Contents

01. <u>Driven by dialogue</u>

"If fear is driving us apart, dialogue will bring us back; not only together, but to the safe haven of trust in ourselves, in each other, and in our future."

Change is of all times, but in some periods, it seems to accelerate in a temporary combination of impactful developments. Change produces instability, new opposing interests and with that: fear. And fear turns change into something personal, confronting us with the question: do we long for the past, when life felt more predictable, or do we plunge ourselves into an uncertain future? How can we resolve the big challenges of our time, how can we stop the process of ecological suicide and increasing scarcity without conflict and war?

WHAT WE LOST

Some say we lost connection, with the earth we live on, with each other, and sometimes even with our inner wisdom, our soul or our intuition. Almost every generation feels the confrontation with increasing change, and with reason: many developments act like Moore's law of exponential growth. Yet, during some periods more crucial innovations join and interact to launch our lives into a new era. For example in the late Middle Ages, when the new art of book printing, developing sciences and all kinds of new technologies met in a burst of discoveries. Lighted by Galilee's refusal to withdraw his public statement that the earth was not the center of the universe, the separation between church and science marked a period of 'Enlightenment'. This brought us an era of scientific revolution, secularization, global trade and colonization and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. A century later new power technologies, such as steam and combustion engines, electricity and new-sophisticated organizational forms, produced the next big change, known as the Industrial Revolution. This created vast growth of factories, large structured companies, cities and infrastructure for massive transportation (by car, by rail, by container shipping and finally by air). This brought substantially growing economic welfare (mainly to the Western world) and a powerful middleclass population. And now, about another hundred-fifty

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years later the internet, the almost limitless growth of the world population, the rapid modernization of China and India and the energy and sustainability crisis are building up to a period of hyper change again.

As human beings we continue to plod on in these unstable times, as the social beings we are. When we lose our grip, as a group and as individuals, we basically look for two things: who we want to be and how we can receive as much social confirmation for this from our direct surroundings, especially from those who are important to us. We are actually looking for autonomy and connection; two seemingly conflicting needs between which we need to keep balancing. In an ever-changing environment which is becoming increasingly more complex and thus making higher demands on our competences, that balance is often fragile. This shows from the fact that its extremes, which we even label as disorders, occur more often. Too much autonomy we call autism and too much dependence on relationships we call psychoses or burnout; modern disorders of people who cannot seem to find the balance (any longer).

We often look for who we want to be by fencing off our identity, our territory, (closing ourselves off from the world outside), or by striving after a grand plan (nowadays often referred to as ambition or passion) or a personal quest for the goal and the impact of our lives (sometimes through broad social analyses, or meditation and mindfulness). That is how we try to find ourselves, with a strong focus on internal personal growth. For each of these quests, countless trainings and management tools and self-help books have been published. However, we have not been given much insight about how we can reconnect, how we can practically bond with each other.

HOW DO WE REGAIN OUR STRENGTH? CONNECTING EXTREMES!

Luckily, the way to find our way back together is simple - but not always easy. Some examples may show us the way. Mandela pulled South Africa away from an almost certain harsh civil war, towards 'his' rainbow nation. Melati and Isabel Wijsen succeeded in convincing the Bali government to commit to a firm 'plastic bag ban' on Bali, when they were only 14 and 16 years old. Christiana Figueres led 195 countries in the Paris climate conference (COP 21) in December 2015 to an unexpected common climate agreement. These are just a few examples. What do they have in common? They were able to connect people coming from extreme opposite positions and perspectives. They were able to supercharge intense and meaningful dialogues, creating new realities.

Every real dialogue starts with empathy. Empathy not as a general social feeling of sympathy, but empathy as a precise and active understanding of what is on the other's mind, clarifying different perspectives. Not to compromise but to recognize and accept different positions and to deepen the mutual understanding. Recognizing and accepting extremes as a starting point, a basis for connection. That is what drives real dialogues. That's what this book is about.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The first part (Chapter 2 to 7), explains the concepts and tools of dialogue, building upon new insights as well as the basics of communication.

The second part (Chapter 8 to 14) explores the concept of true dialogues in different arenas. Respectively; personal, practical communication, teams, leadership, customers, government and education.

(Chapter 11: Leadership dialogues), customers (Chapter 12: Service and customer dialogues), government (Chapter 13: Community dialogues) and education (Chapter 14: Learning dialogues).

The third part is about the art of facilitating meaningful dialogues and ends with a general conclusion. As a bonus I added some practical cases to use as training material.

02. The authenticity trap

"The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean. The amount of oil and dispersant we are putting into it is tiny in relation to the total water volume."

TONY HAYWARD, BP CEO DURING THE DISASTROUS OIL SPILL IN 2010

"I'm sorry, we're sorry for the massive disruption it's caused to their lives. There's no one who wants this thing over more than I do, I'd like my life back." With these apologies BP's CEO Tony Hayward tried to take his responsibility and contain BP 's reputational damage after the explosion and subsequent sinking of the Deepwater Horizon, causing the deaths of 11 workers and 17 others injured on April 20th 2010. The same blowout that caused the explosion also caused a massive offshore oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, considered the largest accidental marine oil spill in the world, and the largest environmental disaster in U.S. history. His apologies were broadcasted nationwide in hundreds USA news programs. They were accompanied by devastating comments, expressing rage about his selfish perspective. Within two months Hayward was replaced as CEO, two weeks after the closing of the well and the stop of the oil spill. He got his life back. Hayward's wish was honored, though in a different way than he had hoped for. How could such an experienced leader have caused this communication disaster? It built on the emphasis on a modern leadership feature: authenticity. At least you could say that Hayward was authentic in the exclamation of his wish. But it didn't seem to work for a leader of an organization that had harmed our collective interests so severely. We didn't expect him to express his own discomfort so publicly. We had expected a connection with our perspectives and empathy for the victims of BP.

What caused this kind of individualism to lay so close beneath the surface? The late Middle Age and the Renaissance brought a shift in focus from religious structures and social discipline towards 'ourselves' as the center of the universe. Greater access to knowledge also brought about a new social mobility. The realization that you were not predestined by birth to either be a farmer or an aristocrat, but that which used to be attainable only for a lucky few, became available to all. In art this shows in the shift from painting religious scenes to the portraying of individuals, for instance in the work of the Dutch golden age painter Rembrandt who started painting successful Amsterdam citizens. From this new perspective everyone became responsible for his own personal life: the start of individualism that currently dominates in our Western societies.

In the same period in Asia another view on a healthy social order came into being. Many Chinese thinkers stated that you are not so much one homogenous being, but for a big part you are being defined by impulses from your direct surroundings. They say that we can develop our emotional tendencies and reflexes by looking outside rather than looking in. Confucius stated: *"Only by exercise we will be capable to govern justly [….] At the beginning of our lives we react with emotions, at the end with decency"*. Confucius also expressed the well-known principle: *"Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself",* the Golden Rule. The philosophy of Confucius emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity. Harvard's popular professor in Chinese philosophy Michael Puett concludes: *"You do not reach a good life by finding your true self but by walking the way of innate refinement and involvement".* Simply being involved with each other in everyday life. You lead a worthy life if you are able to give full attention to the expectations and needs of the other.

For impactful communication: authenticity is good, but empathy is better!

03. <u>Mandela's secret</u>

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us."

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON, CITED BY NELSON MANDELA.

In this world I do not know a better communicator than Nelson Mandela. With his dialogues, he has transformed a country torn by Apartheid and on the brink of a civil war into an, even by western standards, reasonably functioning democracy. What an amount of bonding power and empathy is required to do that! Also bearing in mind that he could hardly have known his fellow countrymen. When he, as future leader of the nation, was released from Robben Island in 1991, he had just had twenty-seven years of solitary confinement behind him. Twenty-seven years in a tiny cell with little other contact than with his guards! Just imagine what your world looked like twenty-seven years ago (if you were even already born then), and then would suddenly leap into the here and now. It would be like making a journey through time and then immediately starting out as the leader of a nation.

Mandela was militant and full of ambition. In his younger years when he studied law next to his simple job as a supervisor in a goldmine, he said that he would one day become the president of South Africa. But ambition alone does not get you very far when you become responsible for guiding South Africa through such a critical stage. Mandela realized that he needed effective help. He had a few specialized diplomats search the world for the most relevant knowledge in the field of change management and communication. They showed up with two professors from Denton University in Texas: Donald Beck and Chris Cowan. Together they had translated the legacy of the late psychology researcher Clarence Graves into a practical culture analysis program. That was exactly what Mandela was looking for. A fundamental and yet directly effective approach. He brought the two men over to Cape Town and convinced them to give up their Chairs for the most exciting assignment you can ever get as a scientist: contribute to the transformation of a nation on the brink of a bloody civil war. Aside from the Cold War this was the largest political problem in its day. What a challenge and what honor.

Nelson Mandela did not only become an expert in understanding the different cultures of South Africa, through applying 'Spiral Dynamics', as Beck and Cowan had named their method in the meantime. He also enriched the model with his personal interpretation of it. From the implementation in the field of cultural analysis and the steering of demographic development, Mandela shifted the emphasis towards communication. He grew to be an expert in understanding others' perspectives and values by reframing this in his messages to the different communities of South Africa: from the Afrikaners, to the ANC and tribes such as the Inkatha. He learned that he was far more effective in convincing all parties to contribute to a new South Africa as a 'rainbow nation', if he linked the message closely to their perception of their social environment and the communication patterns of these groups. Yet, maintaining the same message and the same content. He became an expert in that. By using his empathy he indeed created his 'rainbow nation'.

Nowadays we face similar challenges in many places in the world. Therefore it is extremely relevant to make Mandela's legacy, his secret, available to anyone who may need it: the power of communication based on 'Spiral Dynamics'. Mandela mentioned that power in his presidential inauguration speech in 1994, by citing a now famous poem by Marianne Williamson:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are
inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful
beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most
frightens us.
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who
are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won't feel insecure
around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of
God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us;
it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others."

NELSON MANDELA

04. <u>Re-thinking dialogue</u>

"We do not think and talk about what we see; we see what we are able to think and talk about."

EDGAR H. SCHEIN, HUMBLE INQUIRY: THE GENTLE ART OF ASKING INSTEAD OF TELLING

"What we need in this time of change and insecurity is three things: communication, communication and communication!". Satisfied Sri Sri Ravi Shankar looks around the large room in Amsterdam. For him this sums up all the answers to questions that his followers had written down earlier on small notes. After entering the room where mainly European followers were present – who stroke me as fanatical admirers, strewed petals – he sat down on a kind of throne that was brought in. This scene, with an intriguing mix of cultures, confirmed all my prejudices in one go. I looked around rather puzzled but soon came to the conclusion that I was the only one having these reservations. All around me I heard loud applause. *"Communication of the mind, communication of the heart and communication of the soul,"* he continued. When I let the message sink in, I realized that while his remark first sounded as an 'open door' he actually hit the nail right on the head. We have narrowed down communication into a sole exchange of information, which totally fails in the light of the transition we are facing now.

Once all communication was one, of course. But somewhere along the way separation came into being. At the end of the Middle Ages, The Enlightenment (marking the separation of the religious and the physical world and that of body and soul which lifted the oppressive grip of the church on the physical world) created a crucial breakthrough, which enabled the development of our Western science. All our material insights derive from that. But, that separation also greatly influenced our way of communicating. The world of rationality, or of thinking logically and of physical observations (finally scientists were able to look through a microscope), formed the new domain for researchers.

The need for that separation was mutual. Beside the world of religion, soul and spirituality, scientists of that time wanted to get rid of the then intangible world of the heart, emotions and intuition. They had their hands full with the many new observations and theories about the physical world. The Enlightenment brought about a new order in ways of thinking and communicating:

- Science: world of the mind, the rational and logic.
  Domain of the perceptible world
- Relationship and family: world of the heart, of emotion and intuition
- Religion: the world of the soul and spirituality

Science drove a huge technological advance and with that caused an economic wave. On top of the domain of the rational in language, it created a second and perhaps even more drastic effect. The new factories with their modern technology such as steam power and modern logistical improvements also gave a large impulse to organizational insights. The hierarchy that we were familiar with from the structure in the church, further developed into the modern bureaucracy: a top down hierarchy based on a clear division of functions. The power of bureaucracy is to unite all these different specialists' skills in a logical manner, by means of detailed processes. A second feature is that thinking and acting were separated. At the mines or in factories for example, a class of engineers arose, who did the brainwork, as did a class of laborers to carry out the thought-out processes without adaptions. This strongly affected communication patterns. Under this influence it became very 'top down' and it turned communication on the work floor into a culture of telling. This is reflected in the structure of communication in large organizations. Management is the third class that came into being in order to guide the processes. As communication plays such an important role there, special staff departments 'communication' emerged.
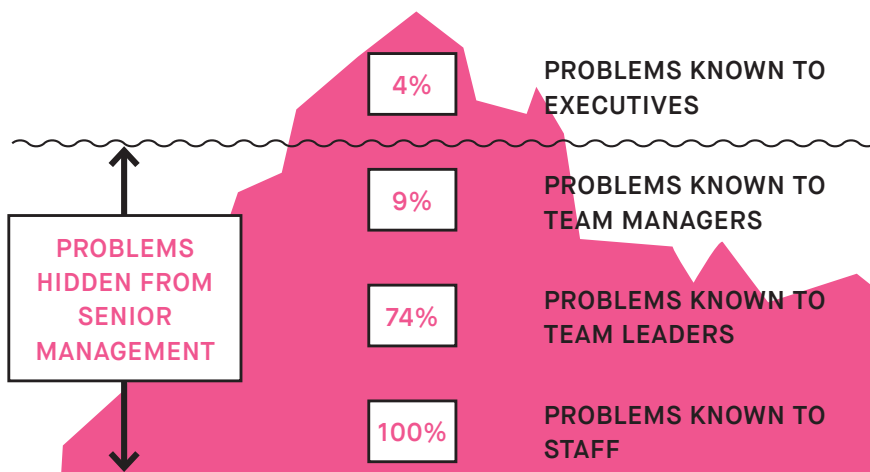
In the twentieth century the Anglo-Saxon management idea prevails worldwide. This boosts the professionalization of management and creates an increasing emphasis on shareholder value. Also, it greatly influences the style of communication: top down, increasingly focused on effectiveness and value

creation. Communication, also within organizations, increasingly becomes top down marketing. So much so that this is completely perfected, both internally and externally, to support functioning peak of our capacity which is actually industrial bureaucracy.

An important insight these days came into being by what is now called 'the Hawthorne effect,' named after the American plant where experiments were carried out in influencing the workers to increase productivity. When productivity grew after the intensity of light was increased, the management searched for a good explanation. When, after some time, productivity fell back to its former level, the intensity of light was also brought back. To the surprise of the management, productivity (temporarily) increased again. They discovered that not the intensity of light but the attention given to the workers influenced their motivation. Yet another tool to influence production and success was found.

The Iceberg of Ignorance

PROBLEMS KNOWN TO
EXECUTIVES

4%

PROBLEMS KNOWN TO
TEAM MANAGERS

9%

PROBLEMS
HIDDEN FROM
SENIOR
MANAGEMENT

PROBLEMS KNOWN TO
TEAM LEADERS

74%

PROBLEMS KNOWN TO
STAFF

100%

copyright Quality improvement and TQC Management at Calsonic in Japan and Overseas

This constant emphasis on success, management, and the culture linked to that, creates an intrinsic problem. When all is focused on success and value creation, this creates a blind spot for bad news. Increasingly communication

becomes a permanent and tightly directed good news show. Gradually it loses its credibility. According to Edgar Schein, MIT-professor organizational culture, the emphasis on sending has become the greatest weakness of the American management culture. In that culture listening has become of marginal importance. The American management guru Deming acknowledged this already in the fifties and developed his 'improve together' approach. He found that Japan expressed more interest for this approach than his own country. Toyota has based its complete production philosophy on that approach, which is now called 'lean'. Improving processes together with all employees.

In the rest of the Western management culture the 'top down' sending culture, or the 'marketization of communication' reached the limits of its possibilities. Caused by the lack of listening capacity and the emphasis on good news both in and outside the organizations, confidence in communication skills has almost completely disappeared. The average employee has more confidence in the informal information exchanged 'at the coffee machine' than in formal announcements. For any organization, public or private, this holds enormous risks. Management and the operations they are supposed to manage seem to often live in complete different worlds, almost like parallel universes. What a danger for proper decision-making that is. From production of goods or food to running nuclear energy plants, from organizing a school to leading an army, poor decision-making is extremely harmful. We need to re-think communication, and re-think dialogue.

05. <u>Re-inventing dialogue: the de-construction of communication</u>

"We accept the world in order to change it.
If you do not accept, then what are you going to change?"

SRI CHINMOY

It is all a matter of perspective. Although objectively we might see the same image, we can have completely different interpretations. And because of our different perspectives we will see a different subject. It is unavoidable. Our perspective is determined by our position, our actual 'life conditions' and our programming from the past. If we are taught to swim, water will look attractive, while if we cannot swim, it will look dangerous. Because everybody has a different personal history, everybody has a different interpretation program.
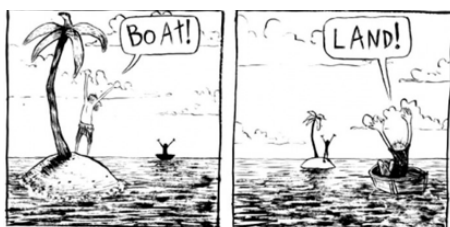
Nevertheless, in any dialogue we assume that the other sees the same object as we do, without checking. The effect is even stronger with more abstract concepts. For a police organization we checked everybody's interpretation of the concept 'integrity'. And they came up with completely different, and often opposite, perceptions. Some explained that 'integrity' meant 'sticking to the rules', others explained it was 'never betray or abandon your buddies in dangerous situations`. Well, you can see that such a difference may lead to completely different actions on the battlefield.

Most of the time we expect everybody to just have the same interpretation as we do ourselves. In fact, that makes us almost blind! This mainly illustrates our incompetence to empathize with how others perceive the world. *"Every well thinking person should experience the world just like I do!"* This casualness also blocks our tendency to simply question things. What do you see? And what does it mean to you? We all have the tendency to start most conversations with our personal message, without checking anything.

Toon, a senior university teacher, following a leadership program, expressed his problem to level with his fellow teachers and his manager. We set him up in a role play where his fellow leadership students served as fellow teachers first: *"Ok, show us your way"*. And off he went, in an impressive monologue,

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explaining a complex reality and enforcing his view on the solutions. The questions he asked, all started with: *"Do you agree……".* His colleagues and later his manager felt overwhelmed and even intimidated. Toon did not even come close to his goal: convincing his fellows or his boss. They all reacted defensive and irritated. *"What's your problem?"* I asked them. *"He is not listening at all! We don't feel any connection"*. So there is the first insight in creating a constructive dialogue: we can only listen to others when we ourselves feel heard and seen.
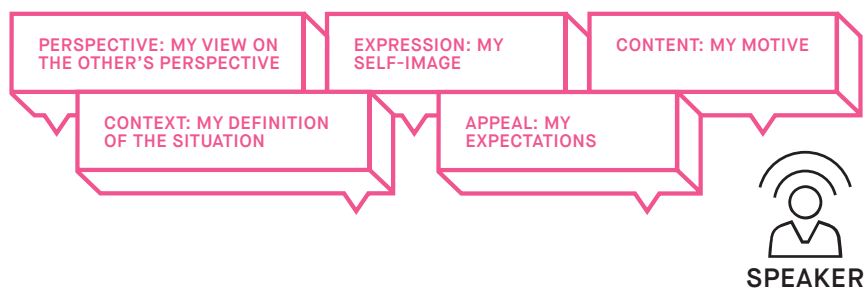
I can only really listen to you when I feel heard.

Almost everyone knows the marvel of a truly good conversation, which does not feel like a wonder but more like a totally natural flow. In a café and at the kitchen table with a good friend or when you just hit it off with someone. On these occasions empathy comes naturally. A dialogue like that never starts by throwing the content or question on the table immediately, like for example: *"Great that we are meeting here, can you help me get a job?"*. Naturally, that never works.

Certainly, you will not obtain your goal like that. And yet, in business situations that is how we generally operate. It is a result of being so preoccupied in our head with content - our own content - that we simply forget the other steps that a good dialogue requires.

In such an informal dialogue amongst friends, naturally we start exchanging our personal observations. Like: *"You do look good, have you been working out a lot lately?"* or *"How are things at work or at home?"*. Questions like that are usually the beginning of an exchange on what we have experienced lately and our personal interpretation of it: our individually illustrated worldviews.

After that, the focus of the dialogue often shifts in the direction of the content. But not without first discussing the context: "*At our company there is a huge reorganization going on. They have already halved the office staff. Next it will probably be our turn*". "*The same here. And they are always making the wrong choices*". That is how the dialogue shifts in the context. Worries are approaching.

"*Look, we can talk about this frankly, we have known each other for such a long time. During our studies we shared the same interests. And over the past years you have really helped me with your advice several times*". At this point in the conversation, the relationship is put on the table. This reference and the upcoming answer define their relationship, and how they both like to see it. "*Oh please, don't overestimate, I just gave you some tips. Isn't that what friends are for?*"

PERSPECTIVE: MY VIEW ON THE OTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

EXPRESSION: MY SELF-IMAGE

CONTENT: MY MOTIVE

CONTEXT: MY DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION

APPEAL: MY EXPECTATIONS

SPEAKER

Then the moment has come to bring the actual subject to the table, the appeal. "*Look, I am seriously worried and heard word that my position is almost sure to disappear in the new setup. Because I feel I can turn to you, I wondered if there is a job for me in your organization. I have become really good at retaining doubtful customers. You must have these too*".

Finally, when all four 'introductory' aspects of the dialogue are completed and with that a well established relationship, there is sufficient basis to dive into the content. Then there is room for mutually different arguments and views and surely a substansive conclusion.

The core of the dialogue is that the two different sides of each aspect are constantly 'synchronized'. Especially by looking at the different perspectives side by side. The images do not need to be the same, as long as they are comprehensible for each other. The differences should be recognizable. A sense of understanding for different points of view, that is true empathy.
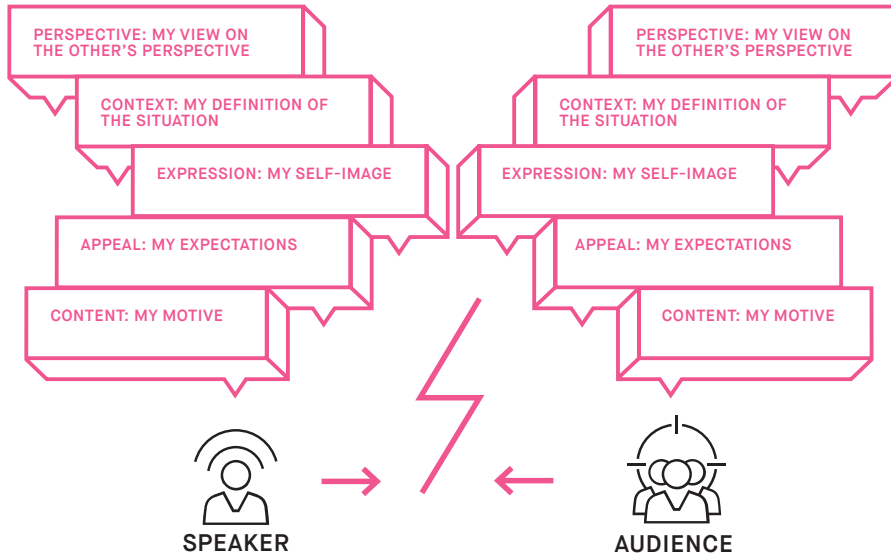
If in such a dialogue we fail to study and discuss differences, they will get in the way of the outcome. Many studies have been carried out on this. If we differ on one aspect in 'the game', then the final message will come across scrambled. If two or three aspects differ and are not synchronized, the ultimate content will not come across at all. And if four aspects do not synchronize, the opposite of the intended message will come across. From the example above the result would be that the helper would advise others against giving the questioner a job.

If, for instance one partner sees himself as very accessible and supportive whereas the other experiences him as arrogant, and the opinions differ greatly on the content matter (it is his own fault that he will lose his job versus I am the victim despite my good qualities), you can easily see that the final conclusion leads nowhere.

This deconstruction of such a naturally flowing dialogue applies to any form of personal communication. Also to business meetings, introductions in management meetings, announcements of great changes in organizations and public speeches. Every time, before we can go deeply into the content, the relationship has to be created or reinforced, and every time the same mechanisms play a role. We first want to be heard and understood before we are willing to listen to the message or the appeal of the other. When we deliver a speech, which is generally seen as one-way traffic, we first have to reinforce that relationship in order to be able to get the message across. Also here disturbances of that relationship cannot only warp a message, but they can even reverse it.

A classic example of such a reversed outcome is the communication of president George W. Bush after hurricane Katrina. This hurricane was the third biggest in the Atlantic hurricane season in 2005. It caused 1,833 casualties and over 153 billion dollar in damage, of which the biggest part was in the city of New Orleans. As aid started slowly, Bush's policy was quickly criticized mainly targeting that Bush basically ignored a relatively poor city with predominantly Democratic voters. To correct the impression that Bush was not a president for the poor, the delivery of the first emergency accommodations (which were only completed after a year, by the way) was seized as the start of a positive publicity campaign. Bush would hand over the first keys to a carefully selected family: a decent family of color with two children.
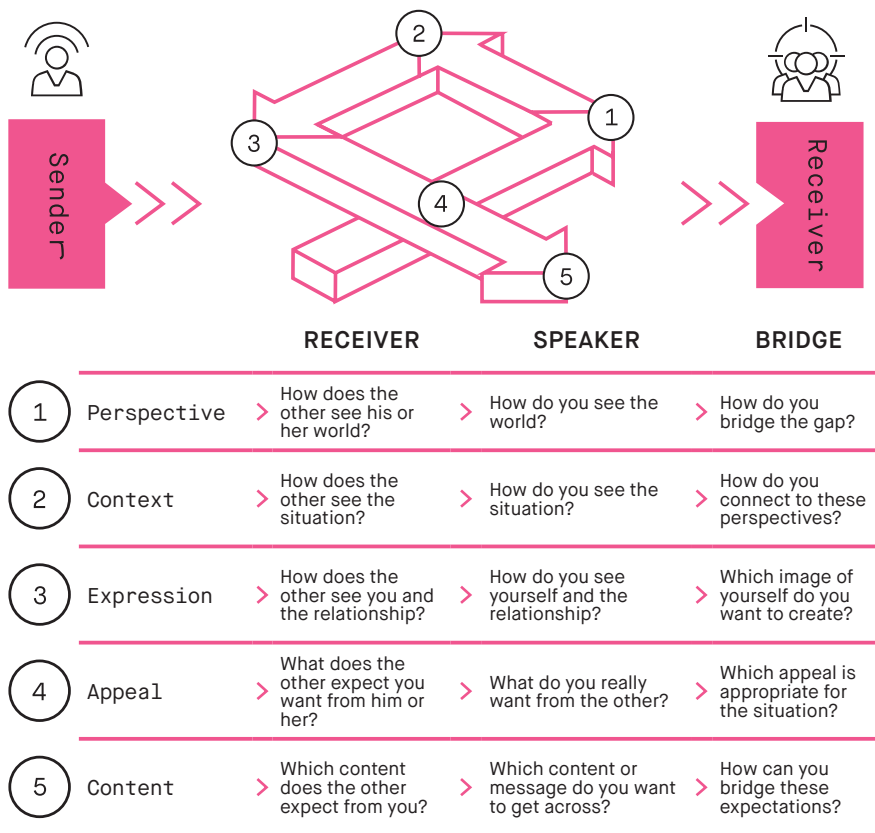
Somewhere in the careful production things went wrong when an invited video news crew from the German ZDF got lost and ended up in the next district, where human remains were still out on the public roads. When the

crew filmed that, it was broadcasted on a much wider scale than the intended produced pictures. The view of the Americans was not that Bush had not been successful in his behavior relating to the hurricane, but it had completely reversed from the original message to, as expressed by Afro-Americans: *"Bush hates niggers"*. According to insiders this occurrence lay the basis for the next Democratic victory with Barack Obama as president.

So, how do you make a true connection? Simply by giving balanced attention to these five steps. First make sure the connection has been made before starting with the fifth step, the content, which we overestimate so much.

The reconstruction of dialogue

		RECEIVER	SPEAKER	BRIDGE
1	Perspective	How does the other see his or her world?	How do you see the world?	How do you bridge the gap?
2	Context	How does the other see the situation?	How do you see the situation?	How do you connect to these perspectives?
3	Expression	How does the other see you and the relationship?	How do you see yourself and the relationship?	Which image of yourself do you want to create?
4	Appeal	What does the other expect you want from him or her?	What do you really want from the other?	Which appeal is appropriate for the situation?
5	Content	Which content does the other expect from you?	Which content or message do you want to get across?	How can you bridge these expectations?

These steps normally do come natural at an informal 'kitchen table dialogue'. In other situations, you should consider these steps as guideline for empathy. Empathy for doubts and conditional thoughts that the other may have in the dialogue. By naming these conditional thoughts.

Often I hear: it's all very nice, showing empathy, but how can you know what someone else is thinking? The answer to this forms the basis for real communication: ask questions and then… listen to the answer. Really listen.

> Listening is more than hearing.
> Listening is having the courage to lose time.
> To let the other finish.
> Don't come with solutions, but go on your way at
> a footpace with the other.
> Don't force your speed onto him,
> but follow his.
> Don't give your answer,
> but let him find his.
> In listening the other,
> experiences that you love him.
> He who has the courage to listen
> does not feel the pressure to illuminate the other,
> but begins to believe
> that the actual listening is light in itself.
>
> **(ERIK STYNEN)**