

## Interview mit Jan Jacob Stam

*Claude Rosselet: Du kommst viel in der Welt herum und bildest Menschen in (Organisations)Aufstellungsarbeit aus; beobachtest Du dabei eine Entwicklung in eine bestimmte Richtung?*

Jan Jacob Stam: The main development I see is a surprising one: there is a sudden new wave of interest in organizational constellations. I would not have been surprised if organizational constellations would be dying out or overruled by for example mindfulness or so. These new clients are not either rational either intuitive, but they are both, and beyond. For them the method of a constellation is not a question mark. They take the method for granted. They are very interested in life processes, change processes and societal issues. They are as much interested in the systemic principles themselves as they are interested in the results of a constellation.

The second development I see is a shift from focus on the method of constellation to the systemic principles underneath. Systemic intelligence could be of survival interest in a volatile and uncertain world. Organizations like an European energy giant (I cannot name them here) and global renowned consultancy firms use systemic thinking and constellations in their transformation processes.

The third development I see is that many organizational issues are embedded in societal issues. This way there is a growing interest in societal issues and constellations to explore at which groups in society the leverage can be found for societal issues. For example: a constellation showed that, in order to introduce the concept and methods of permaculture in a country, it was much better to start with the present, middle-sized farmers than with the 'alternative' and biological farmers.

*Claude Rosselet: Der erste Punkt, den Du erwähnst, ist ja sehr erfreulich. - Was denkst Du, erhofft sich diese neue Gruppe von Kunden - seien es Manager, Berater oder Politiker - von der Aufstellungsarbeit?*

Jan Jacob Stam: Well, that's a good question. More and more I see that there is a wish 'to add meaning' to work, products, companies and the world. 'To add meaning', is for example that a windmill cooperation is not just selling renewable electricity, but to add a 'sense of home', or 'being at home in your house' for the customers. And I notice that these new customers are in the first place interested in systemic principles. When we speak for example about 'the guiding principles' in an organization, this brings to life the often hidden essence of the company: 'What are you for the world?' And also the word 'Destiny' of a company resonates a lot. There seems to be a deeper understanding that things might end, that companies might end, that the way banks were as they were might end. To me this word 'destiny' is one of the translations of Hellingers 'Spirit-Mind'.

So when you ask about 'hope' that the new customers have in regard to systemic work and constellation, it has a lot to do with renewal.

I found a very interesting phenomenon in the field of sustainability, and the people who are striving for a more sustainable world. There is often a lot of aggression

underneath the gentle face of sustainability. After some time it became clear why: the anger is an anger to our parents or previous generations that they have ruined the planet.

But now the interesting thing is, that I encounter in these new customers, especially the younger ones, the readiness to say: 'Let's take the heritage as it is. Let's close the account. Let's take 'the loss', without any remorse or grandiosity. Let's agree to that we got this planet as it is now, and start from here. I saw this movement not only in Western Europe, but also in Brazil and Russia. Very refreshing!

An other thing I observed is that when we do societal constellations, it often appears that the point of leverage to change something is different then we expected. When we did a constellation about corruption in Brazil, it appeared that the point of leverage was not with the government, not with the police, not with the mafia, but with the middle-sized (family-)companies. This was surprising and made a lot of sense to the Brazilians (ex-bank president and some project leaders from the government being present).

*Claude Rosselet: Das, was Du eingangs erwähnst, bestätigt mich in meiner Meinung, dass Aufstellungsarbeit und Sensemaking sehr viel Gemeinsames miteinander haben. Wie hat sich in den letzten Jahren Deine praktische Arbeit entwickelt? Setzt Du da neue Akzente? Oder hat sich Deine Arbeit gar grundlegend geändert?“*

Jan Jacob Stam: It's not so easy to say if and how my work with constellations has changed. I am very aware that my approach is to provide the clients with second-order interventions. This means that the client leaves not with solutions, but with insights. And if I can I like it when the client her or himself facilitates the last steps in a constellation her/himself. Then we leave the client-system (and sometimes it is a whole team) in an active mode.

For me the most useful insights for systemic intelligence and constellations are the three survival mechanisms Bert Hellinger brought to the surface:

The so called personal conscience works in service of the survival of the individual (if you do not know how to belong you will most likely die; if you do not know how to exchange, you will not get food; if you do not know to find a place in a natural order, you might be kicked out).

The so called collective conscience takes care of the survival of the system as a whole. This mechanism creates the unconscious patterns. By the way, my simple hypothesis is: when you become aware of unconscious patterns in a company, you can handle them easier.

Spirit-mind is the mechanism that takes care of the evolution of whole societies. It has a direction. It is like a force. Spirit-mind 'creates' both wars and peace. Spirit-mind is also a force that can de-stabilize patterns, and new ones might form. I was for example curious if the financial crisis was strong enough to de-stabilize the main

patterns in the financial world we co-created over the past couple of hundred years.

Halfway November a team of directors from a very technical company came. They produce among others the rubber sealing for tunnels. They also were merging two locations in the Netherlands to one near Rotterdam. They had questions about the merging and their future.

During the constellations they realized that the type of craftsmanship they used during the past 100 years would change completely soon.

To make a long story short: I got a report on what they did after the constellation. They provided me with an overwhelming excel document where all the insights from the constellation were translated into concrete steps and initiatives for the next half year.

Within a month, before the Christmas holidays, they had produced a photo-book on the history of the firm. On purpose without text. They handed at the Christmas party the first 15 copies to the oldest employees, in order of age. And then these people opened the photo-books. And of course other employees gathered around them to watch over their shoulders. And then the stories came, triggered by the pictures. Each of the thirty employees who had to move from a location in central Netherlands to Rotterdam because of the merging, was brought in person by the CEO to his new working place. Each of them, one by one.

In the company-restaurant they put a huge wooden treasure chest. In this chest they put objects, belonging to the past one hundred year of craftsmanship. Teams are formed to co-create what the new craftsmanship might look like. One of the very strict, older operational managers got more emotional and compassionate for his employees: 'I do not know what happened in this constellation. I cannot explain it to my wife. It is so strange, something changed for good', reports this man.

What I think we did in this constellation, is to open up the ever present systemic intelligence or systemic wisdom, whatever you want to call it, in these six people of the team of directors and managers. And they were able, with the help of a consultant who is trained in systemic constellation work, to put their insights into action.

If something is fundamentally changing in me, than it is the belief that we all are 'systemic animals' by nature. We do not have to sell constellations or systemic principles, they are out there already. Many of the limitations in reaching companies were limitations in myself, not in them. I feel my 'task' and pleasure more and more is to re-awaken this systemic intelligence. More than the constellations themselves, although they often give me also an intense pleasure, even if the message is: 'I really cannot do anything for you. Your situation might require a radical decision, and you are the only ones who can do this.....'

*Claude Rosselet: Du schilderst hier ein sehr beeindruckendes Beispiel einer*

*„Management Constellation“ (und was sie bewirkt hat). Wir haben im letzten Sommer bereits über den Unterschied zwischen Veränderung 1. Ordnung (oder Anpassungslernen) und Veränderung 2. Ordnung (oder Veränderungslernen) im Zusammenhang mit der Aufstellungsarbeit gesprochen. Kannst Du für unsere Leser erläutern, was es in Bezug auf Dein Vorgehen für eine Auswirkung hat, wenn Du sagst, dass Du vor allem auf eine Veränderung 2. Ordnung fokussierst? Orientierst Du Dich nicht am Anliegen Deines Klienten?“*

Jan Jacob Stam: It developed not consciously, but over time that in my work the focus is more on second order interventions than on first order interventions.

My first disappointment, many years ago when I started with organizational constellations was that it seemed to be hard, and often impossible, to find a 'solution'. Until I realized this is very logic (apart from the fact that my skills are and were maybe too limited): in most of the organizational issues there are four, five, sometimes seven or more systems and subsystems involved: a department, a business unit, suppliers, customers, some persons with their personal patterns, value systems and leading principles, maybe a family etc etc. What is good for one system, might not be good for another system. What in a constellation might be a solution for one system, might not be one for another part. So I stopped looking for solutions. (In family systems though, which are often less complex, I still touch on what one might call solutions).

Then I remember clearly a case in a Brazilian company, where the case-giver, the wife of the owner, was also having the function of CFO. (Chief Financial Officer) the function didn't work and a constellation showed that the function of CFO was identified with the mother of the owner (who had invested in the beginning in the company, if I remember well).

So, this was the somewhat shocking insight for the case-giver. Now the question is, what could be done in the real company? As a kind of exercise we generated seven different options within five minutes: she could resign from the company; she could resign from the function and have another function; they could 'clean' the function, obviously still systemically occupied by her mother-in-law; they could shift from focus on the family system to focus on the company system etc etc etc.

Now comes one of my underlying beliefs: I believe that the strength to act and to decide what to do lies in the company. Maybe not only with the case-giver, but certainly in the company. The responsibility and the strength to 'translate' the systemic insights is in the hands of the company. They are the experts on the organizational, managerial, juridical, humane and other principles. This also means I often leave the constellation like a coin on its edge, having a lot of impulse. But which side the coin will fall is none of my business.

My other belief is that what we see when we do an organizational constellations are

the patterns of the organization, not just 'the inner image of the case-giver'. This notion became clear to me when in two days I facilitated three constellations, all from the same company. I didn't know that these three cases came from the same company, nor did the case givers know from each other that they were bringing a case for a constellation, nor did the three meet. One was a project-leader, one a manager and the third one an employee. I had realized already that in these three cases similar patterns showed up. Of course the constellations looked differently, but the main patterns appeared to be the same. To my astonishment I learned at the end of the second day that these three cases were from the same company. Later on I observed this many more times.

So slowly I started considering the patterns shown as a property (eigenschaft) of the organizational system, and not so much of the case-giver, although maybe colored by the inner image of the case-giver.

This becomes more evident for me since we started to offer the case givers the option to set up the representatives, or the representatives set up themselves. In 90% case givers choose for the latter form. When this happens this way in a team of fourty directors of an energy company, and they recognize the patterns that show up as the patterns belonging to the company, for me this is convincing: what we usually see in a constellation are the patterns of the company.

Now coming back to your question: I consider more and more the system of the organization as the client. The case-giver is just one 'point' in the field or structure of the organization. And the question of the client is a point of departure for an adventure to unravel underlying patterns, showing up in relationship to the question of the client. The client and I often re-negotiate during the constellation in which way we will work on. This might be close to the question, but often it leads to far wider or deeper notions about what the organizational system 'needs'.

*Claude Rosselet: Aus dieser Sicht erscheint es mir als konsequent, die Klärung des Anliegens als fortlaufender Prozess während der szenischen Arbeit zu gestalten und sich nicht zuvor –im Interview zur Klärung des Anliegens – mit dem bzw. den Klienten auf einen bestimmten Systemausschnitt zu einigen. Wie Du ja weißt, ziehe ich Letzteres vor. Mit Dir teile ich aber die Ansicht, insbesondere bei der Arbeit im Workshop-Setting mit einem Leitungsteam immer im Auge zu behalten, was denn die Organisation –oder das grössere Ganze –brauchen könnte, um sich erfolgreich und gesund weiter zu entwickeln.*

*Eine letzte Frage noch: Wie bereits eingangs erwähnt, bildest Du in Holland und in Teilen der Welt Facilitators in Aufstellungsarbeit aus. Hast Du diesbezüglich eine Mission oder andersherum gefragt, was sollten Deine Studenten sich zu Herzen nehmen?“*

Jan Jaco Stam: No, I do not have a mission. It is just that I like this work very much. All the time we get new insights about how organizations and society 'work'. That

fulfills me with a deep pleasure.

I think it is really important for people who learn constellations, to be aware of your underlying concepts of: what is a system, what is an organization, what do you consider your task as facilitator.....

While learning constellations it is natural to copy your teachers for a while. But please, find your own style. When you work with your customers, you are your own instrument, and the interventions are in the here and now. You do not have time to sit behind your desk and think deeply for some time about a good intervention. It is all instantaneous and now. Explore what presence, while facilitating constellations, means to you. Take your full responsibility as facilitator and go for it.

And most of all: it is ok to outgrow your teachers. The next generation of organizational constellators will outgrow me, other teachers and maybe even Bert. This is necessary, because society is changing all the time. Every time a student outgrows me, it brings a big, big smile on my face, and under that smile I feel very touched and grateful.

*Claude Rosselet: Herzlichen Dank für den inspirierenden Austausch.*