SOCIAL ECOLOGY
IN HOLISTIC LEADERSHIP

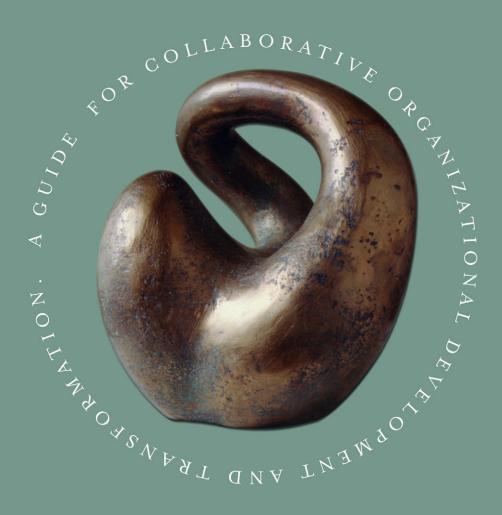A GUIDE FOR COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION·

ERIK LEMCKE

Social Ecology in Holistic Leadership

Praise for Social Ecology in Holistic Leadership

"In his new book, *Social Ecology in Holistic Leadership*, Erik Lemcke gives facilitators, consultants, and trainers invaluable insights and practical methods for healing social and organizational life. Clear, full of living images, theoretical perspectives, and helpful case studies, it is a treasure chest waiting to be discovered and unpacked. I highly recommend it."

Christopher Schaefer, Ph.D.
author of Vision in Action, Partnerships of Hope: Building Waldorf School Communities, and Re-Imaging America: Finding Hope in Difficult Times

"*Social Ecology in Holistic Leadership* is a guide book for facilitators and also leaders in business, government, and civil society organizations. This comprehensive toolkit helps design and facilitate processes of individual, group, and organizational development for more meaningful and productive work. Deeply grounded in tried and tested theory, methods, and social processes arising from action research, this handbook is a handy yet profound resource for guiding organizational renewal and for thriving in this age of disruption. It is a real work of insight and love."

Martin Large, facilitator,
author, Social Ecology (1981) and Common Wealth for a more free, equal, mutual and sustainable society (2010)

"As humanity moves from the age of competition to the age of collaboration, many people are beginning to realize that we need a shift in worldview and a shift in consciousness if we are to survive and are to create a flourishing and sustainable world. This Guide provides the framework for this shift as well as the tools and skills needed to get individuals, systems, and humanity from what does not work to what works for all."

Judi Neal, Ph.D.
CEO, Edgewalkers International

"Few books bring the depth of knowledge about Personal, Organizational, and Cultural Change than this one. This easy-to-read book traces the roots of Social Ecology and gives numerous tools to create deeply effective consultation and organizational health. It is a must-read for senior practitioners and academicians in the field of social, personal, and organizational change."

Marc A. Silverman,
Past President of International Organization Development Association

Social Ecology in Holistic Leadership: A Guide for Collaborative Organizational Development and Transformation

BY ERIK LEMCKE

Association for Social Development, International

*I dedicate this book to the earnest followers of Bernard Lievegoed,
who intend to keep his principles and the Lievegoed Impulse alive,
bringing them futher out into the world.*

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Foreword

There are some books that must be written, and there are those that demand a specialized background, experience, and approach to be written. This is such a book – a necessary book. It is written by a Dane and in English. This is because of its subject, content, and message, which are universal. Therefore, this book can… and should… be read everywhere in the world where groups of people focus on balanced holistic social and ecological development. The message contained in this book appeals to all mankind regardless of country of origin, culture, religion, etc.

The author, Erik Lemcke, has an epistemic, business, and leadership-oriented background and experience that make him perfectly suited to write this book in particular … this inventory of the important topic and concept known as *Social Ecology*. He has created a guide which provides a blueprint on how to merge these theories and practices.

It is hard to imagine a more relevant, and timely concept today than this. It is not a concept that is linked to a specific time period. The concept was relevant when Professor B.J. Lievegoed first introduced it in the 1950s and it will be relevant 100 years from now.

The book presents – as a coherent whole – a world view along with concepts, methodologies, and tools. *Social Ecology* is a practice based on research. It is a practice with suggestions on work methodologies and ways of being that are founded upon – and rooted – in comprehensive philosophical, psychological, and organizational research.

The book's timeliness can best be recognized upon the backdrop of F.W. Taylor's management theories. Taylor was an American engineer and father of management theory going back over 100 years. Taylor's ideas not only stamped but also dominated leadership/organizational thought and practice worldwide. Taylor's ideas are responsible for the almost indescribably dominant concepts of production and productivity which we see expressed throughout the world. These concepts nourish and have been nourished by greed and an almost ruthless lust for efficiency, whose damaging and self-destructive aftermaths are now becoming painfully obvious. *Social Ecology* offers another path to leadership and organizational development.

The book is about both private companies and public institutions, such as hospitals, universities, schools, etc. Everywhere, huge gains in efficiency and

productivity have been achieved, but the price to be paid is becoming so clear and significant, that it's becoming obvious that action must be taken, that tracks and directions must be changed, and that other management and organizational practices therefore are required.

The question that this book raises so pressingly in our day is: Are the leadership methodologies and tools used in society and business throughout these many decades the right ones to ensure a sustainable development of society and the business world in the coming decades?

My assessment – as is the book's author's – that the answer to this question is clear: No. The thought patterns and perspectives that characterize modern leadership and organizational thought are too narrow. It is a business owner's or shareholder's perspective that focuses alone on the stakeholders' short-sighted and narrow economic interests, overlooking other equally if not more important interests. It won't do. It can't continue. It's not sustainable. We have to change course. And it is urgent!

That is why, of late, we can observe the search for alternatives to traditional leadership and organizational development (OD) tools. A search, which B.J. Lievegoed found relevant and important already back in the mid-20th century. Lievegoed stood in the forefront of this movement as an outstanding pioneer of European leadership and organizational theory development. This was expressed, among other ways, through Lievegoed's original and groundbreaking book from 1954, *The developing organization*. In this book, Lievegoed describes leadership

> Leadership creates boundaries and space which makes it possible
> for the individual employee to utilize his knowledge, experience,
> creativity and fantasy in a fashion that brings the organization in
> the direction of a clear vision, and which gives the individual
> employee a better quality of life.

B.J. Lievegoed is very important in the development of leadership and organizational thought, and I would say, in reality, his contribution is strongly underestimated. This contribution is summarized in the term "Social Ecology" and Social Ecological methodology and tools… which are this important book's mission.

This is a very important book. It's being published at a point in time where the need for its methodologies and world view has never been greater. These days, all over the world, there is talk about the climate crisis, sustainability, the dramatic reduction in biological diversity, and of many other serious challenges – and opportunities. These developments and the attendant global risks have been so serious that in 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 goals for a sustainable global development. I maintain that this book belongs to this global sustainability epoch where the need for this book's methods and approach is more vital than ever before.

I welcome this book. I hope that it will find its way into the hands of those responsible for leadership and organizational practice as well as to students in

professional schools, universities, colleges, and other education/research institutions that concern themselves with community/organizational development.

Steen Hildebrandt, PhD
Professor Emeritus, Aarhus University, Denmark
Adjunct Professor, Copenhagen Business School
and Aalborg University, Denmark

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Acknowledgments

Through this book, I wish to honor those who lay the foundation of the Lievegoed Impulse and *Social Ecology*. I am full of gratitude to all of those who created the foundations of *Social Ecology* and the models which I have worked with since 1987. My intention is to use this Guide to describe techniques for using these models and thereby provide a modest contribution to their use and development.

I will first name the Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner, who as a social scientist and spiritual philosopher created the spiritual foundation for *Social Ecology*. Secondly, I owe a debt to B. J. Lievegoed, who with his understanding and ability – along with other colleagues in Netherlands Pedagogic Institute (NPI) – developed the platforms of *Social Ecology* and the Lievegoed Impulse. Through their research and not least practice, I credit them with transforming Steiner's Impulse to a functional theory and practice, which enables the healthy and moral development of individuals, organizations, and societies.

Let me mention a few more of the most important people on my path as a holistic consultant. There is Lex Bos from Holland, who in his work with Judgment Building/The Lemniscate has formed the foundation of my practice. Hans Brodal and Leif Nilsson from Sweden, who through courses have introduced and trained me in Social Ecological methods. Bent Engelbrecht from Denmark, who was the main initiator of Ankerhus, the "Institute for Social Ecology" – Denmark, with which I was a co-initiator in 1987.

My membership in Association for Social Development (ASD) since 1990 is important because it enabled me to establish a personal relationship with a group of people who, like I, have developed and practiced Lievegoed's Impulse internationally. Here, amongst others, I am thinking of Austrian Professor Friederich Glasl's knowledge and books. I also think of the Dutch Professor Adriaan Bekman, who in 1986, held the course that made me decide on future work based on Lievegoed's Impulse and *Social Ecology*. These are just a few of the people in ASD with whom I have had important conversations and development work over the years.

I would also like to mention my colleague in DanSET, Sigrun Hardardóttir, who for many years was an important collaborative and development partner.

This book would never have reached the publication stage without the assistance of my proofreader Eva Lønborg from Denmark and my old friend and colleague in ASD, Graeme Harvey from Australia. I also thank Graeme for his invaluable comments on the book's content.

I will end by thanking my wife, Jonelle, for her love and support during the process of writing this book.

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Erik Lemcke
Copenhagen
2020

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Introduction to the Book

Today, in society as well as in organizations, there is an ever-increasing requirement for growth and efficiency. Concurrently, organizations focus on the quality of the work environment. Most managers and consultants have academic backgrounds in business and administration, and are trained in contemporary methods that focus on decision making and economic efficiency.

The question is: *Are these academic methods the best to further the development of society as well as organizations?*

Increasing numbers of men and women are looking for alternatives to traditional decision and management tools. They are looking for methods based on dialog which involve the employees in the development process; methods which are more creative in their approach to decision making; methods which are more co-creative and collaborative; holistic methods which can even be spiritually based. It is in this context that *Social Ecology* – which roots back to the mid 1950s and developed further over the next 60 years – is interesting.

After having been a traditional IBM consultant and manager for many years, I was …myself… looking for alternative ways of developing organizations. In 1986 I attended a seminar about transformation given by Adriaan Bekman based on Bernard Lievegoed's holistic methods. During that seminar, I decided it was time to change direction in my professional life and use *Social Ecology* as its basis. In 1990, I founded danSET consulting, "Danish Social Ecology Transformation." The mission of danSET was to contribute to a Social Ecological Transformation of society and organizations, in that they became sustainable through the use of Social Ecological methodologies.

After having worked with *Social Ecology* over the past 30 years, I have decided to collect and categorize many of the methodologies and ways of working which I have used or find important as a facilitator and OD consultant.

This condensed Guide consists of two parts. The main body introduces the working methods which are useful to process consultants, development consultants, and holistic facilitators. The second part consists of appendices which describe the different tools, methods, exercises, and seminar programs. Readers interested in the spiritual aspects can find an introduction to the spiritual images found in *Anthroposophy* which lie behind the Social Ecological methods.

From the very beginning, Bernard Lievegoed and his associate Lex Bos discussed naming the new methodology *Social Ecology* – the terminology used in

Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.[1] However, this name was not accepted by the University of Rotterdam in 1954 when Lievegoed formed the NPI. This is why, in most countries, the methodologies are known as "NPI methods for organizational development."

Bernard Lievegoed formed NPI in 1954 and was a pioneer in OD based on *systemic thinking*. Already in *The developing organization*, the title of the first chapter is: "Thinking in systems and models as a basis for modern management.[2]"

The methods can also be called Rudolf Steiner's principles for adult education as Rudolf Steiner's spiritual Picture of Man is the platform/basis for *Social Ecology*.[3] Readers are encouraged to refer to A2: *Anthroposophical spiritual terminology*. This appendix is included for readers with interest in the spiritual aspects. *Social Ecology* methods can be used without going into this area/level.

Social Ecology can be described as a *holistic* way of working which strives to create balance in organizations and human beings. This can be expressed through questions like:

• How is it possible to develop healthy organizations where human beings thrive and experience opportunities to develop themselves as responsible people?
• How can one create a company culture which inspires life long learning?
• How can one create conditions for job-based learning?
• How does one stimulate impulses of sustainability and responsibility in the way the corporate world utilizes natural resources?

The basic intent of Social Ecological thinking is to develop individuals who take free initiative in securing sustainable/healthy development in their communities based on socially responsible actions within the inner life of organizations and within their local societies.

If you as a consultant or manager are looking for methods to implement spiritual leadership in your organization, you will find a lot of inspiration in Social Ecological thinking/methods.

The Purpose of Social Ecology is to...

• provide valid methods and processes which give adults tools for lifelong conscious learning and development
• create an understanding of how to behave in social and ecologically responsible ways in relation to other people, groups, and organizations
• create healthy organizations where individuals can use their free will to take initiative and create working conditions based on a culture supported by dialog.

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[1]A.1: p. 136.
[2]R.1. B. Lievegoed (1973, p. 21).
[3]The terminology Picture of Man stands for both "the image of human being" and "the image of feminine/masculine" and is used in all parts of the book.

The Frame of Social Ecology

- is a holistic approach to transform and develop individuals and organizations
- covers topics from the range of personal development to the range of organizational development
- is a collection of methods and tools developed from 1954 onwards and transferred to practitioners often in verbal form or in short articles
- is part of system-thinking methods[4]
- is a systemic way of thinking and consciousness
- focuses on co-creation, collaborative processes, and leadership for organizational change
- takes inspiration from the organic way in which nature develops
- focuses on ways of developing the individual consciousness and its ability to come to inner freedom
- was developed by practitioners who shared a common spiritual view
- is a path to inner development based on *Anthroposophy. Social Ecology* is not just another business methodology; one lives with it and it can become an integrated part of one's personality.

An International Network of Developers and Consultants

Since 1979, an international network of developers and consultants who base their work on the Lievegoed Impulse has existed. The name of this network is the ASD.[5]

The Form and Structure of the Book

I have decided to write this book as one facilitator giving experiences and recommendations to another facilitator or process consultant. Therefore, I use "you" when I address you as a facilitator.

The structure of the individual chapters is based on a training program which I have given for about 25 years in Lithuania supplemented by my experience in working professionally with *Social Ecology* in client situations. I will supplement the content with text and questions from existing literature.

The Lithuanian training program, "Personal development and change management based on *Social Ecology*" is a six module-training program for people wanting to deepen their understanding of social processes inside and outside organizations. It is especially targeted on people who are active in social change processes in their workplace or are employed as trainers or educators. Those wishing to enter these fields have also benefitted from this training.

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[4]A.3: p. 189.
[5]A.1: p. 136.

Personal development is an integrated part of the training; it gives the participants new social skills and new ways of working independently. The education increases the participants' abilities to learn from daily situations at work and at home.

The training emphasizes some essential areas:

- The quality of dialog
- The art of questioning
- Working with reflection and the *looking back*[6] technique for learning
- How to reach healthy judgments in problematic situations where there is no one answer to problems or questions in business/personal life.

How to Benefit from this Book

You can consider skipping P1: *Introduction to basic concepts in Social Ecology*, if your professional work already involves methodologies focusing on deep listening, the art of putting questions and the extraction of learning points.

P2 to P5 describe the different Social Ecological methods found in the book. If you are primarily theoretically and method oriented, this is where you find what you are looking for. These parts also include reflections on how to use the methods and what to be aware of when using them.

If you work as an OD consultant or facilitator, A5 is the chapter where you can find seminar descriptions referring to relevant theory and methods in different parts of the book, including references to exercises that are described in detail in A4.

If you are spiritually oriented and wish to know which images are behind the described theory and models, A2 is relevant for you.

To make it easy to navigate between the different parts of the book, there is a detailed index.

The Literature used in this Guide

The groundwork of *Social Ecology* was originally developed by consultants who were practitioners of NPI in The Netherlands, but has been further developed over time by consultants from England, Germany, Brazil, Sweden, and Denmark. A key part of this book is written based on translations of very early material from Dutch to Swedish or English. Problematically, this early Swedish material that I had access to has no author or date. Many of the methods described in the book were received via an "oral tradition" during seminars and development sessions, which I have attended in the 80s and early 90s, and adapted to my personal style and methodologies.

A small number of authors began writing about *Social Ecology* and the Lievegoed Impulse in the 80s and 90s. These books were written primarily in Dutch

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[6]P1.4: p. 10.

and German, plus a few in English. Over time, more and more of the Dutch and German books had been translated into English. As these books were translated into English, I integrated some of this material into my consultancy and have incorporated it into this book. I also refer to a few books in Swedish, German, Dutch and Danish which are not translated into English.

My Motivation for Writing this Guide

I am motivated to write this book because I sense that many of *Social Ecology*'s methodologies are more valuable than ever before, but nevertheless are in danger of being forgotten. Although books on *Social Ecology* exist – written by professors and practitioners – these materials are not used very much in academic management programs. The Lievegoed impulse and *Social Ecology* are little known – even in circles that work with transformation, change, and development processes based on methods like co-creation, holistic principles, and sustainability.

Today we have a generation of young, academically trained consultants who have some exposure to the Lievegoed Impulse, but many of them feel connected to newer and more fashionable ways of working which are more commonly used in our time.[7]

The Lievegoed Impulse contains lots of possibilities when working with *Social Ecology* in classical ways. In conclusion, I hope that this book will be an eye-opener for present and future OD consultants/facilitators who focus on holistic participatory processes, co-creation, transformation, and healthy development of organizations.

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[7]In Appendix B, I shortly cover a number of these newer methods which function well together with the methods of *Social Ecology* and in many ways are parallel in their intentions: p. 241.

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Part 1
Introduction to Learning and Basic Concepts in Social Ecology

Learning and Development is Totally Integrated in Social Ecology

Maybe *Social Ecology*'s most important mission is to create the awareness and consciousness that makes it possible for a human being to develop a learning attitude throughout his/her lifetime. If the organization you work with, or for, is focused on developing into a Learning Organization, this section gives you an introduction to three essential elements which have to be developed in the area of learning the ability to *ask the right questions*, the ability to engage in *deep listening,* and the ability to *extract* learning points from every activity you are involved in.[1]

This individual learning goes hand in hand with the task of creating methods and thinking about how a person can develop, change, and learn during his/her lifetime. Learning and development in *Social Ecology* is based on holistic and spiritual images. This thinking leads to a number of questions such as:

- *How can modern Man learn and develop in life?*
- *How can a person take the responsibility for his/her development through his/her lifetime?*
- *How can Social Ecology models be used to create a healthy social life and healthy organizations?*
- *How can an understanding of one's biography assist one in finding one's path in life or the meaning of one's life?*

1.1 The Picture of Man in Social Ecology

Before introducing the three key elements for learning the Picture of Man used in *Social Ecology* is introduced (Fig. 1).[2]

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[1]R2. Peter Senge (1990).
[2]The terminology Picture of Man stands for both "the image of human being" and "the image of feminine/masculine" and is used in all parts of the book.

Fig. 1.   The Threefold Picture of Man.

The human being, male or female, is considered a physical being with a *physical body* which is connected to the *physical world*. The human being also has a *Soul* which is connected to the *social world*.

In addition, the human being has an *Individuality* or a *Higher Ego* which is its connection to the spiritual world. In our daily life, the *Soul* can be described with different qualities, such as *Thinking, Feeling,* and *Will* (T-F-W).

Thinking is connected to the head which is conscious of its inner and outer world. *Feeling* is connected to the heart. *Will* is connected to the limbs. Working with and understanding T-F-W is an integral part of many of Social Ecological models and their use in practice.[3]

The threefold Picture of Man is described in P4.2, chapter: *The threefold organization:* p. 59 unfolded into an organizational model.

1.1.1 Resistance to Change in the Threefold Picture of Man

In change processes, you very often meet resistance and the way in which you meet it is closely connected to the three different *Soul* qualities of *Thinking, Feeling,* and *Will*.

In the *Thinking* area, you meet knowledge and arguments based on intellect against what is proposed, e.g., *With my education, I know that this is not possible because……. I am a specialist in this area and I know …*. These types of arguments are based on logic and consciousness and can often be explained very clearly. You are downloading old patterns of thinking and behaving. The way to overcome this

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[3]In *Thinking* we are most conscious, in *Feeling* we mostly dream, and in *Will* we are mostly unconscious.

resistance is to have an *Open Mind.* Be open to the possibility of doing things in a new way and of finding solutions through new patterns.

Resistance in the *Feeling* area does not come from logic and consciousness, but from what many in daily life call intuition, e.g., *I have a very strong feeling that it isn't right to …… I really don't like what is happening now…. We should never do it this way, it won't be good for anyone ….* One way to overcome this type of resistance is through an *Open Heart.* Let your heart feel free and let it be open for other possibilities. Try to reach *Open Heart Thinking* instead of intellectual thinking.

Resistance in the *Will* area comes from an even deeper level of unconsciousness in your *Soul.* It reaches down to the area of fear and can even be fear for your whole existence in a working situation. It can be fear of being fired, fear of not being able to cope with new ways of doing things. This fear is often illogical, e.g., in situations where a new way of doing things would be much better for your colleagues, the organization and its customers. Fear blocks the way for the new. The way to overcome this is by having an *Open Will* and being courageous by letting go and throwing earlier ways of doing things away. Be prepared to take a chance and try things in a new way.

I will go one step deeper into the area of resistance to change from a spiritual polarity point of view in A.2.1, subchapter: *Polarities in relation to resistance to change,* p. 150.

In *Social Ecology*, this way of thinking of resistance is integrated from the very beginning and now it is also a part of Otto Scharmer's book *Theory U, 2007*, where resistance in the area of *Thinking, Feeling,* and *Will* is named "Counterforces."[4]

Summary

This chapter must be considered an introduction to learning *Social Ecology* and to the Picture of Man. The threefold Picture of Man is recognizable in many of the following parts and in the organizational models.

1.2 The Art of Questioning

Introduction

The driving force in *Social Ecology* processes is the art of questioning. The function of a question is the same as the function of a magnet: *It attracts solutions and answers.* If it is possible to find the "right" question in relation to a situation you are close to finding a solution – the answer.

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[4]B.1, chapter: *Counterforces which you meet in the U-journey,* p. 245.

The Purpose of a Question

Most people in professional as well as in private life are used to focus on problems when they are in challenging situations where change is needed.

   The typical method in problem solving is to define a problem and then formulate a number of alternatives.

   In 1987 when I was first introduced to the art of questioning, I was inspired by this quotation by Albert Einstein:

> *"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes to find the question behind the problem, as I, based on having the right question, could solve the problem in less than 5 minutes."*

In *Social Ecology*, it is recommendable that you train yourself to formulate a problem into a question and reformulate it again and again in the working process of understanding the situation/facts involved. Let the question be alive and let it be transformed during the time you are working on finding a solution.

   If you focus only on the definition of the problem, you risk narrowing down the possible solutions too much. If instead, you begin to work with a *living question*, it can be transformed during the whole problem-solving phase. Let the questions be transformed every time new facts emerge, and you become wiser. You will then increase the possibility of reaching a good solution. You should be aware that often in relation to complex social or organizational problems, there are multiple solutions.

1.2.1 Types of Questions Including Examples

There are many types of questions with different characteristics and qualities. We use them in different life situations. You can train yourself to be aware of the different types and especially be aware of when to use the different types of questions. Training yourself in working with questions is a bit like training your muscles. The more you train, the stronger your muscles become. The more you train in working with questions, the stronger your capability of formulating questions becomes and the more conscious you become in the art of questioning. P3.1.3: *Using the Lemniscate as a dynamic model in supporting conversations,* p. 42 describes a very efficient way of training groups to put questions in a conscious way based on using the *Lemniscate* in connection to supervision/coaching.

Questions are like stars in Heaven which I sometimes express like this:

> *"There is an infinite number of them and they give light on a dark night. However, it can take time to spot a specific star."*

Open and Honest/Authentic Questions as Opposed to Leading Questions

Open questions are used when you want people to come forward with their personal perspective, their own answer to a question. The questions can very often begin with: *what, where, when, how, who,* and *why.* You use open questions, when you want people to share and together find a common understanding and possible solution to the question. The open question is the driving force in co-creation/development work based on *Social Ecology*, when there is no one right answer in a specific situation. This type of question can be called both open and honest/authentic. It is an honest/authentic question because no one already has the answer to the question. Open and honest/authentic questions form the basis for problem solving and clarification, e.g.,

- *What is functioning well in our situation today?*
- *What is not functioning well?*
- *What is our common vision for the future?*

The questions above are both open and honest/authentic. But open questions can also be used in situations when you know the answer yourself. This means that they are not honest/authentic questions from your part. You just want the rest of a group to have the same knowledge you already have. For example, as a teacher or a leader, you want to unfold a theory or a given situation, e.g.,

- *What is the plan for next year?*
- *What is the theory behind…?*
- *Why does the plan look like it does?*
- *What is the background for this decision?*

Finally, there is the difference between open questions and leading questions. Leading questions are used when you want a person or a group to say yes to or confirm your will. You have already decided what should be done, now you just need a confirmation. This type of question with the aim for confirmation can not be called open or honest/authentic as it can be used to manipulate a situation. It rarely begins with one of the five Ws, but can be formulated as a W-question, e.g.,

- *Should we …?*
- *What if we…?*

Questions in Relation to an Organizational Developmental Process

When you as a process consultant or facilitator are asked to design and be part of the change/development process in an organization, it is often because of the management having identified a number of problems/challenges. Here again, the first challenge for the facilitator is to understand the problems to the level where the

problems can be transformed to a number of development questions. The first step in doing so is to clarify why the organization wants to start this process, understand *the purpose*, to understand which part of the organization is not functioning satisfactorily in relation to the existing situation or in relation to the emerging future. Again, use questions to identify the *real need* in that specific situation or organization. Often you will begin by interviewing the involved stakeholders. You might only interview the management team, but sometimes it is possible to interview a wider range of stakeholders. Maybe you will interview both managers and employees from many departments. You may also interview customers or suppliers. The many stakeholders will help you obtain an understanding of the situation by your listening to their perceptions of the problems and then by you transforming them to questions.

How to find the "right" questions? You find the "right" questions both in relation to the past and to the future by questioning:

- The purpose
- The situation and the problem
- How the employees in different departments work together
- Possible conflicts
- Intention and expectation
- Challenges for the future
- Goals
- Company values
- Corporate vision
- *What is emerging?*
- etc.

The development process is designed based on this type of interview including questions.[5]

Questions in Relation to Personal Development

As a development consultant/facilitator or manager, it is important to develop an inner attitude toward your Self and to look inwards. You should raise questions as to what is happening in your own life and continuously renew and live with deep questions in relation to your own striving in relation to the future. In this chapter, we will cover a number of these existential questions.[6]

Questions about Life

Sometimes in life, we are confronted with situations where we do not know what to do. *What is the next step in my life? What changes do I need to make?* You can describe these types of questions as existential questions. These types of questions

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[5]P3.1: p. 33 and P4.2: p. 55.
[6]P5.2: p. 120.

are often connected to life crises. Sometimes they are like a thief stealing into your house in the night. Everything seems to be going so well and now you are suddenly robbed of your security.

The following existential questions could be relevant:

- *Shall I stay in my job?*
- *Shall I stay in my relationship?*
- *What must I do in my life now?*
- *What do I need to change in myself?*
- *Is there a higher meaning with my life?*
- *Is there a God?*
- *Can I be a believer?*
- etc.

Questions in Relation to Inner Development

When these types of existential questions knock on your door, it can be the first step in a decision to start an inner development process. We are talking about a process to transform yourself from the person you are today to the person you can become, to come closer to your *Authentic Self*. You become aware of your ways of being and behaving. You begin to see the dark sides or shadows in yourself and in your relation to other people. The driving force in this process is again questions – especially inner questions, e.g.,

- *How can I become a better listener? (both to others and to myself)*
- *How can I stop being ironic?*
- *How can I stop bullying others?*
- *How can I stop taking too much space?*
- *How can I become better to listen to my heart and feelings?*
- etc.

Living with Questions

With these types of questions, answers rarely come immediately. You have to be patient; you have to learn to *live with an inner question*. Formulate the questions for yourself and keep them in your consciousness. It is recommendable to write the questions down and let them transform over time. Some of these *living questions* will probably stay with you for a period of your life before you get answers. Some of these living questions can even stay with you in your whole lifetime, e.g.,

- *Who am I?*
- *What is my mission on earth?*
- *How can I contribute to a better future for my society and for the world?*
- What is my role in this phase of my life?
- etc.

1.2.2 Be a Practitioner of Questioning

- Practicing in posing questions makes perfect. You can train yourself in many different ways.
- When attending a meeting, you can listen for the questions behind the spoken word. Just write the questions down.
- You can begin to put questions when participating in meetings/conferences.
- Here you can also challenge yourself by simply posing the question, without using time to explain the background for the question or why the question is important. You can put the question without providing a lecture which in reality is a way of trying to tell the listeners how wise you are and how much you know.
- Instead of presenting a counter argument in a discussion, you can begin by posing a question for the sake of understanding.
- By presenting questions again and again (maybe even the same question repeatedly) to a person describing a situation, you create *deepening questions.* These can be used to clarify and unfold more and more of the situation that lies behind the situation, and what has been said in the first round. By using a combination of *questions for the understanding* and *deepening questions,* you will come closer and closer to finding the clue to the question.

Summary

This chapter must be considered an introduction to working with questions. In many of the following chapters and in the appendices A.4 and A.5, there are many more specific examples of questions used in different situations and seminars.

1.3 The Art of Listening and Observation

We live in a rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. Both parts are equally essential for life. This rhythm of breathing in and out can in social/working life be compared with the rhythm of speaking and listening. However, in many work/social situations, it seems to be much easier to speak than to listen.

Speaking is an outgoing activity where we send our words out into the world. Listening is an inward, reflective activity. Listening on a deeper level requires inner quietness.

Let us look at the way many of us listen at a meeting. We listen with the goal of finding weaknesses in the arguments of the speaker. We prepare our counterarguments as soon as we think we have understood what the speaker wishes to say. We quickly cease to listen when we have an idea of what the other person wants to say and we begin to frame our own agenda. It is a great challenge for many of us to have this inner quietness which makes it possible for us really to listen to what another person is saying. Most of us are trained to be active and our minds are always jumping from one thought to the next. Too few of us are trained in the art of being quiet or trained in the ability of just listening and reach the level of *deep listening.* If we are unable to reach this level of *deep listening*, there is a great risk