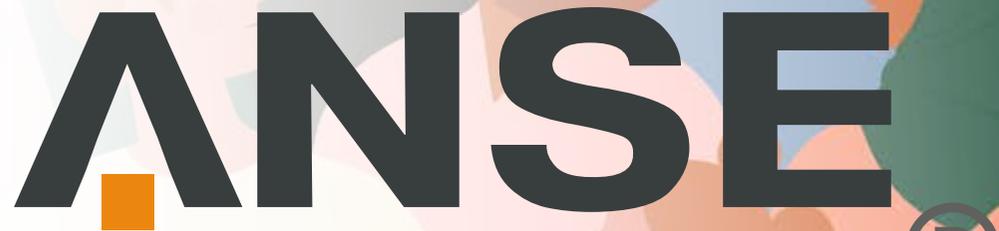


# ANSE®



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for Supervision and Coaching

## Diversity & Plural Identities

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to accept others**

Céline Meyrignac

■ **Experiencing diversity in ANSE**

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Tünde Erdős:

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# Editorial

■ Sijtze de Roos

Diversity is not a local hype, a fancy upper middle class pre-occupation or a passing fad, it is part of the human condition. Not only is it a matter of class, age, sex, gender or ethnicity, but just as well of history, lifestyle, religion, education and of political and moral convictions, traditions and value systems. And not to forget of the impact of geography, climate and the accessibility of water and food. All these factors shape our diverse social, economic and political arrangements, our family and kinship structures and our individual sense of self. All these factors permeate every aspect and every minute of our daily life. It could be said that nothing is more communal than the ever so highly revered 'personal identity' of the individual.

One could also argue that people are like diamonds: an impenetrable core with many outer facets. No intelligent and self-learning system, biological or artificial, understands itself completely, nor will it ever be completely understood by others. It then depends on where the light falls, if at least you are allowed to turn your manifold self to the sun. Or if the powers that be leave you free to develop your own narrative and help weaving the community you feel you belong to. Considering what people do to their own and each other's real or imagined identity, we immediately deal with a political issue. At stake is the right to be different *and* to belong. At stake, too, is the concurrent moral duty to refrain from boxing people up in preconceived and prejudicial categories. People cannot - and therefore should not - be fixed to a single 'identity' based on just one feature like nationality, class, colour, gender or any

other category that could be used to put - and keep - 'the other' in the readymade plugholes that ideology or the blind power of habit assigns them to.

This brings us to the topic of this issue and its significance for our trade. Supervision and coaching are narrative in nature. All personal narratives reflect individually differing social experiences. What our clients bring forward will inevitably touch on the incidence of injustice, inequality, discrimination and of the willful or unthinking exclusion of - to name but a few examples - psychiatric patients, refugees or 'strangers'. What we as professionals are challenged to do, and which different means and methods we could employ, is discussed under the heading 'diversity and plural identities'.

This thematic section contains six articles, interspersed and illuminated by three vignettes by, respectively, Jasmine Gill (UK), DeBorah 'Sunni' Smith (USA) and Isabelle Asseman (France), who eloquently share their various personal experiences and dealings with diversity. But we open with an essay by Lea Pelosi (Switzerland). She invites us to rethink the identity of self in reflection. A diverse world, she argues, doesn't allow for unambiguous identification. Is putting our identity at stake problematic or could it be an opportunity for dynamic self-understanding differing from assimilation and self-optimization? What could supervision contribute to this?

Teams, too, can be very diverse. Britta Posner (Germany) explains how a collaborative working culture,



rooted in deep trust, may function as a key tool in the creation of diverse high-performance teams, harnessing the benefits of multiple identities. Marten Bos and Seyda Buurman-Kutsal (Netherlands) engage each other in a reflective dialogue on diversity, power and equity in supervision and coaching. They emphasize how important awareness of differences in position, power, privilege and belonging is when working with clients. Céline Meyrignac (France) goes on to aptly describe how acceptance and cultivation of our plural identity may help us to find a balance between ourselves and others.

Diversity has historical and institutional dimensions. How, then, does ANSE deal with the European experience of cultural and ethnic diversity? Former ANSE Board member Eva Nemes (Hungary) was intensively involved in the ANSE-Grundtvig 'Life Long Learning Partnership Project', which ran from 2008 till 2010. The very first problem 16 participants from 8 European countries had to face was how to manage their own diversity. Eva describes how they went about it and how they learned from each other. On the same note, Agnes Turner (Austria; ANSE President) concludes our thematic section in collaboration with the ANSE Board. She shows how ANSE is all about finding a suitable balance between diversity and unity and between equity and equality. She follows this up by demonstrating how the ANSE community deals with diversity and how it will continue to do so in the future, thereby understanding diversity as a source of wealth.

In our second section - or as we like to name it: our 'creative corner' - we shift the focus to the importance of art, literature and science for our profession. In a telling combination of text and images, Michiel de Ronde and Marleen Wienk (Netherlands) present eight paradoxical approaches of art-based reflection in the coaching

of complex social systems. Next, Helena Ehrenbusch (Estonia) interviews Ligita Jakučionytė about her recently published book *Thank you for telling me*, showing what children could learn us about reflection and what they could learn from us. And last but not least we are happy to present a longread on scientific research. Executive coach and coaching scientist Tünde Erdős (Austria) sets out to address the question how to foster (more) effective coaching partnerships. In her article, in fact a report on her recent Phd-research, she combines the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of studying clients' self-reports and coach-client dyadic interactions in three separate datasets. Next to that, she focuses on both the role of non-verbal cues and the dynamics of intrapersonal patterns of emotion, attitude and behaviour. Along these lines, she shows how the working alliance between coach and coachee may enhance - but in some instances also hinder - the self-regulation and learning process in coaching.

We touch all this up with our usual opening column by Gerian Dijkhuizen (Netherlands) and her regular interview, this time with our Romanian colleague Bogdan Sebastian Cuc. But before I leave you to that and the further content, let's for a moment return to the topic of this issue.

As we have seen, supervisors and coaches are not operating in a void, impacted as they are by the world around them and all that happens in it, both the good and the evil. As citizens we can't close our eyes to the discrimination of minorities, the denial of climate change and other illiberal evils that undermine democracy. And as professionals we are bound to help our clients resist inequality, discrimination and exclusion. Not just, to be sure, in Hungary, Poland or other countries where - for example - antisemitism, sexism and racism are explicitly

condoned, if not supported or even instigated by government policy, but indeed all over our continent. Pointing the finger at others is not enough; we should not fail to take a stand ourselves and actively support each other and our clients to do so as well. Please note: not taking a stand is paradoxical: it in effect would mean taking the position of tacit approval.

Above all, we are to offer *all* our clients an appreciative audience, critical-reflective understanding and a holding space in which they feel free to learn, to take risks, to move out of their externally imposed or self-chosen bubbles, to face and deal with their inner and situational plurality and to venture out into the world without fear. Doing so, we would, I think, be well advised to keep in mind that the politics of diversity itself is diverse and not without its inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes. We will have to keep working at it.

This being said, let me finish with our heartfelt seasonal greetings. On behalf of the editorial board I wish you all a merry Xmas and a happy new year. We hope to meet each other at the 2022 ANSE Summer University in Riga. And of course in our next issue, which we devote to the topic of history. You are very welcome to contribute. Should you want to do so, please contact your national editor.



**Sijtze de Roos**  
Chief Editor



## Finding Nemo.....

■ Gerian Dijkhuizen

How may the old story of the underwater trip around the world by Captain Nemo, written around 1870 by Jules Verne<sup>1</sup>, be inspirational to us in our job?

Nemo was a very mysterious man. He crossed the oceans with a submarine fully equipped with futuristic gadgets. He possessed deep knowledge and understanding of the sea; especially about all that was under the surface. Also, Nemo was highly compassionate with mistreated and abused people. In reviews of his story, Nemo is often characterized as 'a captain without an identity'. And even today<sup>2</sup> you can read so much of what he **did and said**.

In our lives we play out many identities. Part of those belong to our private life (e.g. mother, father, wife, hus-

band) and another part is professional (e.g. supervisor, coach, teacher).

How do we integrate all these identities in everyday life? In which role do we show which behavior? When are we the 'one and only' we want to be? Questions that can lead us to deeper reflection.....

At the summer University in Rotterdam (2017), I took part in a workshop by a Romanian colleague. He asked us to draw a picture of ourselves as a private person and one as a professional. Two drawings of the same me.

The outcome was surprising: It was really me in both drawings. In my private life there was as much 'color' as there appeared in my professional life. I saw signs (colors and symbols) of hope, joy, enthusiasm and also some hesitation, shyness, braveness.

We take all our qualities and characteristics with us. In every situation. It is all about consciously choosing what

of these qualities and characteristics we show and when we do so.

My conclusion is that we are the same person: privately and professionally. But the situation differs to the extent to which we behave towards it. The way we act.... I highly recommend this exercise. It is a nice tool to reflect on yourself as a.....man/woman, wife/husband, mother/father, supervisor, teacher, coach, colleague, and so on and so forth.

To unfold the 'mysterious' parts of us we have to, like Nemo, gather knowledge about what is under the surface. Finding Nemo....finding yourself.....■



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<sup>1</sup>See for instance:

• Verne, J. (1869/1871). *Vingt mille lieus sous les mers: Tour de monde sous-marin*. Paris: J. Hetzel & Cie.  
• Verne, J. (2001/2020). *20,000 Leagues Under the Seas: An Underwater Tour of the World*. Project Gutenberg Ebook: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

<sup>2</sup>Various hardcover and pocket editions of the book may be found antiquarian. New editions are still published every now and then

# Constellation. Re-Constellation

## Rethinking the Identity of »Self« in Reflection

■ Lea Pelosi

### Abstract

The diversity of the world challenges the orientation and self-positioning of groups and individuals. With the unambiguous and stable identification, the stability of identity is at stake, too. What are the implications of this kind of diagnosis for self-reflection in supervision? In order to create a theoretical and practical framework, two concepts are proposed and discussed with reference to concrete examples: constellation as the form in which self-understanding in relation to a diverse context can be fruitfully conceived and performative self-reflection as an approach to reflection and transformation in terms of action and active exploration of such constellations. This leads to the conception of identity as an open form which allows for a dynamic integration of the complexity and variety of world- and self-shaping factors: paradoxically constellations are stabilized through re-constellation, that is transformation. Supervision is the structured exploration of re-constellations by means of different »reflective media«, including action.

Variety, complexity, ambiguity, often incompatibility or even contradictoriness: the diversity of social contexts is a current concern. It shapes everyday life, labour relations, politics, but also the self-understanding of groups and individuals. Because the diversity of the environment challenges the orientation and self-positioning of individuals within that context. And with the unambiguous identification with particular contexts, also the stability of individual or group<sup>1</sup> identity is at stake. But what is identity if it is not stable? And what follows out of this for the reflection on self and world<sup>2</sup>, as it is the subject of supervision?

The following considerations will presuppose the experience of diversity, in relation to the world such as to oneself. They will focus on two concepts: *Constellation* and *Performative Self-Reflection*. Both explore the interface between world and self. They provide a framework for the conception of identity as an open form, which I want to apply to supervision.

I will argue that what becomes the object of self-reflection is shaped by a wide range of contextual factors that cannot be grasped in their entirety. Self-understanding is the complex, situational constellation of different kinds of references to this context: it consists of perceptions, emotions, reflexes, thoughts, behaviours, actions, etc.

Self-reflection – both »spontaneous« and framed in supervisory processes – is the (transforming) grip on this constellation. The word »grip« indicates that this self-reflection would be inadequately captured in the form of introspection. Rather it is an intervention in the ways in which the constellation actually presents itself. Following Butler's concept in *Gender Trouble*<sup>3</sup>, I use the term performative to emphasize that self-reflection in this sense is both departing from and transforming the constellation.

Considering the amount of potentially relevant contextual factors and their complex interaction, it would be

misleading to equate identity with complete inclusion of all possible components of constellations. Rather, the relative stability of what is experienced as self or as world is due to the partially repetitive relationships between the components of constellations: A behaviour triggers anger and at the same time recurring verbal reactions; decisions are made on the basis of established combinations of criteria such as basic values, strategies, a particular mood or the feedback of a specific person. That's why situation-specific narratives concerning self-understanding remain recognisable despite their variation.

Supervision is a framework in which constellations can be purposefully analysed, explored, de- and recomposed. It follows that dealing with diversity requires a willingness to view world and self-perception as »work in progress«, in other words as a necessarily incomplete process. How is this to be understood?

### Constellations

In medias res: What does self-reflection mean? Very generally: I become the object of perception and engagement for myself. As soon as this general statement is to be specified, the difficulties arise: Is this »self« a body? Is it the subject of an action or behaviour? Is it what has a feeling or a thought? Each of these answers applies, and each applies at most partially: not only because the self is both body and subject, immediate emotion and rationally based behaviour, but also because the attempt to integrate the multiplicity leads to the limits of comprehensibility and thus to the limits of unity. Have we therefore necessarily to choose between drastic reduction and impossible integration? A concept able to grasp heterogeneous aspects by organising the potential of their internal references by selection without exclusion might be useful. I want to propose constellation as such a concept.

A constellation describes the way in which thoughts, feelings, perceptions, actions and behaviours *situationally* combine to form self-understanding. »Situational« signifies context-related, that is co-determined by social interaction, by language conventions, »cultural«

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*A constellation describes the way in which thoughts, feelings, perceptions, actions and behaviours situationally combine to form self-understanding*

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characteristics, media peculiarities, working conditions and even landscape. Context changes. Hence, »situational« means also changeable. Moreover, »situational« refers to a framing: by a concrete situation, the constellation is temporarily stabilized.

That's how situational constellation and re-constellation of self reflects the heterogeneity, the transformation, and the possible temporary stabilisation of the world. Nevertheless, self-understanding in terms of a constellation isn't simply »caused« by the world. Rather it is the interface and connection of different and changing situation-specific references to the world: cognition, sensation, judgement, shaping, etc. This connection is complex and multiform, but not arbitrary and chaotic. On the one hand, it is an effect of established or coincidental references between contextual factors (causal

connections, social conventions, spatiotemporal arrangement), but on the other hand, it also follows the logic of habits, biographically formed patterns, associations, etc. And last but not least, it generates a form: an image, a story, a structure...

How does a self-understanding of this kind become the object of reflection? And how can supervision frame such reflection?

### Performative self-reflection

What does reflection mean? Something acquires a specific appearance through a medium. Light refracted in the windowpane appears as a bright rectangle on the wall, a call is reflected from the rock and appears as a certain sound. But my wording as well can appear to me in the paraphrase of my counterpart as a certain statement, which possibly differs from the intended one. A behaviour can show itself in a specific way – and perhaps becoming the object of awareness – in the reaction it triggers or in the effect it has.

Even these few examples show that the medium of reflection is manifold, and that reflection does not simply mean contemplation. Rather, self-understanding often appears in behaviour and actions, forms of communication and spatial, bodily relations. Self-reflection therefore means actively exploring the components of the constellations of self-understanding. And just as research is usually based on experimental arrangements, self-reflection in supervision can benefit from »experimenting« with different reflective media: Thus, a concern can be approached by writing, telling, drawing, filming, by means of a structured analysis or a list, a photograph or a piece of music, by movements or the arrangement of objects; a decision can be made on the basis of arguments, with the help of chance, by taking into account the »gut feeling« or with the purpose to surprise oneself or others; a verbal situation narrative

can be translated into a visual representation, a sound, a movement or - e.g. in systemic constellations work - into body sensations etc.

I call this form of reflection *performative*, following Judith Butler, because it is about exploring what kind of impact the active change of a certain situational reference to the world has not only on this very world, but also on one's self-understanding.

Reflection is often connected with the desire or the need for transformation. However, a desired or a needed new form is rarely a gift from heaven, but rather a result of formative work. So how are constellations reshaped?

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## *Performative reflection is about exploring what kind of impact the active change of a certain situational reference to the world has on this very world and on one's self-understanding*

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### **Re-Constellation**

A constellation is the (temporary) position of celestial bodies in relation to each other. It is a form that originates in agreement and is established by tradition. Stars could be configured in other ways. The constellation admits the diversity of components: Planets, suns, moons, in the night sky of non-experts like me perhaps

also satellites and moths illuminated by the streetlight. And it does not require the complete integration of all components: not every star, every interplanetary dust grain, every galaxy, the entire dark matter is part of it.

In analogy to the mentioned features, the constellation I talk about is based on conventions, it is heterogeneous, transformable, and it is the result of selective integration.

Through selection, the constellation of a situational self-understanding becomes immediately addressable: by taking into account a reduced set of components. A situational constellation however allows at most the temporary exclusion of aspects: the dynamics of what is necessarily changeable and incomplete always brings into play new components. The challenge of a partially unpredictable transformation cannot be neutralised by »controlling the parameters«. What seems to be at first a merely selective access, therefore ends up to be a process which allows the insertion of additional elements without having to break or give up a defined and possibly inert entity: An aspect appearing to be secondary at first glance - be it the new lighting at the workplace, the pace of work of a colleague or a suppressed affect - can be »docked« to the constellation following the hint of an association, a resistance, a connection suggested by organisational or structural logics. In supervision, the spectrum of possible aspects and connections can be systematically explored. And even though the consideration of all possibilities is impossible, processes shaped by the characteristics of constellations are likely not to ignore less obvious perspectives.

Furthermore, existing references in a constellation can be named and compared with hypothetical variants<sup>5</sup>

For example, the feeling of being overstrained at work can be related to the organisation of the workplace (shared office, composition of the team, kind and frequency of feedback, etc.), the time-management, the self-evaluation or the standards of productivity, rather than only or primarily to the qualifications of the staff member. The diversity of possible references expands the spectrum of perception and action.

The experience of world and self as diverse and dynamic constructs is thus translated into a concept of self-transformation which keeps its distance to ideologies of growth or optimisation. While transformations doubtlessly often imply the improvement of current states, they nevertheless must remain questionable because every new constellation brings other, maybe additional contextual factors into view.

The concept of performative self-reflection offers a methodological basis for exploring the effects of different kinds of influence on the constellation. The person in the example above can try what happens when she talks about her experience of being overstrained not only with the supervisor, but with other people - with a friend or a chance acquaintance on the train, in an online forum or in a workshop of professional development; she can check out project management tools, do breathing exercises, put a bouquet of flowers on her table or leave the organisation, etc.

Performative self-reflection is formative work on the constellation that does not aim at completeness or ideal achievement and therefore confers value to all »trial treatments«. This doesn't make reflection arbitrary however, because the decision for one or the other kind of intervention results from the analysis of the constellation to which supervision often contributes. To what extent is diversity a frame of reference for re-constellation?

### Diversity is doing-difference

I started presupposing the experience of diversity. What is essential here is that diversity does not simply denote the fact of specific differences, but rather the process of generating them and thereby constantly considering new distinguishing features. The term doing-difference has become established to indicate this processual character of diversity.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the experience of diversity is ineluctable, while it exists only as a changing effect of distinctions.

The constellation and its processing are based on precisely this assumption: the understanding and reflection of self and world result from the differentiation, the ordering and reordering of a heterogeneous, unmanageable amount of aspects. This is challenging. Self-assurance or orientation in the world is hardly to be equated with stabilisation. The self as a constellation, necessarily and inconclusively conceived in exploration of itself, is a response to this challenge. And conversely, the diversity of the world offers the self many different and heterogeneous possibilities of reference, on which re-constellation depends. Can anything other than the disintegration of identity into unstructured arbitrariness or restlessness follow from this?

### Identity as an open form

In dealing with diversity, two basic attitudes could be – very schematically – distinguished: the claim to integrate and create new stable identities vs. the affirmation of the necessary incompleteness of integration and with it the affirmation of self as multiform constellation in complex relationship to the world. I am obviously arguing for the latter and will therefore conclude by considering what follows for the *concept of identity*. Just as I have defined diversity above as pertaining to the world such as the self, I also want to refer here to identity as pertaining to both of them.

Identity seen as the complete integration of dynamic diversity couldn't be other than an abstract concept. Dealing with diversity, however, doesn't mean to make it disappear. It rather requires the concrete exploration of similarities and connections across distinctions. No one is simply old or young, well or poorly educated, immigrant or born here. Nor is the world a two-dimensional map on which (personal) features can be located like regions. Rather, it is a multi-dimensional, complex entity into which I am embedded before describing it. It will therefore never present itself as something unified to my observation and definition.

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*No one is simply old or young, well or poorly educated, immigrant or born here. Nor is the world a two-dimensional map on which (personal) features can be located like regions*

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The identity of the world can be experienced in the recognisability of situations. As a rule, this persists even given the transformation of situational narratives. The open form of an identity is therefore due to the fact that repetition in most cases involves variation. Derrida coined the term iteration for this.<sup>7</sup> Recognizability is also the basic condition for the identity of self-understanding. And here too, it doesn't

depend on the elimination of variation in the repetitions – every day experience puts this in evidence before any theoretical validation. So hardly anyone will introduce themselves with a memorised text, and those who do not change at all usually appear to be more alienated than reliable.

Identity as an open form is therefore the potential of dynamic constellations to remain recognisable regardless of necessary variation. What is the significance of identity understood in these terms for supervision?

Supervision quite generically can be defined in terms of structured reflection. It usually operates starting from concrete situations or the corresponding narratives, whether these are verbal or otherwise medialised. Such situation narratives can easily become confusing in view of the diversity of relevant aspects - for the client as well as for the supervisor. The constellation enables work on changing sets of elements. This allows the structure of a complex situation to be explored in the consciously designed form of an iterative process in which behaviours are tried out, narratives are varied, feelings are spelled out and translated.

For example, in dealing with role complexes which challenge professional self-understanding, the easily missed goal of harmonious integration would be in most cases risky and not sustainable. In contrast, the exploration of the constellations in their indissoluble ambiguity takes into account the impossible removal of contradictions and focuses on the conscious situation-specific transitions between relevant perspectives: The tension between the research-related and the organisation-related values in the role-concept of an academic leader does not dissolve in supervision, but the »friction loss« can be reduced through consciously prioritizing or neglecting certain criteria for decision-making.

Openness of identity in this example means that the different relations which can be established between the components of the role complex require a reshaping self-understanding. The identity nevertheless experienced is not the product of an ideal integration process, but the dynamic »by-product« of the reflection process itself: The constellations of different role aspects are variations which do appear as variations only because they are forms of repetition. ■

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Here I will focus on individuals, though the considerations with some differentiations also apply to groups

<sup>2</sup>I am using both concepts (self and world) as representative of two perspectives of reference and thus in a very generic way. I am not referring to "objects" that correspond to these terms, but to a structural distinction between an "I" that refers to a "non-I".

<sup>3</sup>Butler (2007), p. XV-XVI / 183-193. To Butler, identity is not something given by nature, but an effect of behaving and acting.

<sup>4</sup>"Culture" is used here as a non-specific term, the specification of which would go beyond the present framework. Here it designates sets of values or modes of perception and behavior by means of which the identification of individuals with groups or organizations, but also with historical, geographical or religious contexts take place

<sup>5</sup>Here, with reference to systemic work, similarities and differences could be explored. The constellation tends to be more heterogeneous and open than classical systemic concepts, which also allows for the consideration of usually "non-systemic" factors

<sup>6</sup>West/Fenstermaker (1995)

<sup>7</sup>Derrida (1997), p. 53.



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## Through my lens

*A personal story of the experience of entering the coaching profession as a person of color*

### ■ Jasmine Gill



I did not know I was different until I entered the coaching profession. And yet there it was. As I sat in my coaching diploma class, and everyone started grouping together, I was left with the only other person holding the marginalised identity. Well actually he held two

or three of these identities. This intersectionality fused together in a hotpot bubbling over, while the others in the group heterosexual, normative, white-bodied, able-bodied, middle-class, corporate huddled in their spaces together.

I did not know I was different until I heard the stereotype of a south Asian women displayed in an example the supervisor spoke of. I wondered if he thought all south Asian women were like the emotional wreck, he described his client as. I wondered if it was necessary to disclose her race or her gender in his example. I wondered in silence to myself. The supervisor whom

is a pleasant enough individual but that moment, that example, well it is ingrained for all the wrong reasons. Our systems are lined with racism and patriarchy like oaks strongly lined across the pathway, rooted and resistant to weather change. And this what seemed like a small incident perpetuated the systems of oppression that exist in society today.

I did not know I was different until a peer coach on my course choked by my honesty repeated racial microaggressions against my name. He did not even know he was doing it, so he said, and yet there he went on mutilating a perfect flower. That was my first taste of the 'professional coaching' world, like the kick from wasabi, there one minute and completely suppressed the next. I did not know I was different until I volunteered for a climate organisation and the white bodied coach with her distinct white savior complex, yearning to save the indigenous people, brazenly mocked indigenous names whilst also skillfully patronising me as her show swan. Evidently, I removed myself from helping that individual. It was interesting that the onlooker felt totally comfortable with this outrageous behaviour. This was the first five minutes of the conversation, the ease in which the racism dripped from the coaches mouth, like butter wouldn't melt.

I did not know I was different until three white men in a coaching break out zoom room felt it was appropriate to discuss how necessary it was to have white supremacists in the room to be truly inclusive. They carried on and wondered why non-white bodied people were so angry all of a sudden and can't we all just be friends. I felt unsafe, violated even, nauseous at what I was being exposed too. The irony was that one of these men was a cross-cultural expert. Neither of the men seemed to realise the impact their conversation was

having on me. At a loss of words, shocked into silence I said very little.

I did not know I was different until I spoke up and gave feedback on the racism I had witnessed and was treated like the perpetrator and ousted. So you are happy to take free labour but god forbid the different one asking for equal rights and respect, did I say different, well let's add difficult on top. If we ignore her, maybe she will go away and we won't have to do any self-reflection or understand why our systems perpetrate unsafe spaces, let alone take accountability and change things for the betterment of our coaching profession.

I did not know I was different until I was not told I would be coaching a young adult who had asked for a coach of a different race. This important information somehow slipped through the portal of communication. Neither was I informed that this individual had to wait 9 months for a coach rather than a matter of weeks relative to her white counterparts. How the bombs fell as I heard the words uttered, how I too felt that pain of being outcast, and brushed off as if these were innocent acts, as if no harm was caused whilst daggers pierced through our backs. Where was the apology? I did not know I was different until I was asked to speak out, but not too much, maybe just say the first word because that complete sentence would make us divulge in our guilt too much. We don't like feeling bad, even if it's actually harming you, we shouldn't be made to feel sad for silencing you.

I did not know I was different until I could not bring up racism in supervision. When the supervisor coaxed me to say the word which left me ambushed by the white silence and white accusation. We feel attacked one pointed out - no dear I was describing how I was a

victim, at no point did I state Karen you personally did this - firstly the description was of a male, but go ahead take over the show. Where was the supervisor when the peer decided to display her white fragility? Where was the safety then?

I did not know I was different until I was placed in a racialised affinity group and none of my other identities meshed well with the others, whether politically or in social demographics. I am more than the colour of my skin, what don't you understand I screamed to myself, for who else was really listening? Each coaching space began to feel like a prison, I was sentenced even though I had not committed a crime. I was sentenced to being the other, and there was no way out.

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*Am I seen for my whole multi-faceted self or just for a singular element of my identity, like a jigsaw piece removed from the puzzle?*

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Well, I am the other, I am different and because I am who I am I found myself searching for safer spaces. Spaces where my multiple identities fused together like the perfect perfume, blended in a way that only one with exceptional discernment could sense. The first was a BIPOC coaching collective, mainly USA based but it was a space where you could say the word race and be heard. In this space your identity mattered, it was not disregarded, you could finally breath without

assault. I found another BIPOC space, again over in USA, part of the ICF Washington Racial Equity group initiative. It was interesting to meet so many qualified coaches of colour, and yet a company I worked with had trouble locating them. Optically I wonder where their vision was being assessed for such colourblindness, oh because we exist.

I then reached out to find a BIPOC coaching supervisor, someone who would also be willing to hold BIPOC only group supervision. The search was interesting, I asked around and did not find a whole range of options, a well-known coach supervisor, in the field a good few decades, named just one person, just one I thought - but we are the global majority - that's a pretty sharp statistic to overturn.

And here I am because I am different. I decided to hold a BIPOC peer to peer coaching linear space, where we empower each other. Like the rings in Christmas paper chains, all joined delicately together and yet a strong bond is formed. We can no longer be stagnant if we are to be relevant. Where can you open the doors for a diverse pool of coaches and make those spaces safe? Where is the accountability from the accredited bodies and what individual work needs to be done? Why don't we just form our own coaching body, one that is anti-racist, trauma-informed, holistic, where embodied listening in safe spaces is a prerequisite. Because at the end of the day, what does our presence in spaces not made for us stand for? We are richer than we know, so stand up. ■

**Jasmine Gill** (UK). *Multicultural Leadership Coach | I enable socially conscious, enterprising individuals & businesses that are ready to adapt & reinvent their leadership so it is truly inclusive & global.*



# Collaboration: Driving force behind diverse high-performance teams with multiple identities

■ Britta Posner

## Abstract

Building diverse high-performing teams, in which everyone is working at their best, is an art. The good news is that this artform can be learnt. To harness the power of diversity and multiple identities in teams, we need to equip leaders with tools to bring out the differences, while uniting people around a common ground. A col-

laborative working culture, rooted in deep trust, is a key tool in creating impactful, diverse high-performance teams which harness the benefits of multiple identities.

*In this article we take a first look at how leaders can utilize the power of collaboration within their team and across the entire organization.*

Building diverse teams is difficult by itself, let alone diverse, high-performance teams, in which multiple identities come into their own. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, diversity is "(...) many different types of things or people being included in something (...)". What we classify as "different" has evolved over the past years to not only include for example differences in gender, phenotype, culture, social background and ability, but also neurodiversity.

## Neurodiversity in everyday life

As the mother of a wonderful child with ADHD I have a front row seat in understanding neurodiversity. Bearing witness to how people with this condition often have a hard time fitting into the allocated societal mold, it is fascinating to see how they come into their own when providing unusual solutions, thinking outside the proverbial box and even keeping the overview in a potentially overstimulating environment.

## Diversity in teams

While "different" is a critical component of high-performing teams, "different" is also difficult to manage and often expressed as "I employed a diverse team, but it's not working". That is because diverse teams can be more complex than others, bringing not just one, but two dimensions of "being different" together: diversity and multiple identities.

According to Carl F. Graumann, multiple identities result "from the many ways a person has been successfully identified with or by their environment". A key question in the context of creating a high-performing team is, how individuals know which identity delivers the most valuable output. Which identity should come to the surface in a particular moment and how does this influence the team's diversity?

## Leading a diverse team

The people we work with are often team leads, and therefore responsible for creating an inclusive atmosphere in which diversity and multiple identities can flourish for the benefit of the overall output. But how is this even possible if the team members themselves are not even aware of the diverse forces at play? In our experience it all starts with raising self-awareness, as you can only lead others if you know how to lead yourself. What's more, creating a collaborative organizational culture lays the perfect ground for teams to grow together and perform at their best - because collaboration reduces complexity.

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*While “being different” is a critical component of high-performance teams, identifying a diverse set of individual strengths is only the first step to success*

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While “being different” is a critical component of high-performance teams, identifying a diverse set of individual strengths is only the first step to success. It is the common ground underneath that layer of diversity which allows each member of a team to flourish. Once leaders have created greater awareness for the multiple identities and diversity at play in a team, they manage to create respect within that very team by allowing all team members to understand and appreciate how the diversity of their peers contributes to the entire

team's success. This is the perfect point for leaders to move from the perspective of being different into one of commonality by establishing a culture of collaboration.

## Collaboration as an approach to integrate diversity

Over the past years The Collaboration Practice has identified several behavioral facets crucial to enable collaboration and to drive teams towards becoming high-performance teams. Having a joint set of values and a joint purpose are key parts of this equation. No matter how diverse your team is, shared (and lived) values and purpose will always be the guiding star leading the team towards the previously agreed goal(s). And this is something leaders can proactively foster, design and hone together with their team. But a collaborative working culture enabling teams to become high-performance teams goes much beyond that. In addition to value-driven and purpose-driven behaviors, trust is also a key ingredient. And by this I don't mean task-driven trust. I'm talking about the deep trust that allows people to be vulnerable, so that they can grow to be more deliberate on how to utilize the team diversity and potential of the multiple identities for the benefit of the organization.

## Trust, transparency and continuous learning are keys

Deep trust, common values and a joint purpose form the core of any collaboration. They help teams to reduce complexity by focusing on the required output and the role each and every team member plays in delivering that output in a committed and accountable manner. Yet, there is still more to collaboration as it becomes porous across teams and the organization. In our experience, successful collaboration in high-per-

forming teams requires transparency, a certain communication maturity of the organization and an internal as well as a continuous learning mindset within and beyond the organization. Crucially, collaboration is not just a driving force behind diverse high-performing teams in which multiple identities are utilized with deliberation, but a turbo charger for innovation within every organization. ■



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# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Coaching and Supervision

A dialogue between Şeydâ Buurman-Kutsal and Marten Bos

■ Şeydâ Buurman-Kutsal & Marten Bos

## Abstract

In this article Şeydâ Buurman-Kutsal and Marten Bos, both supervisor, coach and trainer with a deep rooted passion for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, dialogically reflect on the importance for professionals to be aware of the position in which they and their clients find themselves, both as individuals and as part of the bigger system they are part of. Being aware of differences in position, privilege, belonging and power is of importance at the start as well as during the whole process of working with clients in supervision or coaching and otherwise. The authors show the need of awareness of what we from our background, gender, ethnicity, colour, class, philosophy of life, etcetera bring into relations. They move on to argue how these relations are influenced by stubborn prejudice and neglect of differences, and how clients can be positively empowered to change. To raise awareness of the power of differ-

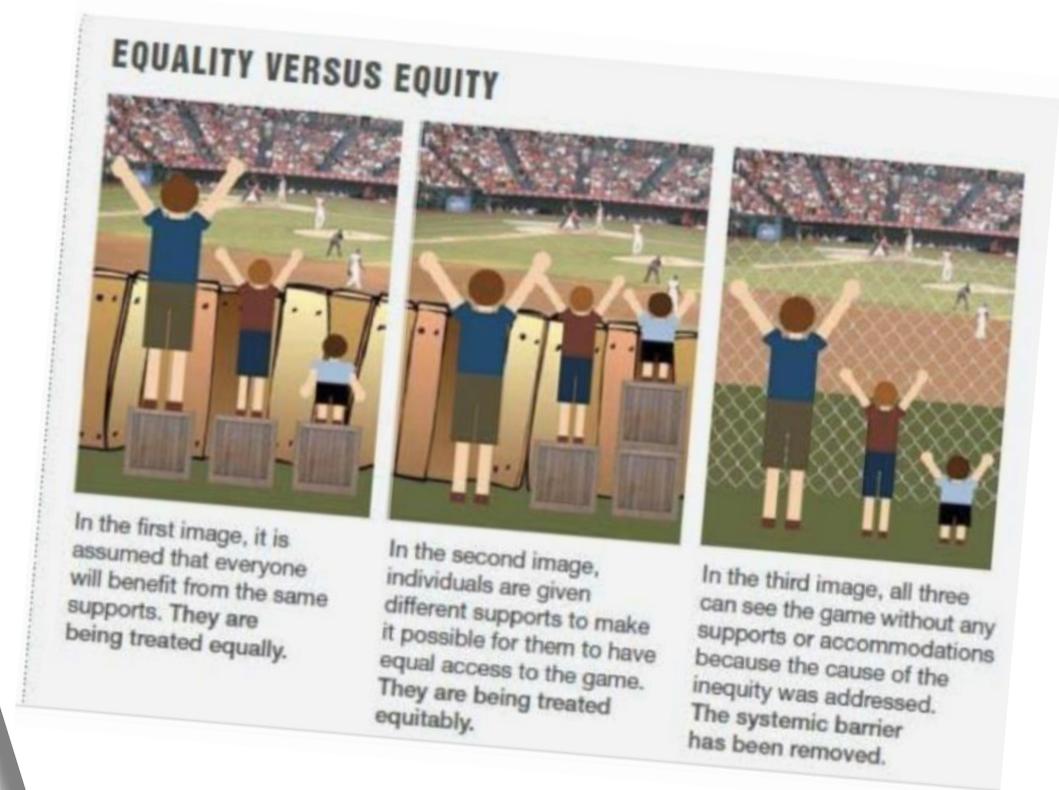
ences, they both work with so called 'Diversity Cards', developed by Marten. Şeydâ also works with the Brown Eyes-Blue Eyes Workshop, originally developed by Jane Elliott.

*"Some of us are more equal than others"*<sup>1</sup> How can those words in Orwell's 'Animal Farm' help us to reflect on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (D.E.I) in supervision and coaching?

We met at workshops of the Dutch National Organisation for Supervision and Coaching (LVSC), connected warmly and ever since find mutual inspiration in our approach of D.E.I. To present both our perspectives

on working with D.E.I., we opt for a dialogue, the more so because we believe in the strength of the dialogical approach to use, overcome and understand the power of differences<sup>2</sup>. So let's tackle this question.

Marten: *"To install on supervision."* This very meaningful theme was introduced to me during my senior supervisor training by Ben Dissel, a much appreciated colleague and my mentor at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. He introduced this topic to create awareness about the atmosphere needed for supervision: a mutual learning ground of trust, commitment and a warm welcome to whatever may come by in our supervision meetings. Ben made quite clear how



important a good start is to create an open, dialogical environment. Installing in the relation also gives an opportunity to 'reinstall', if we become aware that we somehow are growing apart during the supervision process.

Creating an open dialogical learning space surely is an issue when working D.E.I. In my methodology with Diversity Cards<sup>3</sup>, I always take ample time to install on diversity."

Şeydâ: Exactly Marten. Quite like you, I also focus strongly on the start in my work as supervisor, coach or consultant. Who decides what is there to install? The awareness and knowledge, the decision making to build ground and holding space for supervision, this makes all the difference. Clients are looking for a professional who knows what to do, they trust the authority and ability of the coach/supervisor. So right from the start, yes, even before we begin, there is already positional inequality. As professional I have to navigate the thin line between enabling autonomic learning and development and leading by method. What I have learned from installing on supervision by you, the first time I followed your training to work with the Diversity Cards, is how to equalize the power relations by installing properly. The mere assumption that professional and client have the same understanding of what they are here for leads only to a reproduction of their own realities: To vary on a famous quote by Ynse Stapert "we only see what we know"<sup>4</sup>

Marten: You are, in a way, making people realize that we are all looking from different perspectives in your 'Brown eyes - Blue eyes Workshops'<sup>5</sup>. According to their eye colour, you divide a group in two halves, giving the brown eyed participants privileges and the

blue eyed group none at all. All expectations of the blue eyed group are negative. And they live up to those expectations. The aim is to understand the anatomy of prejudices and to reflect on the personal influence and behaviour of each individual in the workshop. This may help to understand what is necessary to change the system of exclusion and racism in society. I felt quite uncomfortable and excluded when I was involved in this experiment. Discomfortable and very much aware of being a white man. Stories by people of colour and some personal experiences made me realize how 'easily' and how often we exclude and marginalize 'the not me'.

During your workshop - and in my professional and private life as well - I more and more discovered the mechanisms of power positions and privileges I myself have. The importance of installing on a real dialogical, subject - subject approach became more evident to me. To really install on D.E.I., we need to realize how common and institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, privileges, dominant discourses, biases are to us. We have to be aware that also in the supervision/coaching relations we discriminate and exclude valuable topics, identities, meaningful experiences, questions, situations, perspectives. Our clients may keep topics away from the conversation, sometimes fully aware of it, mostly unaware. They may think it will probably not be relevant, maybe even inappropriate, avoiding to make the supervisor/coach feel uncomfortable. In this way we both diminish important issues, thinking they probably do not belong in the context of supervision. Such contextual introductions, previous experiences, shame, (school)socialisation, assimilation, and so on, strongly influence the supervision relation. As you say, even before we start, these mechanisms are already there, certainly for clients belonging to minorities and marginalised groups.

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## *To really install on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, we need to realize how common racism and sexism are*

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Şeydâ: When exchanging about this with colleagues I face the desire to find agreement and shared understanding. Thinking and wishing we know what we talk about and we can connect to each other by finding a place to agree. Be alike, be together and agree, be a unity. This wish for belonging is universal, while without sensitivity for power relations it means neglect of positions<sup>6</sup>. By neglecting the existence of power relations we close the door to important aspects of learning and development just at the start of and during our relations. With the danger to reproduce inequality, power distance, exclusion.

Marten: I experienced more and more that we are not all equal. And yes we have to acknowledge that, explicitly when it comes to situations of representation, belonging, power, privilege and marginalisation. Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality helped me to see this. She shows how our variety of multiple identities are all interconnected and how they interact. The intersection of these identities creates differences in the mechanism of belonging and not belonging, in being privileged or marginalised. As they experience a cumulation of oppression and discrimination, it is quite understandable that this theory was developed by bisexual and lesbian black women and women of colour. This mechanism of exclusion and marginalisa-

tion is part of all our systems. We find it in language, attitudes, rituals, norms, as part of our communities, institutions, organisations, theories, methodologies and educational systems. Kimberlé Crenshaw c.s. made quite clear how restrictive this is, even more so for those who belong to the intersection where marginalisation is piling up. But intersectionality also frees the way for suppressed and marginalized people to create a constructive space to develop theory, to educate themselves, to build communities together and find an inclusive approach. This is not new, feminists did it in the 70's, gays and lesbians in the 80's, transgender and non-binary people are doing it now.

Suggesting that we are all equal is denying the power involved in relations. It denies how hard it can be to make real space, to give space to the 'not us'. If 'the other' is weirdly exotic or not too much different we tend to find it more easy: 'you don't look gay', 'you are different from other African people', and other remarks like that. But whenever 'the other' claims a meaningful, equal seat at the table to really create a different approach, introduces a different vision, a different methodology and different rituals, it becomes harder. And when 'the other' mirrors us, showing us how exclusive our established way of doing and thinking is, how racist, or sexist we are in our ways of thinking and acting, it gets really hard and we might rather choose to be with those who look, think and act like us and who do not criticize our rituals, language and our behaviour.

Şeydâ: We strive, but might not be aware of the difference in our positions. Especially when we understand ourselves as the ones who have to keep a neutral position as supervisor and coaches. Sometimes what we do not say keeps the inequality in space. For example when we do not ask our supervisees whether being



white has influenced their choices in their professional life. Or whether being heterosexual has influenced their work experiences. You might recognize that these aspects of diversity are often not the ones where our attention goes to. While trying to be as open as we can be to the learning process of our supervisees, we sometimes forget that what we choose to focus on is a very clear message of our perspectives, reflecting the power position we are in. Not being aware is not a problem. It is simply a matter of admitting that we are unaware and we can be open to it by creating a space where we can receive feedback and feel safe enough to fail as Aminata Cairo calls it. However, not knowing that we do not know is ignorance. And at the same time claiming that we are holding space for equality is

oppressive.

Marten: If we do not properly install on D.E.I., we tend to go into exclusion, objectivation, tube view, competition, objectifying, and so on. Let me give an example.

*"On a recent writers course in Turkey we gathered around a table in a beautiful olive tree garden. The introduction began with the usual question: "Tell something about yourself and what you like to learn this week?" The first person started: "I am married, have three children, I want to write a book" etcetera.. The second: "I am married, we have two children and a grandson, I want to write .." Number three: "Me and my wife have three kids and four grandchildren, I want to .." I was sitting at the end of the table, so I would be the*

*last and came to realize I was, as more often, the only gay man in the group, the only one without a relation and no children. So I had to find my way to present myself. Do I, at the first meeting, already want to tell: "I am gay."? Rather not! I would like to introduce myself in my own way, but as everybody is dwelling in this 'children and grandchildren competition', how free could I feel to tell my story? I felt pushed, or at least unpleasantly invited to also share my relational status, which would bring me to my sexual orientation and even more to the pain of not having children. With some hesitation - I didn't want to spoil the atmosphere - I decided to share my awareness on a relational level. This was denied and brushed off: "that's not how it was meant to be!"*

For me this is the unaware process of installing on exclusion; an all too common start in teams, organisations, neighbourhoods, as well as in coaching and supervision. If you belong to a minority or a marginalized group, it can be hard to present yourself in your own way as a subject with a multiple story. Therefore, in order to have a dialogical coach/supervision relation in which we can really explore in equity and investigate all experiences, opportunities, pitfalls and qualities, installing on diversity is a must,

Şeydâ: When I asked a male supervisee how he made his choice to contact me for supervision, he explained: "I wanted to make sure that I don't have to start at Adam and Eve to help you to understand where I come from as a person. There is so much to learn in supervision that I need a basic common understanding of my cultural background. I have to adjust and fit in during my whole professional life. That is okay, but when it comes to learning I need a safe space knowing that there is a cultural match." Some of my colleagues find this offensive because they think of themselves as very

open minded, not judging and culturally sensitive. That means that they are judging the person for choosing their own values for supervision. Also white saviourism comes around the corner when we try to help supervisees of colour to learn to adjust to the system instead of guiding their path to get stronger in whatever they might need to. Often our dominant norm following attitude keeps them from that. And that is what we talk about when we talk about power relations in supervision.

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### *Diversity and inclusion need a safe space to learn and practice in stead of short training sessions*

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Marten: It is quite uncomfortable to become aware of one's privileges, of being confronted with the fact that your approach, language, methodology, mindset is experienced by the other as exclusive. It may hurt even more if we are doing our best to be open, non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic. We want the best for everyone in the world, we strive for human rights, for equality, non-discrimination. Growing awareness and acceptance of different reality are the first steps, instead of denial before we even try to listen to the experiences of the 'not me'. This all makes 'installing on diversity' a necessity if we want to create a real inclusive relationship for training, coaching, supervision, therapy, teaching.

Şeydâ: In these times of change supervision and coaching are under pressure of losing their position in field of professional development support. I see

supervision as one of the few learning environments in which 'holding space' for vulnerability is professionally founded and acknowledged. We are living in a time in which knowledge transfer is seen as the only measurable learning method. Diversity and inclusion, however, need a safe space to learn and practice instead of short training sessions with checklists. When I train on diversity and inclusion, attendees often get confused when they follow my route from 'me, to we, to us', which of course has its roots in supervision. I make this visible by using the diversity cards, laying them next to each individual and letting them tell about their identities (me) in relation to their positions in work or life and as a next step inviting them to exchange the shared identities (we), then going on to reflect together on the effects of these identities on the whole group (us). This helps participants to understand that they can only achieve long time learning effects if they take time for reflection. I use the same structure in the Brown Eyes - blue Eyes training by first reflecting on the individual feelings, followed by listening to the feelings of others in the group and finally exchanging the meaning of all this for the group as a whole.

Some of them started to embrace supervision. Aminata Cairo<sup>8</sup> stated in her book "Holding Space": I hold the space unapologetically, ( ) me, being in this space, claiming it, holding it, usurping it, is an act of rebellion. Because this space was never intended for me to be in. I am here by grace, exception, tolerance or forced normalcy."

When supervisors read this, they may think that Aminata chooses to see it this way. That is where dominant norms play up again, and normative ideas about who's perspectives are relevant and who has to learn to deal with what. Are we aware of the power relations

in supervision? Are we aware that our colleagues are predominantly white, above a certain age and female?

Marten: Working in D.E.I. is impossible without discomfort. Mirroring, questioning people in privileged majority positions, who are not really used to be questioned about their position and identity<sup>9</sup>. However, it is and always has been a major task for supervisors and coaches to ask the not or even never asked questions. To speak with Halleh Ghorashi<sup>10</sup>, we need an in-between space to reflect and to distance ourselves from the dominant normative fixation on 'otherness' in our thinking.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Here I will focus on individuals, though the considerations with some differentiations "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." Taken from chapter 10, George Orwell (1945). *Animal Farm*. London: Secker & Warburg

<sup>2</sup>See: Bos, M. (2013). *Coaching en Diversiteit*. Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum

<sup>3</sup>"Diversity Cards" is a set of 19 cards A3, developed by Marten Bos on the basis of a combined intersectional, systemic and Gestalt approach. <http://www.martenbos.nl/english/english-page>. The cards are available in Dutch and English and through Seydâ Buurman-Kutsal soon in German as well

<sup>4</sup>Taken from Ynse Stapert (former mentor and trainer of supervisors in The Netherlands and Hungary): "How you look makes what you see"

<sup>5</sup>The Brown Eyes - Blue Eyes Workshop was originally developed in 1968 by Jane Elliott: <https://www.seyda.nl/en/brown-eyes-blue-eyes/>

<sup>6</sup>See Baumeister, R. & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. In: *Psychology Bulletin*, May 1995; 117(3): 497-529

<sup>7</sup><https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ucif>, Demarginalizing the intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, by Kimberlé Crenshaw

<sup>8</sup><https://aminatacairo.com>. Cairo, A. (2021, May). Holding Space. Aminata Cairo Consultancy

<sup>9</sup>When was the first time you realized you are straight, white, cisgender, etcetera?

<sup>10</sup>Prof. Dr. Halleh Ghorashi is an authority on refugee and cultural diversity research > <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/inclusivity-means-breaking-the-otherness-fixation/>



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**Marten Bos** (1955, Bolsward Netherlands) retired senior supervisor, yet still active in connecting people, training at Gestalt Institutes in Eastern Europe, training for supervisors, coaches and trainers, mostly on issues regarding diversity-equity-inclusion and intersectionality. He developed the methodology of the Diversity Cards or the Identity Circle. [www.martenbos.nl](http://www.martenbos.nl)



## Working with the Identity Web

### ■ DeBorah “Sunni” Smith

The question, “what is my identity?”, on its face, seems like a simple question. When in the context of Coaching Supervision, that question can’t be more complex or more important. Edna Murdoch, the co-founder of the Coaching Supervision Academy, introduced the idea that “Who you are is how you coach [and supervise]!” The pronouncement set the tone for a greater need for self-reflection around identity in the coaching process. Clarity about our identity informs us about what shapes who we are, how we



see the world, and how others see us, especially clients and supervisees with whom we work.

In my Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI&B) work as a coach and trainer, I have had the fortunate opportunity to work with a model called, *The Identity Web*. Based on the overlapping dimensional shapes, I use the graphic representation to help clients see where their biases come from as well as the biases others may have about them. In contrast with the traditional dimension of diversity, difference, and identity, this octagonal, multi-faceted, five color-coded model, provides a greater and deeper examination of how we can be authentic and transparent in discovering who we are. In the model, the dimension “Embodied” symbolizes all elements that we can’t change about ourselves. “Era” represents the

times in which we were raised including events occurring during that era. “Relational” characterizes the key people/relationships in our life. “Organizational” is about our work experiences. And “Social” characterizes all other elements from our language, accent, hobbies, and socio-economic background.

Individuals, groups, or teams share lessons they learned or a belief they adopted, and what behavior resulted from this lesson or belief. And finally, they articulate what could be the impact of this belief or lesson on their coaching or supervision style. The profound insights experienced during this process facilitate greater and more in-depth awareness of who one is as a coach/supervisor as well as how they can better bring their whole selves to coaching. Additionally, beyond its impact and benefits, the depiction intersects, enables, and epitomizes the concept of “intersectionality” in determining identity.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American legal scholar, devised the term “intersectionality” as a construct for understanding the varying overlapping dimensions and social identities that we experience. The confluence of our multiple identities also introduces the complexity of how individuals experience power, privilege, and justice in how we show up in our work and in the systems in which we coach. I posit that in supervision, like in team coaching, coaches help individuals articulate and understand their own identity.”

Intersectionality is not solely an American phenomenon. It is a premise that also can, and has been globally applied. Some examples of various types of interlocking dimensions of identity that result in bias and discrimination include:

- Trans men and trans women in Australia are more likely to experience “non-physical and physical

abuse" than gay men and gay women.

- In the Netherlands, 73% of Afghani-Dutch Muslim women who wear a headscarf reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of religion, compared with 11% of Afghani-Dutch Muslim women who don't wear a headscarf.
- In the US, lighter-skinned Asian and Latin people are more likely to hold a bachelor's or more advanced degree compared with those with darker skin," (Ramos & Brassel, 2020).

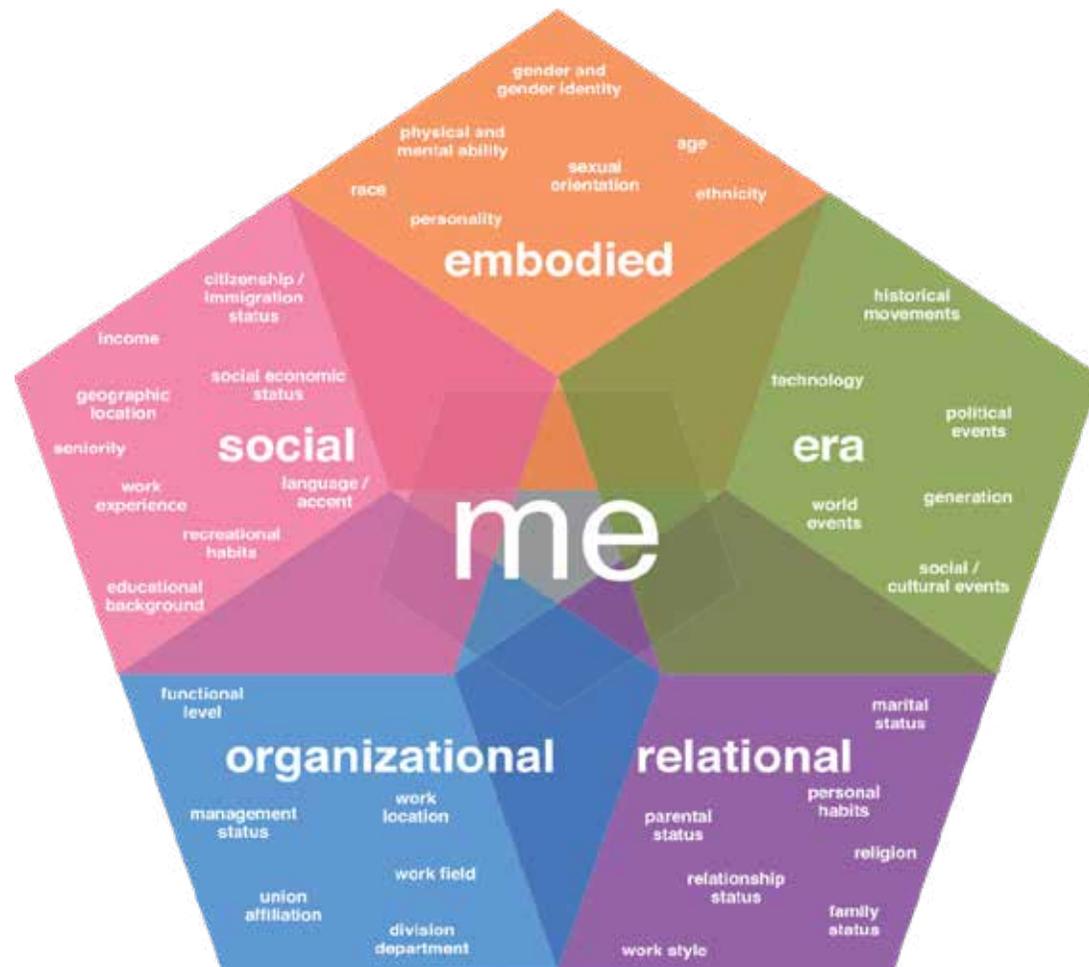
If coaches and supervisors are to effectively help other coaches determine their identity, we must first take stock and commit to determine our own. Only then, will we be able to effectively advocate for 1. self-determining identities, 2. the rejection of diverse representation in place of authentic inclusion, and 3. holding institutions and organizations accountable for sustaining systemic inequities. ■

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### An Identity Web Sample



The Identity Web has overlapping dimensional shapes and can be used to help clients see where their biases come from as well as the biases others may have about them. The profound insights experienced during this process facilitate greater and more in-depth awareness of who one is as a coach/supervisor as well as how they can better bring their whole selves to coaching. Coaches must conduct their own identity work before facilitating similar discovery processes with clients and supervisees.

# Accepting and cultivating our own diversity – to accept others

■ Céline Meyrignac

## Abstract

By accepting and cultivating our own diversity and multiple identities, we can find a balance between ourselves and others to face any difficulty and to enhance resilience

Initially it was literature that fascinated me, then I understood that the art of words and their music was that of the souls of the characters, their emotions, thoughts and acts.

I was less interested in grammar than in psychology. Psychology is anything but literature; I therefore had to discover whole areas of knowledge that were unknown to me: biology, neuroscience, statistics, but also all the specialties of psychology, all of which are framed by the experimental or empirical methods of the human and social sciences.

I like to say that I, a pure literary person, was able to obtain the best grade in descriptive statistics in 4th year... what an ironic victory! Who had I become? For the love of psychology, then coaching, then supervision, I developed many resources and facets of my

personality that were totally unknown to me. Introverted, I constantly had to challenge myself by bravado or obligation to teach, to lead conferences, events, to sell etc...

And yet, the shy and creative little girl who was never bored in her world is still there.

Accompanying people from the age of 23, I had my theoretical and technical bases for conducting a meeting and anticipating the dynamics of a group, which is very useful when leading a training course.

Very quickly, the need to hold our role, a role inscribed in a determined social context appeared to me as a paradox : holding our social role is a powerful engine to act, to progress, and to be inscribed in a certain form of culture which reassures us.

But it is also an enclosure that crushes and exhausts us. Training myself in coaching with the Voice Dialog technique developed by Hal and Sidra Stone and adapted in an original way in France by Geneviève Cailloux and Pierre Cauvin (2016), I learned to hear, to accompany gently the coached persons to the meeting of their sub personalities, of these paradoxical and different voices which are in us.

My universe is that of Organizations, of the company whose collective, culture creates processes and standards of expected attitudes. Simplifying, they allow to achieve objectives in a complex internal environment integrated to an external context which is at least as complex added to a global context making economic or other forecasts useless.

What interests me as a coach and supervisor is the impact on people.

It is reassuring and comfortable to stick to an image made up of internal beliefs, values, and what our history and our environment has sent us



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*It is reassuring and comfortable to stick to an image made up of internal beliefs, values and what our history and environment has sent us*

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*"I am a director with such and such expertise in such and such a context, working in a large group, so I am ... a graduate of such and such a degree, I have followed such and such a career path, and I am ... structured, strategic, communicative, visionary, creative, etc."* says one of my clients. You have already heard such statements, from formal presentations, sometimes from "pitches" cleverly worked out in self-marketing.

Stereotype linked to the job and its context but also sometimes linked to the personality, fruit of a good school and professional orientation...

The problem comes from contradictory injunctions where we are asked to make the difference, to self-brand our unique personality when it is so much easier to become what is expected of us, to stick to an image.

We are asked to differentiate ourselves but with consistency. "Develop your soft skills through leisure activities" I read from a brilliant colleague, a Doctor of Psychology! Certainly, in terms of skills, our personal experiences and actions can help our professional lives and vice versa. However, to act, to live experiences and to hold one or several roles is not to be...

To be, and to live self-awareness is also to know that we

can hold a role and yet not confuse it with ourselves... To be is often to live or even to accept to be in paradoxes, for with each strong expression of our emotions or thoughts, to ignore that its shadow or its opposite is at work, is to cut the self off from half of our resources.

Sometimes the coach who is only benevolent, personal development and investment in the collective struggles to master the need to respond to his survival, his need for recognition and his fear of being rejected by a Society which in France, to say the least, is often very critical of our profession. Over-investment, economic fragility linked to a refusal of the need to manage entrepreneurial realities, so many tensions which if they are denied can lead to a certain bitterness, even to the burn out of the coach.

Integrating our paradoxes, better understanding how passionately we love can be very close to passionately hating, also allows us to better understand these paradoxes in others and thus accept what is foreign to us.

Why did I want to share these thoughts with you?

In part because getting back in touch with aspects of our personality that are sometimes unknown, ignored or denied has often appeared to me in coaching or supervision sessions as one of the most powerful levers so that the clients I accompany can no longer suffer and find the necessary resources within themselves.

Integrating the influence of the context, the systems and the actors, as I learned in social psychology, is fundamental and brilliantly illustrated by the famous 7-eyed method created by Peter Hawkins, which many supervisors use.

To this impact analysis, we need to give a response, a strong response that mobilizes our emotions, our values. As you know, our emotions are more powerful and faster

than our thoughts, and they allow us to move (from the Latin *movere*, which created the word *emotion*). To move, as you know, is the *sine qua non* condition for change.

Let's go back to my example of a client Director: finding in him/her other aspects of his/her personality, linked to some of his/her values and emotions, will give him/her the strength to get out of his/her usual relational pattern and to test other ways of acting.

Following a burn out and a sick leave, he/she had only the posture of the fragile person to watch over and reacted to this pressure by working more and more, reinitiating the infernal cycle that had made him/her sick.

Finding other resources in him, linked to his desire for success, for power, his terror of running out of money, his desire for peace and balance... allowed him to gradually change his attitude, a state of mind that predisposes him to a more varied, more subtle but nevertheless strong action.

So many facets to honor and love, to develop and satisfy without judging oneself.

This acceptance of the rich paradoxes of our personalities, a self-awareness as complete as possible, should it help us to accept the other in his diversity?

From Plato's "know thyself", many philosophers and then psychoanalysts, psychologists, therapists and coaches have debated this question and have shown that the answer is rather yes.

The phenomena of discrimination are most often linked to ignorance of the other, of his culture, of his characteristics, including apparent and superficial ones, which generate a fear of the other and therefore his rejection.

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*Discrimination is most often linked to ignorance, and ignorance is often involuntary, linked as it is to the immediate judgment on first impression*

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Ignorance is often involuntary, it is linked to an immediate judgment, where the theory of first impression is applied in a very concrete way:

"Perceiving a face for 100 milliseconds is enough to judge that person on dimensions such as likeability, trustworthiness, competence, or even aggressiveness (Willis & Todorov, 2006). A longer exposure time increases confidence in the spontaneous judgment but does not alter the judgment itself.

Similarly, perceiving anonymous political candidates for one second is sufficient to judge them as competent or not. More intriguingly, this "first impression" is so decisive that it predicts the actual vote towards the candidate (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005).

Is our ignorance of ourselves equal to our ignorance of others?

Any practitioner of accompaniment often finds empirically that yes...

Certainly, even if we develop our empathy, we can only experience consciousness from our bodily sensations and our thoughts.

But starting from our knowledge of ourselves, we will be more inclined to understand the differences, because we will be more aware of the paradoxes of our personali-

ty and our attitudes.

One of the benefits of coaching is to increase self-awareness, by trying to answer the question "how? One of the benefits of coaching is to increase self-awareness, by trying to answer the question of "how?": attitude, actions and impacts rather than the question of "why?" which is more often dealt with in therapy.

This is not easy, as any coach knows, and can be tempted to focus more on the person's problem and sometimes tip over into counseling, rather than focusing on the person and his or her own unique perception and problem solving.

Consciousness is not just a physical process, nor is it just an objective phenomenon that we can put under a microscope to examine in a purely rational way. In reality, consciousness is above all an experience." (Gablier, 2019)

Could it be related to the fact that the coach sometimes ignores his own personal resources when he has solved certain problems?

Perhaps, this is an interesting reflection to develop in a supervision session, which can be reproduced with the supervisor who will then adopt a posture of mentor, finding solutions for his or her client coach.

In short, choosing more or less consciously not to go beyond the impression we have of ourselves, not exploring our different resources to analyze and solve a problem, would be well linked for me to the rather light treatment we cannot help but give to others.

But this impression formation, a kind of intuition that is not always subtle and finally a good advisor, is useful to go faster, it has however limits that it is good to remember.

In social psychology, numerous experiments show that prejudices, and in particular ethnic prejudices, are

linked to self-image. The more experiences generate the feeling that the person does not have control over his or her own destiny (whether the environment generates positive or negative feed backs), the more inclined people are to carry strong prejudices.

The more socially dependent I am, the more I carry the belief of a very strong social dependence onto others and therefore evaluate people on this basis.

This "locus of control" reinforces the idea that if self-awareness is a key to not only developing one's own autonomy but also acceptance of difference and a more informed judgment of others.

Thus, being more self-aware, impression formation will be more inclusive, more "soft".

Intuition is similar to impression formation by its lightning character, this mixture of thoughts and emotions that are so powerful that they impose themselves in front of a logical and much slower reasoning.

In her book "Tous intuitifs", 2020 Victoria Pellé Reimers describes the evolution of knowledge on the subject with the progress of neurosciences.

The intuition that I choose to link to the formation of impressions, which strongly influences our perception of ourselves, of the context and of others, is a mixture of "intention + experience + letting go".

Also the awareness of the other in its diversity, its difference, even subjected to a very fast formation of impression, would be a dynamic, experiential work armed with our intention/willingness, nourished by our experience, and the opening of the letting go, where the emotion can express itself because accepted.

Everyone knows examples in history (Newton, Pierre and Marie Curie etc...) where people had an intuition

that totally escaped the norms in force, the accepted knowledge at the time.

I hypothesize here that the will and the strength that these people carried is similar to this equation that Victoria Pellé Reimers uses.

If I return to the sometimes paradoxical resources of our personality, we can carry this intention to know and recognize our complexity.

In order to approach it with more ease, daring to vary our experiences can help us, and for those of us who accompany our clients in their complexity, we can pursue a development of methods, actions, postures adapted to the context we perceive.

Dare to let go also, and always remember this role of catalyst and "structuring mirror" that we have with a framework and an ethics, certainly, but also an acceptance of what is sometimes very foreign to us.

Once accepted, diversity within ourselves will make us more inclined to accept and integrate that which our 'other' customers carry.

At the level of an organization, I remember this HRD who told me that he was very shocked by the attitude of rejection of many employees at the idea of integrating mentally handicapped people, including people who are very socially committed, especially in the unions. Through a will that had to be imposed, followed by concrete actions in the field and finally an openness that allowed reluctant people to express their doubts, their fears, responding to these fears with information but also with actions, this fear of difference was able to fade away and these disabled workers to be integrated to the point of becoming an integral part of the culture of this successful international company.

On the scale of an organization, it is also very interesting

and useful to update the different resources, the obvious characteristics and those less known, sometimes denied or rejected by the culture and yet very present.

Accepting its own paradoxes, beyond an acceptable discourse, an Organization will be able to open itself in consciousness to what is possible to achieve, without sticking to a model or a social injunction doomed to failure.

Let us therefore help our emotions through action, the "conscious" letting go, to develop an enlightened intuition and autonomy within us.

And let us live this knowledge of ourselves, sometimes trying, as a resource, a gift, giving us access to ourselves and to the world. Let us know how to detach ourselves from our roles and injunctions of the social field in order to find the resources within ourselves and to open ourselves to diversity. Let's integrate the multiple identities that we are able to develop. ■

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Psychologist Julian Rotter first formulated the concept 'locus of control' in 1954. See: Lefcourt, H. (1991). Locus of Control. In: Robinson, J., Shaver, P. & Wrightsman, L. (Eds) (1991). *Measures of Personality and Social-Psychological Attitudes*. Cambridge Mass.: Academic Press



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## Cognitive diversity at work : to accompany gifted professionals in supervision

■ Isabelle Asseman

**Diversity in supervision, among other issues, also concerns the so called "cognitive" variety of clients we accompany. I have experienced that supervision in particular is a resource and distancing space of the first order to guide and accompany the so-called "HPI" professional (" High Potential Intellectual ")**



Supervising professionals active in the field of accompanying and/or relating - as coach, facilitator, manager, HR, or otherwise- to HPI professionals, the supervisor regularly faces specific problems.

These problems affect any client in supervision but are frequently reinforced while working with this type of clients. They may have trouble finding their "true self" and singularity, demanding a very personal professional coaching and/or relating style. The more so, because their « internal questioning » is often intense, abundant and even sometimes « divergent ». Moreover, these clients often show multi-potentiality and not seldom are

intrinsically multi-tasking and "multi-potential", which makes guidance even more complex.

Difficulties in guiding these clients are linked to "emotional hang-ups", which are often intense and/or "jagged" when dealing with others, such as their supervisor. For instance :

- questions are difficult to channel for people whose thoughts sometimes function as a "tree structure" by multiple and rapid associations
- Exacerbated hypersensitivity
- Empathy that can drift towards sympathy due to a strong tendency to "help" or even "save"
- Rigor, even rigidity, when confronted with - real or imagined - lack of loyalty on the part of those whom they are dealing with in combination with a strong need for justice and equity

These difficulties link up with a lack of self-confidence - the so-called "impostor syndrome"- and often, too, with quite heavy perfectionism. HPI professionals show frequent internal conflicts of values, and therefore with critical ethical dilemmas in professional relationships. Taken separately or together, these different phenomena lead to intense fatigue, « professional wear and tear », and even an increased risk of "burn-out".

- In addition, the HPI professional in the field of accompaniment and/or relationship often accompanies other HPI's (clients or collaborators). This not seldom works out as a resonance box : all or part of the effects described above are reinforced both ways by the intense cross-exchange of sensitivities

Supervision is thus for them an ideal space to step back and on meta-level reflect on various relevant aspects, such as :

- The '*professional gesture*': calming down questions that come up, maintaining a line i.e. not adding tree structure-like thinking to the client's tree, making the best use of associative "intuitive flashes", using resonances and systemic reflections in the coaching process.
- *In their relations with the client, in particular:* thwarting "psychological games" (such as calling for rescue, not allowing oneself to be carried away by clients who might go off in all directions, identifying parallel processes, avoiding projections, channelling emotions, maintaining an empathic posture, and better (re-)centering oneself.
- *Professional identity* : Daring, gaining self-confidence, calming internal doubts, assertively asserting one's uniqueness and professional identity.

Last but not least, supervisors should recharge their batteries We should "put down our bags in time for a while in a generous and non-judgmental space, break the professional's solitude, in connection with peers and the Supervisor, who acts as an "external third party" for this necessary distancing. ■

**Isabelle ASSEMAN** (France), Supervisor since 2011, associate member of MENSA international association. Isabelle was initially active as executive project leader in the international private spatial industry. Since 2019, she is responsible for the IDSUP educational programme for supervisors in the France-Sud Region. She has been PSF Board member since 2019, serving as General Secretary, and Head of the Accreditation Committee. Her supervision practice is « multi-referenced », the main component based on a systemic approach.



# Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor



## *The ANSE Grundtvig Life Long Learning Partnership Project*

■ Eva Nemes

### **Abstract**

The first international project ANSE organized was a Grundtvig Life Long Learning Partnership which ran from August 2008 to August 2010. Participants and learners from eight European countries came together to share their own, very diverse experiences of dealing with and managing diversity. The key question of the project was “Why should we deal with diversity in supervision?”. As the participants soon realised, the only way to answer that question was to deal with and manage their own diversity by reflecting on their process: learning by doing. After a two-year project the participants finally succeeded in developing an International Training Modul Manual on „Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor”.

*This article relates the history of the program and the parallel processes of learning and creating, and introduces the ANSE Diversity Train-the Trainer Module.*

The first international project ANSE ever organized was the Grundtvig Life Long Learning Partnership „Counselling in a Multicultural Europe – a Key Competence within Life Long Learning”, which ran from August 2008 to August 2010.

The program was realized by a learning partnership of three participating countries and learners

from eight different ANSE member National Organisations. The main aim of the program was to develop an International Training Module on „Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor”. In response to this challenge, the participants created a complete “Train – the Trainer-Diversity Module Manual”, which contains a fully developed workshop for supervisors.

Throughout the project the key question was “Why should we deal with diversity in supervision?” To answer that question our starting point was that “Supervision and Coaching are ways of professional counselling. Reflection is a key competence for professional learning and development. In the supervision process, supervisors offer learners possibilities to reflect upon their tasks and/or on organisational issues. This not only enables lifelong learning for learners, but it also contributes to the learning process of their organisations.” (Diversity Manual 2010)

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*We do not learn from experience – we learn from reflecting on experience.*

*Dixit John Dewey*

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As John Dewey wrote already in 1938, “We do not learn from experience – we learn from reflecting on experience”. In supervision we use the simple exposure to a certain experience as a starting point to search for meaning and to find learning and development possibilities by sustaining and enhancing systematic analysis and reflection upon that experience.

As one of the “learners” in the partnership, in this article I first shortly summarize the project’s history from a personal perspective. Secondly, I introduce the International Training Module on „Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor“. Lastly, I share our experiences with the Diversity Training as it has been performed since 2015.

### **The short history of the program – from a personal perspective**

#### **The planning phase – Autumn, 2008**

The word „diversity“ gained deeper meaning for me, when I was in Temesvár in October 2008. The preparatory meeting of Grundtvig project and the upcoming General Assembly of ANSE were hosted in this Romanian city, which is itself the embodiment of diversity and interculturality. Throughout history the ruling elites over Temesvár often changed - the city had been under Hungarian, Turkish, Habsburg and Romanian control - and nowadays still at least six nationalities coexist there. Besides Romanians, it is inhabited by Hungarians, Germans, Serbians, Slovaks, Ukrainians and Italians.

The participating supervisors in this ANSE event came from twelve different European countries. I took part as one of the delegates of the Association of Hungarian Supervisors and Supervisor – Coaches. It was my first international event for supervisors, and I was full of curiosity and excitement.

The tolerant, open and curious attitude of the participants was the most defining experience for me. Nobody took it for granted that we understood each other. Although the working language was English, with the exception of the Irish delegate none of us was a native English speaker, and we really had to concentrate to

make sure to understand each other.

The diversity of the participants was first recognizable in the differences in language and in how we create meaning. There were lots of differences in cultural backgrounds, in concepts of supervision and in previous experiences too, which complicated the situation even further.

On the preparatory day of Grundtvig project, it was very interesting to see how we – within the frames of group-work - looked for a common platform by summarizing our thoughts about supervision and its connection to diversity.

The groupwork was followed by a lecture of Verena Bruchhagen (Germany) on diversity, after which Michaela Judy (Austria) presented the project and the opportunities offered by the Grundtvig Program. Resulting from a lengthy consultation, we finally agreed on the following:

- The planned project is a two-year-long programme, with 11 partners from 9 countries, with 2 participating supervisors per partner.
- Applicants were: Volkshochschule Ottakring & ÖVS, Austria (as coordinating partners); DS, Slovenia; LVSC, Netherlands; ASR, Romania; Association of Supervisors & University of Latvia, Latvia; MSZCT, Hungary; SAI, Ireland; Evangelische Fachhochschule Freiburg & DGSV, Germany
- The applying organization(s) of each partner country will submit their application (which is jointly written) to their National Grundtvig Agency, so the financing will be realized separately, country by country.
- Concerning the partner selection special emphasis was placed on having participants from both Western and Eastern European countries, to make

the diversity as wide as possible, considering the aspects of cultural background, history of supervision, theoretical approach, etc.

- During the program, meetings will be organized in as many countries as possible.

The objectives of the partnership were:

- Thematic study groups in intercultural settings, to exchange practical experiences and knowledge, and to learn by doing. Thematic focus of study groups were diversity and counselling, and competences to cope with Multiculturalism in Counselling
- The ANSE Summer University of 2009 in Dublin will deal with Intercultural Learning.
- Workshops and lectures at the Kick-off-conference as well as at the Final Conference.

#### **First Learning Partnership Meeting – Vienna, Austria, 5-7 February 2009**

We already knew before the first learning partnership meeting that the Grundtvig Learning Partnership tender was partly accepted and partly rejected by the National Grundtvig Agencies. The Western European applicants (Austria, Netherlands, Germany) obtained green light to go on with the program, but all Eastern European applications got rejected. This decision evoked intense emotions and created severe uncertainty.

We had to face with the significant questions: „What’s next?“ (It was obvious that the original plan could not be implemented). „What can be implemented then?“, „How can we get the most out of the program with as little loss as possible?“, „How could multiculturalism be realized in the program (as planned), if only Western delegates can participate?“

The program provided the participants of the Learning Partnership with the opportunity to invite learners to

the study groups. This turned out to offer a solution to the problem. Besides their originally selected learners, the 'successful applicants' could include one more Eastern European participant as learner. This is how Eastern applicants could join in and delegate one person per country.

After all these complications we arrived in Vienna with a curious and open attitude, but we also had many questions and felt confused. We were with 6 participants from 8 countries. The way the decisions about tenders were made just increased the differences between East and West. We had no idea about how we should handle the inequality, the worries and the uncertainty generated by the tender results so far. Such basic questions as „who can belong to the program and who cannot?“ or „how can the roles and responsibilities be distributed among us?“ were still crying to be answered.

It was great and instructive for me to experience the dynamics of the workshop. The fact that the first day's program was rather neutral and based on facts was a great help in „warming-up“. The main parts of the program were about introducing ourselves, getting to know each other, getting information about the official frameworks and the expected results, and then there was a theoretical lecture about a diversity-model which is well-applied in practice. It greatly supported us in arriving well and getting orientated. We also faced the opportunities provided by the program and its limitations as well. It became clear, too, that a Diversity Training Manual had to be created by the end of the second year.

By the second day we felt safe enough to face the most difficult question: How can we deal with our own

diversity as a Learning Partnership? During a constellation of the participants, moderated by Dieter Götschl (Germany), many difficult questions arose. Everybody could freely express all kinds of feelings and needs about exclusion, inclusion, equality, values, fears, and expectations.

As a result, we could agree on some basic values for working together that all of us found important:

- We want to learn from each other by sharing our experiences and knowledge. This way all participants would be both teachers and learners.
- We would like to create an atmosphere where all of us can feel safe, accepted, equally respected and included.
- Raising questions and expressing feelings are very much welcome.
- It's not possible to say – I understand you. We can only say – I understand only what I am able to understand, my aspect of you.
- Through our program we must all the way be mindful of our language barrier and our cultural diversity. This was a responsibility of each of us.
- The 2-year journey together was going to be a learning experience on diversity by doing and reflecting.

### **Second meeting – Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 5-6 June 2009.**

During this 2-day workshop we aimed to get to know each other better as supervisors. We did different exercises like simulation and roleplay to get acquainted again and as an example how to build relationships during the start of supervision.

We already had begun learning from each other by gaining knowledge about the concepts of supervision of the participating countries. To understand the diversity in context, information about supervision and

supervision training concepts were presented by all participants. This aroused key words about supervision per country which served as input to the discussion on the keywords for the international module (Minutes of the 2nd meeting).

We also dived deeper into the theory of diversity. The basic theoretical concept we worked with consisted of 'the four layers of diversity' (Gardenschwartz and Rowe, 2003) already presented by Michaela Judy in Vienna. Next to that, an interactive lecture was given by two Dutch diversity experts, Christine van Duin and Twie Tjoa. Presenting models of Bateson (1972), Dilts (1990) and Roosevelt Thomas Jr. (1999) as well as their own 'Kaleidoscope' perspective, they added more theoretical background.

All in all, the meeting in Amersfoort was a great learning experience on diversity for all of us on many levels – personal, interpersonal, and professional, not to mention the various social events this beautiful Dutch town had to offer.

### **Third meeting – Berlin, Germany, 8-10 October 2009**

Following our first two meetings and regarding our task and our aim to develop a concept and design for a training module for supervisors, we prepared for this meeting with the help of the following questions:

- Which concrete experiences with diversity did I encounter in my supervisory practice?
- Which methods and models were helpful for me?
- Which theories did/do I base my work on, or what do others rely on?
- Which subject areas of diversity (interculturality, ethnicity, gender, religion ....) have I dealt with previously?

After sharing our diversity experiences, we turned to our task of creating the Train-the Trainer Modul Manual. There were a lot of topics to discuss and decide:

- What is the goal of the module?
- Who are in our target group?
- What should be the structure and the content (theoretical models, methods, tools, etc.)?
- How can we deal with the different approaches in supervision of diversity?

Eventually we formed 3 working groups and distributed the tasks – 1. Structure: The Frame of the Module; 2. Theory; 3. Methods and awareness.

Working together didn't go smoothly. When we realized how much effort and time our task required, we reacted differently on the pressure to perform. In addition, we found the language barriers harder to handle now than previously.

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### *After some moderate storming we managed to slow our pace and take a look at the diversity within our own group*

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Fortunately, after some moderate storming we managed to slow our pace and stop for a while, and we could take a look at the diversity of the group and give space to reflect on our own functioning. This way everyone could get back to the same platform again and continued working with good feelings.

One of the highlights of the event was a dinner with a social worker from a multicultural part of Berlin, sharing her work experiences with youth of very diverse backgrounds.

#### **Fourth meeting – Winterthur, Switzerland, 25-27 March 2010**

During the meeting of Switzerland we summarized the results we had so far, we defined further tasks to finalize the Diversity Manual, and we also planned the program of the project's closing conference.

Besides all this, we took time again to learn from each other, and reflect on our own experiences. As a result, relevant and interesting topics and questions arose, which we could discuss later in the World Café organized together with the members of BSO.

At the 2nd day of the workshop, we had a joint meeting with the members of BSO, the Swiss association for supervisors. 75 supervisor colleagues arrived. First, we presented ourselves and the Grundtvig project. Afterwards, gathered around Word Café tables we discussed with our Swiss colleagues on the following topics:

- Tolerance and borders – How would tolerance within diversity lead to opportunities for discovering new borders?
- Inclusion – exclusion – What are our criteria for letting others in or keep them out?
- Sensitivity – awareness (the light tunes matter too)
- Perception and focus – Which differences do we tend to neglect, which do we focus on?)
- Dominance, leadership – How do we deal with power in diversity?
- Taboos – How do we deal with taboos in supervision?

While facing the complexity in dealing with diversity, we again experienced insecurity. This personal experience raised our awareness of the importance of creating a holding and secure environment for the participants while working on diversity.

#### **„The Challenges of Diversity“ Final Conference – Vienna, Austria, 25 June 2010**

In the final conference we shared our products and insights about Learning Diversity with the professional community.

By the end of the project, we had come a long way. We weathered through storms and difficulties and became not only good colleagues but also good friends. The final product could only be made by analysing and reflecting on our groups own diversity issues from Day 1 till the end. We had mastering diversity competences by doing, and for that I am personally very grateful. By this way the words and theories got meanings, and I now understand much better what it means:

- to perceive and notice my own values and interactions,
- to change my own perspectives,
- to tolerate insecurity and how to use it to support a process,
- to think and to act in groups and in organisations,
- and much more.

#### **The final product**

##### **Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor – A Train-the Trainer Module Manual**

The Manual is a basis and framework for a fully developed workshop on “Dealing with Diversity & Interculturality as a Supervisor” that can be realised by the professionals who took part in the Grundtvig Partnership Project.



And to get back to the key question: why should we deal with diversity in supervision? To answer this, we identified a few major important aspects on both individual and societal level. The individual level focuses on the supervisors and their clients, as the societal level focuses on the communities of supervisors in Europe.

These aspects are:

- "Exchange of theoretical knowledge and practical experience according to the issues diversity and interculturality.
- Improving competences for dealing with diversity as supervisors and coaches as well as trainers of supervisors.
- Discussing various standards in counselling, supervision and coaching in different European countries.

The Manual identifies the following core competences for supervisors and coaches dealing with diversity:

#### **"Sensitivity for Diversity**

- Knowledge of your own luggage
- Developed sensibility for diversity
- Willingness to investigate your own affirmative introspection

#### **Dealing with Diversity**

- Knowledge of views/opinions in other cultures
- Insight into one's own norms and values and those of „others“ and the capacity to make interventions based on this insight.
- The capacity to act free from imposing norms
- The capacity to switch perspectives or codes

#### **Managing Diversity**

- Knowing how to define roles and how to structure
- Capacity of recognizing exclusion/unequal treatment and engage in dialogue about this
- The capacity to intervene in case of discrimination

#### **Process aspects:**

- To be able to deal with different ways of communication
- Ability to deal with power and dominance when diversity is under discussion
- Ability to create space and time for ,not knowing‘
- Good management of conflicts
- The ability to turn friction into brilliance“

In the module, experience, theory and reflection are linked as a foundation for learning and teaching.

During the Diversity Workshop, learners and teachers are to form a learning team and go about learning by doing. With the help of an attitude of respect, appreciation, and curiosity we want to create an atmosphere of safety which enables the participants to take part in a spiral-like learning process. On each level we can have the same topics but with new questions, new experiences, and reflections.

To address the topic of diversity in the Workshop, the offered teaching methods are based on the idea that supervision involves both critical thinking and methodical skills. Dialogue and reflection are essential to improve intercultural competences, so also form the basic part of the training's methodology.

In the Manual the structure of the tools and methods reflect on how the topic of diversity can be addressed:

- Part one: icebreakers, warm up workshops
- Part two: personality, internal dimensions, reflection on personal response to diversity

- Part three: external dimensions of diversity
- Part four: organizational dimensions – culture

An actual Grundtvig Diversity Workshop can be organised by any National Organisation of Supervisors and Coaches from the ANSE Community (See the ANSE Website). The two trainers making up the training team should come from two different national backgrounds, chosen from the Diversity Trainers' List. The content of the workshop should be mirrored by the setting of the different national contexts. ■

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# Experiencing diversity in ANSE

## A reflective approach to diversity in Europe

■ Agnes Turner

### Abstract

The Association of National Organizations for Supervision and Coaching in Europe (ANSE) is all about finding a suitable balance between diversity and unity, between equity and equality. In this article, the author shows how the ANSE Community of supervisors and coaches deals

with diversity and how it will continue to do so in the future, thereby understanding diversity as a source of wealth

### Agnes Turner on behalf the ANSE Board

Diversity is ubiquitous and always part of our lives. It is found inside ourselves as well as in interactions and relationships with our fellow human beings, shaped by our biography, upbringing, values and ideas as well as wishes for life and togetherness in society. The willingness to research one's own norms and the awareness of one's own concerns in relation to socialization and cultural background seems essential for the reflective examination of diversity and differences in general and especially in the field of supervision. Respecting diversity remains an attitude that includes the effort to keep the balance between recognition, respect and common ground. This is a recurring challenge.

In 1997, the national associations for supervision of Austria (ÖVS), Germany (DGSv), Hungary (MSZT), the Netherlands (LVSB) and Switzerland (BSO) came together to found ANSE as a European umbrella organization. The overall aim is to promote supervision as a profession in Europe and support national organization to establish supervision in their own respective countries. One of the cornerstones is the development of their own culture of supervision. Being part of an umbrella organisations means to join a field of diversity, at the same time trying to develop common values and standards and to uphold the own 'national' supervisory history vision and identity.

In Europe we have to deal great diversity. This is due to historical, geographical and cultural backgrounds and developments. We continue to experience and observe this within the ANSE community. Here we want to give some insights into living and experiencing diversity in the ANSE community.

### How to communicate in ANSE?

Since three of the founding organizations were German-speaking and the legal connection of the ANSE is in Austria, initially the German language was 'naturally' dominant within the ANSE community. This created a language barrier which only included and privileged a specific group; others were practically excluded from discussion and could not enter the dialogue on supporting supervision in Europe. We know from interviews with the founders that the subject of language has been a challenge for many. However, in order to grow in Europe and to get younger organizations on board, the move to English as a working language was a logical consequence.

The agreement on English as the international working language was perhaps easy, but also posed challenges



for the members, as there are hardly any native speakers in the community. Eventually the term ANSE English was found. This means that the diversity of one's own language is played out in the common language. On the one hand it takes several loops to ascertain the meaning of what is being said, which can be seen as a quality and on the other hand this way of communication also reflects the diversity of the members from the different European regions.

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*As there are hardly native speakers, to agree on English as the common language means that it takes several loops to ascertain the meaning of what is being said, which enhances the quality of our communication*

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### **The work on a professional language**

How accurately can we express ourselves proficiently and professionally in a foreign language when the struggle for words and meaning is often a great challenge even in one's own language. Colleagues from the Leonardo da Vinci Innovation ECVision Project "A European System of Comparability and Validation of Supervisory Competences" report on this experience and challenge.

In the work process they struggled with the representation and meaning of individual terms. The different cultures seem to find their expression in diverging language and terminology. However, the diversity was not only evident linguistically, but also, and perhaps even more important, on the conceptual level. The introductory part of the glossary states, that the project team was based on three principles; (1) a generic approach, (2) focus on the interaction of persons, professional tasks and organizations and (3) connection with the professional community.

"ECVision does not aim at harmonization of the various prevalent definitions and approaches. It does aim at the transparency and comparability of different considerations, tasks and responsibilities and of professional standards" (Judy 2015, p.8). This approach allows and encourages an intensive examination of the differences „according to theories, professional background, environment, and the working fields they are applied to" (Judy 2015, p. 8).

In this respect, the ECVision project can be described also as a deep examination of diversity with regard to the understanding of supervision. Here we want to point out two examples of core qualities of supervisors and coaches, which reflect the genuine character of diversity:

1. **Ambiguity Tolerance:** Discussing and reflecting conflicts, allowing contradictory approaches to show up. This may change perspectives and goals. This includes, tolerating tension and exploring the various feelings, which arise during a counselling process. Ambiguity (also: complexity, ambivalence) is an integral part of the human condition and encompassing feelings, notions, and attitudes about

something or somebody. Ambiguity often creates worry, anxiety or confusion within a person or a group. (ECVision Glossary 2015, p. 57)

2. **Diversity Awareness:** Knowing and factoring in how values, communication styles and assumptions guide human action generally. Having come to terms with one's own biases as a supervisor/coach enables to support supervisees/coachees in exploring their own stereotyping. This includes recognizing, reflecting and managing processes of power and the distribution of resources in a way that enhances the supervisees'/coachees' abilities of dealing with them. (ECVision Glossary 2015, p. 58)

### **The structure of ANSE with a view to the diversity of its members**

The ANSE now has 18 full members, 3 associate members and 4 network partners across Europe. Some of the members have very different histories, they may be among the so-called big 5, the founding countries of the ANSE, or they are younger associations that are partly dependent on the support of the older, already established members. In any case, it should be noted that all full members - whether old or young - small or large - have the same right to vote and the same duties in the General Assembly. Thus, the vote of a large association counts as much as that of a smaller association. So, every member has a one mandate represented by two delegates of the national organization. We think that this is an essential aspect of equal opportunities but also awareness towards diversity.

The imbalance between economic background, historical and cultural roots is always a challenge for the ANSE community. For example, the debate about quality standards demands that there is a need for discussion and action. The ANSE deals with this as constructively

as possible. In this respect, it follows the professional principles of supervision and coaching, as described, for example, in the Grundtvig Diversity Manual:

"Working with diversity counts to the core competences for supervisors. This includes competences such as knowing how to define roles and how to structure, the capacity of recognizing exclusion and unequal treatment and engage in dialogue, the capacity to intervene in case of discrimination. Supervisors will be able to deal with different ways of communication, with power and dominance when diversity is under discussion. Therefore, it is necessary to create space and time for 'not knowing' and the ability to turn friction into brilliance." (2008, p.5 - 6)

Those principles are applied as much as possible in the work processes, too. A working group on the subject of Quality and Education is currently running in the ANSE, which was formed from representatives of ANSE member organisations and representatives of the ANSE Board. The crucial aim of the working group is to obtain mutual understanding of current quality standards in the respective member organizations in order to build on this in a discourse on adapted quality standards. Everyone involved needs to tackle all kind of diverse wishes, requirements and possibilities. That process demonstrates a direct engagement within the ANSE community on diversity in Europe and meets the requirement of article 2.4. of the ANSE statutes: The development of comparable standards and curricula of education for supervision and coaching in Europe and therefore adaptation of professional standards used by the various national organisations for supervision.

### **Supporting individual members in exploring diversity**

ANSE stands for support and empowerment not only at the (inter-)national level, but also explicitly supports the supervisors in Europe on the individual level. Numerous events the ANSE community organizes and/or engages in, can be described as spaces for personal development and professional reflection, in which the discussion about diversity is also a regular topic. International Intervention Groups (IIG), specifically, follow the goal of international discussion about diverse supervisory approaches and practices. The ANSE website explicitly cites that - among many other aspects - "working in an IIG offers":

- collegial exchange across national borders
- professional discourses on topics of supervision and coaching
- learning from the expertise and supervisory competence of European colleagues
- possibility of networking on the European level
- living diversity and finding new friends
- getting to know Europe in a personal way
- getting to know yourself in a new way"

The bi-annual ANSE Summer Universities also offer a very good opportunity to get together and form an IIG. At these Summer Universities there is usually a short introduction to the practice and principles of ANSE IIGs, and a meeting point where interested persons can meet and form a new IIG.

Once again, the respective cultural differences come into play here. Participants see this aspect as a great enrichment for themselves and for their work. The certificates of participation are accepted by many ANSE national member organizations within the framework of their internal quality system. This supports the acknowledgement of standards in Europe, as it was recorded in mutual recognition.

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*In all ANSE activities, cultural differences come into play. We see this aspect as a great enrichment to all of us*

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### **What is ANSE's perspective for the future?**

It is clear that diversity is seen as a wealth in the ANSE and that this should be actively maintained. It would be against the supervisory ethos to force everyone to conform. At the same time, it must also be clear to everyone that dealing with diversity is subject to constant reflection in order not to run the risk of losing sight of the bigger picture and letting it fall apart. In this respect, the member organisations and each individual supervisor are faced with the challenge of fighting prejudice, introspectively and empathically looking for motives and wishes in themselves and in the other person with regard to common goals and projects. Too much complexity can blow up the system and valuable things will be lost. Therefore, from our point of view, an agreement on common fundamental goals and standards is needed while at the same time respecting diversity. Live with the differences without pointing at the differences. Finding a suitable balance between diversity and unity, between equity and equality will continue to occupy us in the future and we look forward to ongoing discourse in the ANSE community. We think that diversity can be understood as wealth. ■

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ANSE Summer University  
Foto: Gabriel Scherer



ANSE Summer University  
Foto: Gabriel Scherer

# Guiding Complex Social Systems with Art-based Reflection

*Eight paradoxical observations*

■ **Michiel de Ronde**

In cooperation with Marleen Wienk : art

## Abstract

Organizations are unpredictable complex social systems. Guiding organizational change requires a kind of reflection in which the unpredictable is acknowledged and included in a form of knowledge that encompasses the 'not knowing'. In this article I will use a concrete case to present a form of Art Based Reflection that provides this kind of knowledge and creates insight into what I actually do when I guide complex social systems. Eight pictures, painted by an artist listening to my stories about the case, functioned as a mirror and a source of self-insight.

## Introduction

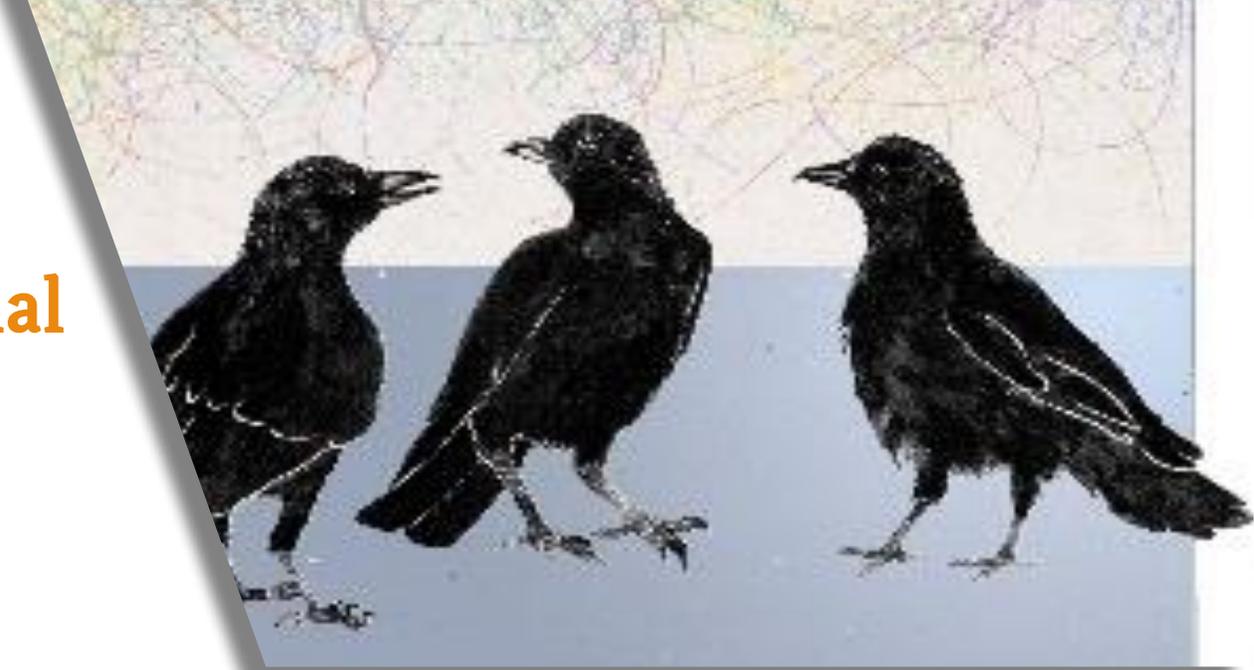
When I am asked to fill a role as a guidance expert in supporting organisational change, I never know exactly what to expect. Organisations are complex social systems. That means that they are fundamentally unpredictable. As guidance expert I continuously encounter surprises. Connected to this: complexity also implies that I can never

see the whole in its entirety. There are always more and other factors involved than I think. Moreover, I can only guide complex systems by participating in the interactions within that vast whole. I am therefore also part of that unpredictability (Stacey, 2001). How do I, as a professional guidance expert, act with wisdom and insight, when simultaneously I am never certain on a fundamental level? Searching for the answers to that question requires a new approach to knowledge and demands a new kind of reflection, namely a manner of reflecting in which the unpredictable also plays a role and a form of knowledge that also encompasses the 'not knowing' (Homan, 2016; 2020). In this article I will use a concrete case to present a new form of reflection that provides insight into what we actually do when we guide complex social systems.

## Art-based Reflection

Art has a unique characteristic – whether it is music, visual arts, dance or poetry: it can say many things at

once and encompass and express an entirety, without being able to put into words exactly what that is. Art is, more than explicit knowledge, capable of representing the depth, the multiple layers and the composition of complex issues. In that sense art represents a form of knowledge, which respects the 'unknowing'. It was based on these considerations that I reached out to an artist with a request to mirror me. Our collaboration resulted in a form of art-based reflection (see Brom & Muijen, 2017). I told her about a complex guidance assignment I was working on and asked her to reflect back to me using creative expression what she heard me say and what she saw me do. This resulted in eight drawings, eight visual mirrored stories. This series of drawings then helped me to express more precisely, using words in this case, what I do when I guide complex systems. The drawings also turned out to be very helpful for reflecting with those involved in the organisation on the question 'what are we actually doing?' In the ongoing process of mutual



interactions these became an instrument for collective reflection. In the text below I formulate the outcomes of this 'reflection work', resulting in the formulation of eight paradoxical assignments that occur when guiding changes in complex social systems. It concerns the transitional space between overview and confusion, multiplicity and unity, the bigger picture and the small event, cognitive understanding and intuitive feeling.

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*Art is, more than explicit knowledge, capable of representing the depth, the multiple layers and the composition of complex issues*

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### Concrete cases

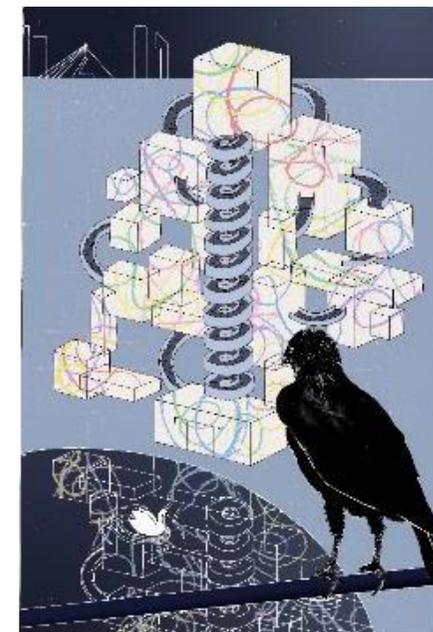
The guidance activity that serves as an exemplifying example involves Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (approximately 40,000 students, 4000 staff members and over 100 different study programs). Within this organisation, where I also work as a professor, I was asked based on my guidance expertise to participate in a multi-year program called 'Grip on Educational Quality and Study Success'. Currently almost twenty separate study programs are participating in this, spread over eight different schools. The goal is to create a movement across the entire university of applied sciences to undertake a targeted approach that prevents unnecessary drop-out among students by improving the quality of education.

In addition to my personal reflection, the drawings have played a role in a discussion with the program's steering group and a professionalization meeting with the project leaders involved in the program. For each image I will describe the insights I have gained in a somewhat generalized manner, devoid of any specific contextual references. For me, the process was a kind of self-supervision, looking at yourself from a distance through the medium of the pictures. The paintings not only gave insight into my coaching actions, but also into the combination of this task and the other roles that I fulfil in the organization. The first, second, fifth and sixth picture in particular offered me insight into the interconnectedness between them. But before I describe the yields of my reflection, it may be interesting for the reader to first review the drawings and formulate one's own associations before engaging in a dialogue with the text...

### Assignment 1: Creating unity, acknowledging plurality and allowing infinity

Guiding change in complex social systems requires clarity on the issue: what are we working on? In our case we are improving the educational quality and study success. This objective is the connecting factor that creates cohesion. A multitude of actors are involved in working on this (administrators, deans, managers, supporters, advisers, lecturers and students) who all play their own role and have their own interests, and thus bring their own perspective. Those involved meet each other in various configurations in different forms of consultations or meetings and collaborate in various contexts that are loosely connected to each other.

The multitude of people involved (in the form of persons and groups) generates an infinity of ongoing interactions and communications. And to further complicate things: the unstoppable and incalculable flow of exchanges



evokes in all participants a sense of meaning and engagement (either positively or negatively). That is, we can say, the undercurrent, the organizational subconscious; the place where energy forms and focuses.

This drawing teaches me that guiding change in complex systems requires an effort to engage with the multitude of people involved based on a connecting question, and in such a way that it contributes to mutual interactions that positively focus the energy of the undercurrent, the feeling of meaning and engagement, on the question. While at the same time acknowledging that everyone has their own perspective and that unexpected things may happen at any time.

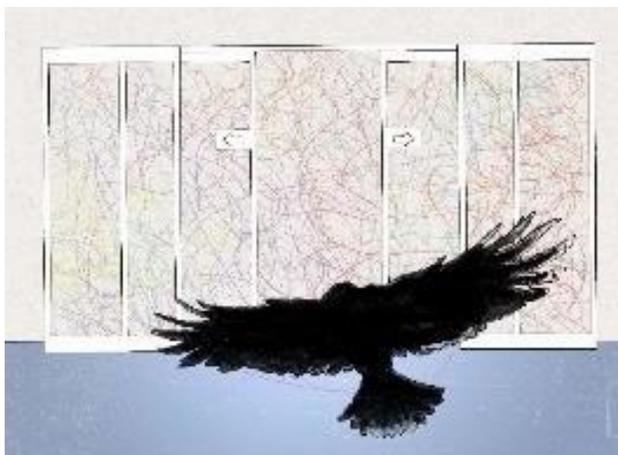
Coaching of complex social systems also requires regularly taking a look at the whole and mentally allowing the

complexity (with its unpredictability and uncontrollability) in order to let go of the temptation of the illusion of simple solutions. That is no small feat.

### Assignment 2: Getting into the swing of things – Seeing things as a game

The task of a guidance experts is of course more than watching from a distance to see how complex the whole really is. They also have to do something. For that they must get into the swing of things. As a guidance expert I will inevitably participate in the entire jumble of uninterrupted communications and interactions.

The drawing shows that it's often not what it seems. The sliding doors open automatically. The organisation, in this case the university of applied sciences, welcomes you. But the experience is quite different. Before I know it, I am caught up in an entanglement of all kinds of things. Guidance experts join the entanglement. They experience the complexity of it and feel the dejection or panic it could evoke. At the same time, and that is a professional challenge, they also see it as a game. Which wires can I connect? Which knots can I undo? Which lines can I give extra color? Those are some of the questions on their



minds. All of this serves the whole, without ever knowing exactly what the next thread in the network of events will be.

### Assignment 3: Seeing the large in the small - Working with parts and wholes

We see a large room with computer screens. Staff and students are working. Many seats are empty. On the screens we see the now familiar lines and wires. Words, images, assignments, explanations, criteria, feedback, assessments, and what not... The quality of education and study success are the essence of this guidance case study. The staff and students are involved in an enormous enterprise that is called education. It's very difficult to keep an overview of all this!



The drawing shows that what people behind the computers see on their screen also hangs in the air in a certain way. The assignments, notes, plans, deadlines and evaluations, together with the room set-up and the presence and absence of people, all of this combined creates an atmosphere, a culture. Before we called this the undercurrent. The guidance expert realizes that this is exactly

what determines the quality of education. Not primarily the content of the message on the screen. Of course the message matters, but what matters more fundamentally is what is communicated on a relationship level: the underlying feeling that is part of all these communications. The guidance expert sees the large in the small and recognizes the small as a part of the larger entirety

### Assignment 4: Promoting an encounter - Acknowledging loneliness

The staff and students are on a prominent spiral staircase. The image shows us the tangle of everything that must and can be done and is going on, the possibilities and the obstacles, and that this jumble also nestles in your mind and thoughts.

The people don't seem to see each other. They are entangled in their own thoughts. Their minds are occupied by the continuous conversation with themselves. Guidance experts see it as their task to understand the experience of those involved



from the inside out, not only of the students, but also of the staff members and administrators. In this polyphonic environment, they aim to promote understanding for each other, each person in their own experience and own stream of thoughts, and thus to contribute to a real encounters.

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*In the polyphonous environment of complex organisations, guidance experts aim to promote understanding for each other and thus contribute to real encounters*

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### **Assignment 5: Dialogue: from cacophony to meaning**

There is a lot of talk in organizations. Sometimes we tend to agree with Goethe and lament: 'Worte, Worte, und nichts dahinter!' (Words, words and nothing else). Dialogue is the prime tool for a guidance expert. An expert in their field, they have a finely tuned antenna that picks up the meaning behind words. That's what they want to talk about.

The meaning is always layered, polyphonous and multi-colored. It's the job of the guidance expert to promote mutual understanding and through this enrich the meaning. However, they know from experience that they

could also easily get caught up in this cacophony, the noise of words without meaning. So what should they do? The answer is: ask about the undercurrent, search for the meaning of the fact that we make noise together. The challenge is to ask these questions with as few words and as much silence as possible.



### **Assignment 6: Understanding what is happening – Don't forget the body's knowledge**

The words 'contain' and 'grasp' clearly refer to cognitive activities. They are derived from the physical action of grabbing and holding onto something. It's important for the guidance expert to develop insight into the ongoing processes, to understand how the activities around the question reinforce each other and how various other events influence this. Understanding is necessary! As a guidance expert, and certainly in combination with my role as professor within the institution, I am looking for ways to comprehend the observed undercurrent of interactions and communication in understanding and language, so that I can use that understanding to carefully consider my actions. This is a paradoxical goal, because it's just a characteristic of a motion that cannot be contained and grasped, and each spoken or written word is

only an addition to that motion.

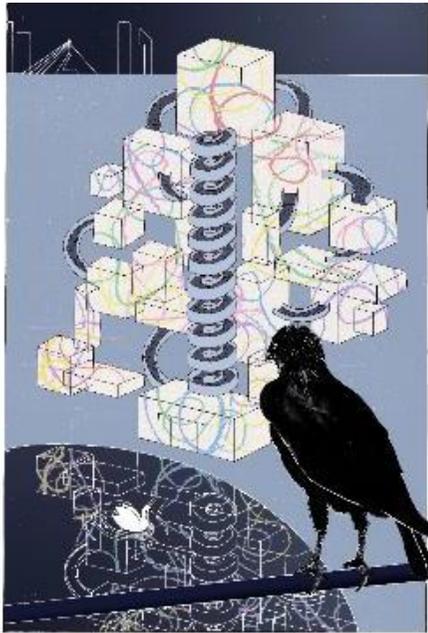
The reflections on this drawing provided me with three insights. First, it's necessary to distinguish and name the polyphony and multi-colored aspect. Collect them in jars, so to speak. Secondly, the drawing shows that this inevitably leads to a fragmentation. By understanding things, they also fall apart. That should really be included in the instructions...



Thirdly, this drawing is an incentive to not forget the knowledge of the body. In addition to an analytical form of knowing through definitions, with language, with our mind, there is also an intuitive form of knowing, the knowledge of our organism as a whole, which is much harder to grasp. If we omit that form of knowing, we are not fully doing our job in guiding organisational change. And...in the field of human and organisational behaviour, the motto 'no harm, no foul' is never appropriate. On the contrary, if we only do half our job, we would be doing more harm than good.

### **Assignment 7: Bringing knowledge into the process**

This drawing shows that something has happened and



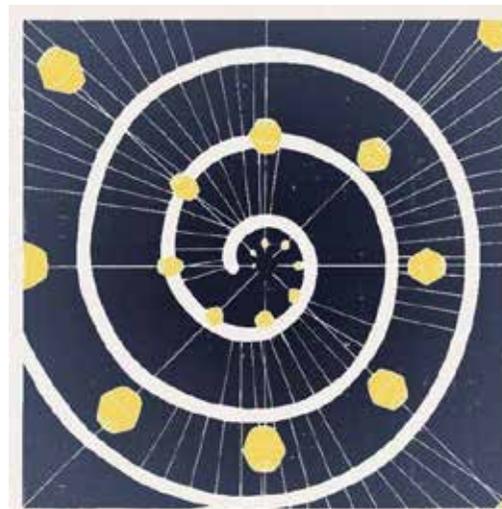
- in my view - something still has to happen! What has changed? The people in the foreground form a joint circle of meaning. There is a shared energy, a shared engagement. The loneliness of being trapped in one's own thought processes has been broken because there is a shared center. That is true wealth!

At the same time, something still has to happen. The collective knowledge, the outcome of reflection and understanding, which in this drawing apparently gives the person in the background something to hold on to, that knowledge still has to become part of the interaction. That is always a big challenge in guidance activities for improving educational quality: how can the insights of experts become a valuable part of the interaction and incorporate them meaningfully into the encounter? When that happens, we see that something also happens to the atmosphere, the culture in the organisation. I would

say that something starts to vibrate. When knowledge and insight are included in mutual communication in a meaningful way, the chaos becomes a wave. Metaphorically speaking, the noise of the cacophony transforms into polyphonous music.

### Assignment 8: Connection between the core and the environment

For the first drawing, I wrote that the guidance expert faces the challenge of acknowledging the complexity. The following drawings all involved the endless and intangible stream of interactions and assigning meaning to them. It's the job of the guidance expert to contribute to the recognition of the undercurrent and thus to self-awareness and mutuality. This allows a new perspective to emerge, of oneself, of the other and of the (organisational) environment.



This last drawing takes us back again to the stairwell that we saw in drawing four. Those who look down into the stairwell will see a spiral shape. The rotating motion of

the spiral is a powerful symbol for the dynamic relationship between the center and the periphery, the rhythm of the heart that translates into action. There is motion from the inside to the outside and vice versa. This image reminds us that when we listen to an incessant stream of interactions, ultimately it always comes back to the question at the core. The question about what truly matters, to the heart where things converge and from where motion is generated.

As a guidance expert, I am also asked this question: what is the core issue for me, what value is at stake? When I am prepared to honestly answer this, it seems to serve as a basis for an encounter with the other. Organisational development comes down to a question of attributing meaning.

### *Organisational development comes down to attributing meaning*

#### **Conclusion: once again 'art-based reflection'**

What has been the outcome of this new form of professional reflection? Substantively, the art-based reflection has given me the insight that as guidance experts our job is to connect the large with the small, to acknowledge our own entanglement in the whole of interactions and to recognize our own challenge in this. The drawings summon us again and again to connect with the underlying story of assigning meaning and experiencing meaning. At a process level, this art-based reflection provides a way to meet each other on a deeper level, and to connect func-

tional, goal-oriented actions with value-based motivations and the underlying desire (De Ronde, 2015). This form of reflection creates an atmosphere of congruency. It not only shows how decisive the elusive undercurrent is, but also helps to bring it to the forefront. It inspires us to acknowledge the complexity of things and to simultaneously work from a connection to the heart of the matter. It's exactly this combination, allowing the unpredictable and being connected to the core, that is of essential importance in coaching on change processes within complex social contexts.

For me, the most important outcome and result of the reflection process is that working on study success in the complex context of the university of applied sciences demands, both at individual and collective level, a connection with a meaningful orientation, a central point of sense making. ■

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**Marleen Wienk** ([www.marleenwienk.nl](http://www.marleenwienk.nl)) is an illustrator, designing researcher and animator. She obtained a master degree in crossover creativity at Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht (Utrecht Fine Arts Academy).

# What we could learn from children, and what children could learn from us about reflection

Helena Ehrenbusch in conversation with Ligita Jakučionytė about her book: "Thank you for telling me"

■ Helena Ehrenbusch



**Helena:** I have worked my whole life in professions, where feedback, evaluation, and reflection are essential. I am really good at evaluating and forming opinions, but it took me years to understand what reflection is and how to use feedback for self-development. Today I put a lot of effort into teaching the future supervisors to reflect, and I see that they struggle a lot. In the context where grown-ups still need help, how did you come up with the idea of thinking and writing a book on feedback with children?

**Ligita:** For years, I have been teaching people to give and receive feedback – until I finally realised that feedback is something we should begin learning as children. So I decided to write this book. It can be useful for adults who never learned the healthy way of giving feedback or for those who want to teach it to their children. It could be a great addition to schools for leadership or social skills classes. Once the exercises, notes, and opinion pages of the book are filled out, it becomes a valuable piece of memory. I myself have kept notebooks from my school years which we named "Opinions". Our friends were invited to write their opinions about us. Today it's fascinating to see what I was like and what my friends saw in me. I noticed that in these "Opinion" notebooks, many children would begin by saying: "I don't know what to tell you". I read it today and I wanted to answer this question – I wanted to show them how to begin, what to say, and how to ask about themselves. In a way, the book can also work as a method to prevent bullying. I talk about the power of good words, teach children to notice other people's positive qualities, take initiative, ask questions, be interested, and, finally, to choose.

**Helena:** *Children are often an underestimated source for our grown-up development with their unbelievable open and curious observations. What can we learn from children about developing our feedback skills?*

**Ligita:** Do you remember how, in your school years, the most important thing was to have friends? We used to say "I want to be friends" or "That's it! I don't want to be friends with you anymore!" How many true friends do we have now? When was the last time you asked someone: "Do you want to be friends?"

As we talk and learn with children, we will hopefully remember the need to have friends, to be a good friend to others, and to share our opinions. "What do I think of you?", "What do you think of me?". We can regain our honesty, sincerity, and freedom.

I invite you to a little journey with your child or grandchild: draw a self-portrait. Probably most of you will just moan: "Oh no, I can't draw". And the child? Depending on the age, but how younger they are, they will definitely draw a portrait. In addition they will also tell you about how they view themselves. Who has convinced us that we "can't draw"? And when? Why did we believe them?

With children, we can go back to the time, when we were more open and more curious, before we built so many defensive walls and created presumptions. Child-like curiosity can help us find our blind spots and discover how other people see us.

**Helena:** *Feedback is very often defined or used as our (expertise) opinion about another person and/or the things they do. How would you define feedback?*

**Ligita:** Feedback is information about us and our behaviour that is given to us by our surroundings. Feedback is comments, praise, evaluations, opinions, grades, assessments and characterisations.

Feedback lets us know what other people think of us – teachers, bosses, family members, friends, and neighbours. In our turn, we ourselves also express our opinions about others. And not necessarily with words: sometimes a smile, a look, body language or even silence can express much more than speech.

Feedback can make us happy, sad, angry, motivated, or even shocked. Sometimes receiving feedback leaves us speechless. This usually happens when we receive information about our "blind spot" – something that others can see very well, but we ourselves can't. Sometimes the information seems so wrong that we have no idea how to react to it.

We are hurt when we feel misunderstood, falsely accused, baselessly criticised or believe that the other person simply doesn't understand the situation. We don't want to experience such feedback again, so most people choose not to ask for it so as not to provoke others and avoid unpleasant situations.

**Helena:** *But why do we need other people's opinions for when we are often taught to look inside for the truth about ourselves, especially when feedback is more often negative and critical than positive and supportive?*

**Ligita:** Remember the task of drawing your self-portrait? Could you do that without looking at a mirror? No, you could not. Have you ever thought about how many mirrors you have in your house? I'm sure it's more than

one, right? Do you ever leave the house without looking at one? Probably not.

We want to present ourselves in a certain way, look tidy, pretty, or stylish. That's why we look at the mirror. The mirror doesn't say what we should or shouldn't do; it just shows us as we are. We ourselves decide if we should change something or not. Should I brush my hair? Should I put on make-up? Should I wipe my nose?

What about our behaviour, characters, our personalities? I am the only person who cannot see or hear myself. That's why only other people can act as mirrors for me. Why do we look at mirrors every day, but never ask for other people's opinions of us? Not only do we not ask, we don't even think we need it, right?

I can give you a quick and simple answer to why. I have heard these excuses many times: "I know how I behave, so there's no reason to ask!" and "I never thought I could ask."

But I think there is one more reason: fear and anxiety. It is kind of like the feeling you get before travelling to a new place. You want to go because you're curious. But you're also scared because you've never been there and have never seen that place before. What if other people tell me something I don't want to hear? It's much easier to say "Oh, I know everything" and not to think about it anymore.

**Helena:** *Basically, you say that receiving feedback is actually much harder than giving it, right? What makes listening to others so hard?*

**Ligita:** First of all, it is the physical barriers – I haven't got time, I choose the wrong place, I can't concentrate,

I'm busy with other things, I'm not really trying. It is also difficult to listen if we're convinced the other person is wrong, or is criticising us unjustly, or if our opinions are simply different. Sometimes it is the person who is the problem: perhaps I don't respect or trust her, maybe I don't have a good relationship with him or just don't see them as authority.

Unexpected information about our blind spots can shock us. We might hear something we've never thought about or never knew, and this may leave us so shaken that we do not want to listen – we only want to escape.

Listening and processing the information takes time. First of all, we need to listen. We need to take care of all the feelings that overcome us. We need to think about the feedback and decide what to do with it. To accept the information or to forget it. For all of that, we need time – time that we don't have or imagine that we don't have.

We can learn to listen by playing this simple game with our children. Here's how: Everyone closes their eyes, and then one person has to walk quietly from one place to another. If the others hear the slightest noise, everyone shouts "Heard it!" and you have to start over. Whoever walks the longest distance without being heard, wins.

Try to notice how you listen during this game, how you concentrate. I usually listen so hard I involuntarily open my mouth. What if we had this level of concentration when listening to other people? If we learn to listen with our ears, we can learn to listen with our hearts and minds, too.

**Helena:** *We also need to learn how to know and recognise our emotions to somehow be able to receive feedback. You said: "The main idea is that feedback gives us an opportunity to choose." What do you mean by that?*

**Ligita:** I open the book with asking the reader to draw a self-portrait. We cannot draw it without looking at a mirror. Only after we have looked, we can decide if we like what we see or not. The mirror does not lecture us on what we should do, but it does give us a choice. And we can choose what to do.

The same happens with the people who act as our mirrors. They come into our lives and tell us what they see. What they want and what they don't want. It's possible that some of them will not know how to say this politely, some might be unkind, rude, or indifferent. Some people have one opinion, and others have a completely different one. Some don't want to say anything at all, so we are left guessing.

We must accept the fact that there is no ideal mirror-person and we can choose if we would like to spend our time on this or not? Should we ask other people's opinions or not? Should we accept their answers or not? Should we change anything or should we let everything remain the same?

Other people's views, opinions, comments, and insights can help us see and understand our personality and behaviour in ways we haven't before. Perhaps there's something we have forgotten, perhaps there is something we are ashamed of, perhaps we are capable of more than we think.

This issue of ANSE is dedicated to multiple identities: European supervisors want to broaden our under-

standing of the many parts of our personalities. They emphasise that we should not be fixed to just one aspect of our being because that leads to a cumulation of discriminatory effects. Feedback can help! It gives us a chance to see ourselves from another perspective. It helps us reduce our blind spots. It is a great tool to learn more and see how we influence others. We should also just let other people tell us how they see us. Perhaps that way we will remember that a long time ago we used to know how to draw, and to sing, and to dance. We thought we were beautiful. We should let other people tell us how they feel about us and what we do best. And then we can decide whether to accept this information or not. ■

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**Helena Ehrenbusch**

Change process beyond goals:

## The client in the context of the working alliance in coaching

■ Tünde Erdős

### Abstract

How to foster (more) effective coaching partnerships? In this article, in fact a report on her recent PHD-research, executive coach and coaching scientist Tünde Erdős sets out to address this issue. Combining the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of studying clients' self-reports and coach-client dyadic interactions in three separate datasets as well as focusing on both the role of non-verbal cues and the dynamics of intra-personal patterns of emotion, attitude and behaviour, she shows how the working alliance between coach and coachee may enhance – but in some instances also hinder– the self-regulation and learning process in coaching. With this practice-informed study she helps practitioners to understand the power of the non-verbal relationship and to build up awareness of their state of presence. Next to that, she concludes with her findings and strong suggestions for further research.

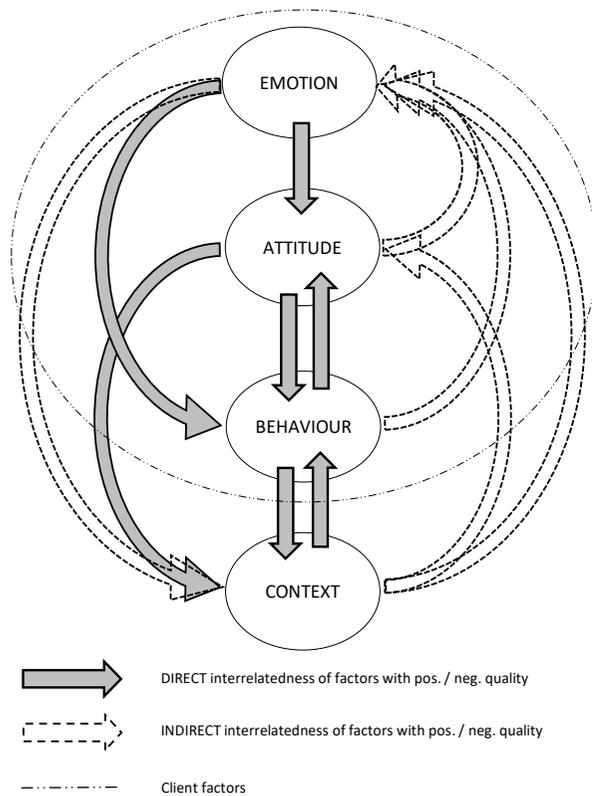
### Introduction

Late 2016, I experienced what felt to me a failure moment in my executive coaching practice. I became aware that despite a well-anchored career as an accredited executive coach there was apparently still something 'critical' that I did not quite understand about the impact that my physicality was having on a client of mine. My unconscious physical responses appeared as not congruent with what I was saying in a session, which my client described as a source of 'feeling unsafe'. That feedback ignited my curiosity to explore coach-client nonverbal interactional processes, how the coach-client relationship influences clients' capacity to feel safe, and how clients contribute to their own change process. The purpose was to contribute to coaching knowledge on clients' growth and learning beyond a specific goal.

At the outset of my research work, I became aware that I was tapping into uncharted territory in coaching with very little knowledge I could use to navigate my 'not knowing'. The biggest challenge was revealing what I did not expect to find, appreciating serendipity as the most valuable contribution both in research and practice.

How to go about it? Applying the process-oriented lens, the qualitative meta-synthesis (Erdős, de Haan, & Heusinkveld, 2020) initially resulted in comprehensively mapping client attributes and the role of these attributes in clients' change process to reveal their dynamic patterned interconnectivity (IRM, Figure 1).





**Figure 1.** Integrative Relationship Model (IRM) of client and contextual factors

*Notes.* Direct interrelatedness is implied when one factor impacts directly on the other as reported in the studies. Indirect interrelatedness is implied when one factor impacts on another factor via a third factor as reported in the studies. Positive and negative quality of interrelatedness is deduced from descriptors used in verbatim quotes. Constant comparison of direct and indirect as well as positive and negative dimensional dynamics across all study types identified how dimensions (emotion, attitude, behavior and contingencies) are embedded in coaching. A transcending non-linear process reveals patterned shifts for clients in the coaching process as observed in the domain of personality process theory but not yet fully understood and explained in coaching as a socially constructed change process. In analogy to "Personality Processes: Mechanisms by which Personality Traits 'Get Outside the Skin'" by S. Hampson (2012), *Annual Review of Psychology*, 63, 315–33.

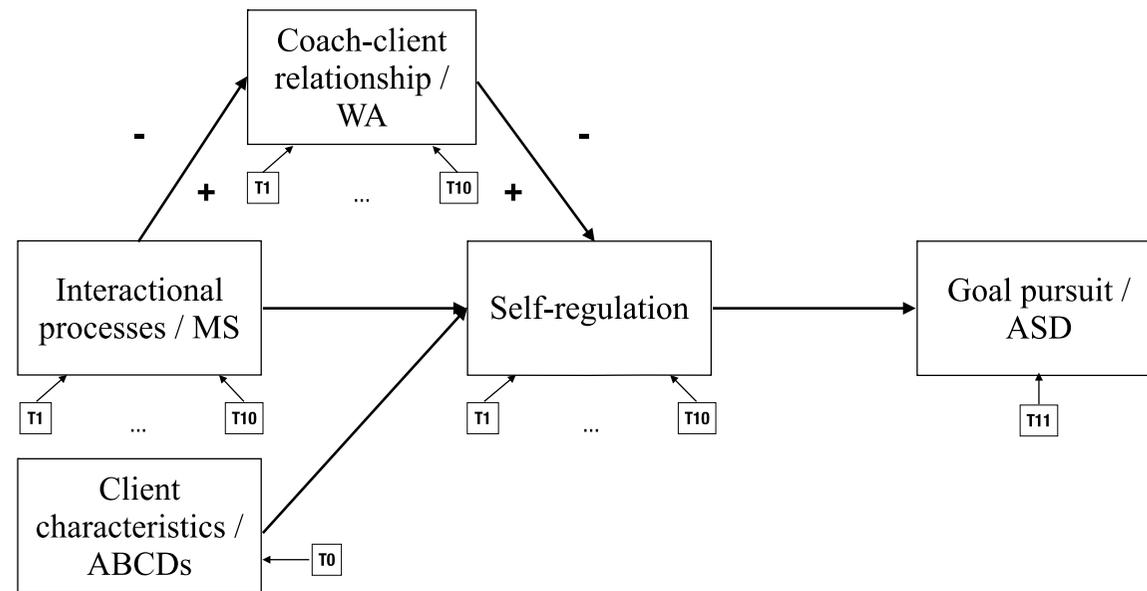
Next, IRM formed the basis for investigating three core themes as having the capacity to affect clients' dynamic change process beyond goals, as follows:

- (a) role of clients' self-regulation;
- (b) dynamics of movement synchrony (MS) as coach-client nonverbal interactional processes;
- (c) role of working alliance (WA) as the quality of the coach-client relationship (Bordin, 1979).

Generally, coaching was conceptualized as a process-oriented activity (Greif, 2017), and the three core

themes were altogether covered in two unique quantitative approaches and a third exploratory investigation. Figure 2 provides an overview of the entire research project while Table 1 summarizes all research questions and key findings per empirical approach.

This article details how the findings relate to each core theme and next discusses possible implications and recommendations for coaching science and practice in the future.



*Note.* Basic prediction model indicating client characteristics in association with self-regulation; Self-regulation in association with coach / client interactional processes and goal pursuit / ASD; coach-client relationship as a process variable. T1 indicates first measurement point, T10 indicates the last measurement point. T0 indicates the pre-coaching assessment of client characteristics, while T11 indicates that post-coaching assessment of goal measures three months after completion of coaching

**Figure 2.** Overview of basic prediction model

Table 1. Summary of research questions and findings

Approach	Research question	Key findings
Qualitative Meta-Synthesis	<p>Q1: Which client factors and contextual factors reported in primary qualitative studies are relevant for coaching effectiveness?</p> <p>Q2: How do primary qualitative studies suggest that these factors interrelate in clients' learning as a context-sensitive and dynamic change process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data analysis produced three client-related aggregate dimensions: emotion, attitude, and behavior, as well as context as the fourth dimension; the meta-synthesis indicates that we have insufficient focus on the client with a specific emotionality as the majority of studies investigate behavior as a goal-attainment measure.</li> <li>- The Integrative Relationship Model (IRM) indicates that client's experiences can be conceptualized from (a) a lens of dynamic interrelatedness as clients undergo their change process, and (b) a nuanced perspective of dynamic interrelatedness as they emerge in client's social contexts.</li> <li>- IRM maps that dimensions interrelate dynamically in that either one dimension directly relates to another dimension, or in that one dimension relates to another dimension via a third dimension.</li> </ul>
Quantitative study on ABCDs of the Big Five in Authentic Self-Development	=D6:D7RQ3: How do the ABCDs of clients' Big Five personality traits impact client's authentic self-development as explained by affect balance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Both the Big Five trait levels of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Openness as well as the psychological components of these traits (i.e., ABCDs: Affect, Behavior, Cognition, Desire) predicted three out of four aspects of authentic self-development (i.e., higher levels of perceived competence, goal commitment, goal self-concordance but not goal stability);</li> <li>- The 2-1-2 multilevel path models showed that the overall affect balance over sessions rather than the change in affect balance explained the direct relationship between personality and two aspects of authentic self-development: perceived competence and goal commitment, but not self-concordance and goal stability.</li> </ul>
Quantitative study on Movement Synchrony and Working Alliance as a Moderator	<p>Q4: What is the impact of nonverbal synchrony (spontaneous movement coordination) on client's self-regulation capacities as operationalized through self-reported affect balance?</p> <p>Q5: What is the impact of nonverbal synchrony (spontaneous movement coordination) on client's self-regulation capacities as operationalized through result-oriented problem and self-reflection?</p> <p>Q6: What is the impact of self-regulation on client's goal-directed behavior in coaching as operationalized through affect balance?</p> <p>Q7: What is the impact of self-regulation on client's goal-directed behavior in coaching as operationalized through result-oriented problem and self-reflection?</p> <p>Q8: How does working alliance moderate the direct effects of nonverbal synchrony on client's self-regulation (operationalized through result-oriented problem and self-reflection as well as positive and negative affect) in coaching?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the high-outcome group (top 33% of goal attainment), synchrony had no significant association with any other variable in both temporal as well as contemporaneous networks.</li> <li>- In the mid-level outcome group (mid 33% of goal-attainment), there were positive associations between synchrony and bonding in working alliance in the contemporaneous network and positive associations between synchrony and task-focus in working alliance and goal-orientation in the between-network analyses.</li> <li>- In the low-outcome group (low 33% of goal-attainment), there were negative associations between synchrony and task-focus in working alliance in the temporal network analyses as well as negative associations between synchrony and cognitive self-regulation in the between-network analyses.</li> <li>- The mid-outcome subsample provided the highest number of associations in the temporal network: Synchrony negatively predicted positive affect, goal-reflection, all aspects of working alliance, and it was negatively predicted by concreted changes in cognitive self-regulation. For the contemporaneous network, there was a negative association with bonding in working alliance and a positive association with self-organisation in cognitive self-regulation. The between-network analysis indicated that synchrony and negative affect were negatively associated across dyads.</li> <li>- A lower level of synchrony in a previous session predicted higher task-orientation, higher goal-setting, and higher goal-reflection in the next session.</li> <li>- Higher positive affect predicts higher goal attainment</li> <li>- Higher goal-reflection predicts higher goal attainment</li> <li>- Clients reported low levels of bonding in working alliance in sessions with high levels of nonverbal synchrony</li> <li>- Interaction effects in mixed model analyses showed that the effect of nonverbal synchrony on cognitive self-regulation (RoPS) largely depended on the expression of working alliance as well as mood as moderators; In dyads with high working alliance, nonverbal synchrony appears not to act as a beneficial factor for other process variables, while dyads with low working alliance showed a positive connection between synchrony and cognitive self-regulation.</li> <li>- There is a clear downward trend in movement synchrony over time in the cluster that completed 10 sessions and the cluster with 173 dyads completing varying number of sessions. The downward trends are indicative of differential change in movement synchrony over time. The difference lies in that the cubic curve type suggests a slight increase in movement synchrony both at the outset of the coaching engagement and at the end of the coaching trajectory. This difference is more evident in the cluster that involved N = 173 dyads.</li> <li>- No significant correlations or covariances between and among the groups of best fitting curve types and the demographic variables of coach / client gender, client</li> </ul>
Exploratory study on movement synchrony over time	Q9: How does nonverbal synchrony (spontaneous movement coordination) develop over time per session and dyadic interaction?	

## Key Findings per core theme

### The role of clients' self-regulation

While the coaching literature has not yet investigated self-regulation as a process of psychological functioning per se, some client attributes such as resilience have been explored as a specific outcome (e.g., de Haan et al., 2020; MacKie, 2015; Molyn et al., 2019). Recently, a study (de Haan et al., 2019) measured resilience at multiple data points, finding that resilience contributed to coaching effectiveness.

Thus, addressing self-regulation as a process of psychological functioning answered claims that coaching is "essentially about helping individuals regulate and direct their interpersonal and intrapersonal resources in order to create purposeful and positive change in their personal or business lives." (Grant, 2012, p. 149).

First, the principle of self-regulation was reflected in IRM (Figure 1) as it became apparent how the client-specific dimensions of emotion, attitude, and behavior are interconnected as an intrapersonal process framed by contextual factors such as the coach-client relationship in relatively consistent dynamic patterns. However, while we can find some support for this intrapersonal process in quantitative research (e.g., MacKie, 2015), IRM specifically carved out that emotion (i.e., fear, anger, uncertainty, excessive affect) is a client attribute that is heavily under-researched and under-theorized in coaching. It is a development which latest neuroscience research into emotion corroborates (Feldman-Barrett, 2017) too. The current state of play in coaching research may be due to how scholars have placed the focus on more easily measurable factors such as clients' behavior and cognitive processes to understand shifts in behavior for goal attainment. In contrast, IRM with its focus on the dynamic intrapersonal

nal patterns of emotion, attitude and behavior provided a possible regulatory framework to address the issue of inconsistent effectiveness that coaches encounter when applying certain techniques (e.g., GROW model) that prove to be effective with some clients while they remain ineffective with some others.

Consequently, the second focal step aimed to address clients' emotionality (i.e., affective and cognitive self-regulatory capacity) as an under-researched phenomenon in clients' change process. In two quantitative approaches and applying an input-process-output approach (e.g., Ianiro & Kauffeld, 2014), the goal was to balance efforts in making meaning of the client both as the 'whole person' (Taylor, 1998) and some individual facets of the client (e.g., mood, attitude).

The first quantitative approach sampled 176 clients measuring the emotional perspective of their self-regulation in workplace settings around the globe. Specifically, clients' personality was associated with their authentic self-development (ASD) as explained by affect balance (AB) on the basis of the Self-Regulation Resource Model (SRRM, Sirois & Hirsch, 2015) that has been previously used to explain the links between personality and health behaviors. Clients' personality was conceptualized as a set of affective, cognitive, behavioral and motivational dimensions (ABCDs, Wilt & Revelle, 2015) of the Big Five personality traits (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Authentic Self Development (ASD) was framed as the ultimate expression of clients' growth beyond any specific goal comprising perceived competence, goal-commitment, goal self-concordance, and goal stability as specific measures of ASD. Conceptually, the coherence of patterned dynamics of the ABCD

personality dimensions was hoped to explain how and why certain traits are likely to lead to outcomes (e.g., O'Neill & Steel, 2017). Moreover, studying personality traits by covering the balanced conceptual content of traits (e.g., Pytlik Zillig et al., 2002) was proposed to be a meaningful way forward to shed light on how clients self-regulate in their striving for ASD.

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### *Authentic Self Development was framed as the ultimate expression of clients' growth beyond any specific coaching goal*

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This first approach produced the following key finding on the role of clients' emotional self-regulation:

- (a) The overall Affect Balance (AB) over sessions rather than the change in AB explained the relationship between personality and two aspects of ASD: perceived competence and goal commitment, but not self-concordance and goal stability. It seems that more AB does not lead to higher self-regulation, but constant AB does.
- (b) The ABCDs predicted three out of four aspects of ASD (i.e., higher levels of perceived competence, goal commitment, goal self-concordance but not goal stability), which may be owing to the balanced representation of ABCDs. Goal stability was not influenced by AB. This finding supports clients' capacity to pursue goal-directed behavior without any rigid adherence to goals.

In the second more complex quantitative approach (Erdös & Ramseyer, 2021), clients' self-regulation was measured as a meta-cognitive monitoring ability (Greif & Berg, 2011). This ability integrates result-oriented problem- and self-reflection (RoPS) and emotion regulation through AB (Hayes & Feldman, 2004) in the coach-client relationship as clients' most immediate context. Movement Synchrony (MS) was associated with goal attainment as explained by clients' affective and cognitive self-regulation and this association was predicted to be strengthened or weakened by Working Alliance (WA).

184 coach-client dyads comprised an international sample of real clients engaging in workplace coaching with professional coaches. These dyads were videotaped and their interactions in terms of MS were analyzed using Motion Energy Analysis (MEA, Ramseyer, 2020). Clients reported on their self-regulation capacities after each session while coaches were interviewed after completion of the coaching process to complement findings through video analyses.

Goal attainment was conceptualized as clients' engagement in sustained goal-directed behavior (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015). This goal striving perspective finds support in coaching literature (e.g., Schiemann, Mühlberger, & Jonas, 2018b) suggesting that coaching effectiveness is ultimately about clients' attaining autonomy beyond goals.

The complex temporal and network models used to analyze self-regulation produced differential findings with huge implications for coaching science and practice in the future (Erdös, 2021; Erdös & Ramseyer, 2021). In terms of the role of self-regulation, these models revealed the following key findings:

(a) The effect of MS on clients' cognitive self-regulation largely depended on Working Alliance (WA) and emotional self-regulation. Surprisingly, dyads with low WA showed a positive association between MS and cognitive self-regulation. This dynamic pattern explains the relevance that clients' context plays in their change process.

(b) MS may negatively influence cognitive self-regulation, which impacts clients' capacity of goal-directed behavior (see 'The dynamics of movement synchrony' for details).

(c) Lower MS in a previous session predicted higher cognitive self-regulation in the next session. This temporal effect can be explained by the role that coaching plays as a self-regulatory mechanism per se.

(d) Higher positive affect and higher cognitive self-regulation predicted higher capacity to pursue goal-directed behavior three months after coaching.

### **The dynamics of movement synchrony**

MS was conceptualized as interlocutors' spontaneous responsiveness to each other through movement as theoretically framed by interpersonal movement coordination (IMC, Bernieri & Rosenthal, 1991) drawing on psychotherapy literature (Ramseyer, 2020). To date, the coaching literature has not explored MS to predict clients' self-regulation. Therefore, the second quantitative approach explored the interaction effects of MS on clients' affective and cognitive self-regulatory capacity as influenced by WA in goal pursuit behaviors. Conceptually, this approach is supported by the dynamical systems perspective in social psychology (Kelso, 1995) as MS reflects the nature of coaching as an interactional change process that is complex and adaptive at the macro-level of coaching too.

The findings on the dynamics of MS are equally differential and can be categorized as follows:

(a) Initially high MS showed a linear trend for a temporal decrease, albeit in a complex manner. Specifically, the effect of MS on clients' cognitive self-regulation largely depended on the expression of WA. The complex effects may be explained by both WA and MS being interactional process variables each with their specific level of dynamic interrelatedness at the micro-level of coaching.

(b) Low MS in a previous session predicted higher WA and higher cognitive self-regulation in the next session. These associations may indicate some "correctional mechanism" that emerges at a point where progress is perceived to "get off track" (i.e., clients report low self-regulation and low WA). Higher MS indicates emerging efforts to correct the deteriorating quality of the coach-client relationship or the yet unproductive coaching process. Where WA is strong (i.e., shared goal/task focus, bonding), it appears irrelevant whether or not coach and client are synched in, while MS becomes necessary where WA is poor.

(c) Low MS is associated with high goal attainment; high MS is associated with low goal attainment and low goal orientation as one aspect of WA; medium goal attainment is not associated with overall positive or negative affect over time. These differential findings explain findings (a) and (b) above that MS can help and harm clients' change process. Placing the focus on creating an authentic environment may be more beneficial to clients as there are too many factors that interact in the coaching process to make full sense of clients' change process.

A third complementary approach further addressed the dynamics of MS in coaching exploring how average MS evolved from session to session per dyadic interaction. In applying cross-correlation and discriminant analyses, the purpose was to enhance our understand-

ing of MS as it changed for dyads across session to highlight the extent to which the number of sessions factors in connection with client age, coach/client gender, or coaches' years of experience. The sample comprised a) the cluster of dyads that completed 10 sessions, and b) 173 dyadic interactions with a varied number of sessions. Digging deeper into the serial

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*Movement synchrony is not associated with demographic variables, it is rather an interactional phenomenon*

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representation of MS is relevant as latest psychotherapy research has produced heterogeneous associations between nonverbal synchrony and WA and rather homogeneous results when it comes to therapeutic success (Ramseyer, 2020b; Lutz et al., 2020). This exploratory approach produced the following results:

(a) MS showed a downward trend in the coaching process, albeit with variations (i.e., linear downward, cubic, and quadratic best curve fits), the differential change showing in a slight increase in MS both at the outset and at the end of the coaching trajectory.

(b) The development of MS is not associated with demographic variables, which may be explained by MS being an interactional phenomenon rather than a factor that is correlational with demographic variables.

(c) The lack of correlation/covariance between

the development of MS and the number of sessions may mean that additional sessions or weeks of coaching do not impact up and that even short-term coaching may have a beneficial impact on clients' goal attainment. However, there may be other factors (i.e., gravity of a coaching issue) that account for the differential change in MS as an interactional phenomenon.

### **The role of working alliance**

Following the most recent theoretical position in coaching (Graßmann et al., 2020), WA was conceptualized as an interpersonal variable that is likely to strengthen or weaken – that is moderate – the association between MS and clients' self-regulation.

This approach is novel in coaching research and reinforces the debate around the contextual role of WA in coaching as a change process (Molyn et al., 2019). Some scholars (e.g., Cavanagh, 2013) call for greater contextualization coaching while elsewhere in the coaching literature (Bachkirova et al., 2015) contextual factors are argued to not significantly influence coaching outcomes.

In fact, the contextual role of WA as a moderator is supported by change process theory in coaching (e.g. Cox, 2013), and is established in mentoring (Larose et al., 2010) and counseling (Masdonati, et al., 2014). These coaching-related fields demonstrate that the nature of WA can change over time and therefore is likely to produce varying effects on outcomes. Yet, this debate is not surprising. Indeed, contradictory indications about the role of WA in coaching may be attributable to coaching in itself being a beneficial process, which may have contributed to how WA has been conceptualized to explain coaching success in the majority of coaching studies to date.

The second quantitative approach produced the following findings on WA as a moderator:

- (a) Dyads with low WA showed a positive association between MS and cognitive self-regulation, while in dyads with high WA, lower MS was associated with higher cognitive self-regulation. This moderation effect implies that in the absence of task-setting, goal orientation and bonding as markers of WA, MS is likely to repair a process that is off track (i.e., goals are not clearly set, goal-oriented path is not shared by coach and client, low rapport).
- (b) Surprisingly, the opposite was true for Affect Balance (AB): In dyads with high AB, higher MS predicted higher cognitive self-regulation, while in dyads with low AB, low MS predicted higher cognitive self-regulation. This explains the relevance of emotion as a key factor that strengthens how coach and client spontaneously respond to each other as clients feel capacitated to build up their cognitive resources to focus on result-oriented problem- and self-reflection (RoPS).

### **Theoretical implications & future research** **Clients' self-regulation as sustained psychological functioning**

As a result of IRM, investigating positive emotion as a predictor of heightened awareness appears to be relevant. All the more, as positive emotion is posited to be an important factor for action taking in coaching (e.g., Grant, 2014). This position is corroborated in the broaden-and-build-theory (Frederickson, 2001) suggesting that positive emotions are likely to expand awareness towards new action taking and 'trying out new things'. As a result of the first quantitative approach, there are at least three implications that may advance coaching literature:

- (a) While clients' AB increases over time, coaching as a change intervention in itself may have a

self-regulatory influence on clients. Each session forms more than the sum of its parts implying that it may be more important for clients 'how well' rather than 'how much more or less' they arrive at regulating emotionally. This may explain why change in AB is not found to explain the relationship between personality and Authentic Self Development (ASD);

- (b) As a consequence, clients may attain goals with minimal pressure and compulsion (i.e., they feel more self-concordant and self-determined to adjust goals) in line with their personality, which implies that self-concordance does not require any self-regulatory resources through AB in coaching.

- (c) From a humanistic perspective (Rogers, 1961), goal stability may be framed as i) a way of developing continuity and coherence across potentially contradictory behaviors in goal pursuit, ii) clients' capacity to integrate their inconsistent behaviors into a coherent self-concept, and iii) goals being malleable depending on situational factors (i.e., client feels safe with coach) or the extent to which clients' aspirations, motivations and intentions evolve. Therefore, ASD may be about maintaining clients' stability of goal-directed functioning rather than the stability of a goal per se.

Based on these implications, ASD is defined as "the process of becoming a continuously congruent self with contradictory behaviors, most probably against someone else's will in our social context. Coaching as a social context indicates a unique self-regulatory intervention that supports clients in their process of 'becoming one'".

This research yields at least two questions that coaching process researchers may investigate, as follows:

- (a) What is the role of clients' social support (Molyn et al., 2019) and more distal environment (i.e.,

sponsors of coaching) as control factors in association with self-regulation?

(b) What is the potential link between verbal as well as nonverbal synchrony and emotion and how may that link deepen our understanding of the whole body as an important 'signaling' device in emotional processing (Gelder, 2006)?

### **Movement synchrony as a differential interactional phenomenon**

Currently, there are little resources coaching researchers can draw on to understand the role of the dynamic nature of MS in supporting clients' development and growth in coaching.

The findings of this research contribute to coaching literature, as follows:

(a) It may be essential 'how well' rather than 'how much' coach and client are synched in with each other to meet the need of the complex nature of change through coaching.

(b) Creating an authentic environment in coaching may be of greater effect than MS per se as there appear to be way too many factors (e.g., task setting, clients' positive affect, result-oriented self-reflection capacity) influencing the coaching process.

(c) MS emerging as a correctional mechanism in dyads implies that high initial MS does not necessarily imply good contact between coach and client.

(d) MS becomes less relevant over time as clients gradually grow autonomous in resolving presenting issues (i.e., they grow their self-regulatory capacities) and feel less impacted by coaches' decreased level of spontaneous responsiveness to their needs. Reciprocally, coaches grow more risk-taking in response to clients' growing more autonomous in how the latter address challenging issues. Therefore, decreasing MS may

be a sign for feeling safe. Coach and client can allow themselves to 'make mistakes' without client or coach feeling impacted by any 'ugly' situation engendered by lack of spontaneous responsiveness to mutual needs.

As a result, it is theorized that authentic nonverbal spontaneous responsiveness between coach and client implies being present to each other's needs. In coaching, Roger Noon's (2018) small qualitative study supports the notion that presence is a relational phenomenon. The notion that the body (i.e., movements) is the instrument that will indicate the extent to which we are congruent with each other any given moment, chimes in with scholarly positions (e.g., Jackson, 2017) that physicality expresses embodied presence, which is important for sharing felt experiences in coaching. Ultimately, this sharing means that embodied presence evokes change in both the coach and the client rather than the client alone as purported by Silsbee's (2008) presence-based coaching theory. Embodied presence also implies that a growing congruence between coach and client will result in a decrease of MS in dyadic trajectories across sessions.

The findings on the dynamics of MS as embodied presence support a new direction in future coaching research to study, as follows:

(a) MS as an interpersonal phenomenon in the context of WA in presence-based coaching;

(b) The predictive value of the differential downward trend of MS for coaching presence as an embodied phenomenon with reciprocal impact on coach and client;

(c) Synchrony dynamics in the first session as compared to synchrony dynamics in the final session for a specific dyadic trajectory;

(d) A set of dyadic trajectories to explore MS

dynamics in several first sessions as compared to synchrony dynamics in all final sessions of the set of dyadic trajectories under investigation;

(e) The predictive value of clients' autonomy for goal attainment through MS across varied number of sessions as it may be an additional gateway to how we can conceptualize the importance of physicality in presence-based coaching in the future;

(f) The relevance of the number of coaching sessions in association with MS as an interactional phenomenon in coaching.

(g) MS by looking into the ways in which synchrony plays out in virtual coaching settings, which was not the context of the present study.

### **The role of working alliance in the change process**

The findings reflecting the moderator role of WS in clients' change process in this study produced the following implication for knowledge building in the future:

(a) Factors specific to WA (i.e., task setting, shared goal orientation, bonding) and other moderator variables such as AB appear to be more important than MS when it comes to clients striving to build up their capacity to self-regulate. These interaction patterns imply that clients may not feel inclined to trust coaches' efforts to sync in with them where they perceive that coaching progress is not characterized by factors specific to WA.

Therefore, there is a substantial need to further investigate WA as a moderator in coaching process research in the future. Specifically, congruence as a key interpersonal factor in the context of WA needs investigating in coaching process research. Unless clients perceive the coach as congruent in how they respond to clients' needs beyond the use of verbal language, they will not experience rapport, trust or empathy (Kolden, Klein,

Wang, & Austin, 2011), which are crucial components of WA (Bordin, 1979).

### Recommendations for a coaching practice

Generally, coaches need to develop a quality of mind that can grasp the intricate context-driven interplay between self and other if we were to progress the body of knowledge in coaching as a context-sensitive area of complex human relations.

#### **The role of clients' self-regulation**

First, there is need to focus on honing coaches' capabilities to work with clients' affective states in the future. As discussed, coaching tends to be concerned with behavior-specific outcomes and mindset change as more easily measurable and discernible outcomes. This is unfortunate, as emotions were found to drive clients' capability to attain outcomes and to strengthen/weaken clients' capacity to reflect goals when "being with the coach". Hence, training coaches in working with the dynamic interplay of emotion-attitude-behavior and specifically in working with moods in the context of the coach-client relationship may enhance clients' effective growth.

Second, coaches need to

- (a) grow their coaching skills and styles to engage with clients' self-regulatory capacities towards clients' autonomy beyond goal attainment;
- (b) engage with clients' self-perception of competence starting with clients' capabilities to increase their goal competence, goal commitment and goal self-concordance towards self-congruence in various contexts;
- (c) adopt a coaching style that sustains clients' balanced affective, cognitive, behavioral and motivational aspects of personality;
- (d) encourage clients to be open for new goals

rather than stick with goals they believe they 'should' achieve.

(e) work with the whole body as an important 'signaling' device in emotional processing (Gelder, 2006) as emotions manifested in the body have implications for clients' capacity to self-regulate and ultimately develop authentically (Grant, 2012).

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### *Grow your skills and styles to engage with clients' self-regulatory capacities towards clients' autonomy beyond goal attainment*

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#### **The role of the dynamics of movement synchrony**

First, there is need to train coaches in working with verbal and nonverbal interactional dynamics in coaching. Specifically, building skills how to discern dynamic patterns of interrelated speech (i.e., coaches' choice of question on starting a session; clients' choice of words on arriving to a session) and/or dynamic patterns of behavior (i.e., coaches' mood on showing up; clients' readiness for coaching) are of relevance for practitioners on their path towards mastery.

Second, there is need to (a) strengthen coaches' capacity to sense and perceive the quality of the coach-client relationship at the outset of a coaching engagement, which skills them up to use MS flexibly in supporting clients' self-regulation; (b) be and stay spontaneous and flexible by becoming aware of own needs

in the coaching relationship (i.e., be a good coach).

Third, coaching training providers ought to educate coaches around the relevance of MS as embodied presence in coaching practice and the nuanced impact that MS produces on interactional processes in coaching (Erdős, 2021) to discern clients' progress over time.

#### **Conclusion**

First, as a result of the research findings and drawing on conceptual work by Myers (2017), coaching process is defined as 'a complex dynamic change process with emergent self-organizing characteristics of the client as intrapersonal sub-processes, coach/client interactional behaviors as interpersonal sub-processes, the quality of the coaching relationship as a moderator of these sub-processes, goal attainment as the client's ultimate capacity to become autonomous beyond coaching in coaching itself as a contextual factor with self-regulatory quality in a single session or over a series of sessions'.

Second, in applying both a qualitative and quantitative methodological design, this research contributes to advancing literature on coaching process research towards a more holistic theory-building design (Myers, 2017).

Third, in providing a considerable contemporaneous sample size for data analysis, it is hoped that this research achieved generalizability of findings towards building a deeper understanding of the nature of coaching as a change process.

Fourth, in using a validated software-based approach to objectively analyzing video-taped sessions and in

combining the analytical results with client self-report data, this research accounted for the possible limitations of outcomes obtained through coach/client self-reports only.

In sum, in applying a methodologically comprehensive approach through a qualitative meta-synthesis, a large-scale international research comprising two hypothesis-testing approaches and a third explorative lens, this research provides possible avenues for better

(a) understanding why clients behave the way they do and eventually how coaching works and why it is effective;

(b) understanding how coaching produces learning for clients over the course of coaching;

(c) supporting scholars and coaches in working on the 'edge of chaos' in clients' learning to ensure we earn clients' trust in coaching to enhance our reputation in a world that is seeking ever more effective means to deal with change moments. ■

## Notes

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# Interview with Bogdan Sebastian Cuc

■ Gerian Dijkhuizen

**Bogdan Sebastian Cuc** is President of the Romanian Association of Supervisors. His professional life developed in two directions: clinical work and organisational work. First he worked as a clinician (20 years of clinical experience with children, adolescents

and adults). He was educated as psychoanalyst and has a PHD in psychopathology and psychoanalysis of the University Paris 13, Sorbonne, Paris Cité. Bogdan is a member of the Romanian Society of Psychoanalysis and completed a training in art-psychotherapy in Geneva. As an organisational specialist, he further completed a training in Project Management, two 'Train the Trainer' (TOT) trajectories, a training in Social Work Supervision, a training program in social management and a TOT at the Kardinal König Haus in Vienna. His work experience: project management, training, executive search and general management. Since 2010 Bogdan teaches Psychoanalysis and Human Resources at Spiru Haret University, Bucharest and Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest.



*How long have you been working as a supervisor/coach?*

Since 2008, over 10 years

*What was/is meaningful to you in your education as a supervisor/coach?*

The idea of creating space and time for reflection. It is what I call "the reflection space-time unit".

*What is your theoretical frame of reference from which you work as a supervisor/coach?*

As psychologist and psychoanalyst, my theoretical and clinical background plays a very important role. But as a former employee and manager of organizations with different backgrounds - before I started to work freelance - I developed my approach slightly differently, and I use the economic perspective as a very important reference to balance between the necessary resources and the expected results.

*If you are familiar with the ECvision glossary and matrix: how does it influence or enhance your work as a supervisor/coach?*

ECvision represents a very important asset for both of my activities related to supervision: practicing supervision with clients and educating supervision trainees or young supervisors. The main reference is the setting and the supervisors identity, as they are part of a community of supervisors inside the Europe, inside the EU. In this respect, ECvision represents, besides the professional tools provided, an identity reference for the members of ANSE, which is not just a professional association of supervisors, but a professional association within the EU. The second reference is represented by the glossary, which I apply mostly in training, but also with supervisees.

*Can you mention three criteria to which you believe a EU-supervisor/coach should comply?*

1. The setting of supervision should be a reference shared by all, so we all have the same instruments in our work. I believe that this is provided by ECvision, at least around Europe.
2. The identity reference for professional supervisors provided by the ECvision represents an important tool in practicing and in training supervision.
3. The specific methods for supervision described by the ECvision, also represent an important tool in practicing and in training supervision.

*How would you like to see supervision/coaching develop in Europe?*

I consider that the best way of developing supervision in Europe is by intensifying professional and educational exchange within and between the national associations of ANSE.

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