects

of the building process while they walk across the bridge together. Leadership is not considered by Quinn to be a collection of techniques and behaviours but as a state. Leadership is what we are. Some organisations have these kinds of leaders. Leaders who dare to build the bridge as they walk over it. To put it in other words: leaders who want to relinquish control and who take steps which have not been planed beforehand. They must move forward blindly as it were. This way they learn a great deal about themselves, about others and at the same time a great deal about the organisation. Would Bruce be quoting the management guru Robert Quinn? It would certainly appear so sometimes.

*Emphasize internal differences in opinions*
This in contrast to striving for consensus. It is precisely the differences which create the driving forces behind the change. Imagine that you have a team which consists of players who all have exactly the same qualities. Would that be a strong team? Probably not; it is precisely the differences and the complementary skills which make a team into a tightly-knit whole. Moreover, people just are different so it doesn't make any sense to ignore or repress these differences. Employees bring for instance different experiences with them from previous jobs. 'All the wood behind one arrow' is far from always being the ideal strategy. Allowing and encouraging diversity appears in practice to work far better because it is precisely through this that new solutions become available. And employees feel as though they are being listened to and will be more motivated to get to work. In a CAS, the combined differences are also the driving forces behind the change. You must then put up with a number of implications: encouraging internal communication, getting the differences into the open and thereby making them open to discussion and not excluding any parties beforehand. Probably this is also behind the ratio of Friday afternoon drinks, teambuilding sessions and the yearly company-BBQ. As a result of the flexible workplace, differences between employees and departments which were shrouded beforehand often also become clearer. You end up sitting next to someone who you didn't know and who has tasks which when examined more closely appear to have clear links with your own activities. By the way: ecosystems exist by virtue of diversity.

Here is an important role for the manager: are you going to go for the differences or rather for consensus? Bruce Springsteen understood this clearly. He selected a wide range of musicians with different instruments, brought them together on his farm in the same room and created an atmosphere of having a party.

*Equality of the actors*
We refer here to whether or not to emphasize hierarchical differences. In American organisations, the boss has the say; that is less obvious than it seems. You could also say 'the one who knows may have the say'. Generals who have been in Iraq are better able to tell the President what is going on and how best to end the war. The military CAS in Iraq know even better what is going on and will probably therefore be more prepared to change strategy. And that is also how it seems to be in practice. The President will however explain this as resistance to the line of policy which was taken after 9/11. Often, it is the employees on the floor who have real contact with the outside world, the (battle)field, and therefore know better what is going on. A fish buyer who has weekly contact with the captains at sea, knows all too well whether quota are necessary or not. These kinds of signals are not known as 'weak-signals' in professional jargon for nothing. A good boss follows the energy of the system 'Listen twice, speak once'.

*Responding to the environment as success factor*
One of the most important problems with 'Anglo-Saxon management' is that they constantly have an ideal and a norm about the 'future state'. Success is in this case is reaching your goals. That is what you are judged by. It is supposed thereby, typically American, that people get energy from running after a goal. Remarkable, because the reaching of goals makes you blind, certainly when huge personal gains are also attached. Adequately responding to reality, to the here-and-now, can also be defined as success. People who work based on goals are quite simply 'disconnected' from reality. Just ask top sportsmen who look back in later years on their chase for gold. This explains to an important degree the gap between managers (as modellists) and employees (as realists) in many 'well organised' organisations. Basically, it is anyway already impossible for an entire organisation to point to a 'preferred future' behind which everyone can line up. Employees work best when they can do their work in the here-and-now and in a local context. Local actions for local needs. Compare it to a football match. Naturally the players want to win, but they must first of all fulfil their task at their own post. If you are not successful in outstripping your direct opponent, the more distant goals hardly make any sense. So success is then not so much about reaching the highest peak, but rather about making the right decision in the here-and-now. The best school is only the best school when a teacher manages to get more out of the pupils than the teachers of the fellow school

around the corner. That is not something you measure, that is something you know because they manage to bring your children to a level which you could not have done without their professional help. The school is knowably better.

## GO RHINELANDIC

Organisations which want to survive in a hectic environment would do well to adequately prepare their employees to this end. At this moment, many organisations have a definition of reality in which learning and changing are mostly aimed at 'adjusting people to the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking about organisations'. On balance that means: we want more! It is even so that in many organisations, the salary structures also facilitate this: a specialist is on a lower rung and stays there too; everyone who may call himself manager has a career and can rise up further.

I understand that the Anglo-Saxon reader now wants to see a concrete step-by-step plan: linear, with goals, plans and checklists. Pity! We go from step to step: so we begin with Step 1. Improve the basic conditions, the awareness, in your organisation for Rhinelandic organising. Many managers have never heard of it. As a trainer, put some Rhinelandic management books on the booklist. Inform the employees council about this thinking. What is involved is reinstating trust in each other and again getting past the fear of the Anglo-Saxon urge for achievement and measuring and regulating. That can be via literature, lectures, workshops, internal seminars, acquaintances, coaching and most of all the restoring of the internal communication/connectedness. It is precisely the training departments of organisations which in the initial stages have a vitalising role. After that you can think further about creating a turning point and finally you come to a complete redesign of the organisation on the basis of Rhinelandic-thinking. However, this lies far beyond the scope of this article.

There are a few important arguments at hand in order to persuade hardened Anglo-Saxons to anyway begin with this first step:
- Customer orientation increases because the gaze is once more directed outwards;
- Less conflicting interests in the organisation because not the individual goals, but the hers-and-now is chosen as a starting point;
- The deregulation can begin because specialist craftsmanship once again has a central place in the organisation instead of rules and protocol from outside experienced as a straitjacket.

Rhinelanders have a social-economic view of organising. Jan Schouten van Schouten & Nelissen even go so far as to claim that Rhinelandic thinking is the answer to the question: what is a good organisation?

Still not convinced? The Bruce Springsteen CD is a party recording. The live performances are like carnival. If only we could just attain that once: learning and changing as a party. Bruce was on the edge, now it's your turn! Turn, turn, turn (by Pete Seeger). Refuse to work any longer on soulless shows. Choose for knowably instead of measurably better!

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