Article

A Reflection on the Evolution of Corporate Culture and Conflict Resolution (Part I)

The Resonance of Individual Conflict Resolution on the Collective Organisational Psyche

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1 Introduction

In this article, a roadmap is proposed for both individual growth and eventual maturation of an organisation as regards how conflict is dealt with. Much can be achieved within organisations when the individuals who work there succeed in discovering and deploying their potential in order to deal with conflict in a mature manner.

An organisation is a compilation of individuals and the overall culture of the organisation is, ultimately, determined by the collective wisdom of the people that form it, when it comes to dealing with conflict and related difficulties. The authors of this article propose a shared view to unearth the potential of an individual working in an organisation to creatively and proactively manage conflict, thereby opening a corporate portal that empowers the adoption of beneficial solutions in response to disarming and preventing difficult organisational situations.

In the first part of this article, the authors will discuss the transformation of the fear-based ego to clear a pathway for development to maturation of individuals and the overall culture of an organisation, following a multidimensional three-step Evolution System.

In the second part of this article, the authors will show how managers can develop themselves in management

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styles embedded in the Evolution System to support individuals and the organisation in their development to maturation.

1.1 Subdued Power Struggle

We begin this article with a real-life story of work-life experiences, recounting lessons learned about the Evolution of Corporate Culture and Conflict Resolution.

1.1.1 The Office – The Conflict

Hilde: "In one of the offices where I worked in the earlier years of my career a lot of tension existed. Most of the tension was caused by the dynamics between the employer and one of the colleagues, who was the office manager. This colleague worked for the employer for many years. They formed a close-knit team.

The relevant colleague – let us call him X – worked very hard and made a lot of extra hours by default. He was the lynchpin of the office and had an extensive network attracting a lot of clients for the firm. The employer first discussed everything with him and thereby broke through the usual hierarchical structure of this kind of law offices, since X was not a certified lawyer. In a way this was progressive, but it was at the same time unsettling and caused a lot of awkward feelings among the better qualified employees.

Many of my colleagues had a tense relationship with X. He was razor-sharp in his observations of everyone's personality and functioning. Especially when it came to flaws! He shamelessly and mercilessly addressed these as well in private as publicly. I saw he had an amazingly good understanding of situations and also of the people in the office, including myself, which he put to use in a nas-

ty way. At that stage in my life, I could not pinpoint exactly what was not right, but it felt threatening. I, as well as the others, felt his stinging eyes in our backs, but still I had respect for him and had the perception that he did respect me relatively well. I felt relatively safe, as long as I did not interfere with office management.

Yet, in the years that I worked in this law office, I saw how several people, some of high quality, fled or were expelled out of the firm through the interference of X and the influence he had on the employer. Even when this employer retired, the person who succeeded him was – even though he was aware of what was happening – not able to change the pattern.

This is what was happening over and over again: X had organised the workload in the office in such a way that he received most of the boilerplate and the most profitable cases. He directed cases that were more difficult, time-consuming and less profitable – due to e.g. government pro bono regulations concerning with price agreements for these kind of lawyers – to colleagues.

It was a great construction, which X had created, because it allowed him to produce a lot of work in these standardised and profitable cases. However, the other colleagues did not feel seen and appreciated for the work they did. Gossip led to loss of a lot of energy and time … Nobody, including myself, dared to speak directly to X or to the employer about the entire situation.

The employer was not blind to what happened though and once in a while – about every six months – she tried to manage the workload more equally. X then threw in his emotions to get the employer to do what he *wanted. For example, by getting upset and angry, blaming her for not appreciating him sufficiently. He then left the office emotionally, in anger, putting down all the work he normally did. The employer then gave in again, because the work had to be done and it was too much for the others to manage in a short time. X had made himself so indispensable that it would not be easy to cope without him. The employer, every time, gave him an expensive present as a token of her appreciation, a watch or high tech stuff, and then he came back and things went on as usual. Colleagues stood by and watched, but no one – including myself – said anything.*

Once in a while, the employer tried to do something else. The solution seemed simple after all: take on an extra employee to take the workload off of X. This would have normalised the situation and the power game would have disappeared. Any attempt to do so however was cleverly frustrated by X. He made sure that the one who was hired became insecure, made mistakes, was put in a bad perspective and succumbed to the pressure, sometimes even within the trial period, sometimes after a few months. This did not happen once or twice, but several times. We all stood there, watched it and did nothing about it.

In the employer's view, firing X was not an option. She was afraid he would influence his extensive network negatively and she believed that he could make or break her. I saw the special relationship between my employer and X. On the one hand, she greatly appreciated him for his

hard and good work and gave him all the credits and rewards for that. At the same time, in my view, she felt controlled by his power play and manipulation.

One day I gathered courage and started talking with my employer about the situation. She then frankly admitted that it was difficult for her, and that she was aware of both sides of the spectrum and how she allowed the situation to persist. I was at that time not yet capable to help her find a good solution. My personal achievement was already to stand up and dare to speak about what I saw. I had to learn more lessons before life gave me a way out of difficult situations also offered even more insights.

After many years of education, practising mediation and giving in-company mediation training, I can now reflect and fully see what was going on in the office, and what could have been done otherwise. I now know how this situation could have evolved into a different, better situation."

1.1.2 The Office – The Resolution

In the office situation, a starting point for change could have been the issue of the distribution of work and allocating bonuses. This could have been discussed in the following way:

1. Collect facts/arguments:
All the standard work was assigned to one person. Some felt this to be unfair distribution of cases. It meant that others got more difficult and time-consuming cases.

2. Distinguish and investigate the interests and desires from both sides:
X did standard work very well! Some of the employees were higher educated and therefore more suitable to take on the more difficult cases, but not all of them. It was not clear whether this is expressed in salary since those data were private. The employees felt that the chances of getting a bonus were uneven. The suggestion is to make a more equal division between standard and special cases so that everyone has equal chances for a bonus.

3. Elevate the situation with new elements:
Can we adjust the bonus system so that everyone can do the work that he/she is good at and likes most and still have equal bonus opportunities?

A more profound solution to the power struggle under the surface would be to take the ordinary work away from X and give him a full-time position as manager since he seems to like to manage the office. He no longer will have to occupy himself with the standard work that he normally does, but can then concentrate on the distribution of work, using his insight in people, and focus on acquisition and networking. Since he found satisfaction in the 'production of standard cases', he probably would not have opted for this himself. Would he however have opted to accept management duties, he would either have improved or changed his perspective on what is best for the company in the long term. In the

event he failed as a manager, he would have come to realise that these duties were not his real talents. In one case or the other, the employer would have made a choice and would have been able to correct him more easily afterwards, rather than X now keeping on interfering with management tasks. The employer ought to have addressed the situation. This might have gone as follows under the following captions:

1. Collect facts/arguments:
Am I right in seeing you would like to take on management tasks since you enjoy participating in the office policy, hiring/firing employees? (Verification question)

2. Distinguish and investigate the desires of both sides:
Would you like to take on the role of manager rather than continuing with hand on work on cases? Do you think this could bring you as much satisfaction as your casework brings you?

3. Elevate the situation with new elements:
If it turns out that you do not like this management function or that it proves not to be suitable for you, you may go back again to work on cases.
A solution in which the employer deals with his ego-based fears could be the following:
On the employer's side, fear of loss was holding her back to confront X with his behaviour. She could have addressed his behaviour, risking his resignation, but at the same time giving him a chance to learn and evolve. If he would choose resignation (not make the change), she could fire him. He might or might not tell nasty things within his network about the employer. The people in his network will (be able to) make their own judgements. This is surrender: nobody knows what will happen, but we do know the situation as it is, is unhealthy. The perspective that might help the employer to act upon this insight could be: It may not damage her as much as she fears. The people in the relevant network will know this man with all of his good traits, as well as his limitations.

The employer might have said the following:

1. Collecting facts/arguments
Let's talk about how we worked together in the past and how we could do better in the future.

2. Distinguish and investigate the interests and desires from both sides:
You do your job very well! I appreciate your work very much! You work a lot in overtime. That is not good for your health and family life and I have responsibility for this as an employer. It is not optimal for the office either, because it makes you irreplaceable. That seems fine for you, but it is not desirable for the continuity of the work in the company. Nobody should be irreplaceable. I have realised I also consulted you too much about management decisions and since it is ultimately not your desire to perform management tasks I will not bother you with this anymore. Of course, you are – as anyone

else – free to give me your opinion, which I will appreciate and take into account where appropriate.

3. Elevate the situation with new elements:
If you agree, we can certainly continue working together. If you are unable to find your way in this, we should consider saying goodbye to each other.
In this article we give our reflection on the evolution of corporate culture and conflict resolution, using the example described above.
We will, step by step, reveal and declare the background and elaborate on the three-step method, shown here.

1.2 Mediation
Mediation guides towards conflict resolution and is aimed at getting both parties into communication to resolve conflict by creating a mutually agreeable solution, which may in the worst case be acceptable and in the best case be mutually profitable.

At the start of mediation one or both parties are not necessarily open to beneficial interaction due to ego and power positions as Martin Brink described in his article 'Psychology of Conflict', 'Why Do People Fight First and Then Settle?' in the *Corporate Mediation Journal (CMJ 2019, No.1–2)*. In his article, he states that power positions often block resolution and will often be fully played out until, finally, a possibility of mutual understanding can be reached.
This power position is indeed an individual perspective coming from the fear-based ego, for instance, fear of loss, loneliness, breakdown of image. Although one's level of consciousness brings about the capability of seeing one or more perspectives, it is possible to broaden these, when the fear-based ego is willing to surrender.
In this article the journey of the individual within, overcoming his or her inner conflicts due to the ego is described and as well as steps in such a process, elevating consciousness. Only when the inner conflict is resolved, settlement/compromise or win-win solutions can be achieved. Understanding oneself, regardless of the behaviour of other parties, leads to insight in the cause of the conflict and sheds light on the position of others (sometimes irrespective of the factual situation). Knowledge of oneself, gaining insight and submitting to this, will – according to the Evolution System described hereinafter – be vital for creating feasible and sound solutions. Also, within an organisation, the conflict arises and can also be resolved, due to the behaviour of individuals.
So, what is at the core of almost every conflict?

2 Culture

2.1 Starting at the Core
Culture in organisations is a collection of the norms and values of individual employees. The norms and values of people are derived from what they strive for deep inside: their fundamental intentions. The basic inten-

tion is the reason why people do what they do at the deepest – usually unconscious – level. What motivates people is universal. It applies to all and it is linked to the mental/spiritual development. The majority of people are all just trying to be good human beings. What it means to be a 'good' human being is different for every person. It is all a matter of perspective and the more perspectives someone can see in a situation, the higher his level of consciousness. It becomes easier to create win–win solutions the more advanced in consciousness people are.

2.2 The Evolution System

The Evolution System shown below is a fusion of various (legal) philosophical and (alternative) psychological insights from various sources and reflects certain basic intentions of people. This universal growth model reflects the development of an individual from childhood phase (depending on the care/acceptance from the environment for survival), through the adolescence phase (wanting to make independent decisions, looking for truth, live your own life), to the adult phase (able to have a 'helicopter view' on cooperation) described in the following three *pillars*. Someone in the first pillar will be motivated by avoiding pain, by feeling accepted by others to be safe, while someone in the second pillar will be motivated by pleasure and feel free to make his/her decision regardless of what others may think of it, and someone in the third pillar will be motivated by insight and the benefit of wisdom.

Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3
Child	Adolescence	Adult
Care	Truth	Overview
Focus on others	Focus on self	Focus on self and others
Dependent	Independent	Cooperation
Pain driven	Pleasure driven	Insight driven
Surviving	Living	Flying
Collect	Distinguish	Elevate
Activation of the reptilian brain cerebellum, amygdala	Activation of the neocortex	Activation of the prefrontal cortex

The *Evolution System* covers the development of human beings, both physical and mental/spiritual, but also applies to the development of products, services, methods and processes. In the context of conflict resolution, the focus is on the mental/spiritual aspect of the development of perspective. We distinguish the following perspectives allowing consideration of:

One side	Both sides	Multiple sides
One-dimensional	Duality	Multidimensional
Thesis	Antithesis	Synthesis

Due to its many perspectives, within each pillar as well, the Evolution System is a *multidimensional system*. It puts everything into yet another perspective: the 'bigger picture'.

Figure 1   Overview Pillars Evolution System
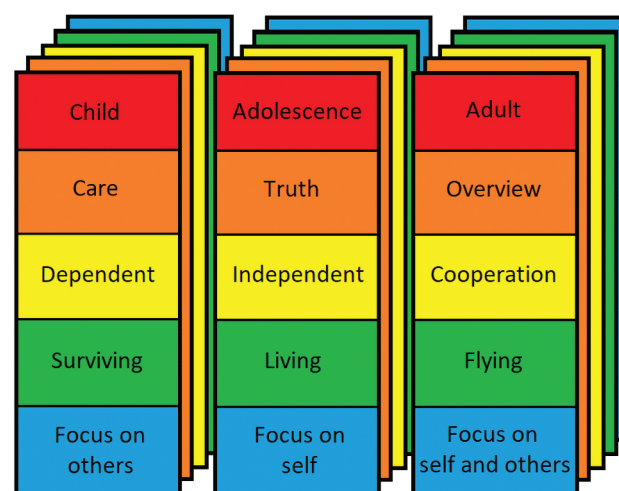
How different existing conflict resolution methods relate to the Evolution System:
- **Litigation** as a conflict resolution method is a *one-dimensional system*: one is right, the other is not, based upon norms and values from the outside world. Therefore, the inner conflict will not be resolved by the decision of a judge or jury.
- **The solution to the inner conflict** is also a *one-dimensional system*.
- It is a struggle within oneself, which is solved by an intrapersonal choice in which something is lost (resistance) and something is won (insight). This is the process of overcoming the fear-based ego.
- **Negotiation** is a *two-dimensional system*: a compromise/settlement is reached by taking into account both opposing points of view. The outcome is okay, but not fully satisfying.
- **Mediation** is a *three-dimensional method*: the conflict is resolved and all parties are satisfied because there is a win-win situation for all due to adding a new perspective that has not been seen before. A new element that unites and transcends the positions of the parties. This enables cooperation at the highest level.

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Litigation	Negotiation	Mediation

Choosing a certain method provides a certain outcome:
– When you go to court, there is a winner and a loser.
– When you negotiate, there will be a compromise. Nobody wins, nobody loses or there is some gain and some loss.
– If you mediate, there may be only winners.
– When using the Evolution System, a person evolves within every method.

2.3 Culture in Society

The 'mental/spiritual' development takes place at a micro level (intrapersonal), in the immediate environment (family, friends, work) at the meso level and in society at the macro level:

Micro	Meso	Macro

Society consists of people, and all people represent a certain level of acquired perspective and awareness of their behaviour.

Taking a look at how someone reacts in most situations reveals a person's:
1. current position in the levels of consciousness in a specific situation/on a specific subject;
2. position within these levels of consciousness, generally.

In general, it is believed that about 70% of the people fit into the level of care (first pillar) and have a more or less dependent attitude, with a focus on being accepted by their environment to survive. They see one perspective in a particular situation as the 'right' perspective and reject the other side or other perspective as 'wrong'. About 25% of the people are open to see, embrace and experience both sides at the same time and have learned to explore and live by their divergent point of view respecting the point of view of others (second pillar). About 5% of the people can achieve an enduring state of consciousness, understanding and appreciating several perspectives simultaneously (third pillar):
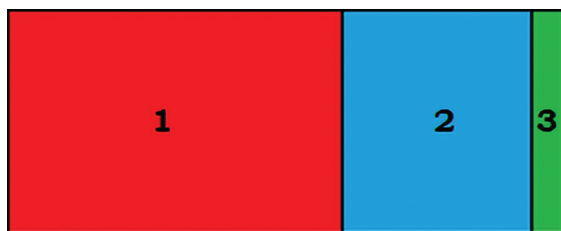
In history – on a macro level – a mental/ spiritual development can be seen in societies. In prehistory and antiquity and even in the Middle Ages, humanity was occu-pied with surviving (except for a very few), and this was only possible within a group environment. In the following era – at least in the Western hemisphere – there was a shift towards the adolescence phase (Enlightenment) in the upper classes of society with slightly more focus on individuality. In modern history, many of the generations born and grown up in the 1930s and 1940s tried to live up to social norms and values provided by church, politics and or a government. The generations growing up in the 1950s and 1960s were freeing themselves at larger scales from these norms and values ('roaring' sixties). The generation of the 1970s and 1980s has continued to show further development breaking free from rules and external norms and values. The generation from the 1990s onwards and at the beginning of this century has continued to develop further (millennials).

Every generation is amazed at how much smarter and more bright their children are compared to them in their youth. Each succeeding generation will have a higher consciousness than the previous one due to mental/spiritual development.

2.4 Culture in the Workplace

In a sense, a workplace is a reflection of society, assuming that – due to the natural process of attracting likeminded people – people with the same values often are hired in a selection process.

It is a pleasant recognition having the same level of consciousness.

Nevertheless, people within an organisation still have different norms and values, which can lead to synergy as well as problems. Dealing with what is different is much more difficult than dealing with what is similar. This can be a source of conflict. Someone who has a first pillar view with emphasis on mutual dependency and compliance will face a challenge understanding someone who has a second pillar view with the emphasis on freedom and independence, and vice versa. Someone in the third pillar will be able to get along with everyone but may find it difficult to connect with for the first and second pillars.

If a manager takes the underlying pillars into account in interaction, he can construct a team that has sufficiently different skills to serve customers best and he or she will be attuned in terms of norms and values. Everyone then will be in a fitting position and conflicts may be resolved more easily. The overarching Evolution System provides a fresh perspective on culture and conflicts also within organisations to help create sustainable relations and resolutions.

Can steps be made towards *changing* organisational culture using the Evolution System and its interventions?

3 Cultural Change

3.1 Transformation and Growth Process in General

Depending on their level of consciousness, people are able to react in a balanced way and to develop new ideas and adjust to these. In general, people want to be able to work together in the best possible way, to produce the best products/services for the organisation's customers. This is supported by a safe environment (first pillar), clear decision-making (second pillar) and a focus on personal and team growth (third pillar).

In essence, the growth process from one pillar of consciousness to the next is not about 'changing' someone's norms and values, but about supporting them to deploy their deepest held norms and values (based in one of the three pillars) in an 'elevating' way. This can be achieved by stimulating awareness of, and removing blockages from, the fear-based perspectives of the ego.

We call this process of removing blockages '*transformation*'. The process of migrating through the pillars we call growth process or '*development*'.

Someone free from ego blockages can much more easily grow towards multiple perspectives and therefore come to better ideas and solutions.

In order to be able to find solutions that meet his needs, someone with norms and values in the thirst pillar can practise these norms and values in an elevating manner. He may seek caring and acceptance as well as the needs of others to be free and independent. Someone with norms and values in the second pillar may be able to search for solutions that meet not only his needs for freedom but also the need for acceptance of others.

How to transform the fear-based ego perspective? Many people deal with challenging issues in their life from a 'childhood phase' perspective.

They have not (yet) found out exactly how they think/feel about similarly challenging issues. They are programmed to be guided by survival patterns, social norms, learned behaviour and fears (ego). In this respect, they have not (yet) 'matured' their point of view. As children, they developed certain 'survival strategies', which helped them at the time in situations where they saw no other way to deal with these situations. In many cases in the 'here and now', these strategies are no longer constructive. In the adolescence phase, they did not correct these strategies by becoming aware of the possibility of a different way to appreciate the conduct of others and their own response to that behaviour. Often the growth process stalls, because people have not learned to go through such an intrapersonal process effectively.

Not having come to the realisation that, in the present, there is no longer a need for old defence mechanisms is of course not a 'fault'! One has not properly been taught by parents and teachers to let go off childhood strategies. In absence thereof as an adult, one subconsciously continues to deploy these old 'survival strategies', while

triggered by associative memories and have 'childhood' emotional responses in situations where a solution is not immediately available. When people 'transform' and obtain an awareness of these occurrences in adult consciousness by taking a closer look at them from a different angle, they can make a different choice on how to deal with them in the present, transform the ego blockage and migrate from the adolescent consciousness phase to the adult consciousness phase. They will be able to stay in balance in all situations helping others to get there too (to ascend).

Growing and developing from childhood via adolescence to adulthood consciousness level can be done by making a conscious and clear choice to explore emotional issues (transforming the ego-based fear strategy) and seek to discover the different perspectives. Taking a stand by making a firm choice, no matter what the environment might expect, the contradictions within oneself will dissolve. The synthesis brings the thesis and the antithesis together in an overarching perspective. This creates peace and space to search and find new openings that could not be reached/seen before. Seeing several (multidimensional) perspectives does not mean being perfect or better than others.

It is all about acting according to insight! Awareness is only possible in the here and now. Being conscious means using all previous learning experiences (conscience) and using intuition more easily. Not making the effort to be conscious is limiting possibilities (funnel vision).

Applying these insights means:
– collecting instead of shattering (first pillar);
– differentiating instead of hiding (second pillar); and
– elevating instead of humiliating (third pillar).

Collect (+)	Distinguish (+)	Elevate (+)
Shattering (-)	Hiding (-)	Humiliate (-)

We have seen here that understanding the growth process of the Evolution System can help individuals to understand and transform their ego-based fears and strategies.

The mediation model can be of help in this process as well, since it is a method of conflict resolution with interventions in all three pillars of the Evolution System. We will explain how we see this work.

3.2 The Mediation Model and the Evolution System as a Transformation and Development Tool

3.2.1 Collect, Distinguish, Elevate

The mediation model is a third pillar method in the Evolution System, having interventions in each pillar.

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1. 'Childhood' phase	2. 'Adolescence' phase	3. 'Adult' phase
Facts, arguments, needs and interests	Desires and wishes	Adding new elements
Fight	Negotiate	Cooperate
Collect	Distinguish	Elevate

So it is possible to shift from one pillar to the next by:
1. **Collecting** facts, arguments/interests.
2. **Distinguish** the wishes and desires, search for differences and common aspects.
3. **Elevating** the situation by inserting new elements to ascertain/transcend interests and desires and bring together both sides in synergy.

Creating in this way a path to find a new solution will unleash the real potential of the people involved and satisfy the real interests and desires of all.

3.3 Blockages and Interventions

3.3.1 Fear–Based Ego Blockages and Surrender
As Martin Brink stated, the major obstacle to change/development is ego-based fear. Ego wants to protect. It is the first, second or third pillar consciousness acting in a negative, shattering, way.

Shattering (-)	Hiding (-)	Humiliate (-)
Fight, Flight, Freeze	Adapting Lying	Sarcasm Arrogance

Fear manifests itself in the form of resistance, in words, behaviour, and body language. It is the hidden fear and resistance that causes most problems. The background of resistance (besides the process of becoming an adult in general as stated before) is the preservation of interests. Someone feels justified/entitled to fight as it serves a purpose. Surrender stops the fight, and the ego qualifies this as 'loss', which is difficult to accept (first pillar consciousness).[1]

If no one surrenders, the fight continues until 'death' follows (destructive behaviour) or until someone decides there is nothing to be gained anymore and withdraws. The one who retreats decides that the value of retreat outweighs the result of the fight. He dissolves his 'inner conflict', which leads to the transition to the second pillar consciousness. If both parties do so, it can lead to a compromise/settlement (second pillar consciousness). However, if it – considering the interests involved – does not yet lead to a solution that benefits everyone in

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1. When someone disagrees with something, he is not necessarily in resistance. The distinction is that someone will react calmly and without being hurt.

every aspect, surrender instead of a retreat creates options. Surrender does not mean accepting the loss, but letting go off the struggle. This gives space for another solution from which everyone can benefit. When both parties 'surrender', the field of negotiation is elevated towards mediation (third pillar consciousness).

Surrender is the step into the 'great unknown'.
That is where new opportunities lie and solutions that the parties have not seen before. It is always a leap into the deep. Encourage someone to jump by using interventions, but do not force them to do so in order to prevent resistance.

3.3.2 The Intervention of Examination and Check of Interests
No one will agree to a solution while feeling their interests and desires are not being taken into account. A person will fight as long as he or she believes that it is in one way or another beneficial. An extra or another perspective on what is beneficial may be necessary to initiate evolution in the situation.

An intervention from the Evolution System to nudge someone to open up to other perspectives may be instrumental to achieve change in a deadlock situation. This may be done as follows:
1. *Collect the interests and desires*. 'Write these down and relate that any solution will be checked with these interests and desires.' The person may now be more willing and able to set these aside for a short time.
2. *Distinguish* with the person whether these interests and desires come forth from fear or real significance.
3. *Elevate* the situation by searching for new elements and perspectives. Check if the new solution conforms with the interest and desires.

3.3.3 Victim (Enabler)-Perpetrator Intervention
If someone is very stuck in a situation and feels powerless like a victim, or appears not to be willing to give up power as a perpetrator, he will not be able to step into the second phase of distinguishing. Victim–perpetrator intervention can then bring relief:

1. Collect and share information. Explain the growth process with examples: 'We all go through a personal growth process. When we were children, we were "victims" of decisions by adults.' Acknowledge how a person can feel to be a victim in such a situation.

2. Distinguish: Be aware of what is going on. Explain the growth process further with examples: 'In adolescence, we will begin to act more consciously as "perpetrators" (having to take responsibility for our own deeds). We will experiment with framing what may be experienced as conscious perpetrator actions and resulting feelings to form our own point of view, regardless of the environment. We may be able to appreciate that we are both victims as well as perpetrators. And for a reason! No one wants to feel powerless. Therefore, we

experiment with power in the instances we can! We can also take a look from a distance at these roles and patterns, and this is essentially what gives us ultimate freedom.'

The questions that can be asked is: 'How could you be the perpetrator in this situation? For whom could you be the perpetrator?' Or vice versa, if someone is identified as the perpetrator: 'How are you a victim? What if being a victim and perpetrator is just an illusion, a roleplay? How differently would you evaluate the situation from this new perspective?'

3. Elevate the situation by searching for new. Now that we are adults, we have more options and more insights to handle situations differently if we want to. We can seek new ways and add new elements. The question could be here: How can we deal with (identical) situations differently?

The intervention intended above requires a subtle approach fit to the expected level of resistance. The framework for such intervention can best be laid out in the first conversation, even before the main issue is addressed. It may make the other person feel 'guilty' or downgraded. This reflection can often be avoided by pointing out beforehand that in the larger context everyone is a victim and perpetrator and that – from a helicopter point of view – perpetrator and victim do not exist and that the definitions are only intended to present new perspectives/insights.

3.3.4 The Intervention of the Inner Conflict

An intrapersonal conflict is the source of virtually every dispute. Such a conflict must be resolved before a compromise or win-win situation with others can be achieved.
There are many methods to deal with inner conflicts. The processes of these methods are at the core very much the same:
1. *Collect* sensations (like feelings, thoughts, needs).
2. *Distinguish* whether they are positive, constructive, or negative, destructive.
3. *Elevate* by choosing and implementing a new perspective.

It is, in fact, the resolve of a person to want to feel better and relaxed. Trying to always remain in control of what happens takes a lot of energy and produces stress.

3.4 Conclusion and Summary

Corporate culture is shaped by fundamentally not always conscious drivers and the resulting norms and values of people, and resonates with their level of consciousness and awareness and ability to transform their inner conflicts. It is important to provide a safe environment in which people can transform their fear-based ego perspective and raise their awareness of overview and insight.
To achieve this, managers would first have to let go off their blockages and raise their awareness in order to be able to help and guide others to let go off their blockages and enhance their awareness.

4 Reflection

How does theory translate into practice? For this purpose let us look again at the issues and people involved in the story we opened with and their characteristics and places in the pillars.

4.1 The Office

In the example of the office, it was, not in so many words, expressed that there was a conflict. So, no clear decision for conflict resolution was made either, and no clear solution was therefore achieved. The conflict had been identified by a few employees, but a transformation process had not been gone through by all involved and was not professionally supervised. This implied a choice as well.

There were several generations present in the office, but the younger ones left the office due to the pressure and rejection of transformation by the elder ones. The only transformation was of a negative kind, because the people who wanted to develop themselves and the organisation left the office, and the ones who did not avail over other options remained. The people involved were too fearful to lose their position by reaching out for help.
The employer and X, in daily life situations, both had a second pillar level of consciousness. They were both very independent, living life with a focus on themselves. In earlier times they found each other in their desire to have and support a successful business, to make a good living, which they both enjoyed. Sometimes they came close to the third pillar, when they were working in concert for this bigger goal of running a successful business and to help people progress. As things grew a bit unhealthy later on, both were well aware of what was going on, and they were able to see both sides of the situation. Their loyalty towards each other was not based upon acceptance by others to survive, but on their mutual benefit. However, they were both restricted by their ego, stemming from fear of loss of image and control. Fear made them fall back into the first pillar, in the particular situation at the office. X on the one hand reacted from his childhood phase, using emotions as manipulative ways to fight for what he thought he wanted/needed. On the other hand, the employer froze, not able to elevate the situation. The employer's interest was to generate revenues, maintain the business and uphold her reputation. The interest of X was to secure his power position and stay in control of the distribution of the workload. The core desire of every person is to be heard and seen for who he or she really is and have their contribution be valued. The battle is between the interests of the ego and the real underlying desire. The employees, X as well as the employer, were sharing information only strategically, not telling each other

everything. They were hiding their real thoughts, and they were hiding their true desires, even for themselves. In the process – it can be said – they were humiliating others by not taking their opinion and worries seriously. X can be seen as the perpetrator and other employees as his victims. Even the employer might have felt like his victim and rightfully so, seen from one point of view. Another point of view has it that they all were equally also perpetrators because everyone let the situation be, most of all the employer! In the third pillar point of view, no one is a victim or perpetrator. These are just typologies.

The employer tried to deal with the situation, but every time she tried to change something X resisted. Could she have done more? Did the employer talk to X about her concerns? Also in the interest of his health, family life, and the health and future-proof situation of the office? Did she clearly explain why, what was happening, was not in the best interests of all? Probably not, in fear of losing clients. It is possible however to put before her that there is a different perspective possible on how it could work out better for her. At that time no one was able to help her become aware of more fruitful approaches to the situation.

The situation within the office was causing stress and anxiety among all involved, also for X! It took a lot of energy to control the situation and circumstances around himself. Sooner or later he would have suffered from this. Gaining an understanding of the destructive side effects involved could help to choose a new direction. The secure feeling of knowing that he would not be judged and still would be valued for his opinion, experience and work could have helped him let go off his controlling behaviour and to face the new and unknown.

The employer let the employees free in their work because she knew they would manage things pretty well on their own. Now and then she steered from the sidelines. She gladly let the daily issues in the hands of X. Although X had a second pillar consciousness overall, in his management tasks he acted like a first pillar operational manager: the dictator. He was recognised for his skills in the cases he worked on, but his authority as an office manager was based on power and control, because it was coming from the ego position, instead of his authentic self. The employer ought to have coached him more in his tasks as an office manager since there were complaints. Because of the lack of steering, X had too much space for his personal agenda. In his eyes, he was justified to do what he did. If we would have broken down and put into words what his needs really were and would have asked more questions, we would have been able to get down to what he was really pursuing, namely to be valued for his work and insights. Once he would feel truly respected as a person and for his contribution to the office, he might have been able to take a different look at his behaviour and the effect it had on others. Knowing he would remain to be valued for his contribu-

tion, he might have been able to search for new ways of interacting and adjust to new guidelines.

In Part II of this article we will look more closely at the management styles and how they are embedded within the Evolution System for even a deeper understanding of the influence the levels of consciousness have on organisations on a day-to-day basis. First we mention another example of a change in a case where fear-based ego also played an important role.

5 Positive Example of Bending Fear-Based Ego

The following case – other than in the abovementioned case of the law office – demonstrates how ego was well managed by operational managers. The power play, in this case, was of less significance due to a flatter hierarchy in the relevant organisation, but all of the principles discussed earlier in this article were applicable.

We trained at a manpower agency, where self-employed people were given the chance to follow education and obtain/lease equipment and a car at relatively low costs to help them start their own business. These costs were set off by the manpower agency in instalments against the revenue on invoices that the self-employed would send to his or her clients, for whom they worked by arrangement of the manpower agency. This decreased the monthly payout received by the self-employed. Many of the self-employed involved had not realised this before signing on at the manpower agency and were getting into financial difficulties during the first few months after joining the agency.

The employees at the agency were bombarded daily with phone calls in which the self-employed asked – often with emotional pressure and less often with even physical treats – for more substantial advance payments.

5.1 Corporate Culture

The self-employed are generally of first pillar consciousness. They are highly loyal when they receive appreciation and recognition for their efforts and work and they happily provide care and good work in return. They however can fall into the trap of childish behaviour and shift their responsibilities to others. If they feel hindered in achieving their goals, they can quickly unleash a power struggle. This was what was happening on a regular basis in the relationship between the manpower agency and many of the self-employed engaged by it.

The employees of the manpower agency are generally in the second pillar and find it difficult to deal with situations of conflict. They sometimes feel powerless due to emotional pressure from the self-employed (relapse in the first pillar), but they are willing to do what is possible to respectfully help the self-employed. Their urge to help backfires since the self-employed feel that, if they increase the pressure, the employee may be more inclined to give in to their demands. The employee is

then drawn deeper into a power struggle (first pillar). The self-employed often phoned several employees to find the weak spot in the team. Once in a while an employee gave in to the pressure. So, people were treated unequally and this caused even more pressure to deal with future issues (downwards spiral).

The employees were struggling with the phone calls of the self-employed. They felt pressured by them and not able to cope with the situation. It caused a lot of stress. We helped the employees see that the self-employed needed – as a matter of speech – 'as a child' to be consistently, but warmly, 'educated', the employee was able to view the situation from the third pillar with a mature 'helicopter' view, without being drawn into the emotional power struggle. The employee then was able to remain calm and explain the applicable rules patiently and the reason for their introduction. Thereupon the employee felt confident to focus the attention back towards the self-employed person, who was the one responsible for a solution. By realising that he is not responsible for the situation of the self-employed person and that the disappointing message can be conveyed without damaging the relationship, the employee can experience more confidence in and satisfaction from difficult phone conversations. They can guide the self-employed from childlike argumentation (first pillar), by asking what they could do (second pillar) in order to shift the focus to an innovative solution (third pillar). The employee could, for instance, ask the self-employed how they themselves could solve their situation differently (third pillar).

5.2   Communication

During the phone call, the employee discusses what is happening and how the situation can be dealt with differently:

1. What is happening? You are in financial trouble because your income is low in the first months due to the investment we have made in you and which has to be paid back in instalments.

2. Why does it happen like this? Understandably, this is tricky, because your monthly income is temporarily lower, due to the agreed upon arrangements. This was explained to you in advance, and we briefed you extensively on the details, so you were able to make a conscious decision. Moreover, it is a temporary situation which will give you the chance to flourish in the long term. You felt it was worth the investment then, and it still is.

3. How else can it be done? I'm sure there are other ways to resolve this temporary situation. What are you thinking about? What other options are there? How else could you fix it? I am interested to learn how you will address the situation forward. Will you let me know how you solved it? I would really appreciate that.

The strength lies in the repetition of the message and the employee's inner conviction that he cannot and does not need to solve the problem for the self-employed. This can be done without guilt because the employee now believes to empower the self-employed to find a coping mechanism by himself or herself. The other person feels this and this strengthens his or her ability to believe in this himself or herself.

5.3   Conflict Resolution

For a sustainable solution to the difficult phone calls as in the case of the manpower agency, it is relevant that all employees follow the same strategy consistently. All self-employed then get the same message from everyone. Compare a child whining first to its mother and consequently to its father. A consistent but friendly approach works best.

The employees of the manpower agency collectively agreed to a 'telephone script', to be used by everyone, as described above. If a self-employed person wants to speak to another employee, they can do so – refusing would be rude – but they will encounter the same approach. The self-employed will give up when he or she keeps getting the same message over and over again. As a result, they, as said, become empowered to find new ways for solving their problem. The employees have guided – now as third pillar consciousness – the self-employed towards second and third pillar consciousness.

They regularly evaluate the script for further improvement (upwards spiral).

5.4   Conclusion

A power struggle is not a battle between the pillars. When all people involved are in a positive mindset, the differences between the pillars can be resolved with ease. In a conflict situation the ego is always involved. One way around the ego is following the Evolution System interventions:

1. *Collect facts.*
2. *Distinguish interest and desires.*
3. *Elevate the situation with new elements.*

In all power struggles, a solution lies in guiding, coaching, inviting, nudging and stimulating the search for new paradigms to reconcile all interests.

The power struggle of the self-employed was at the core of the same power struggle as in more hierarchical situations like in the story of the office in the beginning of this article. The structure and underlying problems are the same: dealing with the controlling ego-mind based in fear.

6   Summary

The Evolution System provides in many ways more perspectives and offers a clear 'bigger picture' of basic cultural norms and values, actions and reactions, and provides interventions to deal with fear-based ego and a clear three-step process for resolution and prevention of conflicts.

The process for transformation, development and achieving solutions and new ideas is:

1. *Collecting* information, arguments, interests, desires.
2. *Distinguishing* the positive, constructive, and negative, destructive ones.
3. *Elevating* the situation by choosing the positive ones and searching for new elements and new perspectives.

To bend the fear-based ego, there is a process to consciously take a look at emotional triggers and uplift awareness from and towards a mature 'helicopter view'. To help someone with the process attending towards the positive aspects of one's basic intentions, it is helpful to relax the ego.

People find better solutions when the ego relaxes, and they surrender to their basic intentions and natural development of all human beings: the development from care, via freedom to insight. To ease, speed up and accelerate this process will bring about a reduction of costs and prevent loss of energy.

Although it is an individual process to bend one's fear-based ego and develop towards the mature 'helicopter' view, a surrounding where it is safe to explore one's intentions without feeling judged will ease this process. One individual who sees 'the bigger picture' can already provide guidance and may in doing so affect and uplift an entire organisation.

An organisation is a compilation of individuals and the overall culture of the organisation is, ultimately, determined by the collective wisdom of the people who form it.