

# Center for Human Emergence Netherlands

## *Impression of our first 7 years*

It is June 2010. We are having our monthly governance meeting with the top circle of our organization. Nine months ago we facilitated the launch of the 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign in Brazil. We adopted the goals of the 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign as our strategic priority, which took us to COP15 in Copenhagen with the aim to connect grass-roots initiatives into a world-wide meshwork of good practices. Our presence there got us invited to further this work at the prestigious conferences in Talberg and in Caux. In the Netherlands, we are involved in connecting financial parties into an initiative along the lines of Lester Brown's Plan B. Through our fully-owned company Synnervate, we consult a number of organizations involved in sustainable development, ministries among them, and offer a variety of training programs. We seem right on track. Yet we feel something else is wanted from us. We are about to pay attention to the evolutionary impulse as it arises in us and to change course. Again.

This is the story of the first 7 years of the Center for Human Emergence in the Netherlands (CHE NL) that was founded on April 20, 2005.

### **The original idea**

The Center for Human Emergence is a brainchild of Dr. Don Beck, a tireless Texan teacher, writer and consultant. At age 75, he still travels the world to help people in corporate, governmental and community settings understand and apply Spiral Dynamics Integral (SDi). This is a multi-dimensional model of human values and cultures. Founder and owner of the international Institute of Values and Culture and The Spiral Dynamics Group, Beck is also a founding associate of Ken Wilber's Integral Institute, a professor at the Adizes Graduate School in California, an associate of The Arlington Institute, and an advisory board member of the Spirituality and Global Affairs Associates. Beck is co-author of *The Crucible: Forging South Africa's Future* (1991) and *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership & Change* (1996).

This last book is an elaboration upon and extension of the work of his friend and mentor Clare W. Graves. A professor of psychology at Union College in Schenectady, New York, Graves explored why people are different, why some change but others don't, and how to navigate through the emerging and often chaotic versions of human existence.<sup>1</sup>

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Beck and Cowan, p. 28

His analysis of the data collected from his students and others between 1952 – 1959 became the basis for a theory that he called, among other titles: "The Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory" (ECLET). Beck and Cowan simplified this to 'Spiral Dynamics'.

The basis of the theory is that humans develop new coping systems in response to changing external life conditions. Graves was one of the first to state that 'man's nature is not a set thing, that it is ever emergent, that it is an open system.' This open-endedness set his approach apart from many of his contemporaries who sought a final state or perfectibility in human nature. Graves also observed that the emergence within humans of new bio-psycho-social systems in response to life conditions follows a hierarchy in which both progression and regression are possibilities.<sup>2</sup> Beck has tested this theory widely. Between 1981 – 1988 he made over sixty consulting trips to South-Africa, putting the theory to the test by applying it to the peaceful abolishment of the Apartheid system.

Beck: 'Mr. Mandela sought for a non-racist, non-ethnic, non-tribal, and non-gender society, one based on human respect and mutual accountability. My role was to shift the categories people were using to describe the South African groupings from race, ethnicity, gender and class into the natural value-system patterns and the dynamics of change. Many were able to connect across these great divides to find the basis for a sense of being South African.'

## **Coming together**

In May 2005, a group of 30 people assembled who had heard the call that a different approach was needed in our country, the Netherlands, where we had recently been shocked by two political murders. In 2002, an animal rights activist killed the upcoming populist politician Pim Fortuyn, who seemed to voice the growing tension between ethnic groups in this country known for its tolerance and openness. In 2004, a fundamentalist killed Theo van Gogh, writer, filmmaker and national court jester. From afar Don Beck saw how the Netherlands were in a unique position to either break down into a fear-based, polarized society, or break through to a new level of co-existence.

He had called Peter Merry, an Englishman who lived in The Hague, whom he knew to be on a path of wanting to apply Spiral Dynamics Integral to concrete situations. They had met early 2000. After a life of passionate activism and a role in the English Green Party, Peter wanted to focus on understanding how people and groups interact, learn and

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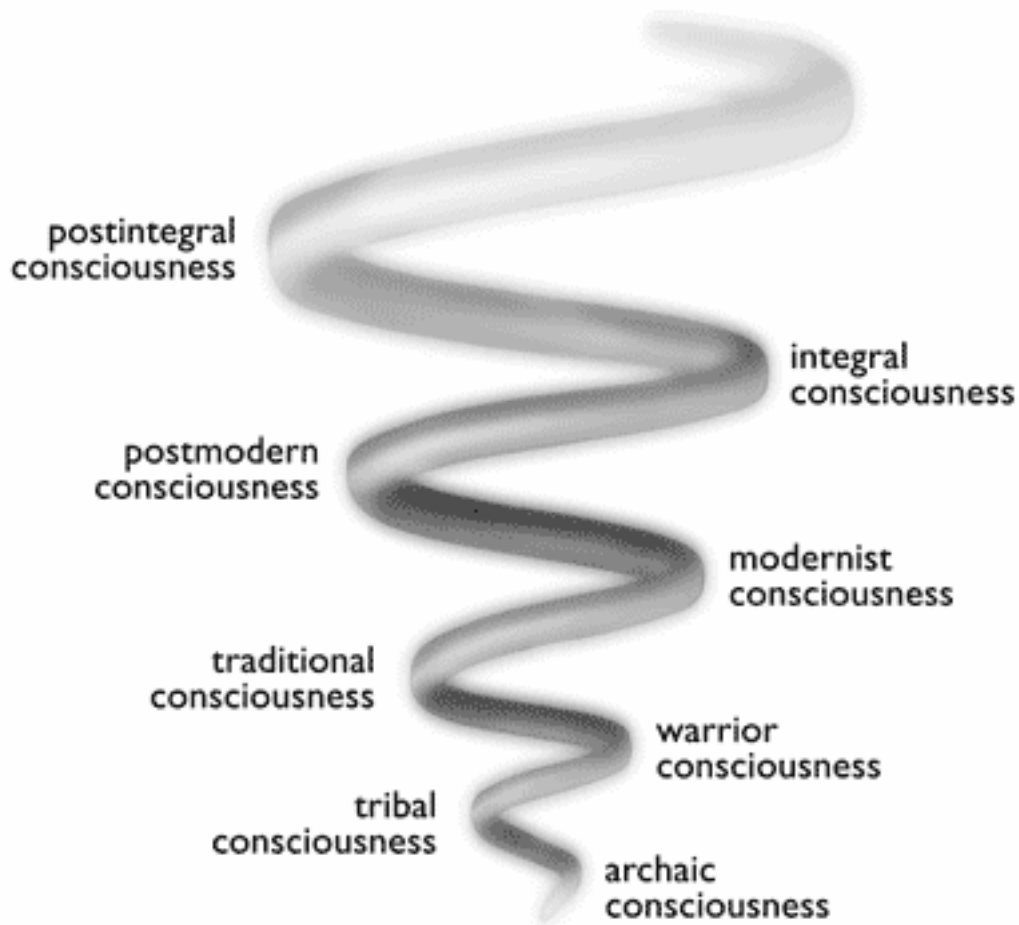
<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare\\_W.\\_Graves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare_W._Graves)

change. He soon discovered Ken Wilber's work, Integral Thinking, and the colorful world of Spiral Dynamics and sought out Don Beck to take all Spiral Dynamics Integral trainings with him. Together they organized a weekend workshop 'on the future of the Netherlands'.

To be able to ground the impulse towards breakthrough in the Netherlands, Peter founded the Center for Human Emergence in the Netherlands with Arjan Kindermans of EnlightenNext, the organization of spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen. Peter's reasoning for this collaboration:

*'Evolutionary Enlightenment outlines the qualities and practices that are necessary on an individual level for evolutionary leaders. This evolutionary perspective includes an inherent understanding that we as humans go from somewhere to somewhere. The general directionality of evolution is one of increasing complexity and compassion. Spiral Dynamics provides a map of the evolving landscape of human, cultural, organizational and societal development. It clarifies in particular the nature of the existential problems we currently face as individuals, organizations, societies and humanity as a whole. It enables us to see clearly the dynamics of diversity at work, and the evolutionary relationships at play. With this level of clarity, we can act laser-like to transcend current blocks, creating systems and life conditions that best serve people and planet from where they are gently inviting them to further development.'*

The May workshop acted as a catalyzing event for many still actively involved in the CHE NL today. Don Beck called us into greatness, when describing his vision of what is needed: 'The Center for Human Emergence will help facilitate the conscious emergence of the human species using a synthesis of profound breakthroughs in human knowledge and capacities, encompassing natural pattern coherence, mega-integration, unification, expanded whole mind capacity, deep intelligence and consciousness. We are creating an organization that will facilitate large-scale global change within a decade – something that has never been done before. What is required is a comprehensive, overarching, planet-oriented vision.' It is quite an assignment. We embark upon it with fervor coming from a sense of urgency. How long can the planet still sustain us? Now that all peoples are moving and mixing, how can we help us live together in a way that people can find their place to contribute and to flourish?



## The launch

We plan to engage the top 100 of our country in a brainstorm with the new integral concepts and wisdom building processes. We also want to organize a big event for all who are already out there working their way towards the new paradigm. As life has it, Herman Wijffels who has consented to be a member of our Wisdom Council, chooses to mark his leaving as Chairman of the Netherlands Social and Economic Council (an advisory body to the Dutch government) by inviting his selection of the top 100 of our country - half from the mainstream and half from leading edge - to a day for which he invites three speakers who have influenced him deepest off late: Don Beck. Peter Merry and the Hungarian pianist, philosopher, systems theorist and founder of the Club of Budapest, Ervin László. To execute our second plan, we ask Beck and László to stay on and speak at a big event which we will organize around them. This becomes 'Klaar om te wenden?!' (or 'Ready about?!'), an event that attracts 850 participants.

*April 20, 2012*

The process of organizing this in three months is one of intense co-creation and keeping the faith. Ten days before the event, only half of the required 850 participants have registered. The manager of the venue is intrigued by our total commitment and faith that we will pull this off, and extends our having to make a go-no go decision day by day. The four who constitute the Board of the CHE Foundation keep their fingers crossed as the team remains convinced that they will break even. The last people register half an hour before we start.

The mega hall is lit up in the Spiral Dynamics colours. People sit facing one another on two huge rising platforms. Herman Wijffels kicks the event off. 'You are the undercurrent,' he says, 'that brings in the new, but the upcurrent has no idea that the times of the crossroads with traffic lights handled from afar are over. You know that it is now time for the roundabout in which everyone chooses their own pace and timing.' Ervin László goes on to show that in times of transition, as the one we are in now, multiple experiments are going on. Many of them will not be successful but it is impossible to say which one in the end will constitute the new paradigm. It is very quiet in the big hall when the esteemed scientist shows how close we are, in his view, to the point of no return. We feel the urgency when he names the period to 2020 as critical. He presses upon us to center our attention on the evolution of human values and consciousness as the crucial factors in changing course from a race toward degradation, polarization and disaster to a rethinking of values and priorities. Like Wijffels he calls for humanity to move from a mechanistic to an organic worldview in which we take our place as a part of nature.

Worldviews and human values as the crucial factor in evolving human societies is what Spiral Dynamics Integral and Don Beck are all about. Beck briefly explains how humans find new ways to deal with the growing complexity of life conditions and points to where, in his view, we are at here in the Netherlands. As one of the most advanced cultures in the sense of economic well-being, organization of education, care and well-fare, he calls upon us to lead the world in dealing with the current issues that involve the whole of humanity. He calls us forth to show the world that we can weave streams of people as well as we can build waterworks to direct streams of water for higher communal good.

Peter Merry closes the evening by bringing the audience back to itself. It is not other people who will make things happen, it is up to me, to you, to us. He has us talk amongst ourselves about how this gathering is affecting us. Then he asks us to look one person in the eye. Slowly the lights go on. Designing it this way we mean the end to be a beginning. For many it works. They start conversations easily as we all seem to be on the same wavelength. Old friendships are rekindled, new

ones made. The event is a point of reference for those who attended it to this day.

## **Discovering working principles**

During the hectic three months of organizing the event, the team is on a steep learning curve. We hardly know one another and we are under pressure to perform, while not knowing what we are creating. All we have is a date and three speakers. In true project management style, project lead Anne-Marie Voorhoeve tries to get us started with a schedule, planning back from the date, March 31, 2006. We all feel put off by that conventional approach. This is not the way you plan a birth ... So we each name what we love to do and what we see ourselves happily contributing to make the event as inspired as we are. And the miracle happens. All tasks are covered after this inventory, but one: finance. So we find someone who is happy to keep the accounts and the team members get started on what makes their heart sing. When we are not sure how to proceed, we send consult with one another. We work all hours and accept that we cannot possibly do all we would like to in that short time. We also accept that we each have a life and need to rest from time to time. This is a process of mutual trust.

Not everyone understands our concept. Some tell us they know the words we use to describe the event, but don't 'get' it anyway. This is certainly the case for conventional magazines and newspapers that decline interest. Even the students who help us out with the on-line registration system, think we are out of who touch with reality. Their business models have not taught them co-creative processes based on love and trust and they don't trust it. Even when all the deadlines have been met, when we have attracted the participants we needed and achieved financial break-even, the students continue to tell us we will never get anywhere with our approach.

In their meetings the organizing team consciously nurtures a sense of trust that each of them do what they can for the good of the whole. They spend valuable time addressing what fears and anxieties comes up for each of them in this process. They explore how it works to tap the collective wisdom by bringing questions into the middle for greater clarity. They teach each other to breathe through the fear that strikes from time to time and consciously decide not to address 'what if' questions.

The whole event is about coming from trust that we are ready to 'go about' and that we are willing to give up life as we know it, so we can make it as humanity. We cannot ask others to do what we aren't willing to do ourselves. So the team knows they need to face all that comes up

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for them in this process. Only then can they convey this to the audience. They discover working principles and the importance of congruence. In co-creation deep listeners are as important as inspiring speakers. This leads to the decision that all who attend pay the entrance fee. So the team and also speaker Peter Merry all pay the entrance fee. It also leads to the choice not to check at the door if people have paid their dues. Instead, participants are met by hosts who welcome them and point them to where they can write their own badges. Upon leaving the hosts offer them a piece of sailing rope. 'This is your bit,' is the message, 'together we hold the ropes of our future.'

When the team later distills the working principles from their joyful collaboration, these make for an inspiring and empowering way of project management.

The 'Klaar om te wenden' working principles:

- \* As we are, so is the event
- \* Do what makes your heart sing
- \* Do what you can and live with what you don't do
- \* Look at what people do, not at what they say
- \* Bring every tension into the middle as soon as possible
- \* Keep in close contact and trust each other's judgment

On April 2, 2006 Peter Merry writes in his blog<sup>3</sup>:

*'The last week has been awesome, culminating in the Klaar om te Wenden event with 900 people and an energy that this country will find hard to resist. What we pulled off could not have come out of the old ways of thinking and being—they told us so themselves! This was a test to see if we at the Center for Human Emergence were really serious about walking our talk and making it happen. I believe we passed with flying colors. Always more to learn of course, but now is a time for a major pat on the back, to stand proud and tell the story of this great step. One of things that dawned on me (in one of those baby-enforced early morning meditations!) about why we managed what we did, is around how we seemed to embody the concept of natural hierarchy. That is to say that people took on the things that they and others knew they could do best, beyond concerns about status and reward, with the good of the whole as the prime driver.'*

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<sup>3</sup> Organising for Integral Impact, available at [www.petermerry.org/Peter\\_Merry/Writings](http://www.petermerry.org/Peter_Merry/Writings) accessed on February 5, 2011

## Getting organized for emergence

Of course, we also receive criticism. Some say we missed a golden opportunity to sign people up to the CHE. In response we invite all participants to come and get to know us better. To the hundred who attend this evening, we present our short history and emerging plans for the future. We invite them to become financial supporters of our fledgling organization. We point them to the free weekly Salon evenings that we started to get to know one another better as well as the models for emergence that we work with. We are able to offer these evenings for free as we host them as volunteers and are in turn graciously hosted by the community of Venwoude that wants to nurture our experiment.

We also invite people to take part in what we call Constellations. These are communities of practice where people from a particular field of expertise can come together and look at the evolution of their area through the lens of the integral model.<sup>3</sup> This model states that everything arises in four aspects simultaneously: the Individual Interior (emotions, feelings, judgments, worldview), the Individual Exterior (body, behavior), the Collective Exterior (systems and structures) and the Collective Interior (unwritten rules and codes of conduct, culture). Looking at societal development which was to be the focus of CHE NL, we acknowledged that each of these four areas need to be given the same importance. To effect real change all of these aspects of human development must be taken into account:

personal development and leadership (individual interior)  
 competences and behaviors (individual exterior)  
 culture and communication (collective interior)  
 systems and processes (collective exterior).

	<i>interior</i>	<i>exterior</i>
<i>individual</i>	<p><b>self &amp; consciousness</b> subjective</p> <p>thoughts, emotions values, intentions feelings, moods psychology</p>	<p><b>behavior &amp; organism</b> objective</p> <p>body, brain facts, knowledge skills physics, biology</p>
<i>collective</i>	<p><b>culture &amp; worldview</b> intersubjective</p> <p>shared values meaning, purpose language, communication music, art</p>	<p><b>social system &amp; environment</b> interobjective</p> <p>economy systems, structures technology, procedures nature, ecology</p>

<sup>3</sup> Ken Wilber



We welcome people to join an existing constellation or start a new one. We have decided to invest in a person whose task it will be to bring these constellations to life, who we will actually pay from our scarce resources. Marianne de Jager, who has been on the Foundation Board from the beginning, has started the Constellation Organizational Development and Leadership (COOL) around the question: how do you organize for emergence? Their case study is CHE as a not-for-profit foundation under Dutch law. Looking around, the only model that seems to fit the connective work that CHE wants to do, is that of a chaordic organization as described by Dee Hock, founder and former CEO of the largest commercial enterprise on earth, Visa International. Starting a business that would encompass people of all nations, cultures, backgrounds, languages, currencies, political persuasions and economic situations, he came up with a concept that revolves around a common purpose. His definition of the term he coined says it all:

Chaordic [kay'ordic] fr chaos and order.

*1. The behavior of any self-governing organism, organization or system which harmoniously blends characteristics of order and chaos. 2. Patterned in a way dominated by neither chaos or order. 3. Characteristic of the fundamental organizing principles of evolution and nature.*

Forming a chaordic organization begins with an extensive search for Purpose, then proceeds to Principles, People and Concept, and only then to Structure and Practice. Each of the six elements can be thought of as a perspective, a 'lens' through which participants examine the circumstances giving rise to the need for a new concept of organization and what it might become.<sup>4</sup> And then we are not forming a conventional organization that has a building with rooms and desks. We are forming a community and a requisite distributed organization. We don't have role models. We need to go by the models that describe the future and try them out. We are the lab and the rats and the scientists.

The young organization is shaken when Peter Merry firmly rejects COOL's proposal to turn the foundation into an association. He strongly feels that a body in which everyone can decide on everything is not the way forward. In Spiral Dynamics terms he sees this as a 'green' form in which hierarchy is abhorred, rather than a 'yellow' form in which hierarchy is perceived and applied as functional for the good of the whole. Some people feel let down and leave the community. The fact that co-founder Arjan Kindermans decides at a later stage to withdraw from the Board makes for more turbulence. Don Beck advises Peter to gather people he can trust around him. We come to a Board of the required three volunteers who will govern the organization with a

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<sup>4</sup> Hock (1999) p. 7

further three who will get paid for their operational tasks that vary from getting the administration going to helping the constellations come alive and connecting us strategically to others in our field.

In his blog of May 17, 2006 Peter writes:

*'We are trying to create an organization that is continually learning and evolving, as that is how the Universe is organized, and we want to align ourselves as much as possible with Universal principles so that we may best be of service to the whole. That means that we need to go beyond traditional thinking whereby you announce an organizational structure with people in different posts, and that's it until a yearly review. The structures and processes and functions need to be in continuous flow with the Universal directionality, with continual reflection on whether they are helping us to achieve our Purpose, in-line with our Principles, to deliver our Product for the world.'*

### **Finding core purpose and principles**

After an inspiring summer event with people like Morel Fourman and Steve Trevino, Peter had come back with a clear description of the first building blocks of the chaordic organization model:

#### CHE's core purpose

*What we are jointly becoming, is  
a catalyser and crystallizer of action for the planetary  
transformation into integral evolutionary consciousness.*

#### CHE's core principles

*How we act to realize our purpose:*

*We practice full presence and radical authenticity*

*We open our hearts to the voice of the whole*

*We pay attention to the evolutionary impulse as it arises as us*

*We move ourselves as that impulse with swiftness, precision and*

*love*

These purpose and principles constitute the body of belief that we will judge all our decisions and acts against. They will also serve to bind the community of participants in our experiment together. We use our bi-monthly Salon evenings to let those present feel into the words, the sound, the energy of these sentences. In an interactive process, the purpose and principles are being weighed and 'tasted', rejected in parts and in the end embraced in full. Through the care we put into this process, we also allow people to make themselves known as being interested in what we are pioneering and how we are going about it. This way we grow our core of people who take tasks within the organization.

## **Funding pains**

To get us started, we have been given a generous, interest-free loan by a philanthropist who is also a member of our Wisdom Council. We invite donations on a yearly basis from those who come to our Salons or take part in a Constellation or are otherwise supportive of our work. Truth is, we find it difficult to raise money. We choose not to go for a membership model due to the claim this creates from members for something in return, but instead invite people to become donors if they feel that the CHE is contributing to them living their life's purpose. Experimenting to bring new consciousness into form is not a clear proposition to corporations, grant giving bodies or even individuals. They all ask us to be more concrete. What is it we are actually going to do? We don't know that in precise terms. We want to help land the new paradigm in which humans see themselves as one being that is part of the natural hierarchy. How to do that effectively, we are in the process of finding out. And we are finding that this discovery process in itself is a contribution. On top of that, none of us at the core of our budding community has the natural inclination to tackle the issue of funding. We can no longer afford to pay the salaries of Anne-Marie Voorhoeve and Alain Volz who we have appointed to bring the inner organization to life and foster relationships with others. We never made it explicit that they needed to fundraise. We trusted that money would come from donations and grants. It has not happened. So it is a delicate process to name what we all saw coming and let go of the idea we had to further our purpose by paying people to do so.

For the time being we revert to the volunteer model in which volunteers give what they can without going under. It is a precarious road that easily leads to sudden departure of key people who cannot afford to give more of their time and their (family's) money. We see no other way but to take that road for the time being. And being who we are, we agree to address consciously what comes up for us individually and collectively on this path.

## **Meshworking around a common purpose**

The same philanthropist who has lent us money, then asks us into a project that seems right up our street, 'Malaria no More'. This project is set up to help end malaria deaths in Africa by the year 2015 as is stated in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The idea is to engage the world with awareness raising campaigns and rally leadership through global advocacy, while making strategic investments in Africa to accelerate progress, build capacity and save lives.<sup>5</sup> One way of

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<sup>5</sup> [available at www.malarianomore.org/node/347](http://www.malarianomore.org/node/347) accessed on February 16, 2011

saving lives is to distribute mosquito nets and other tools, so every family in Africa has ready access to what they need to prevent, diagnose and treat malaria.

We enter into the project with mutual sympathy and, in hindsight, each of us with the belief that we can make the other see the sense of our own approach. At CHE, we feel we can help the organizations involved in combating malaria work together and come to solutions that none of them alone could have worked out or implemented. In the end, this approach is not adopted. It does, however, lead to the next step, which is our involvement with the creation of a Meshwork for Improving Maternal Health. Every minute a woman dies in a developing country from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. In June of 2007, at the initiative of Chantal Gill'ard, at the time a Dutch Labor Party Member of Parliament and spokesperson for development cooperation and medical ethics, twenty Dutch partners from across the public and the private sector drew up and signed a publicly funded agreement around Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG5) toward reducing the maternal mortality ratio. CHE NL is asked to facilitate a process toward increased coordination and collaboration between the partner organizations.

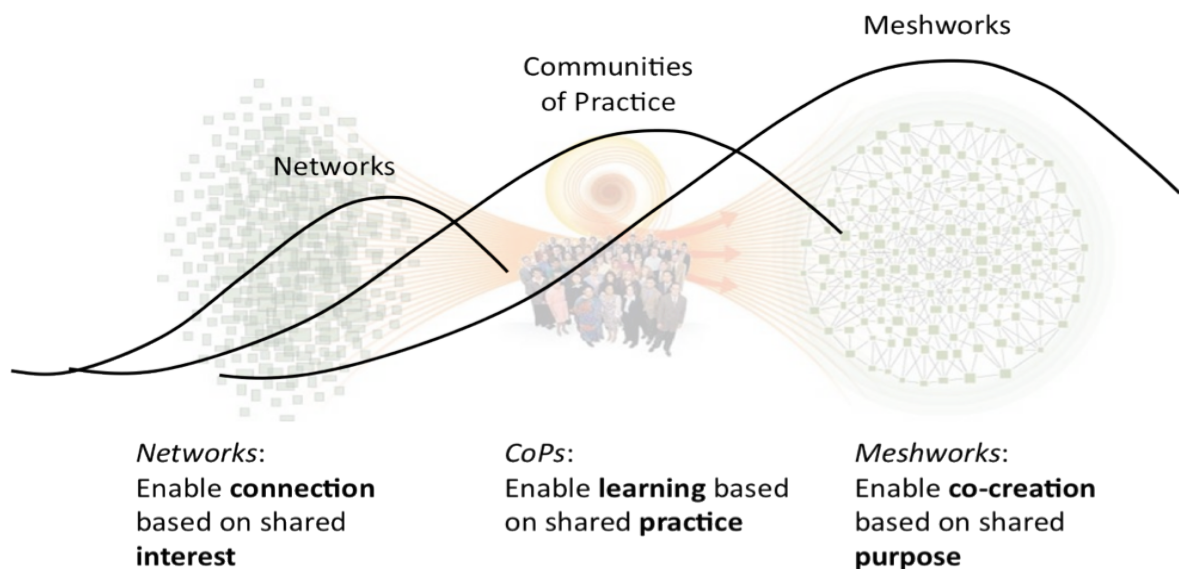
Anne-Marie Voorhoeve and the project team introduce the partners to meshworking™. The nature of a meshwork is to commit to a meaningful and ambitious goal, find the people and resources and develop the structures to achieve that goal. Meshworking is again a term coined by Don Beck and trademarked jointly by us as a social process and by Gaiasoft IP Ltd as a supporting technology platform. Where a network is about the relationship between partners, in a meshwork™ the relationship between partners and the shared goal is at the heart. This enables a community to form in which the partners will transcend traditional limits between organizations or parts of organizations, disciplines and cultures. In this new culture of high-performance collaboration towards a common goal 'what is right' prevails above 'who is right'. We developed the meshworking process in close collaboration with Morel Fourman of Gaiasoft in London. It had been his long time dream to design an on-line platform that would enable multi-stakeholder collaboration and help people find each other's best practices while using a performance management system to track progress. While Morel and his team developed the online platform, together we developed the social process.

The process towards being able to work in this collaborative way starts with making a meshworking roadmap. First the partners look for and formulate the collective goal (purpose). Each partner or stakeholder also determines their relationship to the common goal as well as their contribution and interest in reaching that goal (principles). This brings a

tangible shift in the engagement. We invite participants to come with their best practices and make them available to the meshwork if this furthers the common goal. As this goes against commonly held beliefs around competition, this requires strong facilitation skills as participants move in and out of trusting the process and each other.

Another challenge is that we also invite participants to bring to the table what they don't yet know, what they are struggling with as an organization, which goes against the commonly held belief that you pretend as a executive and as an organization to be in control of the situation. Control is not conducive to meshworking, co-creation is. So the art is to facilitate conversations between the participants that allow them to discover how the unique interests and qualities of each of them can contribute to the shared goal. The art is also to be aware of what happens under the surface and help transform friction and conflict through naming feelings of discomfort and seeing what the information is that is held in the various emotions. Each and every one of us has limited beliefs and attachments to old ways that come to the surface in these processes. It is good to name them and spend time to address issues that are often voiced by one and turn out to be felt by all. There is the fear of losing one's position as an individual or as an organization, fear of the unknown, fear of not knowing what to do – everything surfaces on this path as it builds the fabric of committed collaboration that the huge common issues that we face today, requires.

## Cycles in a Meshworking Process



Through meshworking we can transform fragmented initiatives into a coherent whole of aligned interventions aimed at a shared goal and shared ambition. On a higher level such a process allows us to find solutions for the global issues such as climate change, poverty and fundamentalism we are all confronted with. This is how the partners in the MDG5 Meshwork for Improving Maternal Health present themselves and their common work in the world<sup>6</sup>:

*The purpose of the MDG5 Meshwork is to develop innovative and effective partnerships that contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5, to improve maternal health. The partners within the MDG5 Meshwork to this day collaborate on improving maternal health in five projects, all of them cutting across traditional boundaries between disciplines and sectors:*

- 1. Reduction of maternal mortality in Afghanistan*
- 2. Reduction of maternal mortality in Sierra Leone*
- 3. Mother's Night, a national continuation and international expansion of the concept;*
- 4. Development of heat-stable oxytocin (the WHO's first choice medication for treatment of postpartum haemorrhage)*
- 5. Stimulating linking and learning between the partners and projects of the MDG5 Meshwork.*

## **Getting organized for emergence**

Meanwhile, organizationally we are completely stuck. We are a foundation and operate as a foundation board. But even with the chaordic elements in place, this conventional format does not suit our pioneering approach. We have difficult meetings. We try existing organizational models and come up with a mission that still guides our actions in the world today:

*CHE's mission:*

We serve societal innovation by connecting and vitalizing individuals, organizations and communities through integral experience, in The Netherlands, for the world.

And we are still stuck. Then we find Holacracy™. The name refers to governance by the 'holarchy' or the natural structure of the organization itself. Brian Robertson and others who have pioneered this in their own software company, see Holacracy as a comprehensive practice for

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<sup>6</sup> available at <http://www.mdg5-meshwork.org> accessed on March 11, 2011

structuring, governing, and running an organization. They describe it as a new 'operating system' that facilitates rapid evolution in light of emerging reality by harnessing self-organization in a fractal structure. In this model they have incorporated the principles, ideas, and emerging mindset articulated by many cutting-edge thought leaders, so they can be instilled in the actual structures and processes of the organization. When Brian and his colleague Thom Thomison come to the Netherlands, a few of us take their workshop and seize the opportunity to present the way we envisage our holacratic organization to them. They give us some expert advice and we feel this in SDi terms 'yellow' system might work for us.

During our last board meeting of 2007 with some ceremony all of us release our functions. We don't tell the Chamber of Commerce and everybody just keeps doing what they did for the organization, though not in any 'official' capacity. Quoting from Peter Merry's blog entry of December 19, 2007:

*'We've been through an intense few weeks! Following on from the 'releasing our claims' session and energetic dissolution of the Board mentioned in the last blog, we spent two days with Brian Robertson and Tom Thomison on holacracy, and an afternoon with Terry Patten from the Integral Institute.*

*One of the key things we learned from Holacracy was to look really clearly at what is actually there at the moment in terms of organization - what is the organization actually counting on people to do (accountabilities) - and to organize around that, rather than around the grand visions that we have of what we would like to be doing... That has provided great clarity and simplicity as we move into creating supportive organizational structure and processes that enable what is, whilst holding space for current tensions to manifest next steps.*

*There was a similar theme in our work with Terry, which was facing up to what is really present for people—surfacing the current tensions - 'face everything, avoid nothing', as one of Andrew Cohen's tenet's says. It's amazing how much we don't say to each other, even though we consider ourselves to be 'brothers/sisters-in-arms' on this evolutionary edge. Naming the judgments and tensions we are carrying releases huge energy to actually do the things that need to be done - engaging the issues that have been unspoken. It felt like a collective landing in the messiness of our relative reality - reentering the marketplace as friends. It feels to me as if dissolving the formal roles in the organization has also helped people to be more themselves and get clearer on what their actual work is. And the funny thing is, the work that people are feeling called to still happens - without any formal structure! And that is what we are looking for - how can we create a minimal structure that simply aligns and supports the work that people are naturally being called to - whilst at the same time consciously*

*identifying work that the organization needs that currently isn't being done - and finding the people that best fit that work.*

*It feels as if things are naturally falling into place, the dust of letting go attachments and fears is settling, and an eerie kind of calm is forming - fragile, delicate and real. As we enter the darkest period of the year, our roots are dropping deep, and we gather ourselves for the return of the light. The Spiral spins, the cycles turn and all is very well.'*

In the first months of 2008, we redesign the organization. Brian advised us to start with one circle, which we call the Alignment Circle. Self-organization occurs by means of the governance structure, which distinguishes between the operational (getting the work done) and the policy processes (how we organize ourselves to get the work done). Each circle has weekly operational meetings in which, especially important in our distributed organization, the members synchronize and exchange information, and take operational decisions on next steps.

The circle gathers each month for the governance meeting to address present tensions by identifying the workable way forward, in line with the three principles of dynamic steering:

- *Present tensions are all that matter (what is, not what if)*
- *Any issue can be revisited at any time*
- *The goal is a workable decision, not the 'best' decision (because that emerges over time as new information is integrated into the decision)*

## **Generating wise decisions**

After initially struggling with the strict discipline of the integrative decision making method, over time we come to love it as it allows us to come to wise decisions in no time, while hearing and integrating what everyone who is present has to say. The basis of this practice is that each individual in the circle is seen as a valuable 'sensor' who has access to a unique field of information. It's not important whether everyone shares or even recognizes the tension or objection to a proposal. What is important is that the valuable insights and information brought in from the various perspectives are integrated into the decision. On the basis of tangible proposals and (possible) objections, we find ourselves taking practical and workable decisions that move us forward.

'Which roles does the purpose need to have in place in order to flourish?' is the question we use for the process of identifying roles and their accountabilities. We have fun making up new names as we feel our purpose needs roles like an 'Integrity Guardian' with the



accountability to keep an eye on whether we walk our talk, an 'Organizational Spaceholder' with the accountability to clear and nourish the field we build together consciously, an 'Internal Relationship Officer' whose accountability it is to help people flourish within the organization and a 'Chief Alignment Officer' who in the end is accountable for making sure the organization as a whole fulfills its purpose. Then there are more prosaic names for roles such as the Financial Strategist, Organizational Connector, Strategic Connector, Salon Coordinator and Wisdom Council Lead.

By the end of 2008 we have grown into three circles: the Alignment Circle whose accountability it is to keep the organization aligned to its purpose; the Synnervation Circle whose accountability it is to make what we develop, discover and master available to the outside world by the way of offering trainings and consultancy work; and the Service Circle which provides services such as finance, administration, HR, public relations and publicity to both other circles. Adopting holacracy has freed us up. Or you can say it has allowed us to have an organization that mirrors the responsibility, autonomy and connection to purpose we all feel. It also gives us clarity of who to invite to our bi-annual retreats, in which we orient ourselves both individually and collectively to what is ours to do in the next period. And it shows us time and again what boundaries and limitations each of us needs to overcome in order to be able to be fully accountable.

### **Birth of a commercial company**

Holacracy also frees our energy up to start the company we have been talking about for so long. All of a sudden it seems clear that we don't want to structure this along the lines of a normal collaborative consultants model in which partners hold shares and so create wealth together. Now we see that, of course, the CHE foundation needs to be the sole owner of the shares of the company that will combine research and training with an organizational consultancy firm. Through both we will inspire and facilitate change processes in organizations and communities in order for sustainable responses to complex challenges to emerge.

Peter has come up with the name for this new company: Synnervation. He sat for a few weeks with the question: given that the essence of the universe is that it is interconnected and moving in a general direction, and that therefore our practice should be to interconnect and release the creative life-force in people and systems, what word best describes that practice?

Synnervate: to interconnect and vitalize

*'Syn' — connects the different 'parts' of a person, organization or society and 'nervate' — vitalizes the new emerging whole, channeling energy through the system*

Accordingly the core product can be described as 'syn-nervating', pointing to our conviction that in our present era we need these two movements in developing requisite organizations, institutions and societies. Organizations that continuously synnervate themselves, become integrally resilient and as a consequence, grow more successful and healthier in these turbulent times. The independent consultants, coaches and trainers who take out a license, will call themselves synnervators.

Arjen Bos steps into the role of Synnervation Lead and within the year 12 synnervators are signed up. These are all people from within the community with their own coaching, training and/or consultancy practices. They are experts in the field of organizational development and advice, leadership development and process- and project facilitation. They also all fulfill voluntary roles within the foundation CHE, which we see as the lab where we are free to experiment and continuously develop our insights and learn about themes and methods that matter now. This helps us to bring depth and breadth in the quality of our work.

Clients often wonder about our capacity to address what happens under the surface which, if not seen and voiced, would hijack the project or make it into yet another change that doesn't change anything. To be able to address such issues people must be able to live with questions like: 'How do we set out the right direction within a field of seemingly contradictory interests, differing levels of complexity and a variety of management goals?' Or: 'How do we effectively integrate the need for innovation, flexibility, sustainability and profit with our responsibility as a global citizen?' Many are not accustomed to spending time in the unknown exploring questions such as these. We are happy to help chart the territory and find ways to look at their own authentic power and the meaning of their contribution to the world.

Usually we are invited to the table by change agents who are ahead of the pack, and who have the credibility and authority to experiment on behalf of their organization in projects that might be pivotal for the future of the whole enterprise. As Synnervators we are open about our express vision that work is never 'just' work for us: we always take our individual values and engagement with us and we always put our work in the context of integral societal innovation. We also state that in our approach the inner world of the people we work with and the culture of the organization are as important as the outer systems and structures

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we are asked to help form or re-form. This is frightening to some who are used to skim over difficult personal and interpersonal issues in the workplace. But the workplace has changed or needs to change in order to free people up to bring all of themselves to their job. We practice this and model it when we are doing assignments or giving trainings.

## **The 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign**

In 2009, Peter Merry, Anne-Marie Voorhoeve and Morel Fourman bring our meshworking experience in engendering multi-stakeholder collaboration on complex issues to the attention of Jim Garrison who is looking to re-establish the State of the World Forum. Emilia Queiroga invites him to Brazil and through her contacts and Jim's ability to convey the urgency of the earth's situation to people in business, media and government, he decides to launch the '2020 Climate Leadership Campaign' in the city of Belo Horizonte, the capital of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. The Forum of Climate Change of Minas Gerais had already pioneered the cooperation between business, academia, government and civil society on the issue of global warming in Brazil. There seems to be great willingness to play a leading role in realizing the central goal of the 10-year Campaign: to mobilize people and institutions everywhere to achieve the official targets for reducing CO2 emissions currently being negotiated for 2050 by 2020. In other words: to pledge to reduce CO2 (and other greenhouse gas) emissions with 80% by the year 2020.

The purpose of the campaign is not to duplicate other efforts but, by connecting and supporting individuals and communities, to bring greater coherence to the multitude of transition, adaptation and renewal initiatives set on tackling the profound issue of climate change. Jim Garrison also makes the strategic choice to adopt the Integral framework and so to address lifestyles and worldviews as much as technology applications.

To the August '09 launch he and Emilia invite over one hundred Brazilian activists, business people and officials from various layers of government, some of whom find themselves in the same room for the very first time. The other half of the audience is made up by veterans of the sustainability movement, many from the US, many of them activists turned respectable through continuing their efforts over many years.

Prime amongst them is Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute, whose thorough research as described in his Plan B books, is central to Jim's thinking and so to the Climate Leadership Campaign. One of Brown's proposals is that at this time we need to mobilize to save civilization just as President Roosevelt had banned the production and

sale of cars early 1942 as well as the construction of roads so the plants and machines were freed up for the production of arms. Another point Lester Brown conveys to us in *Belo Horizonte* is that all problems we face can be dealt with using existing technologies. And almost everything we need to do to move the world back onto an environmentally sustainable path has already been done in one or more countries.

The question is: how can we learn from one another how to use our existing technologies towards a sustainable future? This is where we come in with our meshworking experience. We have offered to prototype a process that can build a collective and evolving roadmap to achieve the Campaign's ambitious goals.<sup>7</sup> In this we are inspired by Chile's successful 'El Programa Puente' (The Bridge Program) for Millennium Development Goal 1, which has been extremely successful in reducing poverty and improving social inclusion in Chile. We've used this example before when in November 2008 we facilitated a conference 'Parliamentarians take action on Maternal and Newborn Health' in the Hague, which was attended by parliamentarians from over 35 countries, delegates from the United Nations and other agencies and WHO members.<sup>8</sup> The project in Chile envisioned a bridge to enable each family to travel from social exclusion and poverty to social inclusion. The pillars of the bridge are the major elements that must be in place. Each pillar is supported by a number of conditions that must be met.

In the case of the 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign, the proposal was to develop a likewise bridge for cities, regions and nations to move from their current levels of CO2 emissions to achieve an 80% reduction by 2020. Slightly adapting the language of pillars and conditions, in an iterative process of co-creation with others whom Jim has invited to guide the process we come to the following flow for developing a template for the Campaign:

- Identify and align around the need and purpose, which is to achieve an 80% reduction in global CO2 emissions by 2020.
- Identify the main areas that the Climate Campaign should be addressing in order to achieve its goal
- Identify the breakthrough conditions that could be put in place in order for each area to be successful by 2020 and rate the maturity of each condition in Brazil

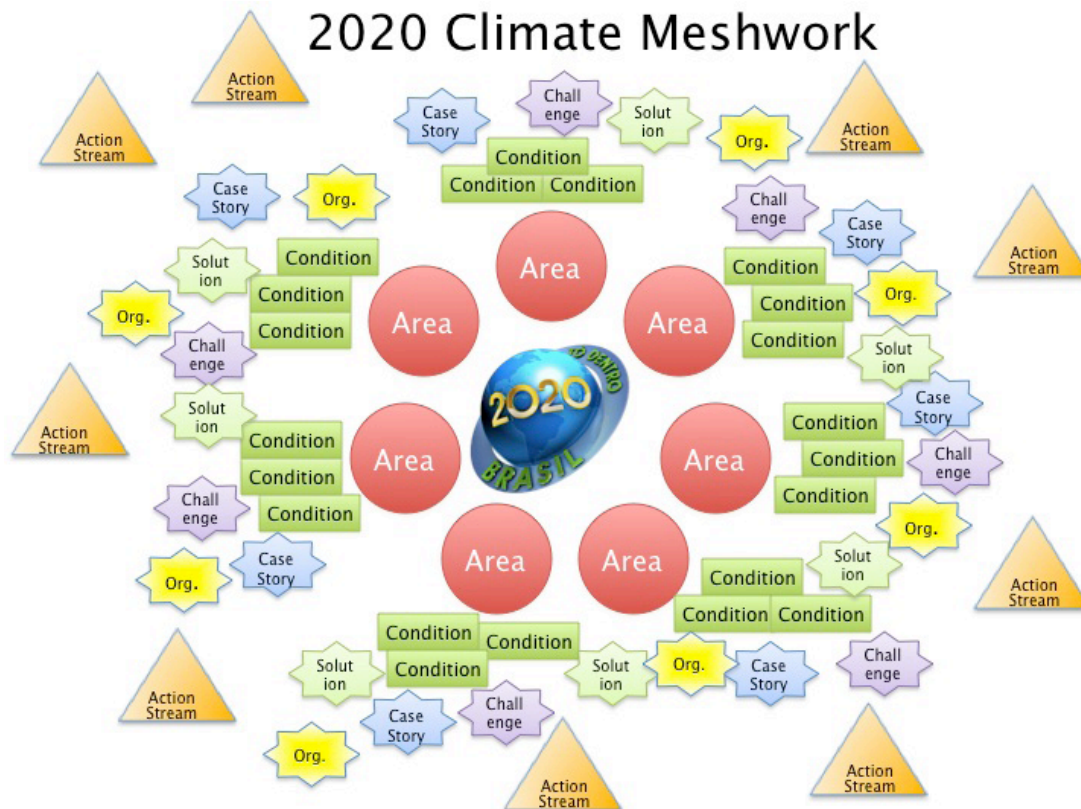
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<sup>7</sup> Case study available at [www.thehaguecenter.org/news/1257173419/2020-Meshwork-Launch](http://www.thehaguecenter.org/news/1257173419/2020-Meshwork-Launch) accessed on March 11, 2011

<sup>8</sup> case study available at [www.thehaguecenter.org/.../MDG5%20Meshworking%20Case%20Study.pdf](http://www.thehaguecenter.org/.../MDG5%20Meshworking%20Case%20Study.pdf) accessed on March 11,

- For each condition, identify existing solutions, case stories, challenges and relevant organizations working in this field.
- Identify next actions for all participants.

With this design of areas, breakthrough conditions, solutions, success stories challenges, organizations and actions, a roadmap for achieving the Campaign's goals will begin to emerge as visualized through the 'Gaiasoft Performance Web'.



For two days, with our team of six we lead the 225 participants through an intense participatory process using World Café and Open Space technology<sup>9</sup> in which they exchange around questions as 'What are the main Areas the Campaign should be addressing?' and 'What breakthrough conditions could be put in place in order for this area to be successful by 2020?' and, finally, 'What do you want to do next, to contribute to the 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign?'. Simultaneously Jim Garrison builds political alliances that accumulate in the signing of a document by the Governor of Minas Gerais. We are at the same time introducing the participants to the online Gaiasoft Meshwork so as to enable the participants to continue to build the road map created

<sup>9</sup> Art of Hosting (2008 II) *Main Methods*, available at [www.artofhosting.org/thepractice/coremethods](http://www.artofhosting.org/thepractice/coremethods) accessed on March 11, 2011

during the conference and begin to implement it in their own countries, starting with Brazil.

Anyone in this 2020 Climate Solutions meshwork can:

- quickly and easily find relevant people, groups, ideas and other information and resources
- collaborate and develop communities of interest for effective engagement and exchange of knowledge, opinions and ideas
- monitor and evaluate progress and developments using scorecard templates
- share communications, information and materials with others, in safe privacy or complete openness (depending on user preferences)
- learn from and contribute to a library of the meshwork's best practices
- report and display the status on projects and goals from many perspectives.

We see the content output from the conference as a starting point, from which the Areas, Conditions and Action streams will be developed further and informed by application stories. We come back full of enthusiasm to start connecting the multitude of initiatives here in Holland, but we don't meet the same enthusiasm on the other side and after a year of trying, we conclude this apparently is not the way to go.

## **Opening hearts at COP15**

At The Hub in Amsterdam, Leonie Stekelenburg and Inge Broere had heard Peter Merry's presentation upon coming back from Brazil. They approach us with the idea to take the meshwork to the people's summit held at Klimaforum during COP15, December 2009 in Copenhagen and offer their services in making this happen. Having adopted the goals of the 2020 Climate Leadership Campaign as our strategic priority in the Alignment Circle, we decide to take these powerhouse women up on their offer.

The organizers of Klimaforum allot us a big space as they see the 2020 Climate Solutions meshwork as a way for the many grassroots initiatives to become visible to each other and for the officials meeting in the Bella Center to see how much is already being done towards a sustainable world by the seemingly unorganized. The team works hard at getting our act together for Copenhagen. They sent emails out to befriended networks, such as The Hub and The Art of Hosting, and soon there is a team of 40 volunteers who are willing to come to Copenhagen paying their own way, finding their own accommodation and receiving a small fee from us towards their expenses and host conversations in our space.

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We had turned to one of our benefactors with an urgent plea to enable us to take the 2020 Climate Solutions Meshwork to a next level and she granted us E 50,000 to make this possible. For ten days in Copenhagen we host conversations on education, the new economy, energy sufficiency and all the other areas we had defined in Brazil to be essential for us to achieve the 80% CO2 reduction by 2020 that scientists say we need to achieve in order to make it as a civilization.

We came there with a well thought out plan on how to facilitate these conversations, but in reality the Klimaforum did not draw the numbers of people we had anticipated. So we hosted the conversations that did want to happen, always coming from the same question:

*'What is so precious to you that it has drawn you to come here?'*

We have furious youth that want to fight the police in the streets, seasoned activists who never tire of telling the story of their cause to the next person and curious inhabitants of Copenhagen. 'What is so close to your heart that it has made you come here?', is the question we keep asking each and every one, until we enter into a conversation with them from love.

### **Turquoise calling**

With all this happening, yet, in the spring of 2010, a tension was noticeable in our meetings. Many check-ins seemed to include a sense from people of a need to slow down, find a simpler way, create more space, and give more attention to the energetic dimension of the work. The notion grew that each player in a societal system actually knows what role they need to play in that whole, and that if one could remove blocked and stressed energy, then the system could achieve its purpose with everyone playing their part. Shortly before the summer holidays, the Alignment Circle decided to pay attention to this evolutionary impulse by identifying it as the emergence of a new level of consciousness within their circle. In Spiral Dynamics terms, this would be Turquoise or the eighth value system. Quotes about Turquoise from the Spiral Dynamics book that reflected their experience at that time include:

Everything flows with everything else in living systems...A world of interlinked causes and effects, interacting fields of energy, and levels of bonding and communicating most of us have yet to uncover...One can never know or understand all things. With this acceptance comes wonder, awe, reverence, humility, unity and a refreshed value for simplicity .... Turquoise thinkers detect the harmonics, the mystical

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forces, the chemical reactions, and the pervasive flow-states that permeate any organization. They can amass and process huge chunks of data in searching for the deepest trend lines and most subtle thought and energy patterns.

This sense felt by a number of the Alignment Circle led us to embark on an action research program, testing our hypothesis on the emergence of the Turquoise value system in three main contexts: our own organization, a working group that studied the way energy can be generated through conscious collaboration with the unseen forces of nature (Ethertechnology) and the participation at COP16 that would focus on meshworking for international multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms.

Early 2011 we were able to publish the results of this research of Turquoise that points to qualities emerging such as effortless simplicity, basic trust in life and spirit, experience of unity between people's inner and outer worlds, trans-rational, multi-sensory processing of what is happening, working with subtle energies, holding 'I' and 'we' boundaries and an alchemy of interior states by transmuting egoic emotions into the powers of the universe.

An example of this way of working within the CHE NL is the decision made early 2011 in the Alignment Circle to experiment with a model of philanthropy combined with volunteer work. As one of the core team made part of an inheritance available to the organization, two others came forward with a proposal that their income would be guaranteed by CHE NL to a certain minimum level of what they need each month. The amount was different for each of them, not as a result of a difference in capacity but as in recognition of the fact that the needs of themselves and their families were different. Their proposal included that everything they would earn above a certain amount, would revert to the CHE. The Alignment Circle agreed to a one year pilot to see whether this construction is of benefit to the individuals involved, to the organization as a whole and to the unfolding of its purpose.

### **Purpose revisited**

Speaking of purpose ... a tension raised by one of the Alignment Circle around the appropriateness of the purpose that was formulated in 2006 was acknowledged as she spoke. As things go in this organization, all 25 'souls in roles' were invited to a day in May 2011 on which the purpose, principles and products were revisited. Before the 2011 summer holidays, in response, again, to the chaordic question a new purpose was formulated:

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*What we jointly want to become is  
a sacred partnership in evolution.*

As before, this purpose was presented at a salon which has an invitation list of 550 people. All present at the first Salon of the season in September 2011 sensed into the words and the energy they carry. During the bi-annual fall retreat for all 'Souls in Roles' under the tutelage of Integrity Guardian Marinette Ritz and Organisational Spaceholder Lisette Schuitemaker, we identify one new principle:

*We assume oneness.*

And then, it also appeared to be time to make changes in our organization. Our structure started loosening in 2011, as some souls left their roles, roles were not filled and the Service Circle put their Circle structure on hold until clarity emerged. We could sense the system pulling apart a bit to make the space and energy for a re-formation. We resisted the urge to fill the vacuum immediately, until it emerged naturally.

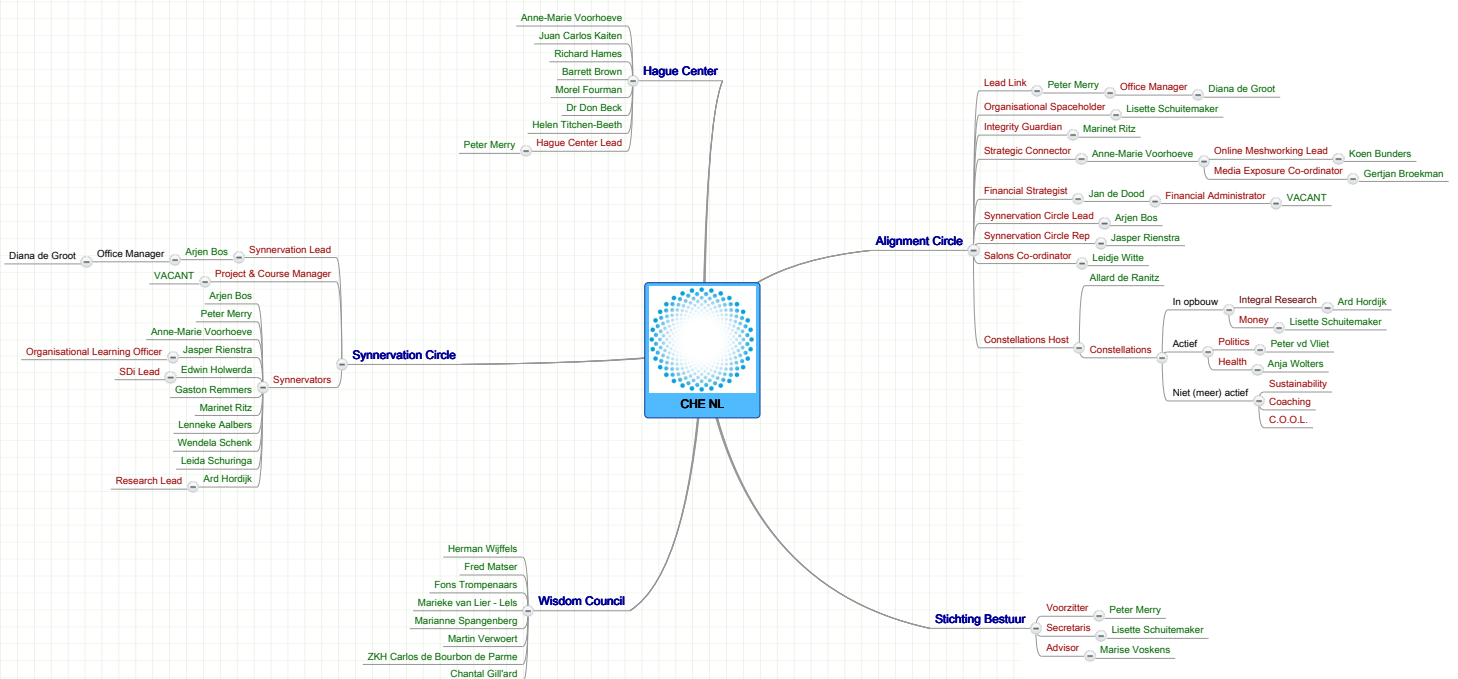
A first significant step was the Synnervators retreat at the end of January 2012, where the Synnervate field started to cohere at a new level. The essence seems a simplifying and grounding of the system. Part of that journey was the decision to release the CHE School of Synnervation brand and bundle all activities under the CHE Synnervate brand. In its simplest expression it means we no longer have to question which label an activity comes under and our clients no longer have to seek clarity about the relationship between the two. We also more fully integrate action and learning. We remain grateful for the energy that Alain Volz put into forming and nurturing the School, and will be honouring the School's passing with an appropriate ritual and wake.

A few days after the Synnervators' retreat, the CHE's Alignment Circle met for a governance meeting. The key elements that emerged were:

- consolidation of the Synnervate circle to be composed only of Synnervators, with internal roles to meet the needs of the business
- bringing the Salon and Constellation Leads into the Alignment Circle. Synnervate, the salons and constellations are the main interfaces of CHE with the world and as such it makes sense to have them all in the Alignment Circle;
- releasing of the Service Circle. This was supported by feedback from the Circle itself where people felt it was getting a bit top heavy. We looked at what was actually happening in practice and followed that design.

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As such a number of roles were released as we felt they were covered by the accountabilities of other existing roles (Organizational Connector, Internal Relationship Officer, External Relationship Officer, Wisdom Council Lead). Remaining roles were linked to existing roles represented in the Alignment Circle.



mindmeister

### CHE NL Organisation (March 2012)

We are grateful to the souls who have vitalized these roles we are releasing over the years, in particular Alain Volz, Marianne de Jager, Jan-Willem van Aalst, Domi Lambregts, Esther Brouwer and Auke van Nimwegen. Other great souls who have recently left existing roles are Geeske Zanen and Koen Bunders. They have all allowed us to get where we are now – thank you!

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## **On we spiral**

The CHE NL is determined to continue to play its part pro-actively while all the time exploring new ways of co-creating sustainable solutions. With a clear lead from Arjen Bos within Synnervation BV work is being done on a new business model that allows for Synnervators to collaborate and for the organization to mature. There is a clear commitment from the Synnervators to invest in this organization and its four core products: Training, Research, Development and Design with the purpose to meet clients where they are and help them make the next natural step through our capacity as integral consultants, trainers, coaches, hosts, facilitators, mediators, motivators, connectors, speakers, project designers and/or developers, and sparring partners.

Synnervators intend to be more strongly visible in the contexts in which we work and to engage in societal issues, organizational and team development as well as personal and individual challenges and conscious development. A good example is the collaboration with LOC and Vilans in the organization of a national conference on values and motivations in the healthcare sector. There is a renewed collaboration with Jim Garrison, now in hjs capacity as president of Wisdom University of which Peter Merry together with Gert van Santen founded the European branch. Teaming up with Herman Wijffels, Anne-Marie Voorhoeve is shaking up marketeers with the challenge to play a leading role in our transition to a circular economy. Under the banner of CHE Synnervation and in close co-operation with Rob van Vliet from EnlightenNext, Marinette Ritz has started an intensive Integral Coaching training program. Lisette Schuitemaker is engaged in the initiative for the Global Cooperative Forum to arise. Financial Strategist Jan de Dood is working on a project to channel pension money to sustainable projects.

For the 6th year in succession, the salons are being held every other week at Venwoude, now coordinated by Leidje Witte. These evenings hosted by a team of well-versed facilitators continue to attract people who are interested in approaching subjects from a 2nd tier perspective. Practitioners continue to gather in the Constellations around a 2nd tier approach of their area of expertise. The Health Constellation is preparing to launch their offering of an integral approach to health, and not sickness. The Political Constellation is in the early stages of offering the expertise they built in conscious conversation to the outside world. CHE NL will play a leading role in the global and local event on the theme of change that the global community of Centers for Human Emergence is in the process of creating under the name 'All Change'. And so much more ... As we say: "On we spiral ..."

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